

## Sixth Sunday After Pentecost—July 15

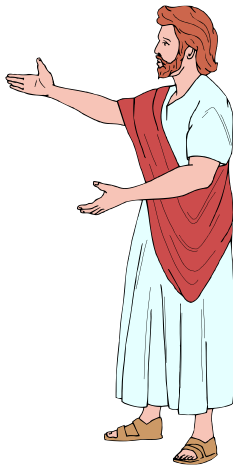
Luke 9:51-62

How often do we excuse ourselves from the difficulties of truly following Jesus? How often do we decide that God doesn't really expect us to make sacrifices for Him if it would inconvenience us? Of course, God doesn't ask us to lay lambs on altars, but He asks us to serve Him in this world. He asks us to love the unlovable, to serve the undeserving, and to stand firmly for Christ in all that we say and do. Somehow, we usually find more urgent priorities to occupy our time. Besides, Jesus can't possibly understand how hard it is to get all of our responsibilities accomplished.

Today's passage says, "He [Jesus] resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem." He had decided that the time had come to endure the death that He had chosen and He would not be swayed from His task.

"Resolutely" tells us that this was not easy for Jesus. As the perfect Son of God, He could have walked away, leaving us condemned and hopeless. The Bible says that after his first encounter with Jesus, satan withdrew until "an opportune time." How many times might Jesus have had to dismiss satan's urging to give up? Instead He chose the cross.

In the second part of today's lesson, several people try to excuse themselves from following Jesus for various reasons. Though to them the reasons were valid, we can see how they pale in comparison to Jesus' commitment to His people. How about our excuses for our own lack of commitment to the tasks that Jesus sets before us each day? We cannot be perfect as Jesus was perfect, but as He "resolutely" set His face to do His Father's will, can we but follow His example? Doesn't He expect us to follow His will for our lives and to serve those around us? Doesn't He call us to remember His promise to provide the power we need to accomplish any task which He sets before us? He is our Lord and our Strength. He can enable us to reset our priorities and place His will as our first desire, but He will not force us to love Him more than we love ourselves.



*Learn more about following Christ. Join a Bible study!*  
A message from your District Education Committee.

## Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

Luke 9:51-62

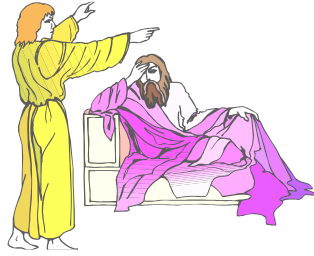
1. How is the hostility between the Samaritans and Jews expressed in the early verses of the text?
2. What was the impulsive response of James and John in vs. 54? What was Jesus' response to them? (Impulsiveness must have run in the family. See Matt. 20:20ff.)
3. What distractions to discipleship does Jesus share in vs. 57-62?
4. How does vs. 58 describe the earthly conditions of Jesus' ministry?
5. What distracts or deters you in your discipleship?
6. Reflect on vs. 62. Are any of us "fit for service" in God's kingdom? Who calls us and equips us? In what areas is God saying to you "Don't look back!"?



## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 28:5-9

When troubles fall on a man or a nation, especially if that person's or nation's rebellion has caused the calamity, there often occurs the denial factor. "It can't be my fault! It's the other guy, and God will help me prove how right I really am." Into such a situation came the false prophet, Hananiah. Wanting favor and power with the king and with the people, he just told them what they wanted to hear, "You are right; God's prophet is wrong; God won't let bad things happen just because you have persistently and defiantly been disobedient to Him; He has to save you!"



Our world today also prefers false prophets. Prophets that proclaim that abortion is a woman's right; homosexuality is just another creation of God; adultery is ok if your spouse doesn't understand you; God will bless lies if they accomplish good things; all paths to God are equal; suicide for the ill is for the best. The list could go on and on. Even Christians aren't immune to false prophets. Since false "truths" are very comfortable, and always popular, it's hard to speak out against them.

