

# Lutheran Educators Conference Devotions



*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.  
Hebrews 13:8*

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## **Day 1 - The Promise that Jesus is the *same yesterday, today, and forever***

It was 1:20 a.m., February 20, 2022. His breathing was shallow as I held him and prayed over him. Then came one long exhale and silence. My beloved was Home and seeing the face of our Beloved. His faith was now sight, his purpose in Christ fulfilled, and I rejoiced over him with the Doxology. What a blessing that his life would never be the *same* again, all because Jesus is the *same* yesterday, today, and forever.

Life is full of changes, and although not all change is bad, in the most recent years, changes such as pestilence, gender dysphoria, the economy, AI in education, the Cancel Culture Movement, political unrest, and the changes in our environment have brought fear and unrest. As Christians, we know that this kind of change will happen before Christ returns. However, changes like these and others we experience in this life can take a toll on our mind, body, and spirit.

The committee for the 2023 LEC gathering prayerfully considered this year's theme with this in mind and built the conference around Hebrews 13:8, "*Jesus is the SAME yesterday, today, and forever.*" Jesus is our sure and certain hope that although things change, He changes not. We have the promise that our God and His Word stay the same and that His Word endures forever. What a great comfort and joy that we can depend on the LORD and His Word to sustain us through every wind of change by keeping us firmly grounded in Him. By His grace, we can confidently claim His promises as our own.

For the next nine devotions, we are going to explore some of these sustaining promises from the Words of our changeless Redeemer through Scripture and hymns to encourage us in our faith and strengthen our witness to proclaim that we serve a God who changes not and is the "*same yesterday, today, and forever.*"

We Pray: O God, who changes not, hold us close to You in our yesterdays, today, and forever as we face the daily challenges of change all around us. Bless Your Word that our hearts may be filled with hope and joy in Your precious promises as we keep our eyes on You. In the name of Jesus, AMEN

## Day 2 - The Promise of Eternal Life

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16*

I love singing the hymns in the hymnal. My father memorized over 37 hymns in his 93 years of life and would sing them as he took his walks. When I would visit, we would walk and sing them together. He had a little trouble with the melodies, but the words came easily. I had no problem with the melodies, but it was like a skimming rock over the water with the words. Together, we made a joyful noise to the LORD!

The hymn, *"God Loved the World so that He Gave,"* is a beautiful way to reflect on John 3:16. Jesus fulfilled this promise given in Genesis 3:15 to save us from sin, death, and the power of the devil, giving us His righteousness received by faith. God be praised that this promise lasts for all generations until His return because *"Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever."* AMEN!

Here is a [link](#) to this hymn to sing with your meditation or just quietly reflect on the words.

1 God loved the world so that He gave  
His only Son the lost to save,  
That all who would in Him believe  
Should everlasting life receive.

2 Christ Jesus is the ground of faith,  
Who was made flesh and suffered death;  
All then who trust in Him alone  
Are built on this chief cornerstone.

3 God would not have the sinner die;  
His Son with saving grace is nigh;  
His Spirit in the Word declares  
How we in Christ are heaven's heirs.

4 Be of good cheer, for God's own Son  
Forgives all sins which you have done;  
And, justified by Jesus' blood,  
Your Baptism grants the highest good.

5 If you are sick, if death is near,  
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:  
Christ Jesus saves your soul from death;  
That is the firmest ground of faith.

6 Glory to God the Father, Son,  
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!  
To Thee, O blessed Trinity,  
Be praise now and eternally!

