



**REAL.
PRESENT.
GOD. | PSALM 46**

2018–2019 Chapel Talks for Lutheran Schools

By Rev. Bob Riggert

REAL. PRESENT. GOD. | PSALM 46

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: The Rev. Bob Riggert was welcomed into God's family
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Riggert prays that his wife, four children and 13 grandchildren will continue to grow
and rejoice in Jesus' name.

 THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod
School Ministry

INTRODUCING

Real. Present. God. Chapel Talks



ABOUT THE THEME

Three powerful words will unite tens of thousands of youth of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as they gather in Minneapolis in July 2019. “Real. Present. God.” is the theme of our church’s National Youth Gathering. The three simple words will also be the focus of hundreds of thousands of preschool, elementary, junior high and high school students as they gather for weekly worship in Lutheran schools.

“Real. Present. God.” summarizes the Psalm of the Reformation, Psalm 46. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). The only real God, the Triune God, is truly present in the person of Jesus. The only real God, the Triune God, entered the real world to save us from sin. The only real God, the Triune God, is present and powerful in the troubles of life.

“Real. Present. God.” takes us to the whole of The Book of Psalms. “The Psalter ought to be a precious and beloved book, if for no other reason than this: It promises Christ’s death and resurrection so clearly—and pictures his kingdom and the condition and nature of all Christendom—that it might be called a little Bible. In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the

entire Bible.” (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, CPH, p. 839; quote from Luther’s Works)

“Real. Present. God.” invites the children of the church to be part of an adventure through this treasure of Scripture and to join the people of the Old Testament in the worship of the Triune God. The Book of Psalms was the prayer book and hymnbook of prophets, kings, Jesus and saints throughout the ages. How fitting that our children join them.

“Real. Present. God.” is not only historic, it is also contemporary. In real life — broken, messy, sinful — a real God is still present in Word and Sacrament. Our God is not only present, but He is personal and powerful.

“Real. Present. God.” invites the children of the church to experience the poetic pictures of the Psalms through illustrations and applications appropriate to their age level and to their life situations.

It is another year of worship in Lutheran schools. Let’s make it the “Year of Psalms” as we listen to God’s Word, memorize passages from the Psalms, sing His praises and pray for His blessing.

USING “CHAPEL TALKS”

The weekly chapel worship in Lutheran schools is an extension of the Sunday worship of the Christian congregation. Many congregations organize the weekly worship around the Propers and Lessons of the Day. Previous editions of “Chapel Talks” have directed the children to the weekly Old Testament, Epistle or Gospel readings. This series takes children and their fellow worshippers into the Psalm of the Day. Perhaps this is a new worship adventure for many.

The “REAL to God’s Children” section of the worship outline provides an object lesson and introduction to the psalm and theme of the day. The “PRESENT in the Word” section provides a study of the Psalm verse and applications of the verse. Pastors and chapel leaders are encouraged to do their own additional exegesis of the psalm with additional instruction. The “GOD Hears our Prayers” section closes the service with a prayer based on the psalm and theme of the day. The “Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week” section introduces activities that take the theme beyond the worship time and into the classroom and other settings.

Worship is blessed by liturgical structure. Children welcome worship routine. The extent of that structure may be determined by local custom and preference of the school and congregation. Some settings may include the lesson as part of a Divine Service. Other settings may be more informal. Hymn selections from both *Lutheran Service Book* and *All God’s People Sing* are included.

Worship extends beyond the sanctuary or other worship settings. Lutheran schools may want to emphasize the “Psalm of the Week” in daily staff and student devotions. Children and staff may be encouraged to memorize the “Verse of the Week.” Families and other friends may be invited to worship with the children in the chapel service.

God is REAL; God is PRESENT; God is GOD through His Word in The Book of Psalms. God is REAL; God is PRESENT; God is GOD in His church and in His schools.



“Our God Is Real and Present Here”

A hymn written for the 2019 National Lutheran Schools Week and based on Psalm 46 and the NLSW theme: “Real. Present. God.”

By Dr. Jeffrey E. Burkart

In praise of the real, present God, the Father

Our God is real and present here. When troubles come we need not fear.
Though mountains tremble, waters foam, Our God will not leave us alone.
The LORD of Hosts with us always; the God of Jacob is our stay.
Our God is real and still remains; the great I AM forever reigns!

Ps. 46:1-3

In praise of the real, present God, the Son

Our God is present, and when fear or trouble comes be of good cheer;
For God’s own Son has washed away the sins that on our hearts now weigh.
LORD Jesus Christ with us today; He is the Truth, the Life, the Way.
He came to us, His life to give, that we might in His presence live.

John 1:7
John 14:6
Ps. 46:1-3

In praise of the real, present God, the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has been sent, to bring us into covenant
With God the Father and the Son, and Comforter, to help us run
The race of faithfulness to God upon this earth where Jesus trod,
So that in faith we shall remain in Him who for the world was slain.

John 14:26
Heb. 12:1-2

In praise of the real, present promises of God

The LORD is God and says, “Be still! I am your fortress, and I will
Be lauded and exalted now! My Word is true and this I vow:
I AM your God and I will make all wars to cease, all bows to break;
The nations of the world I claim and all the earth will praise My name!”

Ps. 46:7-11

In praise of the real, present Holy Trinity

Δ To God the Father we now raise our songs of thanks and endless praise;
To God the Son, our risen Lord, all honor, glory, we accord;
To God the Spirit we bring laud, who brought us to our faith in God;
So let us all, with hearts aflame, the real and present God proclaim!

Deut. 32:3

“Our God Is Real and Present Here”
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Meter: 88 88 88 88 (L M D)
“REAL. PRESENT. GOD.”

The hymn can also be sung to the tune of O GROSSER GOTT (“Praise Be to Christ” [LSB 538] or “O God of God, O Light of Light” [LSB 810]) or another appropriate L M D metered hymn.
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Very Present

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Display or list real objects: textbooks, athletic equipment, a student, etc.

Show pictures of or list imaginary characters or situations: cartoon character, fictional hero, etc.

Introduction

What’s the difference between the two groups that I am showing you? (Some are real and some are not.) We call things that are not real “imaginary.” Much of our school year together will focus on the real: real teachers, real classmates, real books, real school lunches, etc. However, we will also use our imagination this school year. We will read books of fiction where the characters are imagined. We will use our imagination to create things of beauty that look very different from the real things we see and use every day.

PRESENT in the Word

The Bible is God’s real Word to us. Every book of the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit so that we might learn about the God who sent Jesus to be our Savior. This school year we are going to use a book of the Bible for our weekly worship time that Jesus and the people of His time also used. The Book of Psalms is an Old Testament book. It was written before Jesus came to earth. We are going to learn many things about The Book of Psalms this year: whom the Spirit inspired to write the Psalms; how the Psalms were used as a songbook; what Hebrew poetry looks like and sounds like. By the time our school year concludes, we will have explored about 50 different psalms, and you will learn about 50 different Psalm verses. I’m excited!

Psalm 46 was a favorite psalm of Martin Luther. The Psalm begins, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” God IS. God IS real. God IS the only God. God IS everywhere. God IS always present.

When God asked Moses (Exodus, chapter 3) to lead His people out of Egypt, Moses asked who the God was that was speaking to him out of a burning bush. God gave His name as “Yahweh,” meaning, “I Am.” Jesus came and told His followers (and us) “I Am” the Good Shepherd, Way, Truth, Life, Light of the World. The real God sent His Son into the world to really be our Savior.

Jesus, who rose from the dead, is our refuge from sin. Jesus is our strength in times of trouble.

Because we have a real God who is present in His Word, present in our Baptism, and present in us and with us, we will have a really great year in His name.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, we thank You for sharing Your presence with us through Your Word in The Book of Psalms. We ask You to be present in our worship services this year and in every classroom and every activity in our Lutheran school. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

Students will be introduced to a Psalm verse of the week. The display of the verse (bulletin board, etc.) and sharing and memorization of the verse in the school and classroom can be introduced. The Psalm verse may be sent home for family devotions.

“Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”

LSB 866 “Lord Jesus Christ, the Children’s Friend”

AGPS 75 “Blest the Children of Our God”

Really Listen

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: “Listen” signals or signs that may be used in classrooms or are universal to the school: flicking the light on/off; raising a finger; counting down 3–2–1; etc.

Introduction

Many of you recognize the signal or command to be quiet and listen. What are some of the times when we see or hear the “listen” signal in our school? (Before we pray, when the teacher is trying to get us to listen, in the lunchroom, etc.) Why is it important to listen in the classroom or in church or other school settings? (Important announcements, respect for others, etc.) It’s important to be good listeners this school year in the classroom and other places where we learn, play and worship together.

PRESENT in the Word

Our psalm this week is Psalm 34. This psalm was written by King David. (King David wrote half of the 150 psalms.) Like us, King David didn’t always listen very well to God. When David saw the beautiful woman Bathsheba, he listened to his lust rather than to God’s will for him. David listened to his desires rather than trusting in God.

Today’s Psalm verse invites God’s children to listen to Him and to learn to fear the Lord.

Teaching the “fear of the Lord” was certainly to have a fear of God’s judgment. Each day we don’t listen to the Fourth Commandment as we don’t listen to and respect our parents, teachers, etc. Each day we don’t listen to God’s command that we worship and obey Him only. Each day we listen to the devil’s temptations. Our minds may wander during worship times, and we aren’t listening to His Word.

God in Christ calls us His “children.” We are God’s children in our Baptism. In our Baptism, our Heavenly Father speaks, “Listen to me, my children.”

To fear the Lord is to trust in the God of our salvation. We can be confident that because we are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection, our sins are forgiven. The psalm shares God’s promise, “The Lord redeems the life of his servants.” The Savior promised to David has redeemed us. King David also shared God’s promise, “When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears.” God listens to us because we are righteous in the blood of Jesus.

Are we good listeners? God is! Because He has listened to us, we listen to His Word.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Thank You Jesus for always listening to me. Help me to more faithfully listen to Your Word. May the words I hear help me to listen to my teachers, parents, pastors and others whom You’ve given to direct and protect me. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Review good rules for listening in the worship and chapel services.
- Review the Third Commandment.

Really Observant

REAL to God's Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Make some adjustments to the worship setting: move a banner; move furniture in the sanctuary; remove paraments; etc.

Introduction

Do any of you notice any changes in our worship setting today? (Have children respond by noting the adjustments you have made.) I made some of those changes you noted to see how observant you are.

PRESENT in the Word

Our Psalm verse today reminds us that our God is perfectly observant, “The Lord looks down from heaven.”

Does God have eyes? The Bible tells us that God is a Spirit (John 4:24). God fills everything and is not confined by a human body. God does not have hands, eyes, ears, etc. as we have. However, many times the Bible (especially in the poetry of the Psalms) gives God some of the characteristics and features that we have. (The fancy literary word is “personification.”)

When God looked at His creation, He saw the perfection of the Garden of Eden and the perfection of Adam and Eve. The disobedience of the first family changed everything. Suddenly everything was out of place. God's glance at His fallen creation is summarized in Psalm 14, “They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one” (v. 3).

God did not ignore the corruption of His creation. He provided the solution of a Savior. King David, the Psalm writer, prays, “Oh, that salvation for Israel would come

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 14

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK: Psalm 14:2

“The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.”

SONG:

LSB 940 “Holy God, We Praise Thy Name”

AGPS 207 “Seek Ye First”

out of Zion!” (v. 7). God responded to King David's prayer by sending a Promised One from the family of David. Jesus came to be the Savior of the world. He came to restore our eternal fortunes.

God is all-seeing and all-knowing. What does He see? He sees that we don't understand His ways. On our own we do not understand His salvation. When we don't seek after God, He seeks after us. He places faith in our hearts.

The response: “Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad” (v. 7). Our response, “Let every student and every adult at _____ Lutheran Church and School rejoice and be glad!”

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, I am so thankful that as You look at us through Your cross, You do not see my sins. You see me as Your forgiven and precious child. Help me to see Your ways. In Your holy name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- I'm glad that God doesn't see ...
- Help us to see things that we might do for others in Jesus' name.

