

Life Thoughts in the Church Year (One-Year Lectionary) April-June 2017

April 2 – Fifth Sunday in Lent – God’s gifts do not always make immediate human sense (John 8:48, 53, 57). What remains certain regardless is that God is good and God gives. The Father who eternally gives Himself to the Son and the Son who offers Himself to the Father in appreciative obedience (John 8:55) is the Holy Trinity who imparts this life-giving Spirit even where only death appears possible. Trusting His Word and work releases from death’s threatening grip (John 8:51). *Father, Son, and Spirit, guide us to trust Your Gospel that we may share in Your abundant life. Amen.*

April 9 – Palm Sunday – In the midst of the darkness and forsakenness of that Friday we now call Good, we see God “hiding” in it all, demonstrating His love in a way we cannot comprehend but only apprehend by faith. The passion of Christ assures us that God works in our darkness demonstrating His love, bringing good, and promising never to forsake. *Lord Jesus, redeem all our fallenness by Your humility, compassion, forgiveness, and company. Amen.*

April 16 – Easter Sunday –The resurrected Jesus first appeared to a very sinful, formerly demon-possessed woman, Mary Magdalene. The hope of the resurrection is for those hopelessly lost in their sins. In one sense, we could say that this hope is *especially* for those hopelessly lost in their sins! Thanks be to God! *Heavenly Father, draw me into rejoicing in Jesus’ resurrection and the value it gives to all humankind. Amen.*

April 23 – Second Sunday of Easter – Our bodily life matters so much to God that He incarnated human flesh Himself. Even after accomplishing atonement by His body’s brokenness, He did not discard it but inhabits it by resurrection as His eternal instrument (John 20:27). When we are physically suffering sin’s consequences, our Savior’s words of forgiveness breathe healing (John 20:21-23), and His ways of faith bring peace into our very bodies. *Lord Jesus, let me take hold of You by faith until Your wounded and resurrected body redeems my own. Amen.*

April 30 – Third Sunday of Easter – The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11-16). Herein lies our assurance that our Shepherd does not abandon His sheep. He loves them too much. He paid too much for them to forsake them. We live our lives, not in the absence of suffering, but in the presence of the Good Shepherd. *Good Shepherd, thank You for laying down Your life for me. Amen.*

May 7 – Fourth Sunday of Easter – The joy that comes from the risen Christ cannot be taken away (John 16:22). This is not a feel-good happiness dependent upon circumstances. It is a fruit of Christ’s Spirit, the joy of our salvation in Christ that circumstances cannot change or diminish. Many of the life issues we deal with today are “joy robbers” and present opportunities to share the joy of the resurrection. *Gracious Savior, fill my words with the comfort and hope of resurrection to everlasting life with You. Amen.*

May 14 – Fifth Sunday of Easter (Mother’s Day) – Only the grace of God could supply as supreme a blessing as a mother’s company and comfort. In the same way (John 16:7b), the Holy Spirit gives life and saves life even and especially when sorrow fills the heart (John 16:6). Indeed, the Word of forgiveness, joy, and hope He implants redeems both hopeless situations and helpless souls for everlasting celebration (James 1:21). *Ever-present Redeemer, embrace us with Your Spirit until we trust Your truth, follow Your way, and enjoy Your life. Amen.*

May 21 – Sixth Sunday of Easter –Paul encourages Timothy, “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3). Sharing in the suffering of Christ sometimes comes when we share Christ and apply His Word of Life to spiritual issues that are also controversial. But faithfulness to the truth means to “endure everything for the sake of the elect” (2:10). *Faithful Lord, permit me to share You in the sufferings of my neighbors as You share in all my own. Amen.*

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May 28 – Seventh Sunday of Easter – The loving Creator’s presence and power surmount every impediment to life and sanctify all its impairments. He works new life in those as dead as stones (Ezekiel 36:26), abundant life among those as abandoned as exiles (36:24, 28), and everlasting life for those as bereft as beggars (36:29-30). Jesus stoops to bring these gifts into—and to bring them up out of—every kind of uncleanness (36:25). *Dear Father, invite and involve us in Your overcoming. Amen.*

June 4 – Pentecost Sunday – The tower of Babel used God-pleasing technology but not in a way that pleased God (Genesis 11:1-9). The technology to cure disease and to enhance and prolong life is a gift from God. The misuse of this technology, therefore, is an affront to God. The Spirit of Christ enables the believer to discern between what one is able to do and what one ought to do based upon the Word of God. *Almighty God, let Your Spirit fill me through Your Word and Sacraments so that all I say and do may bring Your glory to my neighbors in need. Amen.*

June 11 – Trinity Sunday – God the Father sent His Son because He loves life. God the Son paid the price necessary to redeem life. God the Holy Spirit calls people to faith, and gives them new life now and eternally (John 3:1-17). The Holy Trinity is For Life! *Holy Father, Son, and Spirit, make my life reflect Your own and extend it especially to those in the shadow of death. Amen.*

June 18 – First Sunday after Trinity (Father’s Day) – So much does our Father love us that He sends us angels to assist us in our lowest moments (Luke 16:22). Identify those He has surrounded you with and thank them! Then look for the closest Lazarus God has laid at your gate. Brush off the crumbs, shoo away the dogs (16:21), and set him or her a brother’s place (16:27-28) at heaven’s feast (16:19). *Dear Lord God, make me to find my luxuries in sharing life with Your children. Amen.*

June 25 – Second Sunday after Trinity – Our Savior and our Scriptures do not recognize a functional distinction between physical deficiency and spiritual deficiency. All human beings suffer from a fallen sinfulness that makes us decisively compromised (Luke 14:21-23). And Christ’s sacrifice, victory, and companionship calls and escorts every such one into His heavenly household! *God of compassion and mercy, gather together Your precious ones so that we embrace both You and each other. Amen.*