



**DAILY BREAD
LECTIONARY DEVOTIONS
EPIPHANY 4 — YEAR B**

INVOCATION

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

G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 1

**A: Blessed are they who hope,
who hope in the Lord.**

L: Blessed is the man who does not walk in the
counsel of the wicked

G: or stand in the way of sinners.

L: But his delight is in the law of the LORD,

G: and on his law he meditates day and night.

L: He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yield its fruit in season

**G: and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.**

L: Therefore the wicked will not stand in the
judgment,

**G: nor sinners in the assembly of the
righteous.**

L: For the LORD watches over the way of the
righteous,

G: but the way of the wicked will perish.

**A: Blessed are they who hope,
who hope in the Lord.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: Lord God, you know that we are surrounded by
many dangers and that we often stumble and fall.
Strengthen us in body and mind, and bring us safely
through all temptations; 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: The Spirit of the Lord is on me; he has
anointed me to preach good news.
(Luke 4:18a cf. NIV)**

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:

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany: Why follow him? Jesus shows his glory by his triumph over the devil. In his own day he sometimes did that openly for many to see. He still does it just as effectively but in a less public, less obvious way. Just as his victory made manifest his glory then, so it does now. Just as then, so now, everything is accomplished through his Word.

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: MARK 1:21-28

The devil is quiet when false doctrine is taught. But as soon as Jesus appears with the gospel, the devil is enraged and does all that he can to hinder the message. Here he does it by confessing what on the surface is the truth; but he does it with evil intent, to hinder the work of the glorious gospel. Who, after all, wants to be confessed by the devil? At the very least the confession of the demons would confuse people. But Jesus silences the devil and drives him away, while the devil in leaving demonstrates that his only power is to hurt and destroy, and only that so long as the Lord for reasons of his own permits it. That the devil is in the synagogue serves as a warning to us. Often those churches seem most united and peaceful where false doctrine is given the most room; but where the Word is preached in its truth and purity, there the devil is most busy stirring up strife in doctrine and in life, so that people will turn away from the truth. In your life, too, the devil's only power is the power to destroy and corrupt, to give pain and misery—in spite of his promise to give the opposite. But the glorious gospel's power to create is still more powerful than the horrible power of the devil to destroy. Don't cling to the one that Jesus is driving out!

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: DEUTERONOMY 18:15-20

When God speaks only in the law, there is terror and dread on every hand. Therefore let us hang on every Word of the gospel of the promised greater prophet, by whose Word and work alone we are delivered from the dread wrath of God and called instead into blessed fellowship with him. Yes, and let us not tolerate anyone who contradicts the message and the messenger that brings us to life and to life eternal. In the Old Testament the penalty for false doctrine was death; for God takes his Word seriously. In the New Testament there is no call for us to kill false prophets. But there remains the call to shun them and dread the dread effect of their words and works. God takes his Word seriously. Woe to those who do not! For they invite the devil's rule and his fate, which Jesus expels when he speaks and we listen.

My takeaways:

SECOND LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

Christ's coming has freed us from observing the Old Testament ceremonial law. But we are still obliged to follow the moral law. How do we show that we take the moral law seriously? We seek to serve our neighbor, even when that means we give up for a time some of our Christian freedoms in matters of *adiaphora*. Loving service to our neighbor is, after all, not an *adiaphoron*. Even beyond matters of *adiaphora* we therefore want to take care that we do not by our words or actions place a stumbling block to the gospel in front of our neighbor, which the devil will use to turn them from the gospel.

Altogether apart from matters of *adiaphora*, the Christian who by his words or actions causes his neighbor to think that God is not serious about his Word in either the law or the gospel helps the devil harden the heart of the neighbor against the gospel. Could there be a greater harm to the conscience of our neighbor? Could there be a greater crime against the love of Christ for our neighbor? Don't find yourself hindering the Savior in his work of revealing his glory and the glory of the gospel to those around you.

My takeaways:

**SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON:
HEBREWS 3:1-6**

Jesus has shown his glory in us and to us by calling us to be God's holy house in a perishing world. That's what we are as Jesus drives out the rule of the devil from our hearts and makes of us his holy habitation. He who is worthy of greater honor than Moses has given us in the gospel greater honor than we sinners could have from the law. He has given us the holiness required for God's dwelling place by taking away the sin that polluted us and fouled the temple that God desired. Jesus was faithful to God in all that he did and thus was a fit dwelling for God; he was faithful therefore in his work of becoming our Savior and our salvation, i.e., of driving the devil out and destroying his dwelling place in us. May it then be our goal to hold fast to Jesus and to the holiness which he has won for us.

My takeaways:

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