INVOCATION
L: In the name of the Father
and of the Son +
and of the Holy Spirit.
G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 46

A: The mighty Lord is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
L: God is our refuge and strength,
G: an ever-present help in trouble.
L: Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
G: and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
L: though its waters roar and foam
G: and the mountains quake with their surging.
L: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
G: the holy place where the Most High dwells.
L: God is within her, she will not fall;
G: God will help her at break of day.
L: “Be still, and know that I am God;
G: I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”
A: The mighty Lord is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

PRAYER OF THE DAY
L: Gracious Lord, our refuge and strength, pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your Word, protect and comfort them in all temptations, defend them against all their enemies, and bestow on the Church your saving peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READING & MEDITATION  see next page

PRAYER

LORD’S PRAYER
A: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,	hy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

VERSE OF THE DAY
A: If you continue in my Word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.
(John 8:31,32)

BENEDICTION
L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.
A: Amen

READING AND MEDITATION:

First Sunday of End Time—Reformation Sunday: Lord, keep us faithful to your Word! The Festival of the Lutheran Reformation of the Church emphasizes the true Church’s unfailing reliance on the Word of God and unflinching testimony to it in the face of persecution. Jesus promised to pour out his Spirit on the Church that we might be God’s mouthpiece even before kings. Today the Church prays that the Lord give us the strength to be faithful and the peace of knowing our lives are safe in his hands.

As you study this week, seek to find the connecting theme in all the lessons by using Luther’s Four Big Barber Questions to ponder and discuss each individual reading:

1. What is God saying to me in this lesson?
2. For what does this lesson lead me to give thanks?
3. What sins does this lesson lead me to confess?
4. For what does this lesson lead me to pray?

THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 10:16-23

Throughout the history of the Church, the story of faithfulness to the Word of God has always been the story of persecution. And rightly so, because Jesus promised it! Who would send defenseless sheep into a world of ravenous wolves? It makes no sense, yet that is precisely the plan that Jesus describes for his Church. It makes no sense—unless you are the Good Shepherd who wants his sheep to utterly depend on him. Our trust in Jesus doesn’t guarantee an absence of persecution, but faithfulness in spite of it. We will witness to the Word of God before brothers, fathers, children, governors and princes. Jesus promised, “All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” What comfort that must have been for Martin Luther, whose faithful witness caused him to be expelled from his order, excommunicated from his church, and outlawed from his empire. Before the kings and princes of Europe, Luther gave faithful witness at Worms: “Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: DANIEL 6:10-12, 16-23

They didn’t persecute Daniel because of theses nailed to a church door; they didn’t accuse him because of stirring words spoken over a pile of condemned books. They persecuted Daniel because he prayed in his home. Daniel made a bold confession and faithful witness with his knees. No godless king or immutable law would change the homage due to God. No threats, no pain, not even death would change Daniel’s loyalty to the Word of God that called on him to worship the LORD his God only. So Daniel went home and prayed, just as he had done before. He was faithful, even in the face of certain persecution. For the Christian, most persecution doesn’t come from public writings like Luther, but from private acts like Daniel. We live our faith and are persecuted because of it. We don’t face a den of lions, but persecution abounds when we’re faithful to the Word. We lose relationships because of moral purity; we lose promotions because of worship priorities; we lose friendships because we won’t join in sinful talking or walking. Faithfulness to God’s Word in the face of persecution requires trust. God shut the lions’ mouths to answer the king’s question: Is your God able to rescue you? Yes, he is. God shut the lions’ mouths to show his Church of all the ages that God is able to guard and keep his own. You can trust him and be faithful to his Word in the face of any persecution.

My takeaways:

SECOND LESSON: GALATIANS 5:1-6

Martin Luther called the book of Galatians, “My Katie von Bora—I am wedded to it.” Paul’s letter speaks clearly against work righteousness and plainly about grace. That meant much to Luther who had staked his life on both topics. Why would anyone risk so much over words? Because the very freedom of the Gospel was at stake. Either we are free by grace or slaves under the law; there is no middle ground. Attempts to justify ourselves by outward acts do not result in justification at all—whether you are first-century Judaizers, sixteenth-century clerics or twenty-first century moralists. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. So, Paul says, stand firm and be faithful to the Word of God that sets us free.

My takeaways:
SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON:
2 TIMOTHY 4:9-18

Paul learned firsthand that faithfulness to the Word of God brought persecution. His former brothers had abandoned him; his enemies had not stopped hounding him. Though he was by himself, Paul was never alone. Jesus stayed by his side and in Paul fulfilled the promises of both the First Lesson and the Gospel. Consider Paul’s confidence that God will rescue him from every evil attack—the point is not a rescue from danger, but rather a rescue through danger to the heavenly kingdom. Paul knew that even if he died for Christ, God would rescue him from that evil attack and bring him to heaven. Eventually the headsman’s sword took Paul’s life; but it did not stop Jesus from rescuing him and taking him to his heavenly kingdom. Lord, keep us faithful to your word in the face of any persecution! To you be glory forever and ever. Amen.

My takeaways:

What major theme(s) connect(s) all the lessons?