“The unfolding of your words gives light.”

SONG:

LSB 579 and AGPS 230 “The Law of God Is Good and Wise”

Really EnLIGHTening

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Display various sources of light: candle, flashlight, light bulbs, etc. Also display a Bible.

Introduction

What do all of these objects have in common? (They are sources of light.) Some of these items are common and familiar sources of light. We light a candle and it gives off light. We turn on the switch and the light comes on. We push the button on the flashlight and a beam of light comes out. Our Psalm verse for today says: “The unfolding of your words gives light.” Let’s discover today how the Bible is a source of Light.

PRESENT in the Word

Several times this year we will be hearing God’s Word from Psalm 119. This psalm is the longest chapter in the Bible (176 verses). (With older children, the explanation might include the organization of the psalm — a segment of verses for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet.) The Bible doesn’t tell us who God’s inspired writer of the psalm is. We know the Spirit worked to share the truth of God’s Word.

One of the pictures of Psalm 119 is that of God’s Word as a light. In the beginning God said, “Let there be light.” The light of the sun, moon and stars shone on the world. The Garden of Eden not only had the light of God’s creation, it also had the light of God’s presence.

Adam and Eve’s world became dark when they disobeyed God. The darkness of sin hid the glory of God. Our sinful world is a place of darkness. Darkness describes our sinful thoughts and desires. The apostle Paul (Eph. 5:8) describes us and our world, “For at one

time you were darkness.” Because we are a church and school of sinners, our school, classrooms and playgrounds can be places of darkness.

The Psalm verse states, “The unfolding of your words gives light.” Obviously, the Bible is not an electronic book that switches on a light switch. The Light comes through the message of the Bible. The Light comes in Jesus. Jesus is the Light of the World. The Word tells us about Jesus, who gives Light to His children.

When a child is baptized, one of the customs is to give a candle to the child and family. The candle reminds everyone that the Light of Jesus has come to this child in Baptism. The Light of Jesus has come to us in our Baptism. The Light of Jesus comes to us as we hear and learn God’s Word.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, You are the Light of the World. Thank You for bringing Your Light to us through Baptism. Thank You for the Light of Your Word. Help us to shine as Your lights in our school, family and every place we go. In Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Set up a display of light sources with the message, “Jesus is our Light!”
- Sing “This Little Gospel Light of Mine.”

Really Free

REAL to God's Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Pictures of prisons, prison cells, etc.

Introduction

What do you think it would be like to be in a prison cell? (If the pastor/chapel leader has ever made a prison visit, he might share that setting and experience.)

PRESENT in the Word

Praise God that we are free. Today's Psalm 146 is among a group of psalms that close The Book of Psalms. Sometimes Psalms 146 through 150 are called the Hallelujah or "Praise the Lord" Psalms. (Students may want to count how many "praise the Lord" responses are in these psalms.)

The psalm states that "The Lord sets the prisoners free." God isn't walking around to prisons with a key to let criminals free. The psalmist is writing about those who are prisoners in sin. That's us and everyone else. Those whom God has created to be free to explore His creation and express their praise are suddenly locked up by the devil, our sinful desires and the temptations of the world. The chains of sin keep us from serving God and loving others.

One of the promises about the Messiah was that He would come to set God's people free. The prophet Isaiah joins the psalm writer in sharing God's promise. The Savior would come "to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness" (Is. 42:7).

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 146

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:

Psalm 146:7b–8

"The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous."

SONG:

LSB 398 "Hail to the Lord's Anointed"

AGPS 117 "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"

Jesus comes to set free those imprisoned by sin. The Gospel of John tells us, "The truth will set you free" (John 8:32). The truth of Jesus' death and resurrection sets us free from our sins. We will be freed from the grave on the Last Day.

We are blessed to live in a country that gives us freedom to worship, freedom to vote, freedom to go to school and many other blessings.

The greatest freedom of all is the freedom from sin and the freedom to be God's child. We are free to praise Him.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, we are so thankful that we are free from sin because You have died for our sins. Thank You for the freedom to worship You every day in our Lutheran schools. Help others to hear about the freedom that You have for them. In Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Find out about prison ministry in your community. How is the Good News of Jesus shared with those who are in prison cells?
- Find out about those who may be imprisoned for their faith in non-Christian countries.

Real Rescue

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 116:1–9

TEXT/PSALM VERSE OF THE WEEK: Psalm 116:1

“I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.”

SONG:

LSB 852 “O God of Mercy, God of Might”

AGPS 182 “O God of Mercy, God of Light”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Signs or vocal calls: “Help!”
“Save me!”

Introduction

In what kinds of situations would these statements be made? (Share scenarios or get scenarios from students.) Someone may be drowning and call for help. Someone may be threatened by another and call for assistance.

PRESENT in the Word

The Bible shares many cries for help. In the Old Testament, God’s people were in slavery for 400 years and they cried for help. The people of Israel faced many enemies and cried for help. The psalm celebrates God’s promise that in Jesus He would hear their cry for mercy. The psalm writer knew that God’s promise was sure, and so he gives thanks for God’s response to his cry.

The Book of Psalms includes many calls for mercy. Have you ever felt scared or been hurt and you went running to your mother or another safe, loving person? “Mercy” pictures a frightened child being held tightly and lovingly by a mother. Our Psalm verse states, “He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.”

How wonderful it is that God knows our voice and our every need. In Jesus’ earthly ministry, people with leprosy and other diseases came to Jesus crying “Mercy!” Jesus heard their cry, welcomed them and healed them. By His death on the cross Jesus has heard and answered every cry for mercy. His arms are stretched out from the cross to hold each of us.

We come running to Jesus with our sins and Jesus hears us and forgives us. Our call for God’s help is shared in our worship as we say and sing, “Lord have mercy upon us.” What we pray for, God has already answered.

We may hear “mercy” cries in our school as someone is sick or sad at the death of a loved one. We may hear “mercy” cries at home when a family member is sick or our family is having problems. When we hear those cries, we can celebrate with the psalm writer, “He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.”

GOD Hears Our Prayers

“Lord, have mercy!” Thank You for hearing our cries from Your cross. Thank You for taking us in Your arms and holding us. Lord help us to be Your voice and arms of mercy to others. In Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

Find out about the “Mercy” ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Really Generous

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 54

TEXT/PSALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:

Psalm 54:6

“With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good.”

SONG:

LSB 851 and AGPS 169 “Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Chapel offering envelope, offering plates, stuffed lambs, birds, etc., as reminders of Old Testament offerings.

Introduction

Does anyone know what these objects are? Why do we take an offering at our chapel services and Sunday morning service?

It’s important to remember that our offering times in chapel and worship are not just a “break” in the service or a routine thing. Our worship with our offerings is an important response to God’s grace to us.

PRESENT in the Word

Offerings in the Old Testament were part of the required response from God’s people. In the Old Testament there were many acts and ceremonies that God required to keep His people focused and faithful to Him. (*The Lutheran Study Bible* diagrams and explains the offerings of the Israelites on page 171.) There were offerings for the forgiveness of sins, offerings of thanksgiving for a harvest, etc. The lambs and other objects that we have here remind us of some of the offerings of God’s people in the Old Testament.

We remember that when Joseph and Mary took the baby Jesus to the temple, they brought an offering with them. No matter who made the offering or how generous the offering, the offerings of God’s people could not earn the forgiveness of their sins. The offerings of the Old Testament people were to remind them that God made the most important offering of all.

John the Baptist (John 1:29) introduced Jesus as “the Lamb of God.” Jesus came as the perfect offering for sin. Instead of many lambs being offered many times for the sins of the people, Jesus is offered once for all the sins of the world.

We don’t give offerings to pay for our sins. We give offerings of thanksgiving for the forgiveness and everything else that Jesus gives us. We give our offerings so that our church can share the Good News of Jesus in our school, community and around the world. We give joyfully and generously in thanksgiving to Jesus.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, we give thanks to You for offering Your life for us. Bless us as we thankfully and generously share our offerings so that others might also hear about Your offering. In your holy name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Explain the missions and ministries for which the chapel offerings are designated.
- Explore the sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament.
- Have the pastor, church treasurer or business manager explain to the children (or a class) the congregation/school budget.
- Discuss what “offerings” we can bring other than our money. (For example, time and talents.)

Presenting Praises

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 104:27–35

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:

Psalm 104:33

“I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.”

SONG:

LSB 795 “Voices Raised to You We Offer”

AGPS 189 “Oh, Sing to the Lord”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: *Lutheran Service Book, All God’s People Sing, other chapel and worship song books.*

Introduction

Show songbooks. Why are these books important to us? We love to sing at our Lutheran school. We sing in classrooms. We sing for concerts. While we sing on many different occasions at school, we especially like to sing during our times of worship. Our Psalm verse today summarizes our response to God, “I will sing to the Lord as long as I live.”

PRESENT in the Word

The Book of Psalms was the hymnbook of the Old Testament. Many of the Psalms were meant to be sung. They were sung on the way to the temple to worship. They were sung in the temple. They were sung by families as they worshipped in their homes. The people of Israel sang.

Psalm 104 describes God’s people singing in praise of His creation. The psalm describes the things God made, “He set the earth on its foundations” (v. 5). The psalm praises God for the way He continues to preserve His creation, “You make springs gush forth in the valleys” (v. 10); “You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate” (v. 14).

As we look at God’s creation today, what things do we see that cause us to sing with thanksgiving? (Explore suggestions from students.)

Sometimes as we look at God’s creation and our care of it, we are saddened by the pollution, erosion and other factors that detract from its beauty. The fall into sin has left an imperfect world.

The good news is that God continues to work a new creation in us and through us. God has made us new in the waters of Baptism. God has forgiven our forgetfulness and our neglect of His creation. God continues to bless us as caretakers of His creation. We sing now rejoicing in all that God has created and recreates. We look forward to His new creation on the Last Day. While we wait for Jesus’ return, we sing our praise to Him.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Thank You Jesus for songs of praise and our voices to sing. We sing of the wonders of Your creation. We sing most boldly and thankfully for saving us. Unite our voices to sing together now in our church and school and forever before Your throne in heaven. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Have the pastor, organist or music ministry leader explain how hymns/songs are chosen for the worship services.
- Care for God’s creation by hosting a school (or classroom) cleanup day (or period) in the school/church yard or community.

“May you see your children’s children! Peace be upon Israel!”

SONG:

LSB 867 “Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds”

AGPS 78 “Brothers and Sisters”

Really Present

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Grandparents of a school student or picture of child with grandparents.

Introduction

Today we have _____ (name of student) grandparents with us. (Or, I have a picture of _____ and his/her grandparents.) Many of you may be blessed with grandparents. What are some of the things you enjoy doing with grandparents?

PRESENT in the Word

Our Psalm verse for today celebrates grandparents, “May you see your children’s children.” You are your parents’ child. Your grandparents are the parents of your parents. We call one family following another “generations.” One of God’s special blessings is the blessing of family. The psalmist prays that one generation will see another.

In Genesis chapters 1 and 2 we read how God made Adam and Eve a family. We also know that God’s family disobeyed Him and immediately there were disagreements and divisions. We even read how Cain killed his brother Abel. Obviously, families are not perfect. None of us has a perfect family.

God chose to share a promise with His family. The Bible is a family story of God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah and the promise shared through their family. God kept that promise and sent Jesus through this chosen family. God raised the promised Savior, His Son, in the family of Joseph and Mary.

Besides putting us in earthly families, God puts us in the family of the church. In our Baptism we are welcomed into God’s family. In God’s family we have the forgiveness of sins and life forever in the family of God.

Families are God’s means of not only sharing many earthly blessings and times together, but families are also God’s means of sharing in the blessings of the family of God. It’s a special blessing to have parents and grandparents who believe in Jesus with us.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Thank You Jesus for families. Thank You for parents and grandparents. Thank You for sharing the Good News of our salvation with one generation and passing this Good News along to the next. Help us to keep the faith our parents and grandparents shared with us. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Collect family photos.
- Invite students (with the assistance of parents and grandparents) to design a family tree.
- Have a special event for grandparents.
- Review the Fourth Commandment.