God's grace is overwhelming, but His ways are not flexible. That is why Jesus had to die on the cross. God calls us to help pave the path toward His justice in our world. Part of our job is to let people know how God feels about the evils that go on, and that is not an easy task. Good old Jeremiah went so far as to literally wear a wooden yoke (like that fitted to the necks of oxen in third world countries today) in order to remind the nation that their actions would lead to captivity in Babylon. Sometimes we might feel like that would be easier than trying to tell our friends that God's love is unending, but His justice is also unbending. Understanding sin is the first step in understanding God's unfathomable gift of His Son's life in our behalf. Without understanding sin, how can I understand grace? How can I be overwhelmed by the very idea that God would love me in spite of my total rebellion? In reality, sharing the fact of sin with a friend, a neighbor, or our nation is an act of love. It can be the first step in sharing God's undeserved and unending grace.

**Learn more about God's justice and mercy through Bible study**  
(A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee)

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 28:5-9

1. What had been the message of Jeremiah (the true prophet) to Zedekiah and his subjects? (See Jeremiah 27:16-22)?
2. How had Hananiah's (the false prophet) message differed? (see 28:1-4). Which message would have been more appealing to the people?
3. What had been the message of many prophets (vs. 8)? Why had their messages been so "doom and gloom?"
4. According to vs. 9, what would be the sign of a true prophet? See next week's lesson in Zechariah 9:10. What does the perfect Prophet share in John 14:27?
5. An interesting object lesson surrounds this text. What object had Jeremiah worn while prophesying (27:2)? How was the burden disposed (28:10-11)?
6. What messages (and messengers) do we trust today? How do we discern the truth?



## Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

Lamentations 3:22-33

Jeremiah says that he finds hope in the midst of pain because he remembers that God's mercy and grace never end. Note that he doesn't say that he feels God's loving kindnesses as he writes, but that he remembers that they never fail.

The nation of Israel was suffering a time of conquest, punishment, and despair. It was easy to feel that God's love would never return. Jeremiah had proclaimed that this time would come, and now he proclaimed that even though God's punishment filled their lives, His love for them could never fail. God's love didn't need to return because it had not left. At the right time He would restore His people.



In our own lives we know that the punishment for our sin has been suffered by Jesus on the cross, but we still experience times when life just seems to run out of control. We wonder if God has left us on our own and without His love.

In times of pain, discouragement, or stress, we cannot rely on our feelings to tell us if God is present.

What if Joseph, for instance, sold into slavery by brothers who hated him, cast into prison for an offence that he did not commit, and even forgotten by a man who owed him greatly, (Genesis 37,39-45) had depended upon his feelings to determine whether God was with him? How long could he have gone on without giving up and giving in to total despair?

Jeremiah says that “it is good to wait quietly” (vs.26), but he didn't mean to literally sit and do nothing. Jeremiah tried to keep teaching in Jerusalem when the worst times came. When his friends insisted that he leave, he bought property before leaving in order to demonstrate that God would rescue His people at the right time. Joseph probably had times when he wondered why God allowed such bad things to happen to him, but he also insisted of himself that he live as though God were already paving the way for his rescue. Joseph worked hard for his masters and for his jailers. The king of Egypt even appointed him as second officer in the land. He and Jeremiah did not see waiting for God as a passive role. They knew that God's love would not leave them, and they lived their lives in His power and in His name as they waited for His time.

*Renew your walk with God through a Bible study this week!*

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

## Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

Lamentations 3:22-33

1. Why is the book title “Lamentations” appropriate? Who is generally accepted as the book's author? What was the occasion? (See the notes in the Concordia Self-study Bible or another reference).
2. What is the mood of the message preceding our text? (See 3:1-20)
3. God reveals Himself as the Lord of \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 22); \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 23); \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 25); and \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 26).
4. What does it mean to “wait quietly” (vs. 26) for the Lord?
5. How does vs. 33 respond to the explanation of tragedy “It was God's will.”?
6. Often our love is inadequate or even fails. What does it mean for you that “his compassions never fail” (vs. 22) and “so great is his unfailing love” (vs. 32)?



## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

I Kings 19:14-21

The most fascinating part of this passage is God's reply to Elijah's cry of despair. God said, basically, "Get back to work because I have more assignments for you." Elijah's words may sound a little like our own at times. We become fearful, tired, and perhaps even angry. Everything seems hopeless. Perhaps that is our problem—we assume that what "seems" to be must be. We sometimes lose sight of God through our tears of frustration, fear, or sadness. Elijah also had lost his focus and was ready to give up.

This is surprising because Elijah's frustration came just days after he had been God's tool in the defeat of 450 priests of Baal. After that victorious event, evil King Ahab had run to tell his wife, the even more evil and ruthless Jezebel. She, being a devout worshipper of Baal, sent a message to Elijah declaring that he would be dead within 24 hours. The threat of death and danger, even after the glorious miracle against the priests of Baal, filled the prophet with fear and fatigue.

God's actions with Elijah teach us a couple of things about our own life with God. God helped Elijah make it to the mountain cave to which he ran after receiving Jezebel's message. God did not turn from him because he fled. Elijah was led toward God. His fear did not cause Him to doubt God, but to run to His arms. Another important consideration for us is the circumstance in which God came to Elijah. Reading the verses just prior to today's passage we are informed that it was in a time of quiet. One of the hardest things to do in the midst of fear and turmoil is to sit for a while and seek God's counsel. God had a plan for Elijah. He has a plan for us. No matter what the fear or frustration; no matter the place we are; God is there. He loves us; He is in control; He will guide us through what "seems" to be an impossible situation.

**Learn more about God's mercy and love in a Bible study this week.**

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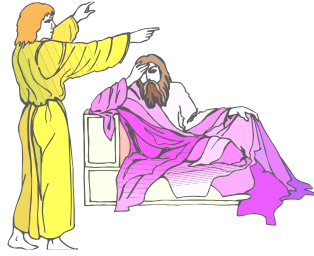
I Kings 19:14-21

1. Describe the thoughts and feelings of Elijah in vs. 14? Skim chapter 18 and the earlier verses of chapter 19 to review the incidents that contributed to Elijah's pessimism.
2. Had God forsaken Elijah and His people? What actions of transition and rescue had God arranged? What is the significance of the faithful "remnant" in vs. 18?
3. What action of Elijah demonstrates the transfer of the prophetic office to Elisha? (Glance ahead to 2 Kings chapters 2-9 for some incidents during Elisha's prophetic tenure.)
4. What actions of Elisha demonstrate his commitment to God's calling?
5. What other transfers of role, office or position do we have in Scripture (Abraham/Isaac; Moses/Joshua)? How can our transitions in church offices or positions be effective and Godly?
6. Elijah felt very alone in his calling. Have you ever felt a similar loneliness in your church role or in your defense of the Gospel? How did God uplift and assure you?

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Jeremiah 28:5-9

When troubles fall on a man or a nation, especially if that person's or nation's rebellion has caused the calamity, there often occurs the denial factor. "It can't be my fault! It's the other guy, and God will help me prove how right I really am." Into such a situation came the false prophet, Hananiah. Wanting favor and power with the king and with the people, he just told them what they wanted to hear, "You are right; God's prophet is wrong; God won't let bad things happen just because you have persistently and defiantly been disobedient to Him; He has to save you!"



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## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 28:5-9

1. A "battle of prophecies" is taking place. What had been Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the temple articles? (27:16-22) What had been the prophecy of Hananiah? (28:104)
2. Our text is Jeremiah's response to Hananiah. Would Jeremiah prefer the outcome suggested by Hananiah? Would that be God's response? (See also Jeremiah 28:12-17)
3. What was the typical mood and message of God's prophets? (vs. 8)

4. Who would be the prophet to ultimately bring the message of peace? (Isaiah 9:6; John 20:19)



For Family Reflections

5. Would it have been hard to be the prophet Jeremiah? Are there times and places when it's hard to share the truth of God's Word with others?
6. Hananiah was a false prophet (not true to God's Word). Are there still false prophets today? Who might some of them be?

