

The Miracles of Jesus

Immanuel Lutheran Church
Sebewaing, Michigan



Advent Devotions 2025
By Pastor Boyer

Dear Reader,

These devotions for Advent touch on some of the miracles that Jesus did during His earthly ministry. God does amazing things while He seeks and saves sinners. These miracles direct us to the miracle of Jesus' birth and death for us. They also show us that He is true God and true man. May these devotions bless you this Advent as you hear of His mercy toward you.

In Jesus,
Pastor Boyer

November 30 - Water to Wine **(John 2.1-11)**

John 2.3 - When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

Jesus turns water to wine, but that was not what his mother expected or wanted. Mary wanted no miracle, but that those who drank all the wine should be reprimanded. They deserved Jesus to show them their fault! Someone should save face for the groom and bride.

But Jesus does the unexpected. This is a theme throughout His miracles. Jesus does more than anyone could ever expect of Him. He takes the water and makes the best wine. His first miracle shows His love and compassion for sinners in need. He also shows that He will follow His mission regardless of what anyone else thinks.

For John this miracle is important. At the cross blood and water will flow from the body of Jesus. This very blood and body Christians feast upon the in Supper. Jesus gives wonderful wine at Cana, but He has better to give to sinners. He gives His life and Himself in the Supper for the forgiveness of sins that you would rejoice in Him.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son turned water to wine. He has done more than for me through His death on the tree. Grant me to rejoice to receive Jesus through Word and Sacrament that my sins would be forgiven in Him. In His Name. Amen.

December 1 – Healing an Official's Son **(John 4.46-53)**

John 4.48 - Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.

Amid the unbelief of so many this man stands out as a faithful witness. He simply believes Jesus' word. His son was sick and at the point of death. Help was needed immediately. But Jesus just speaks.

For this man that word was more than enough. He believed. He knew that because Jesus said so his son would live and recover. As he traveled home the news he received was that his son recovered the very moment Jesus had spoken.

This miracle teaches the power of faith. Faith just believes the words of Jesus and clings to Him. No matter how unlikely or impossible that word might seem, faith trusts. Even more, the miracle shows the power of the word of Jesus. He speaks and it happens.

Jesus speaks you clean. From the cross He grants your sins forgiven. In the Divine service He speaks you clean again and again. Do you believe this His words are powerful and effective? Trust Him who died for you, has compassion on you, and speaks you clean. Come and hear His word of forgiveness.

Prayer: Father, Your Son had compassion on the official and his son by healing him. Jesus heals me through His death on the tree by forgiving my sin and granting me life eternal. Grant me to trust Him alone for my salvation that I would believe and not doubt. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

December 2 – The Large Catch of Fish

(Luke 5.1-11)

Luke 5.5 – And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.”

The crowd was pressing in to hear the word spoken by Jesus. The crush of people must have been difficult to deal with for they all wanted to be as close as possible to hear Jesus. The solution was simple. Jesus got into a boat and had the fishermen put out a little so he could teach the people from the boat.

The fishermen who were in the boat were a captive audience. They had nowhere to go but listened to this teacher. They had front row seats to the most popular teacher. But when Jesus was done teaching He told the fishermen to put out a little and let down their nets.

What does the teacher know about fishing? These guys had been out all night and caught nothing. Should they listen to this teacher? Simon and the others did listen. The nets are let down and an amazing catch follows.

Simon Peter, James, and John left their boats and followed. Their lives would never be the same. They had heard Jesus and would continue to hear Him. Luke records this to show you the way it is with disciples. You hear and you follow. The real miracle is not the catch of fish, but that sinners believe in the Son of God. Faith is created through the Word and sinners come to faith. Here is the miracle!

This is the way it is for you also. Jesus comes to you through His Word and speaks. You hear. You follow. He takes your sins on Himself and dies in your place that you would be saved. He brings you to faith that you would be His and follow Him.

Prayer: Father, Your Son created faith in Peter, James, and John that they would follow and receive Jesus. You have given me faith also that I would do your will. Grant me to be a fisher of men, giving Jesus to all around me. In His Name. Amen.

December 3 – Healing a Man in the Synagogue (Mark 1.21-28, Luke 4.33-37)

Mark 1.23-24 - *And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God."*

Jesus taught in the Synagogue. He taught with authority. But a demon was there to challenge Him. The demon knew Jesus! Do the people know?

The people assume that this is some new teaching. They don't know that this is the same teaching from the beginning. The promise of this was one was from the very beginning. This is the same teaching that crushed the world in a flood, made horrid plagues on Egypt, crumbled armies, saved sinners, gave hope to the barren, and made people bold in God. God has not changed.

