

## 2nd Sunday After Pentecost

### Luke 7:1-10

Some in this story were impressed by the centurion's goodness. He was certainly not the Roman officer that we usually see in the movies. Instead of torturing, tormenting, or cheating the Jewish people, this man had embraced the Jewish God. He had even paid for the local synagogue. Unlike many in his position, he loved his slave and was concerned for him. The fact that the Jews, who had no great love for Gentiles, thought that this man was "worthy" of Jesus' attention indicates that he was a very special person.

The soldier, however, was not impressed by his own goodness. Nor was he overcome by his own unworthiness and humility. The way he lived and thought did not seem to him to be something to be praised or cursed.

Jesus wasn't impressed by this leader's goodness either. He summarized the centurion when He said, "...not even in Israel have I found such great faith."

Faith isn't thinking about being humble. It isn't considering how unworthy we are to be called upon to participate in ministry. It isn't rewarding or punishing ourselves because we "deserve" it. If we are truly blessed, faith is something that dwells so deep within us that we really aren't always conscious of its presence.

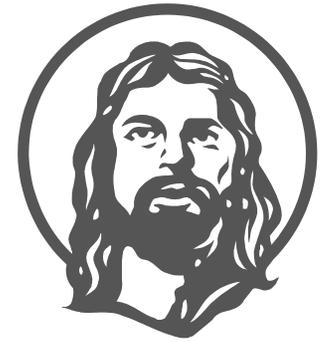
Michael W. Smith has an album and song entitled "*Live the Life!*" The centurion lived the life. His words indicate that he understood who Jesus was—"I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me;" "...just say the word and my servant will be healed." This commander of men knew who he was in Jesus' presence. He expressed his humility only when he was surprised by Jesus' action. This was a man who just did the job every day, serving God in what he did, serving others whenever he could. We don't know anything else about him, but what else could be more important?



## 2nd Sunday After Pentecost

### Luke 7:1-10

1. A central character of this text is a centurion. Use the Concordia Self-study Bible notes (vs. 2) or a Bible dictionary to find out about centurions. What was their authority? With what governmental power did they serve?
2. Some thought the centurion deserved Jesus' attention. What was their human reasoning? (vs. 4-5)
3. Did the centurion think his position deserved Jesus' attention? How do we see his humility in vs. 6-8?
4. According to vs. 9, Jesus was \_\_\_\_\_ . Note Jesus' comment to the crowd in vs. 9b.
5. Do we deserve any of the blessings Jesus gives us? Note Martin Luther's perspective in the explanation to the First Article.
6. What constitutes "great faith"? (vs. 9)



*Please take the time to join others in Bible study this week!*

**A message from your District Education Committee**

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 11:18-21;26-28

How important is God's word in our lives, and why? One of the reasons that people reject God today is that they feel that He has no business "telling me what to do or not to do." We seem to value having our own way. There is a popular joke phrase that goes, "I only want one thing out of life—my own way." But very few of us ever actually try to live life without advice from someone.

We are a people that delights in using "experts" to advise us on how to get what we want. We want pediatricians to take care of our children's health, not general practitioners; investment counselors that will always put our money where it will earn a high interest rate; and we call our lawyers in when we're about to sign a contract for a new home. We are a nation of experts at finding experts to guide our every step. God is our "Expert" at what works in living day to day, but we reverse our usual practice and rebel at the idea that He should tell us how to get along in the world whose rules He created!

Through Moses, God said to His people, "Listen to Me! I'm going to tell you what works and what does not! If you will live by My words, you will succeed in life!" That was over three thousand years ago, and we're still arguing with God about whether He knows enough about us to qualify as an Expert that we can trust.