Really Wise

REAL to God's Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Counting devices/games (from preschool or kindergarten classrooms) — blocks, large numbers, etc.

Introduction

Do you remember learning to count? Perhaps your parents showed you how to hold up your fingers for your first or second birthday. Perhaps you counted the number of vegetables on your plate. It was exciting to learn to count.

PRESENT in the Word

God's counter in Psalm 90 is Moses. Moses had to learn how to count patiently. Moses spent 40 years growing and learning in Egypt. Moses spent 40 years in the desert waiting for God's message. Moses spent another 40 years leading the children of Israel out of Egypt on the way to the Promised Land. Moses could count to 120!

Moses remembered the days and times of God's judgment. For 400 years the children of Israel counted day after day of slavery. Could they count on God to hear them and deliver them?

Some things are fun to count: number of days of school, money in our savings account, number of days until a special activity. Some things are harder to count. Some people count the number of cancer treatments they have left. Some people count how many days of food they have left.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 90:12–17

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:

Psalm 90:12

“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”

SONG:

LSB 903 “This Is the Day the Lord Has Made”

AGPS 241 “This Is the Day”

Imagine if God counted our sins. Imagine if God counted all the sins in the world. Because Jesus has paid for all our sins, God no longer counts our sins. They are all forgiven.

Now we are free to count our blessings. We can count each day as a blessing from God. We can enjoy the math classes where we learn about counting and multiplying and many other uses of the numbers that God gives us.

Following Moses' words, we “number our days” not just with numbers on a calendar but number of sins that are forgiven, gifts that God gives us and many other blessings.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, teach us. Teach us Your Word and Your forgiveness for us. Teach us our school subjects that give us wisdom. Teach us to number the blessings of every day You give us. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Have students develop a timeline of their “days” — the events of their life.
- Visit elderly church members and discuss important “times” in their lives.
- Develop a timeline of the church and school history.

“I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.”

SONG:

LSB 589 “Speak, O Lord, Your
Servant Listens”

AGPS 123 “How Precious Is the
Book Divine”

Really Remembering

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Sign with the words: “I forgot.”

Introduction

When have you said the words, “I forgot?” Perhaps your parents asked you to do a chore at home and you replied, “I forgot.” Your teacher asks for the homework assignment and you responded, “I forgot.” Your coach asked you to bring your uniform to practice or the game and you replied, “I forgot.”

PRESENT in the Word

In today’s psalm, the psalm writer makes the promise that he will not forget God’s Word. Once again our psalm of the week is from Psalm 119. Does anybody remember anything special about this psalm? (Review length, format, theme, etc., of psalm.)

We forget lots of things. (Ask students for examples of their forgetting.) More important than forgetting our chores, assignments, etc. is forgetting God’s Word. We forget God’s Word when we don’t worship, when we don’t do our homework in religion class, when we don’t learn our memory verses. Sometimes our forgetting God’s Word is due to our laziness. Sometimes the devil seems to block our brain or block our hearts to forget God’s love.

Even though we forget God’s Word, He does not forget us. God never forgot that He had made a promise to send the Savior. Jesus didn’t forget to come to earth. Jesus didn’t forget to follow every detail of salvation all the way to the

cross. Jesus didn’t forget to come out of the grave alive again. Every detail of God’s plan of salvation is important to remember.

God helps us remember His Word. He sends His Spirit to help us listen and learn. He gives us minds to remember. He gives us parents, teachers and pastors who help us remember the important words. Our Psalm verse says, “I will not forget your word.” Those words are God’s promise to us. When we need the comfort of His Word, He will help us remember. When we need His Word to drive away the devil, He will help us remember. When we are frightened and we need God’s presence, He will help us remember. We may forget, but God never does!

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, thank You for never forgetting. Thank You for not forgetting to save me. Bless our remembering of Your Word especially in times of trial and trouble. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Look for aids to help the remembering of the Word: a small cross in the pocket, a Bible passage on the desk at school or refrigerator at home, an app on the phone.
- Put a favorite Bible passage on a card and remember (memorize) it.

Really Confident

REAL to God's Children

Object Lesson/Visual: "No Fear" logo.

Introduction

Have you ever seen this message? There are products (clothing, etc.) made with this message. Does seeing this sign or wearing clothing with this logo take away our fears? Just the words "No Fear" do not take away fears. Just the words have no power. God's all-powerful Word does take away fear.

PRESENT in the Word

We all have fears. What are some of yours? (Get responses from children.) Some of us may be afraid of the dark, snakes, being lost and many other things and places.

Martin Luther lived in a time of fear. There was the fear of punishment from officials of the government and church. Martin Luther lived in fear that his life could be taken. However, more oppressing than any earthly fears was Martin Luther's fear of the judgment of God. Martin knew he was a sinner. He had explored many avenues to get rid of his fears. Martin thought that his service to God as a priest in the church would take away his fears. Martin thought that punishing himself and denying himself earthly pleasures would take away fears.

God led Martin Luther to the truth of His Word. Martin could not do anything to make himself right with God and he could not make the payment for his own sins. Martin learned that Jesus had paid for all his

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 46

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK: Psalm 46:2

"Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea."

SONG:

LSB 656 and 657; AGPS 50 and 51
"A Mighty Fortress is Our God"

sins and for the sins of the whole world. Jesus' payment became Martin's payment by believing in God's love through Jesus.

There would continue to be many frightening times for Martin Luther during the Reformation. However, Martin could continue to share God's Word by translating the Bible from Latin to German. Martin could continue to preach the Good News of Jesus. Nothing could stop the Good News from spreading throughout Germany and the world.

God's Word, especially Psalm 46, gave Martin Luther the confidence to continue God's work without fear. The psalm speaks God's Word to us in our times of fear.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, You know all our fears. We are thankful that we don't have to fear being separated from You forever. In times of fear, help us to trust in You, the real, present God. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Review Reformation history: film, books, etc.
- Review the life of Martin Luther. What were his fears? Who was his confidence?

“For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.”

SONG:

LSB 677 “For All the Saints”

AGPS 61 “Alleluia! Sing to Jesus”

Really Humble

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Things people do for “pleasure” — camp, golf, hobbies, video games, books.

Introduction

What do you/your parents do for pleasure? Our pleasure activities include things we might like to do for fun or with friends and family. Some people like outdoor activities. Some people like games or books.

What do you think God does for pleasure? Our Psalm verse for today gives us an answer.

PRESENT in the Word

Since God is God — eternal, present everywhere, all-knowing, etc. God does not think or act like us. God does not seek pleasure in things but in His people.

God created the world and the people in it to have pleasure in Him and the things of His creation. Adam and Eve found pleasure in their interactions with God and each other. However, all that changed with the fall into sin. When Adam and Eve sought their own pleasure, they became separated from God and each other. Outside the Garden of Eden there was no pleasure in work or the world.

God did not abandon His desire for a relationship with His people. It was God’s pleasure to promise a Savior. God was pleased to bring Adam and Eve and all their ancestors into a relationship with Him. In order for God to be pleased with us again, Jesus did the unpleasant work of salvation. It was not a pleasure for Jesus to experience the harshness of life on earth. It was not a pleasure to be nailed to the cross. Jesus did everything the Father asked Him to do because “the Lord takes pleasure in his people.”

Because we live in a sinful world, there are many things that don’t bring us pleasure. We are saddened when loved ones die. There is little pleasure in diseases and disasters. However, God in Christ continues to take pleasure in us now and eternally.

The church celebrates that while we rejoice now in earthly pleasures, we will rejoice with Jesus eternally. With Jesus there are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 149 is a psalm of praise!

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, thank You for Your humble suffering and death. Thank You for those who humbly served in Your name throughout the history of the church. Help us to be of humble service in Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Explore the “saints” remembered during the church year. Who are they? Why are they remembered?
- Celebrate the “saints” of the church/school family who have the pleasure of being with Jesus forever.
- Remember our status as saints of God now through Baptism.

“The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless.”

LSB 844 and AGPS 168 “Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace”

Present for Everyone

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Child or adult stationed off to the side, isolated from the assembly.

Introduction

Did anybody notice that _____ was not sitting with us as we began our worship? He/she was off in a spot all alone. How do you think he/she is feeling? Have any of you been or felt alone?

Sometimes we are left out by our classmates, friends or even our family. It doesn’t feel good to be alone. Sometimes we don’t notice those who are isolated from us.

PRESENT in the Word

Our psalm of the week, Psalm 146, is again a psalm of praise. We praise the God who created and maintains all of creation. Our God is a big, all-powerful God. He is the God who “made heaven and earth” (v. 6). While God is the God of everything and everyone, He is also the God of the hurting, the lonely and the lost. “The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless.”

In Old Testament times it was easy to forget the widows and orphans. They didn’t have family members to take care of them or speak up for them. The psalm mentions “sojourners.” They were people who we might picture as homeless. The psalm writer emphasizes that God forgets no one.

The words of the psalm were fulfilled in Jesus. When Jesus was on earth, He went to tax collectors and sinners who were ignored and ridiculed by others. Jesus

went to fathers and mothers whose children had died. Jesus went to the lepers who no one else (not even their family) could touch or care for.

Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep. Jesus went to find and care for every lost sinner. In His love Jesus reaches out to everyone and brings them into His family. When we feel forgotten, lost or lonely we can remember that Jesus never leaves us. He is always with us.

We reach out to others in Jesus’ name. When there are classmates, children in the neighborhood who need Jesus’ care and love, we reach out to them in Jesus’ name.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, You don’t forget or ignore anyone. Thank You for bringing us into Your family and assuring us that we are always safe and cared for with You. Bless us as we see others who need Your love and our care. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- What agencies care for the isolated, homeless, etc., in community or beyond? Are there any ways that the school might support them with food, clothing, etc.?
- The school policies on bullying could be especially reviewed and emphasized this week.

Really Full

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 16

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK: Psalm 16:5

“The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.”

SONG:

LSB 723 and AGPS 231 “The Lord Is My Light”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: A favorite cup. The chapel leader may want to share his favorite coffee cup.

Introduction

Do you have a favorite cup? When you were a small child many of you may have had a favorite cup to hold your milk or juice. I know we have some pastors and teachers at our school who like to use the same cup for their coffee every day.

PRESENT in the Word

The people of the Old Testament also used cups to hold their beverages. Kings would have cups that were beautiful and precious. The Book of Psalms refers to cups more than a half dozen times. This week’s psalm states, “The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup.”

The illustration of the cup reminds us that our lives are often empty. We may try to fill our lives with a bunch of things or experiences. We think that the more we have, the more filled and happy our lives will be.

King David had many things. He had a mighty army. He ruled over many lands. He had many servants. None of those things gave him happiness. Psalm 16 is a psalm written by David. David knew that God had chosen his family to be the family of the Savior. When his life was empty, David had the assurance that God was going to send His Son. Through the Savior, David’s (and everyone’s) sins would be forgiven. God filled David’s cup with His grace.

Another psalm of David, Psalm 23, has the cup illustration. David wrote, “You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows” (v.5). David’s life overflowed with the blessings of salvation.

God has filled our life, our cup, with His salvation. In Baptism, He poured the water of His grace into our cup. We are filled with His blessings.

What would you like in your favorite cup (coffee, milk, fruit juice, soda)? Thank God for the many blessings that He pours into your life. Praise God that He has filled your cup with His salvation.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, You fill our cups with water, milk, juice and many liquids. You fill the “cup” of our lives with Your love until it overflows. Use us to pour Your love into the hearts of others. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Do a favorite cup display in the school or classroom.
- Whose “cup” can we fill? Give a cup of blessings to others (fill cups with socks, gloves, etc.).

Really Thankful

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 65

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:

Psalm 65:11

“You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.”

SONG:

LSB 893 and AGPS 215 “Sing to the Lord of Harvest”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: *Cornucopia (real or illustration).*

Introduction

Does anyone know what this item is called? (Cornucopia). The cornucopia is a Thanksgiving symbol. We see cornucopias in pictures and we may see them displayed in churches, stores and other places. Why is it an appropriate symbol?