## **Sixth Sunday after Pentecost**

2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-14

In last week's lesson, Paul talked about what it means to become an ambassador for Christ. He explained what it meant to put Jesus first in one's life; to become a new person through our reconciliation to God. This week he talks about a practical result of the change that has occurred in our lives; the change that has placed service to our Lord ahead of serving our own "success."

As we read these verses written to the church in Corinth so very long ago, it is hard to ignore or re-interpret the clear call to give of our wealth so that others can be lifted up in their own lives and ministries. In any Christian church there should never be a person who does not have clothes to wear, food to eat, or a shoulder on which to lean in difficult times. Paul's words also indicate that there should never be another church within our area of association that has unmet needs when we are able to help.

Being a Christian isn't just a "spiritual" experience. Our spiritual joy in knowing that Jesus is real and that He is our Savior and Lord leads to another joy—the joy of giving of our bounty to meet the needs of our own members, the members of other churches, and the members of our communities. God is our Provider and in the Old Testament and in the New Testament He makes it clear that the bounty that He provides is not for our own enjoyment or to enhance our ability to stay ahead of the neighbors. Nor does our comparative wealth, or lack of wealth, excuse us from giving to God's work. Jesus did not say of a poor widow that she should not give, but that her gift was of even greater value than that of the rich (Mark 12:41-44).

How will we respond to Paul's words, Jesus' teaching, and the Father's command? God has given each of us time, knowledge, wisdom, joy, encouragement, and even monetary surplus that can be given back to His work in our world. In last week's lesson Paul talked about us as "ambassadors" for Christ. This week he challenges us to demonstrate our willingness to put that ministry into practice.

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

## **Sixth Sunday after Pentecost**

2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-14

1. What compliment does Paul give to the Macedonian churches? What was the source of their generous stewardship response? (vs. 1,5)
2. What compliment does Paul give to the Corinthian Christians? (vs. 7) What challenge does he give them?
3. In what sense was Jesus rich? In what sense was He poor? (vs. 9; see also Philippians 2:6-9)
4. What implications does this stewardship text have for your congregation? What implications does it have for you personally? Are you giving "as much as you are able, even beyond your ability" (vs. 3)

### **For Family Reflection**

5. Are you rich?
6. In what specific ways can your family share your gifts and resources with your church and with others in need? Talk about what you are giving now (financially and otherwise). What is God in His grace challenging you to do?

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Galatians 6:1-10, 14-18

We sometimes assume that the phrase “caught in a trespass” means that someone has been deliberately living a sin and is “found out.” However, commentators agree that the phrase used by Paul indicates that it refers to one who is “overtaken” by sin; one who intended to do well, but found himself trapped in sin anyway. So, Paul naturally cautions those who want to help to be cautious lest the same thing happen to them. Isn’t it easier to assume that we are above the sin of another? Isn’t it easier to become critical of the “sinner” instead of trying to help him or her resist and defeat temptation?

Paul says that examining our own actions and faith is how we evaluate our Christian life. We do not evaluate our own lives by examining another’s, though that is usually far more comfortable. As a human being I will naturally tend to compare myself only to those whom I feel are less faithful, or more sinful, than I. But, God says to compare myself to Him when gauging my worthiness. (Mat. 5:48) We have seen God’s Son. How does my life compare to His? How do my actions and faith compare to His?

In verse 14, Paul says, “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...” Most of us have read that verse many times. We scan through it, agree with it, and move on—trying to get just one more chapter read before tackling another task. However, that statement becomes a joyful comfort when we understand who we are in reality and who we are in Christ Jesus.

In reality, I am no better than anyone else. Jesus pointed out that even sinful thinking condemns me. (Mat. 5:28) I am without hope in my sin. We are all trapped in an eternity of evil. That is, unless we are in Christ Jesus.

In Christ we are transported into a new reality. We are forgiven and even perfect in God’s eyes. Christ died to make us His people. Now we are free to care for one another; free to celebrate that, though sinners, we are able to make a loving difference in the life of another and in the world around us. Truly it is only in the cross that we can boast.