God entered His creation in flesh and the demons knew it. Do the people? Do they understand what God is doing? Jesus does these miracles to show who He is and why He has come. He is true God and true man. He has come to save sinners. He shows this with His teaching and miracles.

Do you understand? Jesus has come not just for the demon possessed, but for you. He came to take your sins from you and rescue you from the dominion of the evil one. We, too, should be amazed at the love of God displayed in the person and work of Jesus. His miracles show you how much He loves you.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son saved the man in the Synagogue from the demon. Your Son has rescued me from sin, devil, and death. I give You thanks for the miracles that Jesus did that I would know He is true God and true man, my Savior. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

December 4 – Healing Peter’s Mother-in-Law

(Mark 1.29-31, Matthew 8.14-15, Luke 4.38-39)

Mark 1.31 - *And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.*

From the Synagogue Jesus and the disciples go to Peter and Andrew’s home. Peter’s mother-in-law is there and sick. They tell Jesus about her and He heals her. She gets up and begins to serve them.

Mark tells this in a very matter of fact manner. But the point is clear. Jesus has come to seek and save sinners. He has come to drive out sin that sinners would serve. Simon’s mother-in-law an excellent example of the life of the Christian.

Jesus comes to her. Jesus heals her. Jesus does all for her. She then serves. She serves not because she must understand the law, but because she wants to. She has been served by Jesus and she wants to serve in response to Jesus’ service to her.

Jesus must come to you. He must serve you with forgiveness through His Word. Jesus does exactly this through the Divine Service. And what then should your response be? Should you not serve your neighbor as yourself? The miracle of forgiveness flowing to you from the cross should inspire you to serve others.

This was a powerful example that stuck with Peter. He remembered how his mother-in-law was sick and how Jesus healed her. He remembered her joyful service. So others will take note of the hope you have in Christ. The faith you have can be shown to the world.

Prayer: Father, Your Son healed Peter’s mother-in-law that she would rise and joyfully serve her neighbor. Grant Jesus to serve me through the forgiveness of my sins that I too would serve others. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

December 5 – Healing a Paralytic

(Luke 5.17-26, Matthew 9.1-8, Mark 2.1-12)

Luke 5.20 - *And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.”*

What a faith these friends have! They could have let their paralyzed friend lay there. What hope did he have any more? But, instead, they carried the paralyzed man to Jesus, carried him up onto the roof, and let him down carefully before Jesus. Can you imagine what they were thinking? They knew that Jesus would heal their friend.

But when Jesus saw the man being lowered through the roof He said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” Is that all? After all the man had been through shouldn’t Jesus do more? Jesus does give the man physical healing after the Pharisees question. What is easier to forgive sins or to make the man walk?

It is easier to make the man walk again. To forgive sins is something that only God can do. Jesus shows you what is more important. Physical healing and earthly blessings are secondary. Forgiveness of sins is primary. Physical healing lasts only a time here on earth. Forgiveness lasts eternally and grants one eternal life. What is more valuable?

Learn from the paralyzed man and put your priorities in order. Seek first His Kingdom. Seek the forgiveness of sins from Jesus in the Divine Service. This is the one thing needful. So seek Jesus continually.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son forgave the sins of the paralyzed man. Forgive me also through the death that Jesus died. Grant me to rightly treasure all that Jesus has done for me that I would seek Him always. In His Name. Amen.

December 6 – Healing the Infirm Man at Bethesda (John 5.1-17)

John 5.10 - So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.”

The assumption was that when the water of the pool of Bethesda was stirred up it had healing properties. Whoever got into the water first might just be healed. This man has no one to help him get in the water and he has been waiting by this pool a long time. Jesus heals him with a word.

But what should be obeyed: Jesus or the law? The law forbids work on the Sabbath, but Jesus told the man to get up, take his mat, and walk. The man listened to Jesus, but the Jews disagree. This miracle shows you that Jesus has more power than the law.

It was Jesus who gave the law to Moses on Sinai. The law reveals the character of Jesus and demands perfection. But sinners can’t ever live

up to this standard. Thus, Jesus comes to forgive sinners through His death on the tree. Jesus' work trumps the law.

The Sabbath rest foreshadows Jesus resting, dead, in the tomb on Saturday. Jesus will burst forth from the tomb, alive, on Sunday. Through the death that Jesus died the accusations of the law are overturned. You, who are forgiven in Jesus, can walk all over the law. The stern demands of the law are answered by the sacrifice of Jesus. Now you get to obey the law, not out of compulsion, but out of love for Jesus.