PRESENT in the Word

The Psalms were written in a time when people lived among fields and farms. They were familiar with harvest times and settings. God’s author for Psalm 65, King David, owned many fields and often went to watch the harvest taken from the fields.

Psalm 65 is King David’s song of thanksgiving. Notes on Psalm 65 share that the psalm was written for the choirmaster. It was a song. God’s people sang, “You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; ... You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance” (v. 9, 11). King David praised God for filling his fields and life with many blessings.

It is a time of thanksgiving in our country. Sadly we sometimes forget that God has given us everything we have. We assume that our hard work or our skills have brought in the bounty. We cannot accomplish anything on our own. God is the giver of everything we have.

God has filled our cornucopias of school, home, church and community with many earthly blessings. Most importantly He has blessed us with the bounty of His

grace. When our lives were empty in sin, He filled us with His love and forgiveness. Into our empty hearts He poured the water of Baptism to help us grow in faith. King David celebrates God’s grace, “By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation” (v. 5). God fills us with good and grace.

King David offers a psalm of praise and thanksgiving for God’s goodness. As we see the cornucopias of blessings in our family, church, school, community and country, may we also give God thanks and praise. Like David, we celebrate our God as the Giver of all.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Thank You Lord for filling our cornucopias with many earthly blessings. We have many things to be thankful for. When our lives were empty, You filled them with the bounty of Your grace. Bless us to live thankfully every day. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Set up cornucopia displays around school or in classrooms.
- Fill a box with food, etc., to share with others.
- Review the thanksgiving blessings First Article and Fourth Petition.

“Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.”

SONG:

LSB 680 “Thine the Amen, Thine the Praise”

AGPS 218 “Soon and Very Soon”

Present Forever

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: *Items that expire or are worn or torn (canned goods, clothes, blankets).*

Introduction

What do these items have in common? They are all items that we use or enjoy. They are also items that will not last forever. Canned goods have an expiration date. These clothes may get passed on to someone else or they might be torn or worn.

As we look around, many things get used and worn out. You need to continue to fill your notebooks with paper. Even the computers get out of date or quit working.

PRESENT in the Word

Everything has an end date ... except God. Our Psalm verse for this week states, “You are from everlasting” (v. 2). The psalm ends with the words, “O Lord, forevermore” (v. 5). One of the attributes of God is that He is eternal. God has no beginning and no end.

This week is the last week of the church year. (Review the seasons of the church year.) Like a book or story, we come to “the end.” The last weeks of the church year remind us that the earth and all things will come to an end. Some things have obvious expiration dates. God’s Word says that even things we perceive to be permanent (rocks, etc.) also have a beginning and end time.

One of the results of God’s judgment against sin is God’s judgment of the world. When Jesus comes again, all earthly things that have all been affected by sin will come to an end. But God does not end, as He is everlasting.

The good news is that God has chosen us and saved us to be His. Even though our earthly bodies have an expiration time and we will all die, God will raise us up to be with Him. The Bible tells us that on the Last Day we will stand with Him (1 Thess. 4:13–18). One of the blessings of our Baptism is that we will receive the gift of everlasting life. Standing with Jesus on the Last Day with our new and perfect bodies, we will last forever with Him.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Lord Jesus, another church year has ended. We have been blessed to celebrate Your birth, life, death and resurrection. We have been blessed to hear Your word week after week and day after day. We celebrate that while our days and times end, You are everlasting and we look forward to everlasting life with You. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Have an end of the church year party!
- Display a season of the church year calendar. Have the pastor explain the significance of the seasons.
- What have been your favorite worship times this past year? What’s your favorite season of the church year?

Really Patient

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: *Countdown to Christmas calendar or Advent calendar.*

Introduction

How many days until Christmas? We have begun the countdown to Christmas. Some of you may have your calendars marked as to how many days until you open presents, family arrives and other blessings of the season. Some of you may have another countdown with an Advent calendar where every day a new picture or symbol takes you to Jesus’ birth at Bethlehem.

The countdown helps our waiting, but it’s still hard to wait.

PRESENT in the Word

We have started a new season in our church and school. (Review last week’s emphasis on the seasons of the church year.) It’s the Advent season. Advent means “coming.” We celebrate that Jesus came at Christmas and that He will come again on the Last Day. We also remember that God’s people in the Old Testament waited for Jesus’ coming.

God’s people waited as sinners. Advent is also a time of confession. The psalmist confesses “the sins of my youth” and “my transgressions” (v. 7). We also wait as sinners for Jesus’ coming. In our youth we often disobey God’s commands. We continue the disobedience beyond our youth through all our years.

God came to the sinners of the Old Testament with the promise of their Savior. God gave His promise to Adam and Eve, Abraham and their descendants after them. God often repeated His promise. They waited for God to keep His promise, and they waited and waited!

God’s people waited in faith. God’s promise was sure. They knew that their God was the only God of salvation. Sometimes it is hard for us to be patient in our waiting. Sometimes it was hard for the children of God to wait patiently, too.

We don’t have to wait for Jesus’ coming as our Savior. He came centuries ago and was born in Bethlehem. We will review the details of God’s coming in the weeks ahead and in our Christmas celebrations. Our salvation has come. We now wait for His second coming when we will be with Him forever.

We wait for Christmas Eve and Day. We don’t have to wait for God’s grace. It’s already been delivered through Jesus.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, we confess that sometimes it is hard to wait for some of the Christmas gifts and celebrations. We are thankful that we don’t have to wait for the Gift that is You. You have come and now we wait for You to come again on the Last Day. Bless our waiting in Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Share Advent calendars with the school children.
- Review the 2nd Petition of the Lord’s Prayer.

“Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.”

LSB 348 and AGPS 228 “The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns”

Really Awesome

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: *Awesome seasonal sights: Christmas displays, pictures of Christmas light displays, etc.*

Introduction

It’s an awesome season. We may drive through our community and see some awesome Christmas decoration displays. We may even have some awesome displays in our school or classrooms.

PRESENT in the Word

Psalm 66 directs worshippers to some of God’s awesome works. The psalmist invites, “Come and see what God has done.” The worshippers at the time the psalm was written especially remembered God’s awesome rescue of His people when He took them from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land.

While we look at awesome decorations and think of awesome celebrations, God’s story of salvation is really very plain. Bethlehem was just a small town. Mary was a common girl. Joseph was a carpenter. Jesus was born among the animals in a stable. It’s not a very awesome picture. There weren’t any decorations or Christmas lights in Bethlehem.

God’s awesome work is not in the picture or the setting. The psalm says, “He is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.” God’s deed was sending His only Son to be the Savior of sinners. There is nothing awesome about us. We may have an awesome athletic game or we may sing an awesome song or draw an awesome picture,

but we are still sinful people who cannot please God on our own or by anything that we might do. No decorations will make us appear awesome to God.

Yet God chooses us to be His children. He gives us the awesome gifts of grace in Baptism. We are God’s children. Our sins are forgiven, and we are promised the blessings of heaven where everything will be awesome forever.

The psalm invites, “Come and see what God has done.” It’s fun to come and see the awesome sites of the season. We have an even greater blessing. We come and see Jesus. We come and see His salvation for us and for everyone.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, it’s an amazing and awesome time of the year as we see displays and decorations. We remember that You came to earth without any decorations. You came humbly to a stable in Bethlehem. However, You came with amazing grace that grants us awesome blessings now and forever. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Arrange some awesome classroom displays of awesome things God has done.
- Have classroom volunteers decorate trees for homebound members or friends.

“You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin.”

SONG:

LSB 357 and AGPS 186

“Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel”

Really Forgiving

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: *A gift and wrapping paper.*

Introduction

Demonstrate wrapping/covering a Christmas gift. Why do we wrap Christmas gifts? Have any of you wrapped your Christmas gifts to others? Do you help your parents or others do some of the wrapping? We may wrap gifts to keep them a surprise to others. We wrap gifts to make them seem even more beautiful and appealing.

PRESENT in the Word

This week’s psalm is a good psalm for the season of gift-wrapping and gift giving. In verse 2 the psalm describes God doing some wrapping, “You covered all their sin.”

God placed the special package of His creation on this earth. Adam and Eve needed no wrapping because they were made perfect in the image of God. After they fell into sin, they immediately realized that their sinful nature could be seen by God and everyone. Adam and Eve were wrapped in plant leaves and eventually in animal skins.

Sometimes we attempt to cover our own sins. We may lie about our cheating and stealing. We may try to hide our sinful thoughts. We try to do and say good things so that people will not notice as quickly the bad things that we do and say. We deny the words of cursing and hurting that we use.

No matter how hard we try, we can’t cover our sins. There is no roll of Christmas wrapping paper big enough or long enough to cover our sins. Underneath the beautiful wrapping is still an ugly, sinful package.

The Good News of God’s Word is that He has covered all our sins. We are wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus. Covered with Jesus’ blood and wrapped in His blood and righteousness, God sees us as a beautiful package. God’s Spirit then unwraps the gifts that He has placed in us so that others may be blessed with the words that we share and the deeds that we do in Jesus’ name.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, if You would uncover our sinful nature, we would be embarrassed and lost forever. We are thankful that You chose to wrap us in Your righteousness in our Baptism. Help me to appear beautifully wrapped in Your grace so that others might see Your love through me. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

Have children volunteer to wrap gifts for others.

“Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things!”

SONG:

LSB 381 and AGPS 158 “Let Our Gladness Have No End”

Present in Bethlehem

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Sing/play some favorite Christmas hymns.

Introduction

Do you recognize some of the songs that we just sang? In what season of the year do we sing those songs? The church loves to sing at Christmas.

Christmas music is one of the joys of the season. On the television and at the movies and in the mall we hear a variety of songs about Santa, reindeer and snowmen. In church we sing songs about the blessings of the birth of Jesus.

PRESENT in the Word

As we have explored Old Testament Psalms during the first months of the school year, we have emphasized that the people of the Old Testament loved to sing praise to their God. The Book of Psalms was the songbook of the Old Testament. Our psalm for this week celebrates God’s gift of song, “Sing to the Lord a new song” (v. 1).

God’s people continued to sing as we turn the pages to the New Testament. When Mary was told by the angel that she was going to be the mother of Jesus, she sang a song of praise that we still sing in church today. It is called the Magnificat, “My soul magnifies the Lord.”

The Christmas story in Luke chapter 2 tells us that when the angels came to the shepherds, a host of angels praised God with a song, “Glory to God in the highest.” God’s

story of salvation includes songs even when we remember Jesus dying for us. We especially sing on Easter Sunday with the “Alleluias” of Jesus’ victory over death and the grave.

Our church history tells us that Martin Luther and his family loved to sing. Martin Luther wrote a song that tells the story of Jesus’ birth, “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come.”

Some of us are great singers and love to sing. Others of us may not have the same ability to sing, but still we offer our praise to God for sending Jesus as our Savior. There will be many opportunities for the church to sing as we gather on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day for special worship service. Won’t you sing with us? Bring your family and friends to join in the song.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, angels sang at Your birth. We sing because You were born for us. Bless the singing of our families, our church and Christians around the world as we sing this Christmas and always. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Explore the history of some favorite Christmas hymns.
- Share Christmas songs with shut-ins, at nursing homes, etc.

Really Wise

REAL to God's Children

Object Lesson/Visual: 2019 Calendar.

Introduction

Happy New Year! This calendar reminds me that we are in 2019, a new year. How did you begin your new year? Watching or having a New Year's Eve party? Watching football and parades?

Have you made any resolutions for the new year?

PRESENT in the Word

There are many ways to begin a new year. Our psalm for this week shares God's Word and God's direction for our beginnings. We begin in the "fear of the Lord."

One of the common activities at the beginning of a new year is to think back on the year just past. God's people are encouraged to do that in Psalm 111, "Great are the works of the Lord" (v. 2); "He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered" (v. 4). God certainly blessed us in 2018 (perhaps some of the church and school blessings can be remembered).

To "fear the Lord" is to remember all that God has done for us in Christ. In the past year we made many mistakes. There were many times we disobeyed our parents and teachers. There were many times we did not read God's Word and worship as faithfully as we should. However, to "fear the Lord" is not to have to fear God's judgment. We know the Lord who is our salvation. We believe in (fear) the Lord who not only

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 111

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:

Psalm 111:10

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have good understanding. His praise endures forever!"

