

Contents

Introduction	11
FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT	
Isa. 2:1-5 Rom. 13:11-14	
The Secret Ingredient — Matt. 24:37-44	Alvin C. Reuter 15
SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT	
Isa. 11:1-10 Rom. 15:4-13	
Prepare the Way of the Lord! — Matt. 3:1-12	Wilton E. Bergstrand 19
THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT	
Isa. 35:1-10 James 5:7-10	
Walk Beside Me! — Matt. 11:2-11	R. G. Borgwardt 24
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT	
Isa. 7:10-14 (15-17) Rom. 1:1-7	
Incredible, But True — Matt. 1:18-25	Richard G. Matson 30
THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD — Christmas Day	
Isa. 9:2-7 Titus 2:11-14	
The Simple Wonder in Simple Words — Luke 2:1-20	Alton F. Wedel 36
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS	
Isa. 63:7-9 Gal. 4:4-7	
Lessons of God's Presence — Matt. 2:13-15, 19-23	Ingolf B. Kindem 41
THE NAME OF JESUS	
Num. 6:22-27 Rom. 1:1-7	
What's in a Name? — Luke 2:21	Leslie F. Brandt 46
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS	
Isa. 61:10-62:3 Eph. 1:3-6, 15-18	
Excitement in Our Lives — John 1:1-18	Lavern Franzen 50
THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD	
Isa. 60:1-6 Eph. 3:2-12	
The Quenchless Quest — Matt. 2:1-12	Paul H. A. Noren 55
THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD — First Sunday after the Epiphany	
Isa. 42:1-7 Acts 10:34-38	
This Is My Beloved — Matt. 3:13-17	Keith Krebs 58

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- SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
Isa. 49:1-6 1 Cor. 1:1-9
New Life for the New Year — John 1:29-41 George F. Lobien 62
- THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
Isa. 9:1-4 1 Cor. 1:10-17
He's Building an Empire — Matt. 4:12-23 Reuben T. Swanson 67
- FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
Zeph. 2:3; 3:11-13 1 Cor. 1:26-31
Being — Giving — Receiving — Matt. 5:1-12 Phillip Baker 72
- THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD —
Last Sunday after the Epiphany
Exod. 24:12, 15-18 2 Peter 1:16-19 (20-21)
A Vision of Grace and Glory —
Matt. 17:1-9 Louis Neuchterlein 76
- FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
Gen. 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7 Rom. 5:12 (13-16) 17-19
He Passed the Test — Matt. 4:1-11 Walter M. Wick 81
- SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT
Gen. 12:1-8 Rom. 4:1-5, 13-17
God Can't Be Like This — Unless —
John 4:5-26 Wayne Weissenbuehler 85
- THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
Isa. 42:14-21 Eph. 5:8-14
An Important Person — You — John 9:1-41 L. A. Wolf 89
- FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT
Hos. 5:15-6:2 Rom. 8:1-10
Some Questions for Lent and Life —
Matt. 20:17-28 Arthur O. Arnold 94
- FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
Ezek. 37:1-3 (4-10) 11-14 Rom. 8:11-19
The Last Miracle of Jesus —
John 11:1-53 Stanley D. Schneider 99
- SUNDAY OF THE PASSION — Palm Sunday
Isa. 50:4-9a Phil. 2:5-11
Let's Play It Again — Matt. 26:1-27:66 Harry G. Coiner 102

- MAUNDY THURSDAY
Exod. 12:1-14 1 Cor. 11:17-32
He Took a Towel — John 13:1-17 George M. Bass 107
- GOOD FRIDAY
Isa. 52:13-53:12 Heb. 4:14-5:10
The Cross as Mirror and Window —
John 19:17-30 Harris W. Lee 109
- THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD — Easter Day
Acts 10:34-43 Col. 3:1-4
Resurrection — Fearful Doubts or Exciting Faith? —
John 20:1-9 Carl A. Gaertner 114
- SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER
Acts 2:42-47 1 Peter 1:3-9
Just an Ordinary Greeting —
John 20:19-31 Morris J. Niedenthal 117
- THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER
Acts 2:22-32 1 Peter 1:17-21
Hidden in a Word — Luke 24:13-35 James A. Nestingen 121
- FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
Acts 2:36-41 1 Peter 2:19-25
What Is a Sheep Without a Good Shepherd? —
John 10:1-10 Hubert Beck 125
- FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
Acts 6:1-7 1 Peter 2:4-10
Go With the Guide! — John 14:1-12 Harvey L. Prinz 130
- SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
Acts 8:5-8, 14-17 1 Peter 3:15-18
Empowered to Live! — John 14:15-21 Maynard Iverson 135
- THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD
Acts 1:1-11 Eph. 1:16-23
The Same Road Twice — Luke 24:44-53 Richard T. Hinz 138
- SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
Acts 1:6-14 1 Peter 4:13-19
The Church Has a Future —
John 17:1-11 Theodore E. Matson 143