Sometimes even Christians don't act like people who believe that God's word is without error. When a friend, or foe, challenges God's word and claims that it doesn't really matter, we too often mumble something about, "If that's the way you feel..." and then wonder what God's word really does say about this or that. Moses said that the word must dwell in our minds and be constantly on our hearts; that we must teach it to our children, and live by it each day. To follow Moses' entreaty, we must know what God's word says. Yet studying God's word is an activity pursued by less than fifteen percent of church-attending Christians. Perhaps we have reached a point in our lives where each one of us needs to hear the question, "Is learning what the Expert has to say a priority in your life?"



*Bible study helps us grow up in Christ!*

**A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee**

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 11:18-21;26-28

1. Read the introductory verses of the Book of Deuteronomy (1:1-5). What is the context of Moses' words? Where had Israel been for almost 40 years? Where were they going?
2. What three action words begin vs. 18, 19, and 20? On what are God's people to focus?
3. According to vs. 26-28 Israel will be blessed when .... Israel will be cursed when ...
4. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What similar themes do we find in both texts?
5. The word of God is to be in the "heart." (vs. 18) What is meant by the "heart" of the believer? (See the Concordia Self-study Bible note on Deut. 4:29)
6. According to this lesson, what is the role of the family in faith instruction and nurture? Is your family a faith place?



## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Moses said that the people were to rest on the Sabbath not only to remember God's creation of the world and His day of rest, but to remember their salvation out of Egypt by God. Today we do not celebrate the Sabbath of Moses, which is our Saturday. Most Christians honor Sunday as the day of rest and worship since Jesus was raised on a Sunday. But, like Moses, we rest and remember what our God has done for us.

Why is it so important to stop, worship, and remember? One of the Hebrew words translated "remember" is *zakar* which is used fourteen times just in the book of Deuteronomy. Variations of *zakar* appear 233 times in the Old Testament. It simply meant to remember, without any other deep, significant implications. So, why is it so vital?

What if we never stopped to rest, remember, and worship? How long would it be before we stressed out completely? Many of us have had to endure long periods of work without days off and it wasn't long before we began to think that the world hinged on our performance. As the realization set in that our performance dwindled as the days went on, stress set in and we could not imagine how we could make it down what was becoming an unending tunnel. We finally finished the task, complete with personal panic, anxiety, and weariness.

How wonderful it felt to finally get back to our day of remembrance, rest, and worship; to be renewed by God's word and sacrament; to remember that He is the power in our lives; that He is our salvation; that He is our center; that He is the peace that passes understanding. Stopping our rush through life to remember God's mercy and grace is not just a command from Him. It is a privilege that He offers to us as His children. It is a time to remember our Redeemer and to be restored by His love.

*God's word is worth our time!*

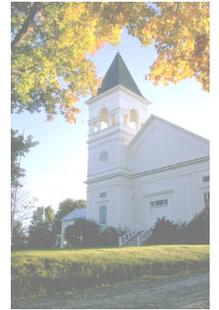
**A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee**



## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

1. This text is part of the listing of the ten commandments (Deut. 5: 6-21). Where else in Scripture do we find the ten commandments? Why are they listed this second time?
2. What did God do for six days (Genesis 1:1-31)? What did God do the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3)?
3. Besides remembering creation on the seventh day, what other event were the Israelites to recall on this day (vs. 15)?
4. In most cases our worship day of rest is now Sunday. Why is Sunday now the primary worship day in the Christian church?
5. Do we still live under the strict observance of the Sabbath (vs. 14)? How does Jesus address this in Matthew 12:7-8?
6. The concept of Sabbath rest is often lost in our society (Sunday recreation; businesses open on Sunday, etc.) How does this commandment speak to you in your present situation?



Second Sunday after Pentecost  
1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43

At the temple dedication, Solomon spoke with his God-given wisdom. In his prayer, almost a thousand years before Jesus' birth, the king showed an understanding of God, His will, and His relationship with His people.



Solomon realized that the true God could not be contained in any earthly dwelling. Even the highest heavens could not contain Him. God dwelt everywhere, not just in the newly built temple. The king also understood that the people needed to keep God at the center of their lives in order to do well and find joy. Solomon knew that God expected Israel to tell the world about their Lord and to provide a home and place of worship for non-Jews (verses 41-43).