SONG:

LSB 900 "Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love"

AGPS 143 "Jesus in the Morning"

was born in Bethlehem but who lived to be our Savior. We fear the Lord who forgives our sins. We have great thanks and respect (fear) for all that God has done for us.

We begin another part of the school year together at our Lutheran school. It is a time for us to grow in wisdom. We will continue to learn many new things in our classrooms and school. Most of all, we begin with God's Word. It is through that Word that our wisdom and fear will grow each day.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, we thank You for our school where we come to gain wisdom in many subjects. Most of all, give us the wisdom to know You as our Savior and to fear and respect You as Lord of all, always. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Share/develop faith-building, Bible-reading resolutions.
- Share a Bible/Psalm reading schedule for 2019.
- Review the First Commandment.

Present for the World

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 72:1–11

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK: Psalm 72:11

“May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!”

SONG:

LSB 397 “As with Gladness Men of Old”

AGPS 265 “When Christ’s Appearing Was Made Known”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Set up a throne. Have a student or staff member occupy the throne in a royal robe.

Introduction

It is my pleasure today to introduce you to king/queen _____.

How should we show respect for our king/queen?

PRESENT in the Word

Which King of Israel wrote many psalms? (David)
Today’s psalm, Psalm 72, was written by King David’s son, King Solomon. King Solomon told kings to worship the King.

After King David there were many, many kings throughout the Old Testament. Some of them were faithful to God, but many of them forgot to worship the King.

Even if the kings were not godly and kind, the people respected and honored their king. They fell down before the king. The Epiphany season reminds us that Jesus is King. Jesus was the King of all creation.

As Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor asked Jesus, “Are you a king?” Jesus was. The sign on the cross said, “The King of the Jews.” Jesus was the King who saved His people. Jesus came from the throne of heaven to hang on the cross. The King died to save the people of His kingdom.

One of the favorite songs of Epiphany is “We Three Kings.” We don’t know for sure if the visitors who followed the star to Bethlehem were kings. We don’t even know if there were three special visitors. We know that they came from a great distance to see Jesus, whom they knew to be their king. Their visit fulfilled God’s promise in this psalm, “May all kings fall down before him.”

We have a king born in Bethlehem. Because Jesus came to make us His royal children, we certainly honor Him as we fall down to worship Him. We look forward to worshipping forever at the throne of our eternal King.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, You are worthy of the praise of kings and common people because you are the King of Kings. As the wise men came to see the King long ago, lead us to see You as our King and worship You faithfully. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Emphasize the kingdom of God in the 2nd Petition.
- Research one of the kings of the Old Testament. Was the king faithful to God or unfaithful? Which kings were part of Jesus’ family tree?

Real Blessings in Baptism

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 29

TEXT/PSALM VERSE OF THE WEEK: Psalm 29:3

“The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over many waters.”

SONG:

LSB 738 and AGPS 167 “Lord of All Hopefulness”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Variety of voices sharing or reading the same message: child’s voice, teacher’s voice, quiet voice, loud voice, deep voice, high voice, etc.

Introduction

We have just heard a variety of voices. Our voices are a gift from God. Think of all the things we can do with our voice (explore with children): speak to our friends, sing, answer questions in class, cheer for our favorite teams.

PRESENT in the Word

Today’s psalm, Psalm 29, is about the voice of the Lord. Six times the psalmist, King David, describes “the voice of the Lord.”

The world first heard God’s voice at creation when God said, “Let there be ...” and there was exactly what God said there would be. The psalm describes God’s creating voice, “The voice of the Lord is over the waters.” God’s voice was heard by Abraham as he heard God’s promise. God’s voice was heard by Moses as the “I Am.” God revealed Himself. The voice of God was heard by the boy Samuel and by the prophets in the Old Testament.

This week the church remembers the Baptism of Jesus as Jesus begins His earthly ministry. The psalm prophesies the voice of God at Jesus’ Baptism. The voice of the Lord was over the waters of the Jordan River. Jesus is baptized and the voice of the Father proclaims, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him.”

There are many times where we don’t listen to voices very well. We may not listen to our teacher’s or parent’s voice. We are blessed that the voice of God called us in our Baptism. Through our Baptism, the voice of the Lord speaks to us and says that our sins are forgiven. The voice that proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God speaks God’s forgiveness to us and shares that we also are sons and daughters of God.

God has given us voices to say and sing His praise. We praise Jesus who has come to be our Savior. We use our voices to tell others that we too have seen the Son of God.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, we hear Your Father’s voice at Your Baptism. We hear Your voice speak to us as Your children in our Baptism. Bless us as we listen to Your voice speaking through Your Word. Open my voice to say and sing Your praises. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Have children research their baptismal birthday. Note the baptismal birthdays on a school/classroom calendar.
- Review the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in the Small Catechism.

Present on The Path

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 128

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:
Psalm 128:1

“Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!”

SONG:

LSB 685 and AGPS 159 “Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: *Footprints down the church aisle or another obvious course in the worship setting.*

Introduction

Today we have a mysterious set of footprints in our worship setting. Let’s follow the footprints. (The worship leader and perhaps several children can follow the path of the footprints.)

PRESENT in the Word

The footprints take us to today’s psalm, Psalm 128. God’s Word to us in the psalm begins, “Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!” This psalm is among a group of psalms (Psalms 120 through 134) in a section called “Songs of Ascents.” Bible scholars believe that these psalms were sung as worshippers ascended the steps of the temple to worship. The worshippers’ footprints led to the place of worship. At the temple they gathered to praise God.

The church is gathered for worship in the Epiphany season of the church year. It is the season where we see the footprints of Jesus in His earthly ministry. Jesus walks down the paths of His ministry healing the sick. Jesus walks from mountain to seashore to teach His followers. Jesus begins His walk to the cross.

To “walk in His ways” means first of all to walk in faith. We begin our walk with Jesus in our Baptism. We walk with Him as we listen to His Word.

Have you ever gone on a walk with your family or with your friends? It’s fun to walk down a path in the woods or along the beach or even down the sidewalk of our neighborhood. Worshippers walked together with family and friends to worship at the temple. We are blessed to walk together in faith with our family, our classmates and others. As we walk in faith together, God’s Word tells us that we are “blessed.”

During the school day our footprints lead us to different places in the school and church. Our footprints lead us to different learning activities. How blessed we are to have footprints that lead us to Jesus!

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, thank You for Your walk on this earth. Thank You for Your walk to the cross. Bless us as we walk together in faith. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Organize a prayer walk or charity walk.
- Explore the hymn “Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways” (*LSB 707*).
- What does it mean to walk with Jesus?

Present Since Creation

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 19:1–14

TEXT/PSALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:
Psalm 19:1

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”

SONG:

LSB 817 and AGPS 90 “Earth and All Stars”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: A display of constellations; arrangement of plastic stars.

Introduction

Do any of you enjoy looking at the stars? It’s a very special thing to be out on a dark, clear night and look up to the star-filled sky. If one looks carefully, we can see some star patterns called constellations. As people looked up in the sky long ago, they used the star patterns as travel maps. Sometimes they gave the patterns special names and added messages to the stars.

PRESENT in the Word

It’s easy to imagine the shepherd boy David looking at the stars as he sat guarding the sheep on dark nights. David is inspired to use that experience to share God’s message from the stars, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”

We look at the sky to see God’s “handiwork.” Like a talented artist or a skilled seamstress, God puts His creation in the sky. One of the evidences of God’s presence and power is His creation. God’s message through His stars is that He alone is God. He alone is the creator of everything. We look at the stars and see His amazing creating power.

As we see God’s power, we are reminded how powerless we are. Astronomy and some studies of science can share God’s creation and attempt to bring some order to His creation. We can’t begin to understand how God placed the stars in the sky and how He keeps everything in perfect order. We confess that our knowledge of God’s creation is always incomplete.

The shepherd stargazer, David, shares an even more important mystery near the end of the psalm, “Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults” (v. 12). The creator of the stars and all things is also the God who declares us innocent of our sins. God’s greater message is not found in the stars of the sky but in the pages of His Word. The pages of God’s Word tell the Good News of our Redeemer. The Book of Revelation calls Jesus “the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16). The shepherd boy who looked at the star knew Jesus, the Star of salvation.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, we are blessed to see the stars and the wonders of Your beautiful creation. In Your Word we see the greater Star that shines salvation on us. Shine on us with your grace, in Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Identify some of the common constellations.
- Visit an observatory.
- Have a parent parishioner share their telescopes and astronomy hobby.

Real Life

REAL to God's Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Picture of a human fetus or ultrasound picture. Lutherans For Life has a model through "Owen's Mission."

Introduction

Perhaps your parents have shown you a picture of how you looked before you were born. Doctors and nurses will often take pictures of the developing baby to show how the fetus is growing. Your parents were excited to watch you grow. What do you think of this child? (Get responses from children.)

PRESENT in the Word

The Psalms describe the miracle of God's creating of you. Psalm 139 (v. 13–15) describe God's work, "You knitted me together in my mother's womb." Today's psalm, Psalm 71, also celebrates God's work, "You are he who took me from my mother's womb" (v. 6). God formed you from the first few cells of your being and continued to have those cells divide to form your eyes, hands, ears and every part of you. God safely brought you out of your mother into the world to have you grow as the special child that you are.

Tragically, some people just look at these pictures of the human fetus and see only a bunch of random cells. God's Word tells us that we are more than a glob of cells, we are God's creation. God's Word also tells us that when we are born into the world, we come into the world as sinners. Even tiny babies need a Savior.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 71:1–11

TEXT/PSALM VERSE OF THE WEEK: Psalm 71:6

"Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you."

SONG:

LSB 864 "Shepherd of Tender Youth"

AGPS 217 "Someone Special"

We celebrate another kind of birth. With the splashing of water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, God washes away every spot of sin. God's new creation is now perfect in His sight.

God has created us to praise Him. The Psalm verse says, "My praise is continually of you." Every cell created by God is created to praise Him. May every cell of our being praise God today and always.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, You created us to be who we are, and we thank You. You redeemed us to be Yours and we thank You. Help us teach the world about the sanctity of life and the reality of new life in You. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Contact Lutherans For Life regarding "Owen's Mission."
- Research other "Life" ministries and resources.
- Review the First Article of the Apostles' Creed.

“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; ... your right hand delivers me.”

Present Through Trouble

SONG:

LSB 861 and AGPS 81 “Christ Be My Leader”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Create an obstacle course. Lead a blindfolded child through the course. Hold the hand of the child/children to lead them through the obstacles.

Introduction

Have you ever done an obstacle course at a camp or some other setting? I’ve set up a short course in our worship area this morning and I thought I’d invite a couple of you to join me. (Take children on the journey.) What’s it like going through an obstacle course? What does it feel like going through the course? What are the dangers?

PRESENT in the Word

It may be fun and adventurous to encounter obstacles in a camp adventure or even in our little adventure here this morning. Sometimes our life journeys are like an obstacle course, and they are not always fun and adventurous. Sometimes we face challenges in our family, in school and in other places. They may even be a testing of our faith.

God’s inspired writer of Psalm 128, King David, knew about challenges. He faced challenges in his family when his son Absalom rebelled against him. David faced the challenges of those who questioned his leadership. There were always enemy kings who tried to invade his kingdom. David’s life was like a walk through an obstacle course.

David trusted in his God and praised his God, “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life.” David walked in faith knowing that the God who had promised to deliver him from the trouble of his sin would also deliver him from the problems and challenges of a sinful world. Having Jesus as his Savior and friend was like having someone walk with him and hold his hand. As we went through our obstacles here, I held your hand and guided you through the path. Trusting in Jesus is like having Him take our hand and lead us.

The good news is that Jesus always holds our hand and that He will lead us through the obstacles of life to be with Him in heaven.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, We are thankful for parents and others who hold our hand to comfort and protect us. You hold our hand and guide us safely through the obstacles of life, but more importantly, by faith You hold our hand and lead us to heaven. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Explore hymns of Jesus’ leading: “Jesus, Lead Thou On,” “Christ Be My Leader,” etc.
- Construct an obstacle course in the classroom, gym or playground and lead classmates through the course.
- Review the Sixth Petition.