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Joel 9:28-29 Acts 2:1-21

Peace and Power — John 20:19-23

Jack F. Hustad 147

THE HOLY TRINITY — First Sunday after Pentecost

Deut. 4:32-34, 39-40 Rom. 8:14-17

The Triune God — Presence, Purpose, Promise —

Matt. 28:16-20

Eugene F. Gruell 151

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Deut. 11:18-21, 26-28 Rom. 3:21-25a, 27-28

In Name Only — Matt. 7:21-29

T. A. Youngquist 155

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Hos. 6:1-6 Rom. 4:18-25

So Close and Yet So Far — Matt. 9:9-13

John V. Halvorson 159

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Exod. 19:2-6a Rom. 5:6-11

Let's Get Going — Matt. 9:35-10:7

Omar Stuenkel 165

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jer. 20:7-13 Rom. 5:12-15

Landlord to a Ghost —

Matt. 10:26-33

Hugh George Anderson 169

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jer. 28:5-9 Rom. 6:2b-11

The Sound of Muzak — Matt. 10:34-42

Michael Rogness 173

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Zech. 9:9-10 Rom. 8:18-23

Truth in Advertising —

Matt. 11:25-30

Norman D. Kretzmann 177

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isa. 55:10-11 Rom. 7:15-25a

Spiritual Agriculture —

Matt. 13:1-9 (18-23)

Louis E. Ulrich Jr. 181

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isa. 44:6-8 Rom. 8:26-27

God's Enemy List —

Matt. 13:24-30 (36-43)

Norman G. Anderson 186

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

1 Kings 3:5-12 Rom. 1:28-30

The Priceless Possession —

Matt. 13:44-52

Herbert F. Lindemann 191

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isa. 55:1-5 Rom. 8:35-39

To Be a Miracle — Matt. 14:13-21

Donovan J. Palmquist 195

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

1 Kings 19:9-18 Rom. 9:1-5

Walking on Water? — Matt. 14:22-33

Warren A. Sorteberg 199

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isa. 56:1, 6-8 Rom. 11:13-15, 29-32

Practicing the Presence of God —

Matt. 15:21-28

Allen A. Gartner 204

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Exod. 6:2-8 Rom. 11:33-36

Is God a Mystery? — Matt 16:13-20

Leigh D. Jordahl 208

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jer. 15:15-21 Rom. 12:1-8

The Way of the Cross — Matt. 16:21-26

Ralph W. Quere 213

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Ezek. 33:7-9 Rom. 13:1-10

Organizing the Organism —

Matt. 18:15-20

Richard R. Caemmerer Sr. 218

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Gen. 50:15-21 Rom. 14:7-9

Forgiven and Forgiving — Matt. 18:21-35

Robert W. Stackel 222

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isa. 55:6-9 Phil. 1:3-5, 19-27

Free to Act — Matt. 20:1-16

Walter R. Wietzke 227

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Ezek. 18:25-32 Phil. 2:1-5 (6-11)

Proper and Polite or Penitent and Productive? —

Matt. 21:28-32

Bertwin L. Frey 231

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isa. 5:1-7 Phil. 4:4-8

Dream Explosion — Matt. 21:33-43

C. L. Johnson 236

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isa. 25:6-9 Phil. 4:10-13, 19-20

Called to Celebration and Commitment —

Matt. 22:1-10 (11-14)

Thomas F. Loftus 239

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isa. 45:1-7 1 Thess. 1:1-5a

Things for Caesar — Things for God —

Matt. 22:15-21

Bryant E. Clancy Jr. 244

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lev. 19:1-2, 15-18 1 Thess. 1:5b-10