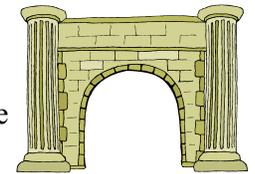
Sadly, the Jewish leaders of Jesus' time rejected Solomon's discernment of God's will for Israel. In that day Jews would not associate with non-Jews, let alone witness God's love to them. We may shake our heads in disbelief at this, but Christian congregations may still miss Jesus' message that we are to be a light in the world, welcoming all people into the kingdom of God, and into our sanctuaries. It isn't easy to reach out to those outside of our "comfort zone," but God can help us do it.

Even today Solomon's prayer offers us a wonderful reminder of Who guides and blesses our lives. He praised God as the source for all of the blessings and successes of his people and knew that only God could protect them day by day. He grasped the truth that God chose Israel not out of their goodness but out of His mercy, and that His mercy and grace would sustain them when there was no other hope. We also have that joyful confidence in our Lord.

**Learn more about God's mercy and love in a Bible study this week.**  
*A message from your Iowa West Education Committee*

Second Sunday after Pentecost  
1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43

1. Today's text is a prayer. Skim through the introductory verses of 1 Kings 8. What events preceded the prayer? Using the Concordia Self-study Bible or another reference find out about Solomon's temple.
2. What thoughts in Solomon's prayer emphasize that God is beyond any earthly description or any earthly place?
3. How is heaven described in vs. 30 and 43? What comfort is there in knowing where God is? Does God only dwell in heaven?



4. According to vs. 43 how was the temple to be a "mission central"?
5. Vs. 27 asks the question: "Will God really dwell on earth?" What's the answer? How did God ultimately choose to dwell on earth?
6. As Solomon praises God for the temple, we praise God for our places of worship. What do your church and its sanctuary mean to you? How does God meet you there? Is it a place of praise and proclamation?

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 11:18-21,26-28

Moses' words, given to him by God, are a little unsettling to us as Christians living thousands of years later. Blessings and curses might be seen by some as carrots and whips. But, there was a more important meaning in Moses' words to the people.

All of the Old Testament tells the story of God's love for His people, and His demand for justice. All of the Old Testament also points to Christ. Even in the beginning, in Genesis 3:15, God called His people to realize that it was through His promise that their lives would find salvation and meaning.

When God gave His Law to Moses, He knew that His people would not be able to follow it, but still His Law was unbreachable. To disobey God meant disaster and eternal damnation. Over time many of the people came to realize the truth. They could not be perfect. God's Law was a mirror by which man could see his need for a Savior. Not all of the people understood this. Many decided that they did have the power to obey God perfectly—there was a formula that could be followed. Today we know that the only “formula” that can make us right with God is His own Son.

That does not mean that Moses' call to obey God is no longer valid. We must strive to obey our God. He is our Owner, our Master, our Lord, our Creator, and our Father. His way is the only way of living that works! Even the world, that claims to have its own formula, generally confesses that the ways of God are the best.

The difference between us and the congregation to which Moses spoke is Jesus! They did not yet see the Savior. We worship Him every day. Many of them came to hate the Law and try to avoid it, not realizing that it was meant to help them recognize their need. We love the Law and all of God's Word. They are guides to our lives; words of God's love. We confidently attempt to obey God every day, knowing that by the blood of His Son we will be forgiven whenever we fail.

**Learn more about why we obey God in a Bible study this week.**

*A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee*

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 11:18-21,26-28

1. What is the context of Moses' words to Israel? (Deuteronomy 1:5) How many years had Israel wandered? What exciting event was about to take place?
2. How do we see that the children of Israel are to take God's Word seriously? Why is His word to be respected and obeyed?
3. What response of Israel would warrant God's blessing? What response warranted God's curse?
4. Who was to take primary responsibility for the faith nurture of the children? (See also Deuteronomy 6:6-8) How can we still fulfill God's direction today?

