**November 1**

**READ:** Exodus 15:1-18 and Hosea 8-10

**MARK:** “The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation” (Ex. 15:2).

**LEARN:** What is salvation? To be *saved* us from something/someone. How does God save us? Jesus died on the cross to save us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. This is true, but in the OT “salvation” has another meaning, too. As you read the OT, you’ll find that the people of Israel constantly recount the great moment of their salvation: when God brought them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. He saved them from Pharaoh, slavery, and captivity.

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** When God’s people suffered, they looked back to the great moment when God saved them and trusted him to do the same again. When God’s people went astray, the prophets called them back on the basis of Exodus: the Lord claimed you and brought you into the Promised Land, so stop rebelling against him. When God gave the Ten Commandments, he did so *on the basis of his salvation*: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me…” (Ex. 20:2-3). As we suffer, go astray, and reflect on God’s Law, we, too look back to God’s great moment of salvation. But we NT people look back to a different event: the cross and empty tomb. It is through these that God has chiefly saved us. Everything else was foreshadowing this and leading up to it.

**PRAY:** Lord God, heavenly Father, you have brought us out of the domain of darkness and death, and you have brought us into your kingdom of light and life. Thank you for saving us. Help us to keep your salvation ever before us, that we might know ourselves to be your people and you to be our God. Amen.

**November 2**

**READ:** Psalm 122 and Hosea 11-14

**MARK:** “Out of Egypt I called my son” (Hos. 11:1) is quoted in Matthew 2:15 as a prophecy that Jesus would flee from Herod to Egypt and then return.

**LEARN:** Hosea is the last prophet to preach to Israel (the Northern Kingdom) before Assyria conquered them and carted them off into exile. Even after God sent numerous prophets to call his people to return to him and receive mercy, his people rejected him.

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** Reflecting on this psalm, Luther notes that, seeking God’s Word and being unable to find it, the Israelites put their faith in the city much like many Catholics in his day put their trust in visiting holy relics and sites. “But the holy church is our Jerusalem, and Christ is our temple, city, altar, and mercy seat, to which, from which, and with which we seek and hear his Word.”

**PRAY:** O Lord, make us glad to come to your house, to worship before you, to give you offerings of thanksgiving for the countless blessings you give us every day. Teach us to love you, your presence, and your gifts of Word and Sacrament. Amen.

**November 3**

**READ:** Psalm 123 and Joel

**MARK:** “’Yet even now’ declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.’ Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and he relents over disaster” (Joel 2:12-13).

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit… And everyone who call son the name of the Lord will be saved” (Joel 2:28-29, 32).

**LEARN:** In the OT, the Holy Spirit comes on select individuals: prophets, priests, kings, and judges. Through Joel, God promises a universal outpouring of the Spirit. Peter quotes this in Acts 2 and then says, “Repent and be baptized… and *you* shall receive the Holy Spirit.” Yes you. Jesus’ work was finished on the cross. The Spirit is now being poured out on all flesh. Through repentance and baptism, you now, all of you, can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for young and old, near and far off, Jews and Gentiles alike.

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** The repentance that Joel calls God’s people to is not merely turning away from sin. To only turn *away* from something is to still have little idea where to go. Rather, we are to return to a God who is gracious and merciful, who shows loving kindness.

**PRAY:** Lord God, you have graciously poured out your Spirit on all flesh. You have not withheld even your Spirit from us. You do, indeed, graciously give us all things. You do make us holy; you make us clean and able to approach you. Your Spirit even dwells within us! By the power of your Spirit, continually create in us new and clean hearts. Change us to be like your Son. Amen.