Prayer: Father, Your Son healed the infirm man at Bethesda on the Sabbath. I rejoice that Jesus washed me clean through Baptism and forgave my sins. Grant me to serve others joyfully. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

December 7 – Healing a Man with a Withered Hand (Matthew 12.9-13, Mark 3.1-5, Luke 6.6-11)

Matthew 12.11 – *He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?*

Who wouldn't help an animal in need? Sheep were valuable to farmers and losing would hurt the bottom line. How much more a person! Jesus gladly heals on the Sabbath. But many of the Pharisees do not approve.

This miracle shows you how much Jesus loves sinners. He willingly comes to this man with a withered hand and desires to heal him. Jesus didn't have to heal this man or even talk to him, but Jesus wants to. He seeks and saves sinners.

The man is healed and Jesus takes the heat as the Pharisees conspire against Him. This is the way it is. We are saved and Jesus takes the punishment. We escape the wrath of God and Jesus takes it all for us. He dies under our load of sin and forgives us. It matters not what day of the week it is, Jesus loves you and offers His forgiveness to you. He comes to you through Word and Sacrament to forgive your sins and grant you life.

Why would he do all this for you? He loves you! Is it lawful for Jesus to take all your sins on your and die in your place? No. But He does out of love for you.

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to die in my place. I rejoice that Jesus comes to me so often and forgives my sins. Inspire me with the love Jesus has for me that I would love my neighbor. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

December 8 – Healing a Centurion’s Servant

(Luke 7.1-10, Matthew 8.5-13)

Luke 7.6 – And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.”

This centurion knew exactly who he was; he was not worthy. He was a Gentile and having Jesus, a Jew, come to his house would make Jesus unclean. Say the word, Jesus, and my servant will be healed! This centurion has great faith in what Jesus is able to do.

The centurion knew exactly how it worked. He said a word and someone did it. It was done. So with Jesus. He could just give the command and it would be done. Say that my servant is healed and it would be so. Jesus had not found such great faith.

The centurion’s faith rests on who Jesus is. It was only the officers in the army who could give commands and make them happen. Who can give commands to sickness and make it happen? Only God. The centurion knows that Jesus, God, has power over sickness.

Jesus speaks and it happens. This theme reoccurs in the miracles of Jesus. By the word of His mouth He accomplishes the amazing. Even still today this miracle of the word of Jesus continues. He opens His mouth and forgives your sins. He speaks over water and washes your sins away. He joins Himself to bread and wine and grants you forgiveness. Have faith as the centurion to believe and trust the command of Jesus. He declares your sins forgiven, hear Him and believe.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son healed the centurion’s servant. Jesus heals me through the power of His word as He takes my sins on Himself and pays the price for them. Grant me to trust Jesus and all that He has done for me. In His Name. Amen.

December 9 – Raising the Widows’ Son at Nain

(Luke 7.11-17)

Luke 7.13 – And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.”

Do not weep? Her son had died and they were carrying him out. She was a widow and this was her only son. Do not weep. Why? Jesus has compassion.

What a powerful word- compassion. It comes out of Jesus when He sees sinners suffering. It is love in action. Love for the loveless and helpless. There was nothing this widow could do, nothing the crowd

could do, nothing the dead man could do. Do not weep, Jesus has compassion.

Jesus speaks and the man sits up. Here is love in action. Hope and joy are restored to this family and community.

Do not weep? You are under the shadow of death. The wages of sin is death. You deserve eternal punishment in hell for your sins. Do not weep. Why? Jesus has compassion.

What a powerful action! Such compassion is seen as Jesus dies on the tree. What led Him there? Your sins and His love for you, His compassion. There was nothing you could do, you were dead in your sins and trespasses. Nothing anyone around you could do for you either. Do not weep, Jesus has compassion.

Jesus speaks and you are forgiven. You are raised from the dust of death and granted life. You are alive with Jesus now, right now, through your Baptism into Him. You are restored to a right relationship with your Father. You are set free to serve Him in willing obedience. Why would you do this? Because Jesus has compassion.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Jesus is full of compassion. He raised the man at Nain and He died for all my sins. Grant me to marvel in the compassion of Jesus and rejoice in His mercy. In His Name. Amen.

December 10 – Healing a Demon-Oppressed Man (Matthew 12.22-32, Luke 11.14-23)

Matthew 12.25 – *Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.”*

There are two choices. Either Jesus is of God or He is of the devil. How else can the miracles He does be explained? The Pharisees have their answer; His miracles are from the devil. But that makes no sense. Jesus just cast out a demon from a man who was oppressed. Why would the devil cast out his own?