Family Table Talks:

5. Do we need to fear God's curse today? Why not? (Read Galatians 3:10-14)
6. In what ways does your family talk about God's love for you and God's will for you? (Deuteronomy 11:19) In what ways could Christ be a more visible and vocal part of your family?

## 2nd Sunday after Pentecost

2 Corinthians 4:5-12

“...so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” (vs.12) Have you ever thought about your life in that way? If Paul is right in today’s lesson, and if he is right in Ephesians 2:10 where he writes, “*For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do,*” then living out our faith by simply attending worship every week is not all that God has in mind for us.

In these verses Paul lists some examples of a suffering life, but he isn’t saying that we should “hunker down” and get ready for misery. We are a people of joy who seek to share that joy with others, but we are not a people of continual happiness, wealth, and physical security who are always supernaturally protected from all the woes of this world. Paul put it well in Philippians 4:11&13, “*...I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am...I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*” That assurance permeating Paul’s life is also ours because the Holy Spirit lives in us.

The Spirit strengthens us and assures us because we are God’s children who are to take on the task of gaining disciples for Christ. As Paul says, we could not do this on our own because we are merely vessels of clay. Without Christ we really would be “afflicted...crushed...perplexed...despairing...forsaken...struck down...destroyed.”

It is through our imperfect selves, (our vessels of clay) that should be hopeless, that God shines. He becomes the message that our lives send to others. Our friends and enemies alike know us. They know that we are just people who struggle with the same daily grind as they, but there is something different about us. We have an enduring joy that permeates even our toughest times. As Paul explains, the life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal flesh. We are different not because our lives are easy, but because our joy endures all hardship. All of this is because of our God who strengthens us and who wants to reach the world through us.

Learn more about living the Gospel in a Bible study this week.  
*A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee*

## 2nd Sunday after Pentecost

2 Corinthians 4:5-12

1. According to vs. 5, Who was always the focus of Paul’s ministry and message? How did Paul see himself?
2. Who is the “jar of clay”? (vs. 7) What is the “treasure”? (vs. 7)
3. How are the realities of sin evident in our life? (vs. 8-12) How does the reality of Jesus’ presence address our situation?

### For Family Reflection

4. What are some ways that we “preach ourselves” in our daily life? What opportunities do we have to share Jesus in our serving?
5. Paul uses words like “perplexed” and “persecuted” to describe his life and that of the Christians in Corinth. What words might express your situation? What Good News does God have for you in every situation?
6. Reflect on the “jar of clay” analogy. What kind of clay jar are you? Are you cracked, misshapen, well-polished, fragile...? How is God using you?

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Galatians 1:11-24

We are so blessed to have Paul's story! Saul (Paul) was so different after his confrontation with Christ, that people wondered if this "new" man could be real. Even today, there are few who claim that Saul didn't have something astounding happen to him that changed the man completely. Some may not accept the truth of what happened, but they don't doubt that something did.

Saul, "breathing threats...", was suddenly turned around one hundred and eighty degrees. His life became precisely what he had persecuted and intensely so. This is what "conversion" is all about. This is what God can do in one's life.

Have you ever looked at Paul's story and thought of your own? Perhaps a better question would be: "Have you ever found your conversion, your baptism, as exciting as did Paul? Have you yet discovered the joy that is the Christian life?"

Unlike Paul, many of us grew up in Christian homes. We were baptized as infants and only remember knowing that Jesus loves us and that He is our Savior. We take it for granted. Paul, on the other hand, grew up *knowing* that he had to live up to God's expectations in order to earn His love. Many people today live in fear of being powerless, believing that they must live life on their own, justify everything that they do, live perfectly in order to be loved, respected, or valued.

Christians, in contrast, have a life of peace given to them by God, not because we can manage our lives perfectly, but because He loves us. We sometimes forget that in the hubbub of everyday living. We let the stress of a too busy schedule rob us of the peace that God wants us to feel. We too often let the world dictate what we think of ourselves and why we think it.