**November 4**

**READ:** Psalm 124 and Amos 1-5

**MARK:** “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:21-24).

**LEARN:** The prophet Amos begins preaching at the shrine of Bethel (1 of the 2 golden calf shrines Jeroboam I set up so his people didn’t have to worship down in Jerusalem). What does he preach? “Oh, Israel: your enemies are in for it. They are wicked, and God is going to bring swift vengeance.” He does this for 6 surrounding nations, one by one. You can imagine people standing there saying, “Yeah, preach it brother! Give it to them! Let ‘em have it!” Then Amos names Judah as the 7th nation to be judged. Most likely, they thought that was all. 7 is the number of completion, after all. But then he finishes by saying that the worst judgment will fall on *you*, Israel!

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** Amos 1-2 reminds me of Romans 1-2. Paul begins by talking about how terrible the pagan Gentiles are; God gives them over to their depravity. But then comes the twist: “Therefore *you* have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself because you, the judge, practice the very same things.” It’s not just “those people” out there that you have to worry about: “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:5).

**PRAY:** Lord, when we are tempted to think better of yourself than we ought, bring to our mind your Son on the cross. Show us his blood, his lifeless corpse; and in so doing show us the best that we have to offer: that is worth death and hell. Show us your grace which covers every part of us and washes away all pride and pretension. Amen.

**November 5**

**READ:** Psalm 125 and Amos 6-9

**MARK:** “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore” (Ps. 125:1-2).

**LEARN:** Of the 5 visions Amos brings up in chp. 7-9, let’s talk about the most famous the one: the plumb line. This is a weight on a string. You hold it up to a wall, drop the weight, and make sure the line is straight (neither leaning against the wall nor falling away from it). If this is the case, the wall is straight and good to go. Amos’ image is this: God takes a plumb line and holds it up next to a wall (Israel), and the wall is crooked. The wall therefore must collapse, and it will collapse.

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** Even with all of God’s heavy-handed Law preaching through Amos, he ends with hope: a promise restoration (still within the Davidic covenant!) and a bountiful harvest.

**PRAY:** Lord God, the day is coming when you will hold up the plumb line to all people and judge their integrity. And yet you have promised that when you judge us you find us innocent and good on account of your Son. Defend us in this faith. Guard us against all schemes of the devil and all his temptations of doubt. Hear us for the sake of your Son. Amen.

**November 6**

**READ:** Psalm 126 and Obadiah, Jonah

**MARK:** Jonah’s brief message: “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4). The king’s response ends, “Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish” (Jonah 3:9).

**LEARN:** Several of the “Minor Prophets” (the briefer prophetic writings) are not directed to God’s people (Israel or Judah) at all, but to particular other nations. Obadiah (read: “Oh bad Edom”) is written to the people of Edom who watched and waited for Jerusalem to fall and then took advantage of it. Jonah’s message is for Nineveh, the distant capital of the pagan empire of Assyria.

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** What is Jonah’s complaint at the end of his story? He didn’t want to proclaim the Word of the Lord to Nineveh because he knew that the Lord would have mercy on them if they repented—and so he did. Jonah wanted to prevent God from keeping his promise to Abraham to bless all the nations if those nations included the despicable Assyria. As it turns out, God really does want you to shine the light to the nations instead of hording it.

**PRAY:** Great God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You desire that all people be baptized and saved from eternal death. You do not desire the death of one transgressor, but that sinners should turn from their evil ways and live with You in eternity. I humbly ask You to remember in mercy and love the unbelievers in this land of ours. Remember those who have never heard the way of salvation, and lead them to the knowledge of the truth of Jesus Christ. Grant that the messengers of Your Gospel may reach many and bring them the sweet tidings of Your redeeming grace. Let the Spirit of truth work through the Holy Scriptures to bring the forgiveness of sins to the lost. I commend Your messengers to Your heavenly protection, and I ask You to make powerful the Word they proclaim to those who are outside the faith. Gather the lost into the fold of the Good Shepherd of our souls. I ask this in the name of our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen. —*Lutheran Book of Prayer*

**November 7**

**READ:** Psalm 127 and Micah 1-3

**MARK:** “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Ps. 127:1). “Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry ‘Peace’ when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths…” (Micah 3:5).