Real Growth

REAL to God's Children

Object Lesson/Visual: *A small tree (from a local nursery or other source or a decorative tree from a home or other display).*

Introduction

Perhaps you've learned some things about trees in science class or from other experiences — 4H, camps, scouting. (Review parts of trees, kinds of trees, etc.) What does this tree need to survive and grow (water, oxygen, light, soil)?

PRESENT in the Word

After several weeks of learning from The Book of Psalms, we get to the very first of the psalms. Psalm 1 compares Christians to trees.

The psalm compares those who do not believe in God to dried up parts of plants (chaff). When the grain was harvested from the plants, the unused or wasted parts would blow away. They would have no useful purpose any more. Plants that do not have water, nutrients, sunlight, etc. dry up. They do not produce any fruits. (Perhaps show a life-less plant.)

When we are not watered and nurtured by God's Word, we do not do the things God wants us to do. We do not give the fruits of love, kindness, joy, etc.

We are blessed to be watered in our Baptism. We are blessed to receive the nutrients of God's Word in our worship in church and chapel, our study of God's Word in our classroom and in our reading of His Word with our family and on our own. When we hear about and believe in God's love for us in Jesus, we are like trees.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 1

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK: Psalm 1:3

"He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."

SONG:

LSB 577 "Almighty God, Your Word is Cast"

AGPS 258 "We Shall Not Be Moved"

Imagine the forest that is our Lutheran church and school. We are all different kinds of trees planted along the same stream. What a blessing it is to have the water of The Book of Psalms flow to the "trees" planted in our school.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Thank You Jesus for planting us in the soil of Your Word and watering me in my Baptism. Thank You for blessing our growth as Your children in this school. Keep us rooted in Your Word so that we might bear fruits of praise and service in Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Have a tree "expert" come and share information with the school or a classroom; go to an arboretum; explore the resources of the Arbor Day foundation or other tree-growing initiative.
- Plant a tree on the school grounds, a local park or another area. Put a sign with Psalm 1:3 by the tree.

Really Soaring

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Picture of an eagle; video or other demonstration of an eagle’s flight.

Introduction

Have you ever seen an eagle fly? What do we know about eagles? (Review some facts about eagles — size, national bird, etc.)

PRESENT in the Word

God’s Word often uses examples from nature to help us learn and remember His truths. Last week we learned that Christians are like plants. Today’s psalm goes to the animal kingdom for a lesson. We learn that God’s love for us empowers us like God’s presence directs the flight of an eagle.

Eagles soar. They go high into the air and they seem to float looking below for enemies that might attack them or their young. They soar looking for food or safe places to land. When eagles are wounded, they don’t soar. Many times we don’t soar. Sin keeps us grounded, or the hurting words or deeds of someone else prevent us from flying high and enjoying the view.

Sometimes eagles get wounded. We are wounded by our own sin and the sin of others. God has healed our wounds in Jesus. King David, God’s writer of Psalm 103, praises his God who “forgives all your iniquity” (v. 3). Jesus frees us from anything and everything that would keep us from flying.

Like King David, the prophet Isaiah also observed eagles. Isaiah shared that those who trusted in the Lord would “renew their strength” and “mount up with

wings like eagles” (Is. 40:31). Even when King David and Isaiah felt grounded by the challenges they faced, they could soar knowing that the promise of Jesus was under their faith wings.

When you see an eagle soar (or a picture of an eagle’s flight), think of God’s gift to you. Because God loves you and has freed us from our sins, we can soar in the wind of His grace. Our response is that of King David, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!” (Ps. 103:1). How will we soar together today?

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, thank You for the beauty and grace of an eagle’s flight. With the wind of the Spirit, You lift us and help us to soar freely. When we get tired, renew us so that we might see Your blessings and deliver Your message. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Invite a member of Audubon society (or similar group) to share information on eagles and birds.
- Explore “cam sites” of eagles nesting, laying eggs and caring for their young.
- Find other biblical references to birds.

“Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy!”

SONG:
LSB 537 and AGPS 70
“Beautiful Savior”

Present on The Mountain

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Pictures of mountains/mountain ranges.

Introduction

Have you ever been to the mountains? What’s it like in the mountains? What are some activities that people enjoy in the mountains (skiing, hiking, looking at the scenery, etc.)?

PRESENT in the Word

We’re going to take a Bible field trip today. Today’s psalm takes us from our classrooms and worship setting to the mountains.

This week’s psalm goes to the mountains because our church worship emphasis this week takes us to the mountain. The Bible takes several mountain excursions. The children of Israel gathered at Mount Sinai. Elijah the prophet worshipped at a mountain. Jesus taught the disciples on a mountain. Just before Jesus began His journey to the cross, He took Peter, James and John with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration. The Bible doesn’t tell us exactly where the mountain is located, but we know it was a real mountain adventure.

It is called the Mount of Transfiguration because Jesus was transfigured or changed there. The disciples saw that Jesus was not just the man whom they had seen and heard. Jesus was God. Jesus shone with a brightness so bright that no human eyes could stay focused on Him. Jesus’ clothing was stunning white. Jesus wanted His disciples and us to see that the holy Son of God was going to the cross for the sins of the world.

Our psalm today invites us to “worship at his holy mountain.” We worship Jesus at the Mount of His Transfiguration. We see His holiness. Jesus’ holiness frightens us because we are unholy. We do not deserve to be in His presence. Jesus went to the mountain of the Transfiguration with His disciples and then went to Mount Calvary where He died to make us holy.

The place of worship in Jerusalem was referred to as Mount Zion because it was located on the top of a hill. When we gather for Sunday worship and chapel worship, we come to a kind of mountain. We can and will worship at our holy mountain because He welcomes us.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, thank You for the majesty of the mountains. Thank You for sharing Your message from the Mount of Transfiguration and especially Mount Calvary. Thank You for bringing us weekly to the Mount Zion of our worship place. Bless us as we adore You in all times and places. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Research the mountains in the Bible and the events on biblical mountains.
- What mountain ranges are in our country? What are the mountain ranges of the world?

“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.”

SONG:

LSB 418 “O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days”

AGPS 156 “Let Me Learn of Jesus”

The Presence of Angels

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Pictures of angels, artistic expressions of angels, a collection of angels.

Introduction

Do your parents or grandparents have any pictures of angels or angel collections in their home? Do any of you collect angels? Angels have fascinated many people for many years. Today’s psalm gives God’s promise about His angels, “For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.”

PRESENT in the Word

The Bible tells us about angels in both the Old and New Testament. As Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden after the fall into sin, we are told (Gen. 3:24) that God placed an angel with a flaming sword to keep them from the garden. Jacob had a dream about angels going up and down a ladder into heaven. Daniel was protected from the lions by angels. Angels are certainly part of the Christmas story. Angels made announcements to Mary and Joseph. An angel choir sang praises to God as shepherds listened on the plains of Bethlehem.

A psalm about angels is appropriate this week as the church remembers the temptation of Jesus. The devil tries to tempt Jesus with a promise of angels’ protection (Matt. 4:5) if Jesus were to jump off the pinnacle of the temple. After Jesus is tempted by the devil for 40 days, “angels came and were ministering to him” (Matt. 4:11).

Angels continue to be part of the story of salvation, strengthening Jesus as He prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. Angels share the good news of Jesus’

resurrection. God created the angels, and His angels continue to be present today. While the angels’ main task is to glorify Jesus at His throne, they are also sent to serve God’s children.

Psalm 91 describes a challenging scene of terror. It talks about arrows, darkness, pestilence, lions, serpents and other means of attack. God promises, “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.”

We do not have the strength or resources to face and stand up against the many challenges that come our way. However, because God has claimed us as His children, He will provide protection for us. His means of protection is His angels — our guardians, always.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, angels adored You at Your birth. Angels surround Your throne constantly and praise You. Bless our praise and make it angelic. Thank You for the angels that surround and protect us. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Find references to angels in the Bible. What angels are named in Scripture?
- Discuss some of the misconceptions of angels: we don’t become angels when we die; angels don’t always have white robes and wings, etc.

Real Trust

REAL to God's Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Angry faces, angry expressions.

Introduction

Make as angry a face as you can! Has your face ever looked like this? When have you been angry? What makes you angry?

PRESENT in the Word

All of us have been angry at something or someone. One of the emotions with which we are created is anger. Our Psalm verse for today begins, “Be angry.” Can you think of times when it’s appropriate to be angry? We may be angry about someone getting made fun of or hurt, or we may be angry if someone is not being treated with respect.

The Psalm verse continues “and do not sin.” Most of the time when we are angry we also sin. We show our anger in inappropriate ways; we try to get even with someone who has hurt us.

The Bible tells us of the time when Jesus saw people misusing the temple by using it as a place of business rather than a place of worship (Matt. 21:12–20). The perfect, sinless Jesus was angry enough to throw tables. Later on Jesus had every right to be angry when He was being beaten with whips, spit upon by the soldiers, mocked with a crown of thorns on His head and otherwise hurt and humiliated. Even then, Jesus did not get angry or attempt to get even. Jesus willingly went to the cross to die for all of our sins — even the sins of our anger.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 4

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:

Psalm 4:4–5

“Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.”

SONG:

LSB 729 and AGPS 126 “I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus”

Rather than respond in anger, we remember Jesus’ sacrifice for us and respond in praise. The psalm tells us to “offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord.” We trust in Jesus’ forgiveness. We trust in the Spirit’s power to help us respond in kindness and helpfulness.

What kind of faces will you make today — blank, smile, bored or maybe even angry? How about making a face that smiles at Jesus’ forgiveness? How about a face that shines with joy in Jesus?

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, thank You for forgiving our anger by Your suffering and death which showed no anger toward those who mocked and crucified You. As Your face shines on us, bless our faces and all our being in praise and loving expressions toward You and others. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

Create an emoji page with a variety of expressions. For a week have everyone in the classroom display an emoji of how they are feeling that day.

Real Love

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 85

TEXT/PSALM VERSE OF THE WEEK: Psalm 85:7

“Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.”

SONG:

LSB 850 and AGPS 110 “God of Grace and God of Glory”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Flower petals (daisy or other flower with easily identifiable blossoms).

Introduction

“She loves me,” “She loves me not,” “She loves me,” ... Pulling petals off of a blossom is sometimes suggested as a way to determine whether someone loves me or not. The last petal gives the answer. Is this a good way of discovering someone’s love? Obviously not. Flower blossoms have little to do with love.

PRESENT in the Word

Sometimes we do wonder whether someone loves us. While we know our parents love us, we may have disappointed them and had them angry at us and wonder, “Do you still love me?” Sometimes we have arguments with our friends, and we wonder if they still love us.

Who we love and how we love them changes. In our families we know that moms and dads who loved each other at one time may fall out of love and get divorced. We may have been best friends with someone for years, and then that person moves away and we get disconnected, or there’s a disagreement, and something happens to change our love for someone else.

God’s love for us never changes. Our Psalm verse for this week describes God’s “steadfast love.” Steadfast love is sure and solid. Steadfast love is consistent. In our sinful nature we are not loving and do not deserve God’s love. God’s love is summarized in the beginning

verses of our psalm, “You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin. You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.” Everything that rightfully made God angry, He forgave. Instead of showing His anger toward us, He showed us His love.

During this Lenten season we continue to picture Jesus on the cross. Jesus endures the pain and suffering of the cross because He loves us.

Because of Jesus’ steadfast love for us, we love each other steadfastly. When others hurt us, we continue to love them. When others disappoint us, we continue to love them. May we be God’s steadfast children in a steadfast Lutheran school.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, You have shown Your perfect steadfast love for us on the cross. Through Your perfect love we have salvation. In Your love help us to love others in Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Share flowers with someone and attach a “God loves you” note.
- As a classroom, explore loving deeds for others. Contact the pastor or principal for suggestions of those who might be blessed with your loving actions.

“You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.”

