

Life Thoughts Fall (Oct-Dec) 2017, One-Year Lectionary

October 1 – Trinity XVI – In both the Old Testament and Gospel readings we see the ultimate miracle, sons raised from the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24, Luke 7:11-17). Yet they present but a tiny picture of what will happen because God raised His Son from the dead! All the dead in Christ will be raised to eternal life. Death is a defeated enemy! *Prayer: Lord, may Your defeat of death give us courage as we confront a culture of death. Amen.*

October 8 – Trinity XVII – In Christ God embraced and befriended hearts and bodies ruined by sin. He allowed neither disabilities nor disobedience to separate anyone from His love (Luke 14:1-4). This forgiveness heals us to share the same gracious kingdom with the ones right in front of us who struggle with impairment and iniquity (Luke 14:12-14). *Prayer: Extend Your kingdom, Lord Jesus, through me to those who are broken like I am. Amen.*

October 15 – Trinity XVIII – Those who see abortion as just “another issue” and would support or encourage a woman to make such a choice fail to understand the scriptural concept of “neighbor” and have a false sense of what it means to love. Those who see both mother and unborn child as “neighbor” and take action to bring help and hope fulfill the second greatest commandment in the Law and reflect the love of Christ (Matthew 22:34-40).

October 22 – Trinity XIX – The horror of abortion happening over 3,000 times each day in the U.S. should make Christians angry. The silence of the Church and the indifference of fellow congregational members should make Christians angry. But anger must not lead us to sin (Ephesians 4:26). Screaming and yelling and returning evil for evil is not the way of the body of Christ. The truth needs to be proclaimed but without “bitterness and wrath” (4:31).

October 29 – Reformation Sunday – The Reformation truths Lutherans have celebrated for 500 years apply beautifully and powerfully to life issues. A human being’s identity and sanctity come from God’s grace in creating, redeeming, and calling each one. Abilities or accomplishments, efforts or emotions cannot establish anyone’s value or invalidate anyone’s worth. *Prayer: Gracious Savior, let us honor with You the preciousness of every human person because of Your grace, forgiveness, and free salvation. Amen.*

November 5 – Trinity XXI – The picture of the armor-clad Christian in Ephesians 6:10-20 is one of defense not offense. We are not fighting to obtain truth. We have the truth. We fight to defend the truth upon which we stand. Be encouraged in this spiritual battle that can seem so frustrating at times. “[B]e strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (6:10). *Prayer: Thank You for Your truth, Lord, and Your armor. Help us stand firm. Amen.*

November 12 – Trinity XXII – God would have us forgive each other “from your heart” (Matthew 18:35). When terrible sins are involved, such as abuse or incest, it is no easy matter to forgive; maybe it even seems impossible. The same is true when trying to forgive ourselves when we have committed some horrible sin, like abortion, for example. The starting point for forgiveness in all situations is not what we should do but what God in Christ has done for us. Only His complete forgiveness can give us peace as we strive to forgive others and ourselves. *Prayer: Father, forgive our many sins for Jesus’ sake and give us opportunity to share this forgiveness freely with others. Amen.*

November 19 – Trinity XXIII – Since God created humankind in His image, their fate belongs in His hands above Caesar’s (Matthew 22:21). Life issues are more than just private or political—they

are matters of the heart, to which the Gospel of Jesus Christ speaks most directly and effectively. They must remain part of the Church's conversation for the sake of persons struggling with them.

Prayer: Almighty God, impart unto us ears that rejoice to hear Your whole counsel and tongues that proclaim it with courage and compassion. Amen.

November 26 – Last Sunday of the Church Year – Our Savior considers human bodies so precious that He has already begun making a new earth for them to enjoy eternally (Isaiah 65:17-25). He has not designed humankind's bodily existence as disposable but as indispensable to our identity and abundant life. How shall this affect our approach to illness, disability, conception, and age?

Prayer: King of creation, increase our respect and protection for the bodies of others with the esteem You bestow upon our own. Amen.

December 3 – Advent I – “The Lord is our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6b). What comforting truth for hearts troubled with sin's guilt that keeps resurfacing. Sometimes a past sin can be so haunting that we do not always feel forgiven, or we cannot forgive ourselves. The sin of abortion is a prime example. But our righteousness does not depend upon us or our feelings. Our righteousness is Christ! *Prayer: O Lord our Righteousness, may my comfort and hope be anchored in You and not my feelings. Amen.*

December 10 – Advent II – No matter what sufferings we carry or how weary we become, Jesus provides hope-filled news about His second coming. Christ has won the victory, and when He returns death and evil will be vanquished. We will be “leaping like calves from the stall” (Malachi 4:1-3). “[S]traighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28). Some things are worth waiting for—even amid suffering!

December 17 – Advent III – “Speak tenderly” in Isaiah 40:1-2 is literally “speak to the heart.” More than nice-sounding words, all of the Good News encapsulated in the first and second coming of Jesus speaks powerfully to those with struggling and burdened hearts. The life issues give us opportunity to speak this Good News to matters of the heart, especially those considered “controversial” and “divisive.” *Prayer: Thank You for touching our heart with the Good News! Help us share it with all who deal with matters of the heart. Amen.*

December 24 – Advent IV/Christmas Eve – Jesus brought God delicately amidst sinners, as humble in crucifixion as He was helpless in conception. Yet this estate did not hinder but, in fact, heralded the full realm and reign of God for us. And thereby He reaffirmed the worth of even the feeblest human beings. God's gift of life arrives all the better for the plain packaging He habitually hides it behind. *Prayer: Lamb of God, make it so that our taking hold of You leads us to cradle Your little ones as well. Amen.*

December 31 – Christmas I/New Year's Eve – A peaceful departure (Luke 2:29) may not always mean the absence of pain and suffering. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, it is seeing the presence of our Savior accomplishing His will according to His timetable. *Prayer: In our last hour, dear Savior, help us see You and be at peace. Amen.*