**LEARN:** The language in Micah is quite judicial. He acts, in a sense, as the prosecuting attorney on behalf of the Lord. His main concern is social injustice: usury, especially in rural areas. The farmers or land owners were being bought out and displaced by the rich.

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** How does God feel about children—about babies? Throughout Scripture, e.g. in Ps. 127:3-5, we find God saying only good things about children. They are a blessing. They are a prize. They are your heritage. They are your retirement plan. They are typically the natural result of marriage. They are to be prayed for. They are a gift directly from God; he closes and opens the womb. What we do *not* find in Scripture, however, are encouragements to inflict the curse of barrenness upon yourself or to prevent conception (see Genesis 38:9-10!), or any language about children being an undue burden. People often use the excuse, “God gave us a brain, so we should discern…” but this, too, is not explicitly biblical. If you find this to be incorrect, please let me know. –Pastor Bauer

**PRAY:** O Lord, You have made the young so beautiful; even their awkwardness has in it a grace we delight to see. Their never-ending laughter, their rippling, eddying energy—they amaze us still and stir us strangely with memories of half-forgotten freedoms, of unsagging drives of constant power; with memories of a time when we did not need to portion out our efforts and ration our spurts. We thank You for the beauty they bring into our ebbing days, for the memories they quicken, for the promise that their simply being speaks. Surely You have not written off a world that has such power and beauty in it. You have not said no to man when he can live anew, so mightily and freshly, in his children. We cannot call them ours because we begot them and bore them; *You* have created them, and You will bless them, and You will bless the world that is their home, and You will bless us through them too. O Lord, there they are, the young: so vulnerable, so liable to hurt, so prone to injury, so open to the backlash of melancholy and melancholy’s close cousin: self-pity; so prone to draw in upon themselves, to think themselves a kind of class apart, to distrust and ignore all ages but their own; so intent on gulping experience, all experience, any experience; so eager to shed the innocence that is their one-time, one-time-only glory; so bent on a sophistication they will find too dearly bought; so impatient to have done with, to have lost what a man can never find again all his days. O Lord, give us grace to love them when they irritate us most; give us wisdom, give us Your Spirit, give us words that will not stop at their ears. O Lord, by us or by whatever secret ways You have, teach them to take delight in the walls which our love and Yours have built to trap the sunlight for them, the sunlight young plants need; teach them to value love in all its forms, in all the sterner ways that love must go if it be love indeed; teach them to know the love that lives and works in discipline, in the clear cup of tradition’s wholesome drink, in measure and restraint, in the settled comeliness of courteous form. O Lord, forgive them the unconscious harshness of their willful ways. Take them up into Your kind, almighty hands. Bless them and keep them. Let their quick devotion be acceptable: a morning scent, an easy song, an improvised and unrepeatable melody to Your glory. Amen. —Martin Franzmann, *Pray for Joy*

**November 8**

**READ:** Psalm 128 and Micah 4-7

**MARK:** “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel” (Micah 5:2). “With what shall I come before the Lord…? …He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:6, 8).

**LEARN:** Micah has two notable predictions. First, he identifies that Babylon will carry Judah into exile some 100 years before Babylon is even a world power. Second, he identifies the place of the Messiah’s birth to be Bethlehem. This passage is what the chief priests referenced when answering Herod and the magi about where the king of the Jews was to be born (Matthew 2:1-6).

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** Luther on Ps. 128: “The 128th psalm is a psalm of comfort in which the estate of marriage is splendidly praised. Marriage partners are given this great comfort: They should not look only at the trouble, work, discouragement, and discomfort they feel and experience in marriage, but rather the gracious will of God toward them, that their station and life are a gracious creation of God and are blessed by him. Therefore marriage is dear to him, and he gives it much more happiness and blessing than discomfort, if only one believes and adapts oneself to marriage and faithfully remains within it. Therefore in the beginning and middle of the psalm it says, ‘Those who fear the Lord…’ When the godless go astray, on the other hand, it is no surprise.”