LSB 420 and AGPS 82 “Christ, the Life of All the Living”

Real Deliverance

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: *Several children hiding in the worship area.*

Introduction

Have you ever played “Hide and Seek?” I’ve asked a couple of the children to help me with a game this morning. They’ve chosen some hiding places and I’m going to see if I can find them.

PRESENT in the Word

The “Hide and Seek” game takes us to our psalm for this week. God’s Word to us is “You are a hiding place for me.” Jesus provides us a place to safely hide.

Psalm 32 is a psalm of confession. It reminds us of our need to confess our sins to God. Sometimes we think we can hide our sins from God. The Bible tells us that when Adam and Eve first sinned, they tried to hide from God in the garden. How do you think that worked? God is all-seeing and all-knowing. He will always find us. He sees and knows every one of our sins.

Confession is saying, “I can’t hide from You, God. You know all of my sins.” The psalm says, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.” The psalm then states, “and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.” King David, who wrote this psalm, believed that his Savior would come to suffer and die for all his sins. Because Jesus paid the price for our sins, we are forgiven.

Even though our sins are forgiven, we still live in a sinful world. The devil reminds us of our guilt; we still have problems in our family and in our classroom. Sometimes

we feel like we need a place to hide. Have you ever had a bad day at school or had a disagreement with a friend and what you most wanted to do was to go to your room, close the door and have some quiet time alone? You wanted to hide.

Jesus, who has forgiven us, welcomes us. He says, “You can always come to me. You can hide in me.” King David had evil people chasing him; he had difficult decisions to make as king. He had a “hiding place.” When we want to hide, when we need to hide, Jesus seeks us and grants us His safe place.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, I could never hide my sins from You. Thank You for Your suffering and death, which took away all my sins. When I am lonely or afraid, thank You for the promise that I can hide in You. In Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Discuss the sections of confession in the worship service.
- Review the Office of the Keys and Confession sections of the Small Catechism.
- Play “Hide and Seek” at recess.

“The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.”

LSB 811 and AGPS 190 “Oh, That I Had a Thousand Voices”

Real Glad

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: School cheers.

Introduction

We love to cheer for our school team, our favorite high school or college teams. When great things happen or great plays are made, we cheer. What great things might we cheer for at our school? (Dialogue about some of the school blessings.) Join in some school cheers.

PRESENT in the Word

Our psalm for this week is again one of the Psalms of Ascents. Does anyone recall what that means? Most likely these were psalms that the worshippers chanted as they went up the steps of the temple to worship. Like fans gathering for an exciting game, the worshippers came with excitement. They were ready to cheer, “Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy” (v. 2).

There were many times that God’s people didn’t feel like cheering. As they looked back in their history, they remembered the generations that had been in slavery in Egypt. They remembered their disobedience in the desert on the way to the Promised Land. They remembered the worship of idols and unfaithfulness to God. Our sin and the consequences of sin leave us in defeat with little to cheer about.

God had not forgotten them. God had rescued them from slavery and guided them to the Promised Land. “The Lord has done great things for us.”

The God who rescued His people of the Old Testament is the God who has rescued us in Jesus. God has done the great thing of salvation for us. Jesus has paid the price for our sins. Jesus has risen from the dead. Jesus has promised us heaven. “The Lord has done great things for us.”

Our worship time in chapel and our worship time in church is our cheering time. More important and exciting than cheering at a game is cheering in the church. We cheer because we are forgiven. We cheer because God is with us. Let’s cheer together today and every day in Jesus’ name.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, You have done great things for us from the cross and empty tomb. You do great things for us as You forgive us our sins and remind us of the promise of heaven. You do great things in caring for us every day. Make great our praise and thanks to You. In Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

List God’s great things at _____
Lutheran Church and School. Cheer in praise and thanksgiving.

Present Today

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 118:19–29

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:
Psalm 118:24

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

SONG:

LSB 547 and AGPS 229
“The Lamb”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Daily activity calendar from pre-school or kindergarten classroom.

Introduction

One of the routines of our early childhood classrooms is to do the daily calendar. Every day the children celebrate what’s unique about the day: what day of the month and week it is; the weather; the season of the year and other aspects of the day. (Perhaps engage in some of the activities for the day of the chapel service.)

PRESENT in the Word

Today’s Psalm verse encourages us to look at the day and celebrate it as God’s day.

Palm Sunday was God’s day of celebration. God had marked this day on His calendar since the beginning of time. For 33 years Jesus had lived on earth. For 3 years Jesus had gone about His earthly ministry teaching and healing. Every day Jesus knew that it was His mission to go to the cross to suffer and die for the sins of the world. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was a public proclamation that the time for payment for the sins of the world was near. Palm Sunday was a great day in Jerusalem with a parade and palm branches. Jesus is celebrated as King. Palm Sunday was a day that God made.

This week is called Passion Week, which was introduced by Passion Sunday. In our worship and study this week, we will see the activities of various days. There is a day for Jesus to gather with His disciples to wash their feet and to offer them a Sacrament. There is a day for Jesus’ trials, where judges and soldiers mock Him. Finally, there is the Good Friday day of His crucifixion. Every day of Holy Week is a day that God made.

The Psalm says, “Let us rejoice and be glad in it.” There wasn’t much joy for Jesus in His humiliation and crucifixion. The joy is ours because Jesus willingly suffered and died for us. We have joy because our sins are forgiven. We have joy because we belong to God’s family now and forever.

No matter what day it is on the calendar and no matter the season of the year or the church year, we can rejoice and be glad in it because Jesus redeemed every day. Every day is a day of praise and thanksgiving.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Lord Jesus, we journey with You on the day of entrance into Jerusalem and through the days and the places of Your Passion. We thank You for Your days of suffering so that we might be blessed with the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation every day and even into eternity. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Review the events of each day of Holy Week.
- Review the explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed.

Real Joy

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 16

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK: Psalm 16:11b

“In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

SONG:

LSB 482 and AGPS 243 “This Joyful Eastertide”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Easter decorations, Easter candy and other joyful items of the season.

Introduction

What do these items have in common? What kind of feelings do these items give us? (Joy.) I hope you had a joyful Easter vacation and celebration. It is a time of joy with special decorations, family gatherings, etc.

PRESENT in the Word

While Easter clothes, Easter candy, family gatherings and other special activities of the season give us joy, the joy quickly goes away. The clothes wear out; some of the decorations break or get packed away; the candy gets eaten; the routine of school and work starts again. Even the joys of Easter Day last for a day.

Our psalm of the week shares a fuller and more permanent joy, “In your presence there is fullness of joy.” Our Easter worship was certainly joyful. The Easter songs spoke of joy. The music and decorations in the church added to our joy. However, the joy was in the message of Easter Day.

There was very little joy for Jesus’ followers as they left His cross on Friday afternoon. Their Teacher and Friend was dead. Some of us who have had loved ones die know that death robs our joy. There was little joy on Saturday as Jesus’ death became even more real. Women who loved Jesus went out to the grave early Sunday morning to finish the burial. That was not a joyful trip on the dark, sad morning.

The discovery of an empty tomb and an announcement by an angel that Jesus had risen changed everything for the women and the disciples. Jesus was alive again and forever. When they gathered again in Jesus’ presence and knew for certain that their Lord was alive, there was fullness of joy.

God’s Word shares with us the reality that our Jesus is alive. We have joy now. The psalm says that there will be joy forevermore. Not every family event is joyful. Not every school day is joyful. However, forgiven and loved by Jesus, we have joy in Him every day. We also know that we will be with Jesus in heaven and experience that joy with Him forever. We are blessed and joyful today and forever. It’s a joy to be shared!

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Joyful, joyful we adore You, Jesus, as the risen Lord. May the knowledge of Your resurrection bring joy to us every day. Bless us as we share that joy with others. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Share a favorite Easter hymn of joy.
- Children share the joys of their Easter weekend.

“Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.”

LSB 462 “All the Earth with Joy is Sounding”

AGPS 210 “Shout for Joy Loud and Long”

Real Praise

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: List of important names in history: Washington, Lincoln, etc.

Introduction

What’s important about these names? When you think of other names of important people, who do you think of?

PRESENT in the Word

During the year we remember the names of numerous people for their contributions in history and the church. We have Presidents’ Day and remember famous presidents. We remember Martin Luther King, and in the church we remember Martin Luther. God has blessed the world and especially our country with many capable leaders.

Psalm 148 is one of the concluding psalms of praise in The Book of Psalms (Psalm 145 through Psalm 150). Everything in Psalm 148 is about praising God. (Students may want to count the number of “praises” in the psalm.)

While it is important to compliment and thank leaders (even leaders in our church, school and community), praise and glory belongs only to God. At certain times in history people have given too much trust and praise to earthly leaders. To put our ultimate confidence in human

leaders rather than God is a form of idolatry. There is only one God and He alone deserves our praise.

Psalm 148 emphasizes that we praise God for His creation: sun, moon, stars, sea creatures, mountains, beasts and birds. Most thankfully we praise God for our salvation. The church continues to gather in the Easter season. It is a special time of praise. Only God sent His Son who died and rose again. We praise Him because we are His sons and daughters now and eternally.

When we do something well in school, sports, music, etc. people sometimes kindly praise us. We can respond, “Thank you” and share, “All praise goes to my God.”

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, only Your name is holy and worthy to be praised. Forgive us for the times when we have misused Your name. We are blessed to call upon Your name in prayer and to know that You always hear us. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Review the First Petition of the Lord’s Prayer.
- Review the Second Commandment.
- Identify faithful Christian leaders in American history.

Present with Joy

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 30

TEXT/PSALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:

Psalm 30:5

“For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”

SONG:

LSB 803 and AGPS 147 “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Night/Day list —

Night: darkness, sleeping, studying, loneliness, etc.

Day: light, energy, playing, working, etc.

Introduction

What’s the difference between night and day? The difference is more than the sun being out and the sun being hidden. Night and day have different activities and different feelings for most of us.

PRESENT in the Word

In Psalm 30, one of the comparisons for King David, God’s inspired poet, is the difference between night and day. It is more than a comparison of darkness and light. It is a comparison between the night of sin and the day of salvation.

The psalm uses words like anger, weeping and mourning. God’s just anger comes at our sin. Because we disobey God, we deserve His anger. There is weeping at pain of the body and disappointment of the heart because of a sinful world. There is mourning when a loved one dies. Death comes because of sin. Fortunately not everything about our nights is sad and bad. We have fun times with family and friends at night. Some of our parents may have to work at night. In the psalm, “night” is a picture for the reality of sin.

The “morning” of verse 5 describes the new day. We are in the Easter season. At the sunrise of a new day the women went out to the tomb and were greeted with the

message of Jesus’ resurrection. It was a morning and a day of joy. Jesus’ resurrection brings the new day of His forgiveness. The darkness of our sin has been taken away and we live in the light of His love. Obviously not every day is a great day and sin still happens in the day, but we live in the day of Jesus’ resurrection.

We thank God for the blessings of the night — sleep, time with family, etc. We thank God for the blessings of each day — light, school, play, etc. We especially rejoice in the day of His resurrection and each day of new life.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, You hear our weeping in the night and our cries for deliverance during the day. Thank You also for the shout of joy we are privileged to hear and share. We are joyful because of Your resurrection and the promise of our resurrection. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Explore vocations that especially require night work. Do any school parents work at night? What are the challenges of working at night?
- Explore the “morning” and “evening” hymns in the hymnal and compare their themes.
- Reflect: “I am thankful today for ...”

“The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.”

SONG:

LSB 710 and AGPS 233

“The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll
Not Want”

Present as Our Shepherd

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Leader comes dressed as a shepherd with a staff, etc.

Introduction

I am privileged to come to you today as a shepherd. Obviously, shepherds take care of sheep. While there are still shepherds in certain areas of our country and world today, it was a very common profession in Bible times. Abraham and Lot raised sheep, Moses was a shepherd in Midian and the writer of Psalm 23, King David, was a shepherd. A shepherd gives us a picture of the best Shepherd of all.