### Day 3 - The Promise to Forgive and Cleanse

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 6:8-9*

At the heart of repentance is the ability to know the difference between the truth and a lie and confess it. Our sinful nature prefers to cover the darkness of our actions or cast our wrong on another as we justify our case. It was no different for our first parents as they played the "blame game" toward each other and God. Their refusal to see the truth drove them further into the darkness, where hatred and anger would fester. But, God, in His love and mercy, was walking them toward the light of His truth to see their sin and their need to be saved. Confession exposes our darkness and moves us to the light of God's truth and forgiveness. But, *"if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8). When we confess our sins to God, we are coming back to His will, His way, *"walking in the light as He is in the light."* (1 John 1:7) We recognize our actions against Him and others and desire His mercy and forgiveness. And that is what He promises: *"If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* God is faithful to forgive. God is also just to forgive our sins, and that justice comes through the work of Christ on the cross. Jesus took the just punishment for sin that we deserved on Himself, who knew no sin. When we confess our sins, the Father is pleased, and the Son is glorified. As His baptized children, we have the Holy Spirit working in us to bring us to the knowledge of our sins so that we can repent and receive the forgiveness of sins and be cleansed through the blood of Jesus, our Savior.

What a gift! What a blessing! Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness are the *same yesterday, today, and forever*. AMEN

Here is the [hymn](#) to sing with your meditation or just quietly reflect on the words.

1 Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.

2 Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
Cleansed and redeemed, no debt to pay;  
Fully absolved through these I am  
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

3 Lord, I believe Thy precious blood,  
Which at the mercy seat of God  
Pleads for the captives' liberty,  
Was also shed in love for me.

4 Lord, I believe, were sinners more  
Than sands upon the ocean shore,  
Thou hast for all a ransom paid,  
For all a full atonement made.

5 When from the dust of death I rise  
To claim my mansion in the skies,  
This then shall be my only plea:  
Jesus hath lived and died for me.

6 Jesus, be endless praise to Thee,  
Whose boundless mercy hath for me,  
For me, and all Thy hands have made,  
An everlasting ransom paid.

Translator: John Wesley  
Author: Nicolaus Ludwig, Graf von Zinzendorf (1739)  
Public Domain  
Hymnary.org  
Lutheran Service Book #563

## Day 4 - The Promise of New Life

*"We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*

Romans 6:4

With sins forgiven, we are raised to new life! I am reminded of the wonderful hymn, "*God's Own Child I Gladly Say It!*" Marty and I chose this as the opening hymn at his memorial service. Bill Heide opened up all the stops on the organ until the phrase, "I am baptized into Christ!" where he stopped playing, and we sang it loudly as a proclamation of faith. Please take some time to meditate on these words and sing this hymn as your proclamation of faith. Begin to take in some of those verses as a way to strengthen your faith in moments of testing and trial. May the LORD bless you in your journey of faith as His called, baptized, and equipped child of God, remembering that "*Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*"

Here is the [hymn](#) to sing with your meditation or just quietly reflect on the words.

1. God's own child, I gladly say it:  
I am baptized into Christ!  
He, because I could not pay it,  
Gave my full redemption price.  
Do I need earth's treasures many?  
I have one worth more than any  
That brought me salvation free  
Lasting to eternity!
2. Sin, disturb my soul no longer:  
I am baptized into Christ!  
I have comfort even stronger:  
Jesus' cleansing sacrifice.  
Should a guilty conscience seize me  
Since my Baptism did release me  
In a dear forgiving flood,  
Sprinkling me with Jesus' blood!
3. Satan, hear this proclamation:  
I am baptized into Christ!  
Drop your ugly accusation,  
I am not so soon enticed.  
Now that to the font I've traveled,  
All your might has come unraveled,  
And, against your tyranny,  
God, my Lord, unites with me!

4. Death, you cannot end my gladness:  
I am baptized into Christ!  
When I die, I leave all sadness  
To inherit paradise!  
Though I lie in dust and ashes  
Faith's assurance brightly flashes:  
Baptism has the strength divine  
To make life immortal mine.
  
5. There is nothing worth comparing  
To this lifelong comfort sure!  
Open-eyed my grave is staring:  
Even there I'll sleep secure.  
Though my flesh awaits its raising,  
Still my soul continues praising:  
I am baptized into Christ;  
I'm a child of paradise!

