INVOCATION

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

G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 25

A: To you, O Lord, I lift my soul;
   in you I trust, my God.
L: To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;
   in you I trust, O my God.
G: for they are from of old.
L: Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love,
G: according to your love remember me,
   for you are good, O LORD.
L: Turn to me and be gracious to me,
G: for I am lonely and afflicted.
L: Look upon my affliction and my distress
G: and take away all my sins.
L: Guard my life and rescue me,
G: for I take refuge in you.

A: To you, O Lord, I lift my soul;
   in you I trust, my God.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: Mercifully grant, O God, that your Holy Spirit
may in all things direct and rule our hearts, for
without your help we are unable to please you;
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: At the name of Jesus every knee should
   bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus
   Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(Philippians 2:10,11)

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:

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Our God wants real repentance that leads to true obedience. The Verse of the Day reminds us that one day, every one will bow before Jesus of Nazareth and confess him as Lord. Some will do so in grief and others in joy. God wants real repentance from every sinner they might bend the knee to Christ in true obedience and confess with gladness that Jesus is Lord. The Church prays that God would rule our hearts through Word and Sacrament that our repentance might be real and our obedience truly pleasing (Prayer of the Day).

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 21:28-32

They seemed so righteous as they stood in the temple courts. The great men of Israel had gathered against Jesus. These men knew all the words to say and ways to act, but the only “righteousness” they had was a self-righteousness that offended God. They claimed to be doing God’s work and fulfilling his will, but there was no repentance and no true obedience. The parable Jesus spoke against them convicts every self-righteous person. The father commands two sons to work in his vineyard and receives two surprising answers. The first son flatly refuses; he fails to even offer an excuse, but simply says, “I will not. (οὐ θέλω)” The second son says all the right things and tacks on an appropriately respectful title. He seems almost breathless in his readiness to do the father’s will (ἐγώ, κύριε). True obedience, however, in not merely saying what God wants to hear, but doing what God wants done. The first son repented of his wickedness and gave his father true obedience; the second merely mouthed the words and contented himself with doing his own thing. Which did what the father wanted? Jesus’ question had only one answer, and the religious leaders gave it and indicted themselves. Yes, even the vilest sinner that repents gives an obedience far more true that the upright man wallowing in his self-righteousness. What a powerful preachment against the Pharisee inside each of us that wants to be content with saying the right words when it comes to faith! What a stinging rebuke of our lukewarm Christianity that confesses Christ with our mouth but denies him with our deeds! Repent, Christ says, and believe—true obedience will surely follow.

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 18:1-4, 25-32

On this Sunday when the Church is called to continual repentance, Ezekiel brings a strong warning for Christians who grow lax in their faith or dismissive of their sin. God wants real repentance that leads to true obedience. Israel had not given either. Instead of seeing their suffering as a result of their sin and as a call to repentance, they saw only injustice. With their favorite proverb, “The fathers eat sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge,” they were saying that God should certainly punish sin, but they felt he was punishing the wrong people. They felt they were being punished for the sins of their parents, and they implied that God was not just in treating them this way. God denies it all: the soul that sins is the one that will die. This is not injustice—no, the injustice is that Man who was made for perfection sinned again and again against his God. God shows just how just he is: he will judge each man according to his way. Repent, God says, turn from your wickedness and live. God promises not to judge us by our past, but by our present, and so he calls us to live anew. Repent and receive a new heart and new spirit that leads to true obedience. Why will you die, O Israel? God wants exactly the opposite—repent and live!

My takeaways:
SECOND LESSON: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

This is the second in a series of four lessons in the book of Philippians. Paul quotes a Hymn of Humiliation and Exultation as a model to shape our attitudes. Real repentance leads us to the true obedience of imitating Christ. Jesus is the third son—the one never mentioned in the parable—the son who said “Yes,” and also worked in the vineyard. Jesus is the true son of his Father who both said the words, “Not my will, but yours,” and did the work, “obedient to death—even death on a cross.” When his work in the vineyard was complete, God exalted his Son to the highest place and now calls every man to real repentance and the true obedience of bending the knee and confessing with joy that Jesus Christ is Lord (Verse of the Day).

My takeaways:

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON:
2 CORINTHIANS 13:5-8

The Corinthian congregation had heard much from Paul on the topics of repentance and obedience. As they readied to receive Paul on his third visit, he encouraged them to prepare by testing themselves. Which son were they acting like, the son who worked in the vineyard or the one who just talked about it? Five times in this lesson, Paul uses a form of the word δοκιμάζω, telling them to examine themselves to see whether they were in the faith. True obedience gives evidence of real repentance. It is not the cause of repentance, but a visible fruit that shows our faith is genuine. That brings us the great joy of knowing that Christ Jesus is in us, and we are walking on the way of righteousness.

My takeaways:

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