**PRAY:** Lord God, bless your holy estate of marriage, and grant that all who live in it might find that they are, in fact, a shadow of the true marriage of the Son and his bride the Church. Strengthen families, that they be united in love and wholly devoted to one another. Amen.

**November 9**

**READ:** Psalm 129 and Nahum

**MARK:** “The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty” (Nahum 1:1-2).

**LEARN:** Jonah visited Nineveh some 100 years before Nahum proclaims this word of the Lord. Under Jonah’s ministry they repented, but soon they again fell away into idolatry. Jonah’s word brought repentance; Nahum’s word seals the judgment.

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** When Luther reflects on Ps. 129, he speaks of how often Israel was oppressed by the surrounding nations, as recorded in Kings and Chronicles. The psalmist curses these nations, that they would wither up and not survive. This is, in the end, how it turned out: Israel remained (now in the Church), and the oppressing nations were destroyed. But we will remain forever.

**PRAY:** Lord God, defend your Church, that we may be strengthened and upheld in every good deed. Grant us victory over the evil powers which surround us, and grant us eternal life as you have promised. Amen.

**November 10**

**READ:** Psalm 130 and Habakkuk

**MARK:** “The one who by faith is righteous shall live” (Hab. 2:4; see Romans 1:17). “If you, O Lord, should make iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared” (Ps. 130:3-4).

**LEARN:** Habakkuk was a 7th century BC prophet in Judah, shortly before God would send the Babylonians to carry God’s people off into exile. Habakkuk really wrestled with this. His book is set up as him asking questions and God answering. One of the main things to trouble Habakkuk is that God would use the Babylonians—these evil pagans—to carry out his justice against his own people. That sure doesn’t seem just! The Lord reminds Habakkuk that he does not desert his people—he does not desert the righteous. In fact, he will preserve a righteous remnant in Babylon. Who are the righteous? They are those who have faith, like it always has been (see 2:4).

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** The fact that God works through what we would call evil means has always troubled humanity, ever since the Fall. How can God carry out his plans through the Babylonians? How can he let Satan loose to just about destroy Job? Why does he allow cancer, and heartache, and poverty, and how does Saint Paul have the boldness to say that “for those who love God all things work together for good” (Romans 8:28)? It sure doesn’t feel good! Our answer is twofold. First, God is God, and we are not. We shouldn’t expect to fully comprehend him, and he does not take orders from us but the other way around. Second, as Joseph reflects upon his brothers’ hatred, “you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20). That is, even when people do evil things and when this broken world has its broken way with us, God is still in control, and he desires and pursues our good—whether we can see it or not.

**PRAY:** O Lord, we are men of flickering faith; we do not have the courage to put You to the test, to take You at your word, to give You what is Yours, that You may open the windows of heaven and pour down on us Your overflowing blessing; we doubt that Your heart is as great and good as Your strong Word would make us believe, that the riches of Your glory in Christ Jesus will supply our every need. O Lord, we are men of half faith, of cloven faith, half given to You, half saved up for ourselves, faith that would tempt You, experiment with You, use You, to entrench us in our ways, to serve our ends, to give us greater greatness than You have given us when You made us sons of God. Forgive us, Lord. Teach us, O Lord. Let Your Spirit blow and make our faith burn steady and clear, a flame upon Your altar; let Your Spirit make our believing whole and wholly sane, a monomania of trust in You, merely suspended from Your high sustaining Word. Teach us to walk as Your Son walked on the earth, through ministry to death, through death to life and glory at Your right hand. Through Him we pray. Amen. –Martin Franzmann

**November 11**

**READ:** Psalm 131 and Zephaniah

**MARK:** “Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth” (Zeph. 3:19).

**LEARN:** Zephaniah also preaches in Judah just prior to their exile. The judgment is clear: God will destroy Jerusalem because of their apostasy, using Babylon. What is distinctive in Zephaniah is that God’s judgment is portrayed not only as punishment, but as corrective. God will use this not only to punish his people for their sin, but to cause them to repent. The fire will be a refining fire for the remnant whom he will preserve and bring back.

