INVOCATION

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

G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 34

A: Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

L: Taste and see that the LORD is good;

G: blessed are they who take refuge in him.

L: They eyes of the LORD are on the righteous

G: and his ears are attentive to their cry.

L: The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,

G: and he delivers them.

L: The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;

G: he delivers them from all their troubles.

L: The LORD is close to the brokenhearted

G: and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

L: The LORD redeems his servants;

G: no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.

A: Happy the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ, your Son, 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,
thy 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: Jesus Christ has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (1 Timothy 1:10b)

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:

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost: The Church will stand forever. Nothing can keep our Redeemer from upholding his promised salvation. Neither false expectations nor the gates of hell, neither an Egyptian army nor a flowing river, not even the great tribulation of the end times will keep our God from preserving his Church.

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 16:13-20

Who do people say the Son of Man is? That question is as applicable today as it was in Matthew’s Gospel. The question remains, “Who is Jesus?” As the disciples rattled off the popular misconceptions, one is struck by how illustrious that list actually was. There were no slouches in that group. But they didn’t even begin to compare with the truth. Many people today give similar answers: they call Jesus a teacher, a philosopher, the founder of a religion, an agent of change. Their answers miss the mark as widely as the answers of the people in the Gospel. Only disciples of Jesus, through the work of the Spirit of God, can confess him as he truly is. Could Peter’s answer be any better?

You are the Anointed One, the one set apart by God and prophesied by Scripture, the Promised Seed who would save us from sin. But even more than that, Peter showed that the disciples confessed him to be the Son of the living God. You, Jesus of Nazareth, are the Son of the God who is life and who gives life. This living God is the hope of every sinful man ever since Adam in the face of death named his wife “Life,” because through her womb would come the Seed who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Now here, in the flesh, stood the Son of the living God whose mission was to restore life to this world of death. This truth is the rock on which the Church stands. Because it stands on the rock and not on the pebbles of men who serve it, the Church will stand forever: its message is changeless; the ramifications of its work are eternal.

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: EXODUS 6:2-8

To a people who wanted to know who God was, he responded, “I AM who I AM.” In this lesson he explains exactly what it means to be the LORD, the God of free and faithful love. It means that he is the living God who will preserve his Church forever. Why and how does he preserve it? God gives a striking answer by referring to himself 21 times in seven verses. The God of free and faithful love will redeem his people. And because our redemption is not based on our obedience, but on him and his faithfulness, his power and his grace, it is a covenant that cannot be shaken or removed. God will preserve his Church forever. How can we be certain? Look at the simple promise that brackets our lesson. “I am the LORD.”

My takeaways:

SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 11:33-36

This is the thirteenth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Note the preceding context that falls outside of this lesson. Romans 11:25-27 remembers the covenant with Israel. Isaiah prophesied it. God fulfilled it. “This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” The living God preserves his Church forever by remembering his covenant. How can man respond to the illogical nature of grace? Only with awe; only with praise. Here Paul records a great doxology fit for our Redeemer God. The depth of his wisdom, his unsearchable judgments, his limitless grace in Christ—that truth is the rock on which the Church will stand forever. Worship him with awe! Praise him with joy!

My takeaways:
SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON:
JOSHUA 4:1-9

Twelve rocks told the story God’s grace and preservation to generations of his people. Through the Word, they still speak to us today. As he once used his might to halt a river in its place to preserve his people, so today God still preserves and protects the new Israel, his Holy Church. Today, rocks still speak. Not stones in a river, but people like Peter, little rocks who proclaim the Rock on which we stand forever.

My takeaways:

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON:
REVELATION 7:1-8

God doesn’t just hold back rivers, but he even holds back the winds of destruction until every one of his elect is safely sealed. Ezekiel 9 gives an interesting prophesy of such a seal. The believers are marked with the Hebrew letter Taw. It’s intriguing to think of the image that would have formed in the mind of the people of Israel. The Hebrew script at the time would have marked each forehead with † or + or X. Thus sealed with the seal of the living God, the whole Church is preserved forever (12 2 x 10 3 = 144,000. The number of the Church is 12; the number of completeness is 10; multiplication intensifies the symbolism).

My takeaways:

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