

ABOUT the FOURTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST

Theme: Thy Strong Word

– *highlighting the Scriptures for the week* –

When the LORD speaks, things happen. (Isaiah) Like rain and snow waters the earth to bring forth crops, so the Word of the LORD accomplishes the divine purpose for which He sent it; it does not return to Him void. This is our comfort when our flesh (sinful nature) wages war against us. (Romans) Comparing present sufferings to future glory, our pain fades in significance. So now in the meantime we cling to the Word of the LORD. (Matthew) Like a sower with his seed, the LORD faithfully spreads His Word without regard for receptivity. Some hear it not, others hear it first with joy, then fall away. Others find their faith choked off by worldly pursuits. But others hear the Word with the faith it gives, and bring forth abundant crops of faithfulness: *glorious now, we press toward glory – and our lives our hopes confess.* [LSB 578 v. 3]

Use the schedule below in your personal devotion. The first three readings are the lessons read today; the last three will be read next Sunday. The Wednesday reading is the psalmody for the week. Each day you may want to pray that Psalm or the prayer printed in our service folder today, followed by the suggested reading and your personal requests and Thanksgivings to our Heavenly Father.

- Sunday** Isaiah 55:10-13 What does the rain and snow accomplish on the earth? Who sends it? From where does the Word of the LORD come? What does it accomplish? Why therefore is the LORD's own Word to be our constant focus? How is this done?
- Monday** Romans 8:12-17 What is the result of 'living according to the flesh'? What does this phrase mean? What is the result of putting to death the deeds of the body? How is this done? What does it mean to be 'heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ' (in the words of St. Paul)?
- Tuesday** Matthew 13:1-9 Who is the farmer in Jesus' parable (cf. vv. 18 – 23) Who snatches the Word of God away before it can take root? How do trouble or affliction intercept the work of the Word? What affect do worry and wealth have on the growth of the Word? What therefore is the true source of all Kingdom growth? How is this a warning to all who work in the LORD's vineyard? How is it a comfort? How therefore can you best handle trouble/affliction/worry/wealth?
- Wednesday** Psalm 65 What "good things" did temple worshippers anticipate in God's holy house? Where are they found now? Why? What did God make by His power? How does He care for His creation, enriching it abundantly? What is the benefit for humankind? How does the animate and inanimate creation show forth the praise of the LORD? How therefore does He provide for the needs of body and soul? What does this mean?
- Thursday** Isaiah 44:6-8 Who alone is God? Whose King and Redeemer is He? What did this mean for Israel? For the church today? What is the source of your fears? What is the cause of your idolatry? Why must you repent for both? What promise is extended for believing penitents in this text? What does this mean?
- Friday** Romans 8:18-27 What are your present sufferings? What future promise outweighs them all? What is the cause of all frustration and suffering in the created world? What future liberation awaits? What therefore is all affliction like childbirth pains? What future hope is guaranteed to all who are in Christ? What down payment have we already received? How therefore may we have patience under affliction? Who prays along with us in our weakness? Who alone knows the real thoughts of our hearts, be they good, bad, or ugly? What comfort is therefore found in the Spirit's intercession? How can we therefore pray more boldly?
- Saturday** Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 How is the Kingdom like a sabotaged field? Who sows good seed? Who sows weeds? Who, therefore, is the cause of sin and shame? Why is God patient (sometimes seemingly indifferent) with sin? When will things be set right again? What does this mean?