Whether God's "conversion" of us, His adoption of us into His family of love, is a vivid memory or an unremembered baptismal event, it is real. To live without Christ is to live without peace. When Satan again tries to steal your peace, keep these words of Paul in your mind—"*And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" (the closing words of Philippians 4:4-7)

Learn more about our God in a Bible study this week.

*A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee*

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Galatians 1:11-24

1. We will focus on texts from Galatians for several weeks. Who was God's author for this book? To whom was it written? Why was it written? When was it written?
2. Paul had a "before" and "after" in his life. What was his life like before his conversion? What was his life like after his conversion?
3. Did Paul go immediately from his conversion (Acts 9) to the mission field? What happened in between? How was God using that time?
4. Were the events in Paul's life his own personal work or the working of any human? (vs. 11-12) Is our salvation ever a human work?

### For Family Reflection

5. Is there a "before" and "after" to our life? When did God change us? How did God change us?
6. Paul writes (vs. 24) "And they glorified God because of me." Can others say the same thing about your witness? Pray that God would receive glory because of our words and deeds.

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 6:24-34

As we read today's passage, it's really hard to look at our world, and especially our own nation, without wondering if our priorities are misplaced—at least in God's eyes. No, I'm not referring to the political faldral that's coming our way—but to our lifelong concern and worry about money.

Today's whole passage is comprised of Jesus' words, and His message concerns just whom we serve and trust. God? Or our own ability and worry concerning the accumulation of "stuff"?

In verse 24, Jesus explains that we cannot be devoted to God and to wealth. In America, that is a pretty shocking statement. After all, if I devote my being to God, what if He does not think I need my 4,000 square foot house? What if He reprioritizes my paycheck? What if He leads my child, or me, into the humbling arena of professional ministry instead of a more financially secure profession? What if He wants me to spend my valuable time with the poor? What if He leads me to hire a questionable employee and it turns out badly? What if He expects me to give something up?

Jesus says that unbelievers worry about the material aspects of living (vs.32), but that we should realize that His love for us is so intensely personal that He will meet all our needs. (Though our concept of "need" may have to mature a little as we grow to know God better.) Wealth is not bad. Contrary to rumor, I Timothy 6:10 says. "*the love of money* is the root of all sorts of evil." The problem comes when our worry about money is our highest priority.

Jesus says the word "worry" or "worried" five times in this passage. Perhaps the most astounding use is when He says, "who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life?" Luke says that Jesus added, "If then you cannot *do even a very little thing*, [like adding time to your life] why do you worry about other matters?" (Luke 12:26)

After many assurances of God's care, Jesus gives us a simple command in today's lesson: "Seek **FIRST** His kingdom and His righteousness..." (vs. 33). That is the priority that we must seek, knowing that God really can care for the rest, heal our stresses, and show us His path to peace within.

*Learn more about faith in a Bible study this week.*

A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 6:24-34

1. This text is part of a greater dialog of Jesus (Matthew chapters 5-7). What is the context of today's lesson? Where is Jesus teaching? Who is He teaching?
2. Very simply Jesus teaches: Do not \_\_\_\_\_.  
What object lessons does Jesus give to support His lesson?
3. How does verse 33 help us prioritize our life? What happens when we put Jesus first in our life?

### For Family Reflection

4. How do the words "O you of little faith" (vs.30) speak to you? What things do you worry about?
5. God's Word speaks to our worries. Share favorite passages that help you in times of worry. Put some of those passages on cards and put them on your refrigerator or other convenient places.
6. Hymns and Christian songs also are helpful in times of worry. What songs might you sing when you are tempted to worry?

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 2:23-28

In today's verses, Jesus is presented with another question: Why are His disciples picking heads of grain to eat when this was unlawful. The questioners are referring to the act of rubbing the grains together in one's hands to remove the hull and get to the edible grain within. This was defined by the Pharisees as working on the Sabbath—a violation of the Pharisees' extensively defined versions of God's Law, developed to make it possible to work one's way into God's acceptance.