The Trap That Backfired —

Matt. 22:34-40 (41-46)

Paul M. Werger 249

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Zeph. 1:14-16 1 Thess. 4:13-14 (15-18)

An Oil Shortage — To Have or Not to Have —

Matt. 25:1-13

R. E. McClelland 254

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Hos. 11:1-4, 8-9 1 Thess. 5:1-11

Talents to Use — Matt. 25:14-30

Harry N. Huxhold 259

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Mal. 2:1-10 1 Thess. 2:8-13

There's Something Missing in Religion —

Matt. 23:1-12

William E. Berg 264

LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Christ the King

Ezek. 34:11-16, 23-24 1 Cor. 15:20-28

The King and His Brothers and Sisters —

Matt. 25:31-46

Gordon Lathrop 269

THANKSGIVING DAY, U.S.A.

Deut. 8:1-10 Acts 17:(16-21) 22-32

Healing and Wholeness — All Thanks to God! —

Luke 17:11-19

John H. Baumgaertner 275

Introduction

The Calendar and Lectionary introduced by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) in Advent 1973, has become one of the most popular liturgical tools for contemporary worship and preaching. It is the answer to many requests in Lutheran churches for a revision of the church year and a new lectionary.

The church year calendar has been modified and modernized. The lectionary has been extensively overhauled by drawing on parallel efforts by the Protestant Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic churches.

This new lectionary has proved to be just what preachers have been asking for.

The New Church Year Calendar

This new calendar is similar to all previous calendars in that Easter is still the heart of it, and the Gospel still tells the story of Jesus Christ throughout the year.

The revisions in the new calendar are these:

- The *gesima* Sundays, sometimes known as pre-Lent, are now listed as Sundays after Epiphany. The season of Epiphany is therefore lengthened, which makes possible a fuller development of Epiphany themes.
- The Sundays between Easter and Pentecost will be known as the Sundays of Easter, rather than *after* Easter.
- The Latin titles for the Sundays of Lent and Easter have been deleted.
- Passion Sunday has been moved from the Fifth Sunday in Lent to the Sixth Sunday (Palm Sunday).
- The Sundays in the Pentecost-Trinity season have been numbered *after Pentecost* instead of *after Trinity*.
- In color terminology, *purple* replaces *violet*, and *red* is suggested for use during Holy Week.

The New Lectionary

The new lectionary presents a three-year cycle of lessons for the church year. The texts designated for a specific year will be chosen alternatively from Series A, Series B, or Series C of this lectionary.

This lectionary follows the traditional pattern of appointing an Old Testament lesson, an Epistle, and a Gospel for each Sunday. During the Easter season, however, a reading from the Acts of the Apostles replaces the Old Testament lesson.

Perhaps the outstanding feature of the lectionary is its use of a *Gospel of the Year*. In each series, one of the Synoptic Gospels is featured, providing continuity to the reading and telling of the Gospel story throughout the entire church year. The reading of the *Gospel of the Year* is interrupted annually by the insertion of the Gospel of John from Easter Sunday through Pentecost. Certain festivals for which only one Gospel is appropriate (the Epiphany for example), also are outside the domain of the *Gospel of the Year*.

Series A in 1974

The Lutheran churches in America will receive their first exposure to Series A of the new *Calendar and Lectionary* beginning in Advent 1974. Matthew is the *Gospel of the Year* in this series and thus will be the primary source for most of the sermons preached in 1974-75.

The *Gospel of the Year* approach enables the pastor to study the Gospel of Matthew in depth and to share his insights with his congregation through his sermons. This will help make visible the uniqueness of each of the New Testament Gospels. The same kind of organized in-depth study and proclamation of the Gospels is continued in Series B which features Mark and Series C which is based on Luke.

The first volume of *Augsburg Sermons*, based on the Gospel texts of Series C, was published in the summer of 1973. The enthusiastic response to those sermons, plus the wide acceptance of the new *Calendar and Lectionary*, provided the encouragement to issue the present volume based on the Gospel texts of Series A. This book, like its predecessor, is offered in the hope that the sermons, the calendar, and the lectionary will contribute to the renewal of preaching.