Text: Erdmann Neumeister, 1671-1756  
Text: Robert E. Voelker 1991  
Translator: Robert E. Voelker 1957  
Tune: Public Domain  
Lutheran Service Book #594



## Day 5 - The Promise of His Presence

*"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand"*  
Isaiah 41:10

Our new life in Christ as His baptized child is open season for Satan and his demons. The crosses and trials that we face every day can bring sorrow and a feeling of hopelessness. But, the LORD promises that He is with us. Ponder that for a moment. You are His child, and you are safe with Him no matter what Satan does. When we experience these attacks, we can proclaim as a faithful prayer that He is our God and will strengthen and help. He will hold us with His righteous hand of blessing as we go through life's troubles. We can also know that whatever comes our way, it has not been without God's knowledge nor His love, and He will sustain us through it and bring us days of gladness.

The hymn, *"Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me,"* by the Lutheran theologian Paul Gerhardt, has brought me great comfort through my journey of faith. As you meditate on the promise of our LORD in Isaiah and the hymn below, may it remind you that it is the LORD who is doing all the work to strengthen you, help you, and uphold you through every trial. Make the sign of the cross over yourself as it was done at your baptism, and be reminded that you are His, and He will never leave you because *Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Here is the [hymn](#) to sing with your meditation or just quietly reflect on the words.

1 Why should cross and trial grieve me?  
Christ is near  
With His cheer;  
Never will He leave me.  
Who can rob me of the heaven  
That God's Son  
For me won  
When His life was given?

2 When life's troubles rise to meet me,  
Though their weight  
May be great,  
They will not defeat me.  
God, my loving Savior, sends them;  
He who knows  
All my woes  
Knows how best to end them.

3 God gives me my days of gladness,  
And I will  
Trust Him still  
When He sends me sadness.  
God is good;  
His love attends me  
Day by day,  
Come what may,  
Guides me and defends me.

Verses 4-5 are beautiful but omitted because they are not public domain. Please [listen](#) to the hymn for those verses.

Text: Paul Gerhardt, 1607-1676

Tune: John G. Ebeling, 1637-76 setting TLH 1941

Translator: Christian Worship 1993 sts. 1-3

Stephen P. Starke 1955 sts.4-5

Text: sts. 1-3 Public Domain

Text: sts. 4-5 copyright Stephen P. Starke, admin. CPH

Lutheran Service Book #756

## Day 6 - The Promise of His Rest

*"Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."* Matthew 11:28-30

As I write this, today is Labor Day, a Federal holiday that pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of American workers. Its history, however, is not that glamorous, with labor strikes, rioting, and even death.

You might say that Sunday is the Christian "*Labor Day*," where we give thanks to God for His work to give us rest from our labors against sin through the death and resurrection of His Son. Our "*Labor Day*" is focused on worship, where our LORD feeds us with His Word and His Body and Blood, forgiving our sins, renewing our spirit, and preparing us for the days ahead. And that is the promise from the LORD today in Matthew. All authority has been given to Jesus; He has everything we need (Matt. 11:27-28). In this promise, He invites us to come to Him alone, not to the world, not to ourselves, and not to our own reason and strength, but instead to our Creator and Redeemer. Our yoke is the burden of this life caused by sin, sometimes by our own hand and sometimes from the hand of another. That creates weariness and times of despair. And that is what Jesus is calling us to bring to Him because His yoke is not a burden but one of joy in His forgiveness. Jesus is gentle and humble of heart, and in obedience to the Father, He went to the ultimate yoke, the cross, and empty tomb, so that we can throw off the worries and anxieties of this life and the burden of our sins and failures and receive His rest. Remember that in your baptism, you have "*put on Christ*" (Galatians 3:27), and by His Grace, you do not have to wear the yoke of this life but instead you wear the "*garments of salvation*" because "*He covered (you) with the robe of righteousness.*" (Isaiah 61:10) This is a beautiful foretaste of what is yet to come in eternity and is what God intends us to seek and find in His Son, our Savior here and now in this life. You can be sure of this because the promises of Jesus are *the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Here is the [hymn](#) to sing with your meditation or just quietly reflect on the words.