The Pharisees refuse to see the truth, that Jesus is God. They do not want to relinquish their religious power to anyone else. They are willing to call Jesus the devil. But by whom do their sons cast out demons? If the Pharisees don't know God, standing right before them, who are they following?

Jesus has come to plunder the strong man's house. No one else could plunder the devil's kingdom and rescue sinners; only God. For this purpose Jesus has come. The demons flee before Him while men plot to kill Him.

Do you see the truth. Jesus is God. He came to take on the sins of sinners and pay the full price them on the tree. Through His death He rescues sinners from the devil's kingdom. See the miracles He does in your life. Does He not forgive you? Does He not drive the devil far from you? Does He not feed you with His Supper? His kingdom is not divided but given to you through His death.

Prayer: Father, Your Son is indeed true God. He has died in my place under the law and forgives me. Give me times and places to confess all that Jesus has done for me. In His Name. Amen.

December 11 - Calming a Storm **(Mark 4.35-41, Matthew 8.18-27, Luke 8.22-25)**

Mark 4.38 – *But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”*

Odd, isn't it? The fishermen are terrified and the carpenter is asleep on the cushion. Shouldn't those strong, experienced, fishermen put on a brave face at least? But this must have been the worst storm they'd seen. They knew the truth- the boat was going down into the chaos of the sea. There was nothing they could do to stop it from happening.

So they woke up the carpenter. Doesn't He care that they are perishing? Of course He does. He calms the wind and waves with a word. Why were they so afraid? Didn't they know that Jesus had power over wind and wave? Didn't they know that He created the sea and all in it. At the word from Him the sea was made and could be calmed. They had no faith.

The miracles of Jesus remind you who is in control; it's Jesus. Amid the storms of life He is in complete control. While Peter and Andrew were terrified, Jesus was in control. While the powers of evil raged around the cross, Jesus was in complete control. And amid all the turmoil in your life, Jesus is in complete control. He knows what is best and invites you, as He invited the disciples, to simply trust Him. He is able to calm the storms if He so desires.

But often those storms of life force us to go to Jesus. The disciples had no other choice, so they went to Jesus. Amid sickness, suffering, even death we may have no choice but Jesus. Our difficulties push us to Jesus, to His word, to His love. Let us then trust Him who loves for us and died for us that amid turmoil we would cling to Him alone.

Prayer: Father, Your Son calmed the storm. He knows all that I am going through and works for my best in every situation. Grant me to trust His goodness and love, clinging to Him alone for my salvation. In His Name. Amen.

December 12 – Healing a Woman with an Issue of Blood (Matthew 9.20-22, Mark 5.25-34, Luke 8.43-48)

Matthew 9.21 – *For she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.”*

That was not the way it worked in Jesus’ day. For someone unclean to touch someone else, the unclean made the clean person unclean. The touch of an unclean does not cleanse by touching another. But with Jesus all this is turned on its head.

Jesus enters places where there are unclean demons, or sickness, or even death and Jesus is not made unclean. Instead, Jesus cleanses those places and those people. Sufferers are made whole and sinners are forgiven.

This woman trusts that Jesus can and will make her clean and well. Her faith is well placed. Instantly she was made well when she touched Jesus. This woman teaches you where to go. Go to Jesus!

Who else can cleanse you from your sins? Who else can forgive you before God? Who else can make you well with a touch? Only Jesus. Believe like this woman and follow her example. Come near and touch Jesus.

In Baptism you touch Jesus. He comes to you with His death and it is applied to you. You die with Him and now live with Him. You touch His passion and mercy. And He takes your sins from you. Touch Jesus in the word. Hear Him speaking and giving you His Spirit. He offers to teach you all that He has done for you. Touch Him in the Supper. Come near and receive Jesus, Himself, for your forgiveness. He makes you clean.

Jesus comes among you so often. What would this woman think? She would put down everything and come to Jesus. Where else would she be? Where else would you be? Be with Jesus in the Divine Service. Receive Him who died for you. Be touched, be cleansed, with His mercy as often as possible.

Prayer: Father, Your Son healed the woman who suffered much. Jesus has compassion on me also and forgives my sins through His death. Give me zeal to come before Jesus often to receive His gifts that I would live in Him eternally. In His Name. Amen.

December 13 - Raising of Jairus' daughter
(Luke 8.41-56, Matthew 9.18-26, Mark 5.22-43)

Luke 8.49 – *While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more."*

Surrounding the woman with the issue of blood is the strife of Jairus. His daughter is at the point of death and it seems that this woman detains Jesus long enough so that Jairus' daughter dies before Jesus is able to arrive and save her. All seems lost. Why trouble the teacher any more?