PRESENT in the Word

The most familiar psalm to many people is Psalm 23. David the shepherd directs us to the Shepherd. Let’s meet a shepherd in the time of David. Sheep were led by the shepherd to places where there was plenty of grass to eat and water to drink. “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters” (v. 2). It was also the shepherd’s job to protect the sheep. The “rod and the staff” would guide the sheep safely along the path, pull them to safety when they wandered from the fold and even drive away other animals that would attack the sheep. The shepherd would do anything and everything to provide for and protect his sheep. The shepherd would be willing to give his own life so the sheep would survive. The task was often difficult because the sheep would not often follow the shepherd.

When Jesus describes Himself to His followers (John 10), “I am the good shepherd,” Jesus comes to fulfill the prophecy of Psalm 23. We are the sheep. Like sheep, we wander off on our own. We get lost and separated from the flock. We cannot provide for ourselves. There are enemies that want to attack us. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who provides everything we need. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who protects us every day. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. Jesus gave His life on the cross so that we might be His little lambs.

The best promise of Psalm 23 is that Jesus’ lambs will be with Him forever. Sheep in Bible times were brought safely to a protective pen. Believing in Jesus, we get more than an earthly pen. We get a banquet at His heavenly table. We get to live in His house forever.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, I am blessed to be Your lamb because You are the Good Shepherd who gave Your life for the sheep. Help us to follow You faithfully all our days. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Invite a guest who raises sheep to share the challenges of shepherding.
- Visit a sheep farm.
- Why is the lamb an Easter symbol?
- Sing “I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb.”

“Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts.”

SONG:
LSB 790 and AGPS 201 “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

Present and Praiseworthy

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Praise signs/chants: “Praise the Lord!” Organize the assembly into various groups. Give each group a “Praise the Lord!” sign.

Introduction

Have you ever been at a game where there is an echo cheer? One group cheers for the team and the other group repeats the cheer, only louder. We’re going to cheer this morning. I will direct each group to shout, “Praise the Lord.” Let’s see if we can get louder and more energetic as the cheer is repeated. (Proceed with cheers.)

PRESENT in the Word

The words of this week’s psalm will sound familiar. We also visited this psalm a few weeks ago. Obviously, the theme of this psalm is important in our Easter season. We remember that this psalm is part of the praise section that concludes The Book of Psalms. (Leader or students may want to count how many “praises” are in the psalm.)

What a joy and blessing it is to cheer our school, our favorite team, the athlete, the actor and many others. God blesses us with many gifts and many occasions to celebrate. Often we praise people and forget to praise God. The psalm begins and ends with the command, “Praise the Lord!”

Everything is to praise the Lord. All of God’s creation, from the stars of the heavens to the mountains of the earth, is to praise the Lord. Every angel in heaven is to praise the Lord. Every creature on earth from the sea to the sky is to praise the Lord. Every act of nature from mist to storm is to praise the Lord. Everyone of every age and every position, king to commoner, is to praise the Lord. Since everything is the Lord’s, the

response to Him is “Praise the Lord.” (Have children hold up signs and respond.)

This is an Easter season psalm. We praise the Lord who rose again from the dead. We praise the only God who is victorious over death and the grave and who gives His victory to us in our Baptism.

The “Praise the Lord” cheer is the cheer from our worship every week in church and school. Most of the time we don’t hold up signs in our worship services or shout our praises loudly, but we do cheer for our God in our worship hymns and worship liturgy. The Easter “Praise the Lord” cheer goes from pew to pew in our sanctuary, group to group in our chapel worship, from classroom to classroom in our school, from home to home among our families. The cheer goes from Lutheran school to Lutheran school around the world. Let’s cheer, “Praise the Lord.”

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, even as the angels praise You in heaven, we have even greater reason to praise You. We have been saved from our sin because of Your sacrifice. We have been promised eternity because of Your resurrection. Give us Your Spirit of praise! Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Share times and places of praise in the church, school, home and beyond.
- “Praise God for ...” listing/bulletin board.
- Write a praise poem.
- Organize a praise cheer.

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.”

SONG:

LSB 922 and AGPS 102

“Go, My Children, with My Blessing”

A Real Blessing

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Various facial expressions. Perhaps a display of face “emojis.”

Introduction

There was a time when the most familiar facial expression was a “smiley” face or “sad” face. People have developed a variety of expressions that we now see everywhere. This week’s Psalm verse describes the face of God and directs His face to look at us.

PRESENT in the Word

Does God have a face? What does God’s face look like? The Bible tells us that “God is spirit” (John 4:24). Since God is everywhere and fills everything, He is not limited with a body like we have. God is described with hands and a face so that we might better understand who He is and what He does better. When God’s Son, Jesus, came to earth, He had a body — hands, feet, face, etc. — just as we have.

God’s face looking at us might have a variety of expressions. God’s face could show sadness at our disobeying Him. God’s face could show frustration at our rebellion. God’s face could look puzzled at some of the things we do that are contrary to His will. God’s face is the face of Jesus showing anger at those who misused His temple. God’s face is the face of Jesus showing disappointment at the denial of Peter.

We also know that God’s face shines. His face shines in glory like the face of Jesus at His transfiguration. God’s face shines in the face of Jesus who teaches His little children. God’s face shines because God looks at us as His forgiven children. God’s face shines every time a little child is baptized. God’s face shines every time we gather for chapel and worship Him.

Have you heard words similar to our verse today? When? (In worship as we close our service.) As the children of Israel were wandering through the desert on the way to the Promised Land, God commanded the priest, Aaron, to bless the people: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you” (Num. 6:24–25). The psalm repeats God’s blessing to another generation.

The psalm continues God’s blessing to us. God’s face shines on us as we leave our worship today. God’s face shines on His people as we leave our Sunday worship. God’s face shines on us daily because of the resurrected shining face of Jesus.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, we are blessed to hear a word of blessing at the end of each Sunday service, at the close of each chapel service and many other times when we depart from worship. How good it is that You go with us and bless us wherever we go in Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Have the pastor share the significance of the benediction in the service. Why does the pastor raise his hands as he shares the benediction?
- How does God’s face not only shine on us but through us?

Real Unity

REAL to God's Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Gather a small group of children in a huddle.

Introduction

Have you ever been in a huddle? Where or when? (Basketball team, cheerleading time, school group project, etc.) In a huddle, a group of people puts their heads or hands together to show that they are a team working or playing together.

PRESENT in the Word

What's the longest psalm? (Psalm 119) What's the shortest psalm? (Psalm 117) Our psalm for this week is among the shortest. (Psalms 131, 133 and 134 have just three verses). We have a short psalm with an important message. God huddles us together in His Church.

Have you ever been part of a disagreement with your friends or classmates? Has your family ever had arguments? Unfortunately, our huddles are not always friendly and productive. We can also find disagreements in many places in the Bible. Cain hated and killed his brother Abel. Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him as a slave. The disciples argued as to who was the greatest. Peter and Paul had some disagreements in the early church. In our sinful selfishness we seek our own way and break up our huddles instead of bringing them together.

Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Jesus' prayer for the disciples and for us was, "That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you" (John 17:21). Jesus' resurrection breaks down all divisions and barriers between God and us. Jesus'

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 133

TEXT/PALM VERSE OF THE WEEK:
Psalm 133:1

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!"

SONG:

LSB 649 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

AGPS 252 "We Are The Church"

resurrection also brings us together. We share in the blessings of the forgiveness of sins. We share in the blessings of the Spirit that unites us. To huddle together is God's blessing to us. It also brings joy to our heavenly Father. How pleasant it is when we dwell together as brothers and sisters in unity.

Every Sunday when we gather for worship, we huddle together as God's people. We are a team called the Church. Every week as we gather together as the school church, we huddle together as God's team.

So, let's huddle together in Jesus' name. Let's invite others to join in our Jesus huddle.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Jesus, we confess that we don't always huddle together well. Thank You for bringing us together into Your family, the Church, where You forgive us and send us the spirit of togetherness. Bless us as we worship and serve together, in Your name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- How is the Church like a team?
- When does the church or school huddle together?
- What does it mean to be the "holy Christian, the communion of saints?"

“Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”

SONG:

LSB 496 and AGPS 120 “Holy Spirit, Light Divine”

Present In The Spirit

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: Symbols of the Holy Spirit (dove, flame, etc.).

Introduction

Where do you see these symbols? What do these symbols have in common? Why might we be emphasizing these symbols today?

Explain the significance of the Spirit/Pentecost symbols.

PRESENT in the Word

It’s the week of Pentecost. Fifty days after Jesus’ resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended on the gathering of Christians in Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit was present from the beginning of time. The beginning verses of the Bible tell us that the “Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). Believers of the Old Testament knew about and believed in the Holy Spirit. In this week’s psalm, King David writes, “Let your good Spirit lead me.” God’s people have always come to faith through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was present at Jesus’ Baptism. The dove symbol for the Spirit is used because the Spirit descended like a dove when Jesus was baptized. The Pentecost story tells of the tongues of fire (another symbol) on the believers’ heads as evidence of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit brought the message and power of Jesus’ resurrection to the apostles and to 3,000 believers in Jerusalem.

The Spirit leads us to Jesus. The Spirit’s presence at Pentecost was spectacular: rushing wind, tongues of fire, unusual languages. The Spirit’s descent today is not as dramatic, but it is just as spectacular. The Spirit comes to us in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the water of our Baptism. The Spirit comes to us in church, chapel and our classrooms as we read and hear God’s Word. The Spirit gives us the blessings of faith — knowing that Jesus died and rose for us and that we too belong to His Church.

King David’s prayer, “Let your good Spirit lead me,” becomes our prayer. We pray that the Spirit will lead us to always follow Jesus. We pray that the Spirit will lead us to worship faithfully. We pray that the Spirit will lead us to honor God with our lives.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Holy Spirit, thank You for the waters of Baptism through which You brought us to faith; thank You for working through the Word to keep us in the one true faith. Teach me to do Your will, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Look for symbols of the Spirit in church and school; draw symbols of the Spirit and display them in the church and school.
- Review the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed.
- Explore the Pentecost hymns in the hymnal.

“The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”

SONG:

LSB 656 and 657 and
AGPS 50 and 51 “A Mighty
Fortress is Our God”

Real. Present. God.

REAL to God’s Children

Object Lesson/Visual: List safe places: home, church, community “safe” house. Display signs for safe places during weather or other emergencies.

Introduction

It’s important to have safe places. We want our school and church to always be safe for every child. We want every home to be safe for every child. When there are storm warnings, we go to safe places. We are often reminded by police departments to be safe and stay away from strangers.

We pray that all of you will be safe as we leave the school for a variety of summer activities.

PRESENT in the Word

We have read Psalm 46 several times this school year. Just as we began the year with this psalm, we will conclude the year with this psalm. We remember that this was a favorite psalm of Martin Luther during the time of the Reformation. Martin Luther trusted that God would keep him safe.

Psalm 46 describes some scenes where one may not feel safe: waters roaring, mountains trembling, nations raging, wars and chariots of fire. Some of these scenes still frighten us. Storms and earthquakes still happen. We watch the news and see wars and disagreements. The sinful world is a frightening place.

God’s presence drives away our fears. The resurrected Jesus comes to the frightened disciples and says, “Peace be with you.” Many times God’s Word shares the

message, “Fear not.” The God of Jacob, the God of the Old Testament writers of the Psalms, is still with us. The resurrected Jesus leaves His disciples and us with the promise, “I am with you always.”

Remember the safe places? Psalm 46 describes our God as a “fortress.” A fortress was a safe place — often high on a hill with high and strong walls. The king and those behind the fortress were safe from the enemy. Our God is a “mighty fortress.” He is a safe place. He brings us to the safety of His Word. He brings us to the safety of His Church. Be safe in Jesus’ name.

GOD Hears Our Prayers

Thank You Jesus for Your protection during this school year. As You promised, You have been with us. You have been our fortress in this place. We know that You will go with each of us into our summer adventures. Keep us in Your care. As we continue to learn Your Word and gather for worship this summer, keep us in Your grace. Amen.

Exploring the Psalm and the Theme of the Week

- Talk about summer safety: pool, weather, etc.
- Have students reflect: “God kept me safe when ...”



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