1 "Come unto Me, ye weary,  
And I will give you rest."  
O blessed voice of Jesus,  
Which comes to hearts oppressed!  
It tells of benediction,  
Of pardon, grace, and peace,  
Of joy that hath no ending,  
Of love that cannot cease.

2 "Come unto Me, ye wand'ers,  
And I will give you light."  
O loving voice of Jesus,  
Which comes to cheer the night!  
Our hearts were filled with sadness,  
And we had lost our way;  
But Thou hast brought us gladness  
And songs at break of day.

3 "Come unto Me, ye fainting,  
And I will give you life."  
O cheering voice of Jesus,  
Which comes to aid our strife!  
The foe is stern and eager,  
The fight is fierce and long;  
But Thou hast made us mighty  
And stronger than the strong.

4 "And whosoever cometh,  
I will not cast him out."  
O patient love of Jesus,  
Which drives away our doubt,  
Which, though we be unworthy  
Of love so great and free,  
Invites us very sinners  
To come, dear Lord, to Thee!

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-98  
Tune: Frederick K. Anthes, 1812-1857, setting TLH 1941  
Tune and music: Public Domain  
Lutheran Service Book #684

## Day 7 – A Promise to Guide

*"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go;  
I will counsel you with My eye upon you."* Psalm 32:8

I remember my first year of teaching. I had so much excitement and still so much to learn. Every day was a new day of experiences and areas for prayer and repentance. After 42 years, I still feel the same and am grateful for every day I have been given and the lessons I have learned from a loving and patient Father.

Our Christian life is also one of great joy and excitement in serving the LORD; no matter how old we are, we still have so much to learn. It is a lifelong process of maturing in faith and depending on Him. In our verse for today, God promises to instruct us through His commands so that we know what He wants us to do, and that includes discipline because the LORD disciplines those He loves. (Hebrews 12:6) He promises to teach us in His Word the way we should go, which means when we stray like a wandering sheep, He corrects us. Correction can sometimes be painful, but when we heed the call to repent and change our ways, it brings a harvest of righteousness and peace! (Hebrews 12:11) He also promises to counsel us with His eye on us. There is no time when the LORD removes His watchful eye from us, but there are countless times when we take our eyes off Him. Remember Peter walking on the water and sinking suddenly! But the loving eye of the LORD was on Him, and He reached down and pulled Peter up from drowning in a sea of fear and doubt when he took his eyes off Jesus. The LORD counsels us with His Word so that we keep our eyes and ears on Him.

We are also reminded in this Psalm that we should be teachable, not like *"a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you."* (vs. 9) God would rather we listen and obey than have to curb us, but curb us He will because He loves us.

Issac Watts penned, *"Oh, that the LORD would guide my ways."* It was taken from Psalm 25:5, *"Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You, I wait all the day."* May that be our prayer as we trust in our God who is the *"same yesterday, today, and forever."*

1 Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways  
To keep His statutes still!  
Oh, that my God would grant me grace  
To know and do His will!

2 Order my footsteps by Thy Word  
And make my heart sincere;  
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,  
But keep my conscience clear.

3 Assist my soul, too apt to stray,  
A stricter watch to keep;  
And should I e'er forget Thy way,  
Restore Thy wand'ring sheep.

4 Make me to walk in Thy commands--  
'Tis a delightful road--  
Nor let my head or heart or hands  
Offend against my God.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Tune: William H. Havergal, 1793-1870 setting TLH 1941

Tune and music: Public Domain

Lutheran Service Book #707

## Day 8 – The Promise to Work Everything for Your Good

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28*

This promise is written to believers because they are the ones who know that God will work ***ALL things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.*** Note God's absolute in "all things." That includes ALL afflictions in this life. It is in those afflictions that we are being "called" and equipped to serve His wise purpose and to trust Him as He leads us through life's sorrows and trials as He turns them into His good and blessing. C.G. Moule, an Anglican theologian, said, *"There is no situation so chaotic that God cannot, from that situation, create something that is surpassingly good. He did it at the creation. He did it at the cross. He is doing it today,"* even for you! This is the victory of the Christian because no matter what we face, He also promises that we are *"more than conquerors through Him who loved us"* and that *"nothing else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our LORD."* (Romans 8:37-39)

With confidence in God to do exactly what He says, we can face ALL suffering and trials knowing that *"in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him"* because *"What God Ordains is Always Good."* We have that sure promise in our Savior Jesus, who *is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Here is the [hymn](#) to sing with your meditation or just quietly reflect on the words.