But Jesus answered the frustration and grief with, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." Who would believe that? She's dead. There's nothing anyone can do.

Amid the weeping and mourning Jesus, Peter, John, and James with Jairus and his wife enter the house. And with a word Jesus raised the girl from the dead. The laughter of the crowd must have turned to stunned silence.

Jesus does the unthinkable. He raises the dead. This is a foreshadow of what He has promised you. You shall not die but live with Him eternally. He has power over life and death. He proves it. Thus, when He promises you life you can believe Him. He will call you from your grave one day, that Last Day, and you will rise.

He will perfect your body and glorify it. There will be no weeping or mourning that day. You will be body and soul with Jesus eternally. He does this all for you who are in Him. So come and bother the Teacher. He has time for you. He has time to forgive your sins and teach you all that He has done for you. He has time to show you how much He loves you and all that he has and will do for you.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son raised the daughter of Jairus from death. I know that Jesus will raise me on the Last Day and grant me eternal life. Keep me ever strong in faith until the end that I would be with Him eternally. In His Name. Amen.

December 14 - Healing Two Blind Men
(Matthew 9.27-31)

Matthew 9.28 - *When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord."*

Do they believe that Jesus could do the impossible? Who else could cure these blind men? Isn't this a theme running through the

miracles? Do people believe that Jesus can do these things or not? Almost like the Gospel writers are imploring you to decide; do you believe or not?

The blind men believe. They trust that Jesus is able to heal them. With a touch the men are healed and their eyes opened. The blind see. Not what is physically before them, but they see the truth in faith. They see that Jesus is the Christ.

Do you see? Do you understand that Jesus does the amazing work of redeeming sinners? Are your eyes opened to see that Jesus dies for your sins on the tree? Do you see that He touches you with forgiveness through Baptism, Word, Supper?

Give Him thanks that you see all that He has done. He has opened your eyes and given you faith to comprehend the depth of His love toward you. It is a miracle when sinners have faith in all that Jesus has done for them.

Prayer: Father, Your Son opened the eyes of the blind men. In love you have opened my eyes and given me faith to trust all that Jesus has done for me. Give me times and chances to speak and live Jesus before others. In His Name. Amen.

December 15 – Casting Out a Mute Spirit (Matthew 9.32-34)

Matthew 9.33 – *And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, “Never was anything like this seen in Israel.”*

How long does it take to learn how to talk? For those who have never used such muscles it would be a long process. But for this man the healing was immediate. He could talk as soon as the demon was driven out. That made the crowd marvel. Not only was the demon driven out, but they could see the evidence, and the man was able to speak clearly!

Wherever Jesus goes, the devil’s kingdom is rolled back. The devil and his demons are defeated at every turn. They flee before Jesus for there is never any real contest. The demons know they are defeated before the battle begins. Jesus is in complete control.

Wherever Jesus goes, the devil’s kingdom is rolled back. Jesus comes to you. He claims you from the devil’s kingdom. He washes you clean and places you in His kingdom. He overturns the devil’s might and rescues you. The healing of these demons possessed is a foreshadowing of what would happen to you.

Shouldn't you marvel at what Jesus does? He does all this for you, not because you deserve it, but because He loves you. He owes you nothing but freely saves you. Never has anything else been seen like this! Sinners are rescued by the God they sinned against!

So, open your mouth and praise God. Speak of what He has done for you. Confess your sins before Him and receive Him in the Divine Service. Sing back to Him your joyful report. Give Him your tithes and your service. You have been bought with the price of the blood of God so rejoice.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son has rescued me from the devil's kingdom. I thank You for the work of Jesus in my life. Use me to impact others that they would see and believe all that Jesus has done for them. In His Name. Amen.

December 16 – Feeding Five Thousand

(Luke 9.10-17, Matthew 14.13-21, Mark 6.32-44, John 6.1-14)

Luke 9.13 – *But he said to them, “You give them something to eat.” They said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish-unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.”*

The disciples were put on the spot. They had been with Jesus, and this crowd, all day. They were weary and tired. They wanted Jesus to send the crowd away so they could rest and maybe find something to eat. But Jesus tells them to give the people something to eat.

Did Jesus not realize how many people there were? Did Jesus not understand how little food they had? What was Jesus thinking!

Jesus knew exactly the size of the crowd and how little food the disciples had. He desires to teach the disciples about what is important. Is it important that the disciples get their rest? Yes, but there is something more important. The time Jesus spent teaching was the more valuable. Jesus had taught the crowd about the kingdom. The crowd heard the Word of hope and forgiveness from Jesus. Here is the one thing needful.