**Learn more about helping one another in a Bible study this week.**

A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Galatians 6:1-10, 14-18

1. How does Paul address spiritual pride? (vs.3-4, 14)
2. Explain vs. 7, “Whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” How is that statement true in a Godly sense? How is that statement true in a worldly sense?
3. Why should we express care and concern for fellow believers? (vs.10) Should our loving actions be limited to fellow church members?

### For Family Reflection

4. Does vs. 1 give us the permission to be “sin detectives”? When and how should we address the sins of others?
5. How and when was Paul “marked”? (vs. 17) Review the order for Holy Baptism (LSB p. 268). What “mark” did you receive?
6. These first weeks of the Pentecost season we have read sections of the book of Galatians. What do you remember about this book? What is your favorite passage from this book?

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 10:5, 21-33

Today's passage makes it clear that we are to be witnesses to those around us; that our favorite reason for opting out of this command is weak, to say the least. We like the adage that advises us to avoid talking about religion. Just the other day one of the advice columns in the paper assured a letter writer that a friend's discussion of her faith was indeed inappropriate, and the writer should have asked her to stop. I guess that's fair—when asked to cease talking about Jesus during a conversation with a friend, it is best to wait for a better time. But we are rarely asked to stop talking about our Lord's power in our lives since we so rarely begin.

Even giving God credit for the good things in our lives, or praising His presence during hard times is difficult. It can be embarrassing, awkward, or in some arenas detrimental to friendships or even jobs. All of this makes today's passage difficult reading.

We should not, however, apply the verses of "warning" to ourselves or berate ourselves for our failures and unfulfilled intentions. Those verses are not written about us, for we are forgiven recipients of God's mercy and grace. To His disciples Jesus gives encouragement to not be discouraged or afraid. If some persecuted Him, how could we expect less? Persecution, rejection, or outrage should just inspire us to move on, witnessing to others through our lives and words. Nor should we put off the task. It will be impossible to finish the job before His return. Nor are we forgotten. God knows the number of hairs that cover (or almost cover) our heads.

But what about all the warnings? Enduring to the end in verse 22 is not about working constantly, but believing. Verse 28 doesn't tell us that we should be afraid of God, but that we can be assured that there is nothing to fear from man. Verse 33 is not a threat to us to keep witnessing, but a statement of truth that at His coming there will be those who will still deny Jesus' reality and His authority to the people around them.

What will our response to Jesus' words be? Hopefully that we will continue honoring Jesus by our actions and words; that we will remember Jesus' promise from verse 19 that we do not live out our witness without God's help.

Learn more about living out Jesus' love in a Bible study this week.

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

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 10:5, 21-33

1. Today's lesson is a continuation from last week's Gospel reading. Review the introductory verses of chapter 10. To whom is Jesus speaking? What is the context of the instruction?
2. What does it mean to "stand firm to the end" (vs. 22)? What obstacles would the disciples encounter along the way? What would be the reward for their faithfulness?
3. How do verses 29 and 30 describe God's attention to detail? Why are these verses reassuring to us?
4. How do verses 28 and 33 emphasize God's divine justice? Who should be afraid of God?

### For Family Reflection

5. What does it mean to acknowledge Jesus (vs. 32)? When, where, and to whom can we do this? What is Jesus' reward for us?
6. How many hairs are on your head (vs. 30)? Does God know? What else does God know about you?

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 6:14-29

Now Mark tells us about John the Baptist's arrest. Herod Antipas arrested John. Serving under Rome, Herod ruled a part of what had been his father's (Herod the Great) kingdom. The unhappy marriage that John condemned was almost incest. Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great; Herodias was the grand-daughter of Herod the Great by another of his wives. Herodias, living in Rome, married Herod Antipas' half brother, Philip, her half uncle. Herod Antipas, visiting Rome, seduced his sister-in-law/niece from his half brother and married her. In doing so, he smashed the Old Testament marriage laws. This is what John had been loudly condemning. To charge a typical Jew of such a crime would have caused much discussion; to accuse the king cost John his life.