1 What God ordains is always good:  
His will is just and holy.  
As He directs my life for me,  
I follow meek and lowly.  
My God indeed  
In ev'ry need  
Knows well how He will shield me;  
To Him, then, I will yield me.

2 What God ordains is always good:  
He never will deceive me;  
He leads me in His righteous way,  
And never will He leave me.  
I take content  
What He has sent;  
His hand that sends me sadness  
Will turn my tears to gladness.

3 What God ordains is always good:  
His loving thought attends me;  
No poison can be in the cup  
That my Physician sends me.  
My God is true;  
Each morning new  
I trust His grace unending,  
My life to Him commending.

4 What God ordains is always good:  
He is my friend and Father;  
He suffers naught to do me harm  
Though many storms may gather.  
Now I may know  
Both joy and woe;  
Some day I shall see clearly  
That He has loved me dearly.

5 What God ordains is always good:  
Though I the cup am drinking  
Which savors now of bitterness,  
I take it without shrinking.  
For after grief  
God gives relief,  
My heart with comfort filling  
And all my sorrow stilling.

6 What God ordains is always good:  
This truth remains unshaken.  
Though sorrow, need, or death be mine,  
I shall not be forsaken.  
I fear no harm,  
For with His arm  
He shall embrace and shield me;  
So to my God I yield me.

Text: Samuel Rodigast, 1649-1708  
Tune: Severus Gastorius, 1646-1642, setting TLH 1941  
Tune and music: Public Domain  
Lutheran Service Book #760

## Day 9 – Our Response to His Promises

*"I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer..."*  
Psalm 18:1-2a

This is our response to the great promises of our LORD to give us eternal life, forgive and cleanse us in His Body and Blood, give us new life in baptism, be present with us as we face life's challenges, give us rest from the burden of our sins, instruct us and teach us the way we should go keeping His eye on us and working everything for our good. As the world around us changes and we face all the difficulties that come with it, our God changes not, and we can rest in Him as we live out our faith and are conformed to Him through them all. May our God who changes not be the one you love above all things. May He be your strength, your rock, your fortress, and the One you trust, who has delivered you from sin, death, and the power of the devil to give you life now and eternally in His name as you serve Him in your various vocations.

Please meditate on these words from the hymn, *"Thee Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower."*

1 Thee will I love, my strength, my tower;  
Thee will I love, my hope, my joy.  
Thee will I love with all my power,  
With ardor time shall ne'er destroy.  
Thee will I love, O Light Divine,  
So long as life is mine.

2 Thee will I love, my life, my Savior,  
Who art my best and truest Friend.  
Thee will I love and praise forever,  
For never shall Thy kindness end.  
Thee will I love with all my heart--  
Thou my Redeemer art!

3 I thank Thee, Jesus, Sun from heaven,  
Whose radiance hath brought light to me;  
I thank Thee, who hast richly given  
All that could make me glad and free;  
I thank Thee that my soul is healed  
By what Thy lips revealed.

4 O keep me watchful, then, and humble;  
Permit me nevermore to stray.  
Uphold me when my feet would stumble,  
And keep me on the narrow way.  
Fill all my nature with Thy light,  
O Radiance strong and bright!



5 Thee will I love, my crown of gladness;  
Thee will I love, my God and Lord,  
Amid the darkest depths of sadness,  
And not for hope of high reward,  
For Thine own sake, O Light divine,  
So long as life is mine.

Text: Johann Scheffler, 1624-77  
Translation: Catherine Winkworth, 1827-78  
Tune: *Harmonischer Lieder-Schatz*, Frankfurt, 1738  
Tune and music: Public Domain  
Lutheran Service Book #760