But there is more. Jesus does not just leave them with teaching, but He teaches the way to worship. He gives Word and then has table fellowship with the people. Teaching and meal. This is how the disciples will worship in the Divine Service. They will speak the Word of the Kingdom and give the body and blood of Jesus to sinners. Jesus teaches the disciples how to worship.

This is still how we worship. In the Divine Service we hear the Word of God and receive the Supper. Why would we do this? Is it culturally

relevant or maybe it's the latest craze aimed to bring people in? No, the church worships like this for Jesus taught His disciples to do this. So come and receive Word and Sacrament.

Prayer: Father, as Jesus taught and fed the crowd, He showed us how to worship. Grant me joy in receiving Word and Sacrament in the Divine Service. Forgive my sins and strengthen my faith. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

December 17 – Walking on Water **(Mark 6.45-52, Matthew 14.22-33, John 6.15-21)**

Mark 9.50 – *For they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”*

These men were used to being out on the water at all times of the day. They had seen everything on this sea. Well, almost everything. Imagine, in the dark a figure walking toward the boat. What could be the meaning of this! They were terrified.

What an odd miracle. Every other miracle seems to help someone. The healings helped those healed and the great feedings helped those fed. But who does this help? It helps the disciples and us understand that Jesus is God.

Jesus walks to them on the water. Who else could do this but God? They should have known by the other miracles, but the disciples were slow to believe. Even now Mark records that they did not understand about the loaves and their hearts were hardened. They did not understand that Jesus was true God and that He would die for their sins.

We should not fear where Jesus dwells. As Jesus showed the disciples that it was Him, they had no need to fear. Jesus comes to us in our lives and He does not desire to terrify us. He comes through simple Word, water, bread, and wine. He comes to forgive our sins and grant us life eternal. He comes to drive the devil far from us and give us Himself. Take heart; it is Jesus! Do not be afraid!

So, flock to where Jesus is for you. Come to Him and receive the forgiveness of your sins. Amid the storms of this life and the turmoil you endure do not be afraid but come to Jesus.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Jesus calmed the fears of the disciples with a word. Grant Him to calm my fears as He comes to me through Word and Sacrament. Forgive me my sins and sustain me through this tribulation. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

December 18 – Casting Out a Demon
(Matthew 15.21-28, Mark 7.24-30)

Matthew 15.23 – *But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.”*

The disciples don't recognize faith. Faith never quits. It continues no matter what, even if the odds seem impossible. This woman has faith. But the disciples don't see it, they don't understand it.

Jesus know that this woman has faith, and He knows that the disciples don't see her faith. Jesus draws out her faith that the disciples would see it. He says nothing and she keeps coming after them. He says He came only for Israel, and she still keeps coming after Him. He insults her and she will not be detoured. She wants only a crumb of mercy. This is faith!

Isn't that the way it is? Faith is unseen until a crisis occurs. There are times and chances for us to show forth the faith that we have in our Savior. This woman was given a chance and she did not disappoint. The disciples were forced to see that this woman had great faith in Jesus.

How did this woman get such faith? It was given her. As she listened to Jesus, she believed Him. She took His words to heart and trusted them. She believed that Jesus was the Christ who would save her. She wanted His help for her daughter.

How do you get faith? The same way, by listening to Jesus and receiving Him. So listen and receive! Hear His word, confess your sins, receive Him through the Sacraments. Strengthen your faith for you never know when a moment of testing will be upon you that you can bear witness to the one who has saved you. Receive Jesus now that you can bear witness as this woman did.

Prayer: Father, Your Son knew the faith the Canaanite woman had and He allowed His disciples to see her faith. Give me a strong faith as I cling to Your Word and give me chances to show that faith to others. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

December 19 – Feeding of the Four Thousand
(Mark 8.1-9, Matthew 15.29-38)

Mark 8.2 – *“I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.”*

Compassion is love in action. The crowd has been with Jesus, listening to Him for three days! And Jesus has compassion on them.

He always has compassion on the crowd. He teaches them because He loves them. He feeds them because He loves them. He heals them because He has compassion on them.

In this case Jesus feeds the crowd so that there are even baskets full of leftovers. This is a reminder of the outpouring of creation that accompanies the Messiah's advent. But also, a reminder that Jesus comes to teach and feed. So many of the miracles recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John focus on Jesus' teaching and feeding. They are reminding that reader that Jesus still does miracles.

Every time Christians gather the Word is read. Jesus comes and creates faith or strengthens faith. Christians are fed, not just with the Word, but with Jesus' own body and blood. An over abundance of forgiveness is given to us each time we gather for the Supper. Even better than Jesus feeding thousands with bread and fish!

