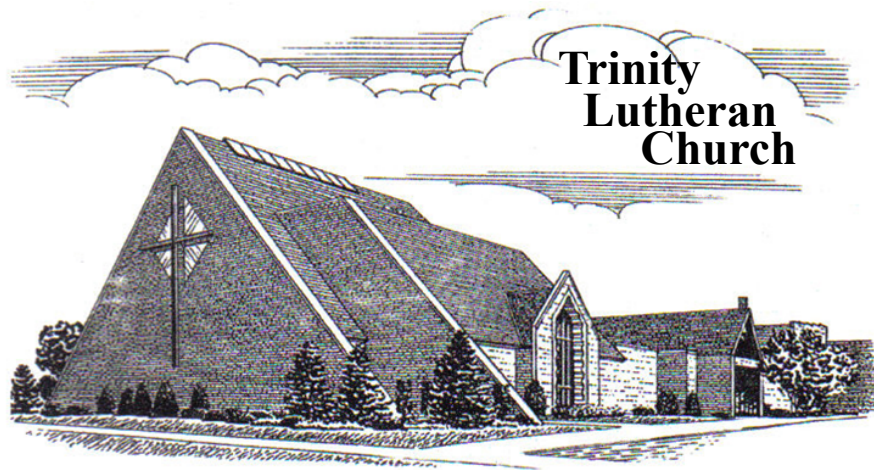


## **Proper 12**



**July 20-26, 2026**

# Weekly Outline

## **Invocation**

L: You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you,

**C: because he trusts in you.**

L: Almighty Father, Lord of heaven and earth, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us after your great goodness; according to the multitude of your mercies, do away our offenses; wash us thoroughly from our wickedness, and cleanse us from our sins; for Jesus' sake,

**C: Amen.**

## **Scripture**

**July 20: Deuteronomy 7:6-9**

**July 22: Romans 8:28-39**

**July 24: Matthew 13:44-52**

## **Devotion**

### **Closing Prayer**

L: I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me.

**C: Amen.**

## Monday

Because God made us rational creatures, we are driven to look for the reason behind everything. Every child's first question is, "Why?" for exactly this reason. Even before his prefrontal cortex is fully formed, he expects there to be a reason behind everything. One reason the Gospel can be hard to accept is because we look to heaven and ask, "Why?" only to get an answer that doesn't make sense.

In Deuteronomy 7, Moses reminds Israel, "You are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." Those are good things. Israel has been chosen for holiness. God has made them his treasured possession. But why? Surely, they must be particularly virtuous, unusually large as a nation, very powerful compared to the people around them. Nope. Moses continues, "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all people. But it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers." There was no reason for God to choose Israel to be his chosen people. Though Moses does mention their fathers, such as Abraham, there was no reason for God to choose them either. Abraham appears in Genesis 12 with no introduction, as though God simply looked down from heaven and selected him for no reason at all. There is no answer to "Why?" there is only grace.

Grace frustrates human reason because it rejects every attempt to find a reason that God would choose us for salvation. He didn't send his Son into the world because of any merit or worthiness in us. We are poor, miserable sinners. But he chose us for salvation for one reason only: grace. Grace is not an answer to "Why?" but it is God's gift to the undeserving. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Wednesday

The most popular verse in the Bible is John 3:16, but Romans 8:28 can't be far behind: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." That verse has comforted millions of people in their suffering with the hope that no matter what they are going through, God will work it out for good. The question, though, is this, "What good is God working out?"

When we think of the good that God is working out, we usually limit ourselves to a good that we think is realistic. For example, imagine a young girl who loves running. But she is in an accident and loses a leg. A horrible thing! But being forced to learn to run all over again using a prosthetic, she becomes a testament to tenacity, grit, and hope. She becomes the embodiment of everything that is great about sports. We would rejoice and say, "Look at how God has worked good out of evil!" But wouldn't it still be better if she had her real leg? That's the problem with how we often treat this verse. The good that we can see is always limited to what is humanly possible. We have this great promise, but we don't have the faith to imagine anything beyond what we can already expect.

Thankfully, God's thoughts are not our thoughts. When Paul promises us that God works all things together for good, the good he has in mind is salvation, the greatest good of all (Romans 8:29-30). So why limit our hope to the good that we can imagine? In every difficulty, in every disaster, in every trouble, God is working out glory. Those limited goods we see are like rays of light meant to lift our eyes to heaven, where we see Christ, enthroned in glory, and the promise that we will soon join him. God does indeed work out all things for that perfect good. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Friday

The Gospel readings over the last few weeks have emphasized repentance and the difficulty of finding salvation. While it's true that salvation is a free gift of God's grace, it's also true that entering the kingdom of heaven is more difficult than a camel passing through the eye of a needle. Faith in Christ should reorient all of life towards God. That process is painful. But even in that struggle, we must never forget that salvation is also a joyful surprise.

Jesus says to us, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Here, Jesus maintains the demand that we give up our lives in this world to enter the kingdom. The man does sell all that he has after all. But this is not an act of sorrow. It's joy, because he has stumbled across the great treasure of eternity while still on earth. What are all his goods in comparison to that? Again, Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Trade all your goods for one pearl? How foolish! Except the pearl he purchased was worth even more, for what did he own that was equal in value to eternal life? The merchant found the treasure of the kingdom at bargain basement prices, and he knew it.

The great surprise of life in this world is that we find the kingdom of heaven in it. One wouldn't expect by watching the news that God had drawn so close to us. No man would consider in the hum-drum of everyday life that eternity was buried in his backyard. One wouldn't guess as he lays in a hospital bed that there is a greater and better life still to be had. But there is. The kingdom of heaven has drawn close to us in Christ. It is our joyful surprise. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Evening Prayer**

You may pray one or more of the following after dinner or before bed:

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day; and I pray you that you would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.



Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take; and this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.



Visit, O Lord, our home, and drive from it all the snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell in it to preserve us in peace, and may your blessing be upon us evermore; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

## **A Parent's Blessing**

You may place your hand on the head of your child before kissing them goodnight and say:

My loved one, rest securely,  
for God this night will surely  
from peril guard your head.  
Sweet slumbers may he send you  
and bid his hosts attend you  
and through the night watch o'er your bed. Amen.

## Memory Verse

