

Thoughts on the Readings

The Common Thread

This is why we know of Jesus today. Long ago, at his Father's bidding, he came to earth to be crucified. More specifically, he lived among us so that he would die for our sins, his body broken and his blood spilled in order that God's forgiving grace could be made available to all who believe. In order for this to happen, God had to provide his grace in a just manner; the penalty of the sin of a world had to be paid. So both God and humanity must die: a human because we sinned, and God because he would pay the debt of all. And so, the Son of God became the Son of Man, setting his face like flint, determined to save those who have no strength to save themselves, wasted as they are by sin. As man, he became obedient to God, and suffered every sinner's sentence—death so that we might live. This is why we know of Jesus today.

First Reading - [Isaiah 50:4–9a](#)

Some folks are always looking for explanations. How was the Red Sea parted? How is the bread Christ's body, the wine his blood? How does the Word of God enjoining the water produce a saving baptism? Luther says, "What it will produce is not ours to investigate. It is up to us rather to admonish, to exhort, and to terrify by the Word" (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 17). The Word of God also sustains. It does these things through those who proclaim his word ([Rom. 10:17](#)). The Word of God joins with water and wine and bread, yes, but also with the tongues of people.

The results are not up to us, any more than the explanations. What is up to us is the proclamation. Again, Luther teaches us, "If the Lord prepares the one who teaches, He will also prepare the hearers" (*ibid*). Let us be determined to proclaim this word faithfully. Though some will strike back in disbelief, our purpose, like flint, is then made all the sharper.

Psalm - [Psalm 118:19–26](#)

The old way had gates (plural) of righteousness that the priests would ask to be opened so they could enter to worship the Lord. The new way has a single gate of righteousness. Jesus said that he is the gate or the door ([John 10:9 NIV](#); [John 10:9](#)). Elsewhere in John's Gospel, Jesus said that he is the only way to the Father ([John 14:6](#)). Christ Jesus has become our righteousness ([1 Cor 13:20](#)), the very door of righteousness and salvation through whom we enter into the presence of God. This new day "is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." Rejoice and be glad!

Alternate Psalm: [Psalm 31:9–16](#) The Lord was David's security. See how often he wrote about God being his rock, refuge, and even fortress. He knew his time was in God's hands. Jesus, of course, also knew this truth ([John 2:4](#); [7:6](#), [8](#), [30](#)). We, too, should learn that God is our security. Our times are in his hands and he may yet rescue us from enemies. And when the time is permitted for that last enemy, death, to visit us, we may rest assured that God is still our security. In that hour his face will shine upon us.

Second Reading - [Philippians 2:5–11](#)

When the time came for Jesus to face death and bear our sin, he set his face like flint and humbled himself for our sake and for the sake of God. Who could have foreseen the result? Who can explain it now, except through faith? The result of Christ's resolve was that his trust in the Father had been sure.

Now his name is above all names; every knee will bow to him, and every tongue will confess him as Lord. Just so, the proclaimed word will be realized on that last day.

Gospel - [Matthew 26:1–27:66](#)

During a week when everything may have seemed to be falling apart, God was getting his glory. He was betrayed, yet anointed. In the face of such adversity, Jesus established his holy meal and worshiped with his disciples. He continued to teach his disciples up to the end, now showing them how to pray during tough times and how to face their enemies as friends ([Matt. 26:50](#)). He instructed a feisty disciple on the need to be a peacemaker. Jesus set his face as flint while many around him broke the eighth commandment. He endured wrongful judgment, mistreatment, and shame for the sake of others. He faced government inquisition and the ridicule of its agents. He ministered to the needs of another while he was enduring the agony of crucifixion, and brought at least one to everlasting life ([Matt. 27:54](#)). And, not lastly, he suffered death.

God in Christ accomplished so much at the very end of Jesus' life. From this, we may take many measures of hope. One is that, just when all may seem lost, that our lives may not have amounted to much, God is powerfully at work in our time of greatest weakness. Be encouraged; God will get his glory out of our poor lives, too.