

EVENING MEDITATION

Hymn: 305 St. 1-2 –From Depth's of Woe I Cry to You

**From depths of woe I cry to you;
Lord, hear me, I implore you.
Bend down your gracious ear to me;
My prayer let come before you.
If you kept record of my sin
And held against me what I've been,
How could I stand before you?**

**Your love and grace alone avail
To blot out my transgression.
The best and holiest deeds must fail
To break sin's dread oppression.
Before you none can boasting stand,
But all must fear your strict demand
And live alone by mercy.**

Responses:

Stay with us for it is evening; the day is almost over. Luke 24:29
Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:20

Your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.
The LORD will guide you always. Isaiah 58:10-11

Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more;
The Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. Isaiah 60:20

On no day will the gates of the Holy City ever be shut,
for there will be no night there. Revelation 21:25

Psalms: 51:1-6

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
- ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,

so that you are proved right when you speak
and justified when you judge.

⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Reading: Luke 1:1-25

Introduction

1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

⁵ In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. ⁶ Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. ⁷ But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

⁸ Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. ¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. ¹⁶ Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

¹⁸ Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

¹⁹ The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. ²⁰ And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."

²¹ Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. ²² When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

²³ When his time of service was completed, he returned home. ²⁴ After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. ²⁵ “The Lord has done this for me,” she said. “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

Confession of Faith:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn: 32 – When Sinners See Their Lost Condition

**When sinners see their lost condition
And feel the pressing load of sin
And Jesus comes on his blest mission
To heal the sin-sick heart within,
All grief must flee before his grace,
And joy divine will take its place.**

**When Jesus enters meek and lowly
To fill the home with sweetest peace,
When hearts have felt his blessing holy
And found from sin complete release,
Then calm and joy within shall reign,
And hearts divided love again.**

**When Jesus enters land and nation
And changes people with his love,
When, yielding to his kind persuasion,
Our hearts his truth and blessing prove,
Then shall our life on earth be blest;
The peace of God on us shall rest.**

**When Jesus comes -- O blessed story --
He works a change in heart and life;
God's kingdom comes with pow'r and glory
To young and old, to man and wife.
Through sacrament and living Word
Faith, love, and hope are now conferred.**

**Oh, may he soon to ev'ry nation
Find entrance where he is unknown,
With life and light and free salvation,
That Satan's pow'r be overthrown,
And healing to all hearts may come
In heathen land and Christian home!**

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for forgiving me all my sins by sending Jesus on that first Christmas. But I also thank you for making known to me my deep need of forgiveness. Through your Holy Spirit, prepare my heart for the Christ child by turning me away from sin in repentance towards the peace and joy of your forgiveness and love. Amen.

Luther's Evening Prayer:

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day. Forgive me all my sins, and graciously keep me this night. Into your hands I commend 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.

Blessing:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.