This miracle Jesus is happy to perform among us. He is happy to give your forgiveness by His death through Word and Sacrament. He is happy to join Himself to you and come to you in the Divine Service. We should be just as diligent as that crowd, longing for more of Jesus. They waited and waited with Jesus three days. They listened to Him preach and then they received the meal. They wanted to be there with Jesus. So also, us. We want to be with Jesus where He is found to forgive our sins. We can eat and be satisfied.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son taught and fed the crowds. I long to come into the Divine Service to be taught and fed by Jesus. Sustain my faith as I rely on Jesus through Word and Sacrament. Grant me to be a powerful witness of all that Jesus has done for me. In His Name. Amen.

December 20 – Temple Tax (Matthew 17.24-27)

Matthew 17.25b – *Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?”*

Simon Peter does not yet understand what Jesus has come to do. Of course, they will pay the temple tax! Every good Jew pays the Temple tax. Peter doesn't give it a moment thought.

But who pays? From whom do kings take tax? Not from their sons! Under the law everyone must pay. The law demands perfection for the standard is to be holy as God is holy. Those who do not live up to the

demands of the law can't be sons of God. They must pay eternally in hell.

The son does not pay. The sons of the king are set free from paying any sort of tax. They are not under the law but above the law, outside the law. Peter doesn't understand that Jesus came to make sinners into children of the King. The sons are free under the law and do not pay.

Through Baptism Jesus makes you a child of the King. You are grafted in; adopted by grace. There is nothing you have to pay, it's been paid for you. You are set free from the strict demands of the law for you are a child of God!

You are set free as a child of God to serve God and love your neighbor. You may delight to fulfill the law of God and follow His rules, not because you must, but because you want to. Jesus has paid the full price for you, you are set free to serve and love.

Prayer: Father, Your Son died to set me free from the demands of the law. In Jesus I am forgiven. Grant me to want to serve You and love my neighbor as myself. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

December 21 - Cleansing the Ten Lepers (Luke 17.11-19)

Luke 17.16 – *And he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan.*

The blind men are healed and go their way to show themselves to the priest. Only the priest could declare them healed and clean. But there is an issue. One turns back. Jesus told them to go and this one turns back.

He turns back praising God and falling at Jesus' feet in worship. He recognizes where thanksgiving and worship should be given- to Jesus. Why does he need the priest to tell him he is clean when Jesus has made him so? He alone praises God in Christ Jesus.

Where are the rest? They continued on their way, not turning back to Jesus, the one who healed them. They did not give thanks where thanks should be given.

So where are you? Are you giving thanks rightly? Has not God blessed you with your reason and senses? Has He not given you your clothing and shoes? What about wife and children? All you have, all you see, He has given. Open your eyes and see all that He has given you.

Give thanks where it is due, at the feet of Jesus. Come where Jesus is found, in the Divine Service, and give thanks to Jesus for all the first article blessings you have received. Give thanks also for the salvation He has accomplished for you on the tree. Receive that gift from Jesus in the forgiveness of your sins. Receive and give thanks.

Prayer: Father, Your Son healed the ten lepers and cleansed them. In love Jesus heals me by forgiving my sins. Grant me joy in all that Jesus has done that I would give thanks to Him alone. In His Name. Amen.

December 22 - Healing the Man Born Blind (John 9.1-41)

John 9.6 – Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud.

Spitting in dirt and putting that mud on a blind man's eyes shouldn't do much of anything. But the blind man washes and is able to see. Then, in John's Gospel, follows a lengthy account of how the man tells all who will listen what happened. The Pharisees question the man and even his parents about what happened. At every turn the man keeps stating what Jesus had done for him (although he did not know it was Jesus).

Eventually, Jesus finds the man that he would know who the Son of Man is. The blind man sees while the Pharisees remain blind. So what about you? With every miracle in John's Gospel he seems to ask that question, "What about you?" Do you see? Do you believe?

Do you see that Jesus has come in flesh? Do you see that Jesus is true God and true man? Do you see all the miracles that He did to show you that He is God? Do you see all the human things that Jesus did as he walked, hungered, slept, wept? Do you see Jesus journeying on to the tree? Do you see Him laying down His life for you? Do you see the empty tombs and Christ raised on the third day? Do you see? Do you believe?

Your eyes have been opened by Jesus to see all that He has done for you. He has died for you and washed you clean through Baptism. He has done all for you that you would see all that He has done for you. So come before Him and receive in the Divine Service. Receive Jesus and see all that He has done for you.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son healed the man born blind that he would see. Jesus grants me to see all that He has done for me as He opened my eyes in faith. Grant me to rejoice and give thanks to You for all that Jesus has done. In His Name. Amen.