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** Repeat and meditate upon Psalm 131. Prepare yourself for the Lord’s guiding.

**PRAY:** O God, in you we trust. In you we hope. For you have promised, and you have fulfilled. You have said, and you have done. You keep your Word; teach us to keep it, as well. Amen.

**November 12**

**READ:** Psalm 132 and Haggai

**MARK:** “Consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes” (Hag. 1:5-6).

**LEARN:** When the first group of exiles returned from Babylon to Jerusalem in 538 BC, they started to rebuild the Temple. However, they soon gave up. God used the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to inspire them to continue and finish this work. Why should God’s people live in “paneled houses” while his house was left in ruins?

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** The Temple was the place where God had chosen to dwell among his people. His presence was there. His promises were there. To rebuild the Temple was to, in a sense, renew or rededicate themselves to God’s covenant with them. Every time we enter God’s holy presence in the Divine Service, we do the same.

**PRAY:** Lord, teach us sacredness. Help us know what it is to be set apart, to be holy, to be far greater than the common things of this world. For thus you have made your Temple, your altar, and your people. Amen.

**November 13**

**READ:** Psalm 133 and Zechariah 1-5

**MARK:** “Thus declares the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 1:3). Then he said to me, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’” (Zech. 4:6-7).

**LEARN:** *TLSB* on Zechariah: “A measuring line and filthy garments made pure, a golden lampstand and a flying scroll, a gilded crown and a promise from God—vision by vision, the Lord raised up the second temple to welcome the exiles home and to hold the promise of His presence. The visions that the Lord gave to Zechariah overtook the wandering Judeans and settled their hearts in Zion. This humble beginning would hail the coming of a lowly King, who would fulfill the old covenant and establish an unbounded kingdom wholly consecrated to the Lord.”

**INWARDLY DIGEST:** How good it is, indeed, when brothers dwell in unity. When sisters bond in sincerity. When Christians speak in unison, sing in harmony, and receive the Sacrament in adjacent iteration.

**PRAY:** O Lord, you have promised that you will gather us from the ends of the earth to celebrate at your feast. And as if that weren’t enough, you even gather us now at your table. Grow within us unity and harmony, that we might truly be the body of Christ who gather around the body of Christ and together receive the body of Christ. Amen.

**November 14**

**READ:** Psalm 134 and Zechariah 6-10

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 15**

**READ:** Psalm 135 and Zechariah 11-14

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 16**

**READ:** Psalm 136 and Malachi

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 17**

**READ:** Psalm 137 and Matthew 1-2

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 18**

**READ:** Psalm 138 and Matthew 3-4

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 19**

**READ:** Psalm 139 and Matthew 5-6

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 20**

**READ:** Psalm 140 and Matthew 7-8

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 21**

**READ:** Psalm 141 and Matthew 9-10

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 22**

**READ:** Psalm 142 and Matthew 11-12

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 23**

**READ:** Psalm 143 and Matthew 13-14

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 24**

**READ:** Psalm 144 and Matthew 15-16

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 25**

**READ:** Psalm 145 and Matthew 17-18

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 26**

**READ:** Psalm 146 and Matthew 19-20

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 27**

**READ:** Psalm 147 and Matthew 21-22

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 28**

**READ:** Psalm 148 and Matthew 23-24

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 29**

**READ:** Psalm 149-150 and Matthew 25-26

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**

**November 30**

**READ:** Exodus 15:1-18 and Matthew 27-28

**MARK:**

**LEARN:**

**INWARDLY DIGEST:**

**PRAY:**