Herod feared John and the people who followed and listened to him. Herodias had no such concern. Her daughter's dance for her stepfather could be the way to her revenge. Herod's enjoyment of his stepdaughter's dance was no doubt more than an appreciation for great art, and his statement that he would honor her any wish trapped him.

John perfectly understood the danger that his words brought him. Yet, he spoke out anyway.

In our own society, there are many things going on that go against God's demands for behavior; even the denying of God's existence or His truth, or even His love. Abortion, adultery, homosexuality, lying, cheating on taxes or tests, destroying human embryos, the belief that there is no right religion—that there is no right or wrong—are only some of the sins that plague our culture. Some of these sins are even under the protection of our laws.

What do John's story and our culture have to do with the Gospel of Christ? Everything!

We are challenged to be John—to comfort those seeking God and challenge others to change. Not through hatred and condemnation, but by speaking honestly and with Jesus' love.

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

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

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 6:14-29

1. What explanations were offered for the person and power of Jesus?
2. Review the ministry of John the Baptist. (Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-20). What was John's message? Why was John's ministry so important to the ministry and message of Jesus?
3. Why was John a threat to Herod and Herodias? How did they rid their world of John's and his challenge to their lifestyle?
4. Read Matthew's account of this story in Matthew 14:1-12. Read the notes on Herod, Herodias, and the daughter (Salome) from the Concordia self-study Bible or another resource. How would you describe them?

### For Family Reflection

5. Is speaking out against sin still unpopular? Are Christians still persecuted for speaking the truth?
6. Can you think of others who gave their life for speaking the truth of God's word? Do you think you would be willing to stay true to Jesus even if your life depended on it?

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 10:1-20

“Now after this....” After what? Jesus had just emphasized that to follow Him requires discipline, obedience, and a willingness to put Him first in everything. Then He sent seventy-two out in pairs to the cities that He was about to visit.

The fact that Jesus sent out “seventy-two” lets us know that He did not just expect the twelve apostles to be bearers of the Gospel. He expects it of all of us. Let’s emphasize here and now, however, that none of us will be perfect bearers of the Gospel. Some of us may not even try, but failing to be perfect and failing to try do not cost us our salvation, nor does it cost us God’s love. Both are assured by Jesus’ death on the cross. Having said that, what life applications can we learn from this passage?

Verse 3 tells us not to always expect a grateful welcome. There is hostility against the Gospel and Christianity in our world. It’s essential to recognize the reality of evil and be wary of it.

Verse 4 points out that the mission is urgent.

Verses 5 through 12 seem a little removed from our time, but there is an important instruction for us here. Offer the gospel to everyone; demonstrate the love of Jesus to everyone. If, however, you are met with hostility, leave that one behind and continue to share Jesus with more people. To keep hammering on one person who doesn’t want to hear means that many who want to hear may not have an opportunity. Verse 12 points out the true tragedy of the scenario Jesus describes.

In verses 13 through 16 Jesus speaks of the cities in which He has worked miracles that are not even recorded for us. The obvious truth that they revealed was rejected and those cities and their residents would not see the joy of heaven.

I think that we see Jesus’ joy and also His humor as the passage closes. The seventy-two return in awe at the things they were able to do through Jesus. I think His smile was large as He said, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning!”

Finally, and most importantly, Jesus reminds us of the true gift of grace—“...rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”

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

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

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 10:1-20

1. What “harvest” is Jesus referring to in vs. 2? Who is “Lord of the harvest”? Who were Jesus’ “laborers” in the text? Who are His laborers today?
2. What challenges would the seventy-two face? What assurances did the seventy-two have?
3. What positive reports did the seventy-two share after their journeys? What was the reason for their success?
4. What warnings does Jesus give to those who reject Him?

### For Family Reflection

5. How does your church share the Good News of Jesus with your community? Do you have teams that visit homes in your community? What are some of the outreach initiatives of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod? Who can you tell about Jesus?
6. Are our names “written in heaven” (vs. 20)? When were they written down? What confidence do we have because our names are “written in heaven”?