Jesus' answer is to first cite the Jew's own history when David broke religious law in order to feed the hungry. Then Jesus made a profound statement, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." And "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Have you ever thought about these words? God rested on the seventh day of creation and calls on His people to set aside this time for concentrating on their relationship with Him. The Pharisees, instead of revering the Sabbath as a time to rest in the presence of God and to fellowship with Him, used the day to load the people with more laws to obey; to use it to browbeat the people with their interpretation of God's will.

Jesus corrects His critics, telling them that far from being a day for the manipulation of God or the manipulation of God's people the Sabbath is a day of refreshment for them; a time of worship and praise. It is a time to get to know Him better.

Do we sometimes try to influence God on our day of worship? Do we celebrate worship just to do the right thing? Or, do we find it a day of joyful worship and praise followed by a time when our minds are free to seek fellowship with God and family; a time of reflecting on the statement that Jesus is Lord of our every day, including the day set aside for worship and praise.

*Get to know God through His Word this week!*

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 2:23-28

1. Which commandment gave God's direction regarding the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11)? See Exodus 31:12-17; Exodus 35:1-3. Why was God so emphatic about the keeping of this Day?
2. How had David seemingly disobeyed this commandment? Read more about David's action in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. Why were David's actions justified?
3. Who is the "Son of Man"? (See the Concordia Self Study Bible note on Mark 8:31.) What is significant about this title for Jesus?
4. What does it mean that the "Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath"?

### For Family Reflection

5. How does your family keep "the Sabbath"? Why is it important that we set aside time to worship Jesus? How and when do we worship Jesus as a family?
6. Read and review the Third Commandment in Luther's Small Catechism.

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 7:11-17

Her son was dead, by accident or disease we do not know. His mother didn't care how her son died. The fact was that he was gone. Losing a child in those days wasn't rare. Many children died before adulthood, but this son was grown, a comfort, someone to love and be loved by, and he was dead. The cries of those supporting his mother filled the air as they walked to the cemetery. The number attending imply that the man and his mother were well thought of in the village.

What would happen to her now? A widow, she was dependent upon her son for housing and food, as well as companionship. She would become a beggar if someone did not step in to care for her. Was there a male relative to take her in? We don't know.

Into this scene steps Jesus. He walks to the funeral procession and up to the men carrying the rough coffin or bier. He leans to the widow and says, "Do not weep." If this woman was a believer in the Pharisees' teaching, she knew that her son would be part of the final resurrection, but that did little to lessen the grief of the moment. Jesus then shocked all present when He said to the corpse, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"

Some say that Jesus did this miracle and others to demonstrate that He was the Son of God. Perhaps, but there was a much more human aspect to His work. Over and over again we read in the gospels, "He felt compassion."

How is your compassion doing? When a family of a different race or nationality visits your church, how do you greet them—with suspicion or compassion? When a stranger is in need, what is your compassion score? A few years ago the WWJD bracelets were very popular. We know what Jesus would do. Compassion, forgiveness, and grace were His "trademarks." What are your trademarks? What are your church's?

*Get to know God through His Word this week!*

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 7:11-17

1. What tragedy had taken place in the small town of Nain? Besides the emotional implications for the widow what were some of the practical considerations?
2. The tragedy turns to triumph! What do we learn about Jesus from this miracle? What's the tragedy to triumph story for Jesus? For us?
3. What are the extremes of the people's response in verse 16? How might we explain those extremes?
4. What Old Testament prophet had performed a similar miracle (1 Kings 17:17-24)? What made Jesus' miracle even greater than the first?

### For Family Reflection

5. How is Jesus' compassion comforting in our times of sadness? Can you think of a time when Jesus' compassion for you was important to you and your family?
6. The exciting news of Jesus' miracle spread throughout the area. What exciting news do we have for our communities? How can we share that Good News from our homes and from our churches?