December 23 - Raising of Lazarus

(John 11.1-44)

John 11.43 – When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”

By now the disciples should have believed that Jesus does the unbelievable. He stood there at the tomb of a dead man and demanded that the dead man come out. And Lazarus obeyed.

The dead hear and obey! Jesus is Lord of life and death; He holds the keys to death and grave. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. The demons obey, the wind and waves obey, food is multiplied, sick are healed, and even the dead listen. Jesus shows, through all these miracles, exactly who He is. Jesus is God.

God has come in flesh to roll back the kingdom of the devil. He has come to seek and save sinners. God has come to die that you would have life and have it more abundantly. All the miracles that Jesus does point you to one place- the cross and empty tomb.

These miracles prepare you to celebrate all that Jesus would do in the ultimate miracle. He would take the sins of sinners on Himself and die in your place. He would rest in the tomb on the Sabbath and rise on Easter Sunday. This is THE miracle! Lazarus' empty tomb foreshadows what Jesus would do for all sinners. It foreshadows that through the cross your grave will be empty also.

Jesus will raise you from the dead. He will give eternal life to you and all believers in Him. He will be with you eternally in paradise. Why? Because of the miracle of the cross and His empty tomb.

Prayer: Father, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. I give you thanks that through the death of Jesus I have eternal life and that Jesus will raise me on the Last Day. Grant me to live as one who has been redeemed by Jesus. In His Name. Amen.

December 24 – Healing Woman Who Suffered for with Eighteen Years (Luke 13.10-17)

Luke 13.13 – And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.

Can you imagine this woman? She must have gone to every doctor and tried every remedy, but all to no avail. Nothing helped. She was crippled up and could not stand straight. Life must have been beyond difficult. But she still trusted in the Word of God, she was still in worship. She had not given up although her body was weak.

Isn't this the life of the Christian? We know our sins under the law. There is no help for us from any earthly thing. No way we can try harder or do better to make up our sins before God. There is no help for us under the law. The law accuses you of all your sins and what can you say? You are guilty.

God must do all the work of our salvation. He steps into history and takes on our flesh. Even more, God takes on our sin. He hangs under the judgment that was meant for us and pays the price that our sins merited. He is our substitute, the sacrifice for our sins. He grants sinners like you forgiveness.

You may be weak, as weak as this woman, but in Christ you have all you need. Your sins are forgiven, and you are washed clean through your Baptism. Jesus feeds you with Word and Supper that you would learn to trust and rely on Him alone. Amid sin, amid weakness, amid death come to Jesus, receive Him in worship and stand in the forgiveness of your sins.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Jesus healed the woman who suffered for eighteen years. Jesus heals me from sin and rescues me from eternal death through His death on the tree. Grant me joy receiving Jesus in the Divine Service. In His Name. Amen.

December 25 – Healing of Blind Bartimaeus

(Matthew 20.29-34, Mark 10.46-52, Luke 18.35-43)

Mark 10.48 – *And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”*

Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The crowd is going to go wild for they know that Jesus has come to be their king. Who wouldn't want to see this great sight! Along the way Bartimaeus begs to be healed and is. He will not be silenced. He will not be pushed away. He cries out to Jesus. He can't see where Jesus is so the cry must have gone out as a wild yell.

Bartimaeus is healed and sees. He follows Jesus into Jerusalem. He sees the great entrance of Jesus into the city. He witnesses the palm branches, people shouting and singing, cloaks being laid on the road. What a sight! But that is not all.

Is Bartimaeus there while Jesus teaches in the Temple throughout the week? Did he see the betrayal of Judas? Did he see Jesus arrested? Did he see Jesus on trial and beaten? Was he there to see the bloody Jesus carry the cross through Jerusalem? Did he see Jesus

hung on the tree? For this Bartimaeus' eyes are opened, that he would see Jesus.

So, see. See Jesus bloody and dying on the tree. This is why Jesus was born. He gives sight to beggars that they would see and know. He opened your eyes to know why He was born. Jesus was born to die for you. He was born to bring you to faith, that your sins would be forgiven through Him. See Jesus coming to you still through Word and Sacrament. He brings you eternal life. See and follow Him.

Prayer: Father, Your Son healed blind Bartimaeus so that he could see. Grant me to see all that Jesus has done for me that I would receive Jesus and give thanks to You. I thank You that Jesus was born for me, died for me, and rose for me. In His Name. Amen.