

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

The Table Approached: Learning to Choose What Lasts

Word of God

Jeremiah 28:5–9

Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord, and the prophet Jeremiah said, “Amen! May the Lord do so; may the Lord make the words that you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles. Yet hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet.”

Psalm 119:153–160

Look on my affliction and deliver me,
for I do not forget your law.
Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise!
Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
Great is your mercy, O Lord;
give me life according to your rules.
Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
but I do not swerve from your testimonies.
I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.
Consider how I love your precepts!
Give me life, O Lord, according to your steadfast love.
The sum of your word is truth,
and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

Romans 7:1–13

Or do you not know, brothers^[a]—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.^[b] Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with

another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.^[c]

The Law and Sin

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

Matthew 10:34–42

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Rewards

“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

Meditation Theme

Because Christ's victory has already secured our belonging, healing invites us to approach the table with honesty—acknowledging cost without fear of losing our place.

Reflection in the Field

Approaching the horse requires discernment. Not every voice is trustworthy. Not every movement is safe. The horse teaches us to recognize what is true by how it aligns with life, steadiness, and trust.

So it is as we near the table.

Faith is not sentimentality. It requires truth-telling—about what gives life and what does not, about promises that hold and those that collapse under weight. Christ does not hide the cost of following Him, but He names it only after companionship, listening, and trust have been established.

The table is not approached lightly—but neither is it withheld. We are invited to choose what lasts, even when that choice brings tension or loss. Healing here is not comfort alone; it is clarity that frees us from false attachments.

Beside the horse, we learn that trust deepens when truth is faced. The animal responds not to flattery, but to consistency. So do we. As we step closer to the table, we learn that what costs us something is often what gives us life.

This week marks the threshold. The road has prepared us. Scripture has opened us. Hearts have been warmed. Now we approach—not to earn a place, but to receive what has already been given.

Lutheran Reflection

To cling to Christ is to let go of every other claim to righteousness, security, or control. Faith does not divide its trust between Christ and the self. It releases what cannot save and holds fast to the One who does. In this clinging, the old supports fall away—not by force, but because Christ alone is sufficient.

— Reflecting the teaching of Martin Luther (*Heidelberg Disputation*, 1518; *Lectures on Galatians*, 1535)

Reflection Prompts

1. What voices compete for your trust right now?
2. Where does following Christ feel costly—but also clarifying?
3. Horses respond to truth in posture and presence. What helps you discern what lasts?
4. How does knowing your place is secure change how you face hard choices?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, as You draw us nearer, give us courage to release what does not lead to life. Help us to choose truth without fear, trusting that Your victory has already secured our place. Lead us to the table with clear hearts and steady hope. Amen.

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.
- Numbers 6:24-26*