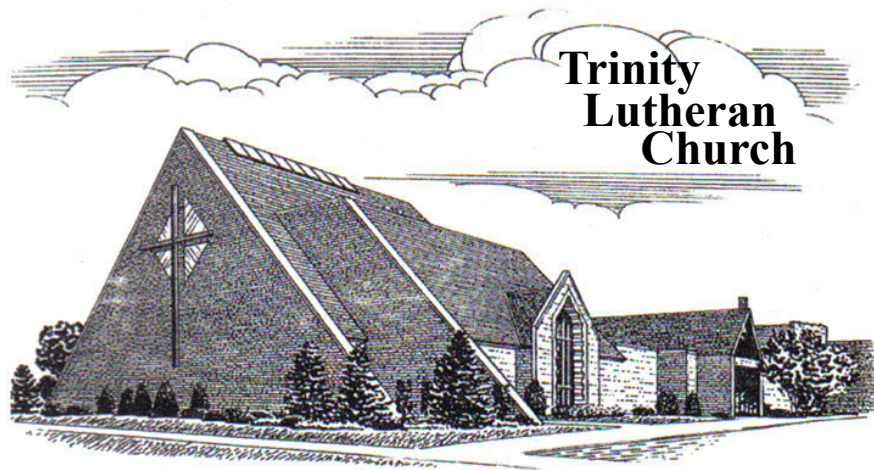


Proper 16



Aug 17-Aug 23, 2026

Weekly Outline

Invocation

L: O Lord, open my lips,

C: and my mouth shall declare your praise.

L: Almighty, everlasting God, Lord, heavenly Father, whose Word is a lamp to our feet and a light on our way: Open and enlighten my mind that I may understand thy Word purely, clearly, and devoutly, and then, having understood it aright, fashion my life in accord with it, in order that I may never displease thy majesty, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

Scripture

Aug 17: Isaiah 51:1-6

Aug 19: Romans 11:33-12:8

Aug 21: Matthew 16:13-20

Devotion

Closing Prayer

L: Faithful God, whose mercies are new to us every morning, we humbly pray that you would look upon us in mercy and renew us by your Holy Spirit. Keep safe our going out and our coming in, and let your blessing remain with us throughout this day.

Preserve us in your righteousness, and grant us a portion in that eternal life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

C: Amen.

Monday

Life can get very discouraging very quickly, even for a person of faith. I remember reading *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins a few years ago. He reasoned that the probability of God's existence was so low that all religions must be built on a lie. Reading a book like that is to subject yourself to great discouragement. But who needs to read to be discouraged? Our world continues to groan with wars and rumors of wars, plagues, famines, and the growth of sin with no end in sight. Where is Jesus when we need so much? Why hasn't he returned? Discouraging.

But what God said to Israel in our Old Testament reading is for us as well. He says, "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him." God points his people to his faithfulness in the past. When Abraham received God's promise, how likely was it that he would become the father of many nations? Zero. Sarah was barren and he was almost 100. But God kept his word. He was faithful to what he had promised and gave Abraham a son, Isaac. To his discouraged people, God says, "Look at how faithful I have been in the past; trust me in the present."

Whenever we grow discouraged, the best thing we can do is look to God's acts in the past. Thousands of years after he promised to bless all nations through Abraham's offspring, the fulfillment of that promise was born, Jesus Christ, who suffered, bled, and died so that God would keep his word. He has proven himself faithful. Do you really think that his faithfulness will fail now? So when you feel yourself discouraged, look to Christ. He is the fulfillment of God's faithfulness—past, present, and future. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wednesday

Public education over the last decade has become quite a fight. For example, just last year, the Supreme Court ruled that a county in Maryland must permit parents to opt out of elementary grade English lessons featuring LGBTQ books. Previously, the county had tried to force every child to attend those classes even over religious objections. Christians see problems like this in our educational system, but we shouldn't focus solely on that. Public schools are merely a reflection of current values. The true problem is that the values we practice are sinful. Every single person participates in that problem.

That is why Paul writes in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." When Eve ate the forbidden fruit, she determined that her ways were higher than God's ways; her actions better than God's Word. The result is the mess we find ourselves in today. All of us participate in that mess when we live out values that are contrary to God's will. To fix that mess, we must present ourselves to God as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1), so he can transform our minds. Only he can make us righteous, not only teaching us to discern between good and evil, but enabling us to do it.

The thing that transforms our minds is the Word of God. Through God's Word, we learn that the values we once held were upside down. That the things we once cherished were actually destructive, and that what we once applauded were abominations in the sight of God. As we grow in our knowledge of God under the influence of the Spirit, we grow in our ability to offer ourselves as living sacrifices through thanks, praise, and works that are pleasing in his sight. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friday

I once had a very sincere man come up to me and say, "Pastor, I know that not enough men are entering ministry and that the LCMS does not allow women to be pastors. Do you think that is something we will have to revisit in the future to get more pastors?" Again, this was a sincere Christian man, but his question exposes an underlying assumption about the church. That the church isn't really God's institution; it's ours. And because of that, we can change doctrine if we need to when that doctrine is no longer convenient. The pressure to change the historic teachings of the church will only grow as the church finds itself increasingly out of step with modern times. A quick fix would be to alter the teachings of the church to make them acceptable to new generations. But then, whose church is it? Christ's or ours?

In Matthew 16, Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" His disciples respond, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." But then Jesus asks, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter responds, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." It's on this confession that the church is built. The foundation of the church is Christ. The message of the church is the Gospel of Christ. The doctrines of the church are the teachings of Christ. He is the church's one foundation. Him, and him alone.

No matter how difficult or unpopular the doctrines of the church may prove, they must never be altered by man. The church in America is under intense pressure to change its teachings to fit modern values. Many already have! But the church does not have the authority to change its own foundation. What Christ has taught is what the church must teach, or it is no longer the church. But the church that stands on Christ receives this promise, "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." 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

MEMORY VERSE

THIS IS LOVE, that we
walk according to his
commandments; this is
the commandment, just
as you have heard from
the beginning, so that
YOU SHOULD WALK IN IT.

— 2 JOHN 6 —

