

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Prepare
December 4 & 5, 2021

AS WE GATHER

Preparing for Christmas, we buy presents, attend social gatherings, decorate, make plans to gather with family, and some will brace for the pain of grief that can be so difficult this time of year. In the middle of all our preparing, today the voice of John the Baptist rings out, "Prepare the way of the Lord." Undergirding all the preparing we are doing is preparing for the Lord. John calls us to "bear fruits in keeping with repentance." In worship, we do just that. We repent. We turn again to God, seeking His mercy, receiving His forgiveness, partaking of His grace. This leads to bearing the fruit of the Spirit. John highlights the fruit of generosity and contentment. What fruit is God calling you to bear as you prepare for Christmas?



PRAYER

Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells. In the multitude of Your tender mercies prepare my heart that I may enter Your house to worship and confess Your holy name; through Jesus Christ, my God and Lord.

ORDER OF WORSHIP *Divine Service III LSB 184*

OPENING SENTENCES *Malachi 3:1, 6; Luke 3:4; Philippians 1:6, adapt.*

P The LORD says, "Prepare the way of the Lord."

C **We thank You, O Lord!**

P The LORD says, "The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, He is coming."

C **We adore You, O Lord!**

P The LORD says, "I the LORD do not change; therefore you are not consumed."

C **We praise You, O Lord!**

P The LORD who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

C **We worship You, O Lord**

+ CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION +

OPENING HYMN LSB 343 "PREPARE THE ROYAL HIGHWAY"

1 Prepare the royal highway;
The King of kings is near!
Let ev'ry hill and valley
A level road appear!
Then greet the King of Glory
Foretold in sacred story: Refrain

ref Hosanna to the Lord,
For He fulfills God's Word!

2 God's people, see Him coming:
Your own eternal king!
Palm branches strew before Him!
Spread garments! Shout and sing!
God's promise will not fail you!
No more shall doubt assail you! Refrain

3 Then fling the gates wide open
To greet your promised king!
Your king, yet ev'ry nation
Its tribute too should bring.
All lands, bow down before Him!
All nations, now adore Him! Refrain

4 His is no earthly kingdom;
It comes from heav'n above.
His rule is peace and freedom
And justice, truth, and love.
So let your praise be sounding
For kindness so abounding: Refrain

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(The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.)

P In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

(Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.)

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

- P Upon this your confession, the Words announces the grace of God unto all of you, and forgives you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C **Amen.**

+ **SERVICE OF THE WORD** +

INTROIT *Psalm 81:8; 10–11, 13; antiphon: Luke 3:4b*

- P The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.”
- C **Hear, O My people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to Me!**
- P I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.
- C **But My people did not listen to My voice; Israel would not submit to Me.**
- P Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways!
The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.”
- C **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

KYRIE *LSB 186*

- C **Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.**

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS *LSB 187*

- P Glory be to God on high:
- C **and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.
We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee,
we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee, for Thy great glory.
O Lord God, heav’nly King, God the Father Almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sin of the world, receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.
For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord.
Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,
art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

COLLECT OF THE DAY

- P Let us pray.
Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C **Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT READING *Malachi 3:1–7b*

¹“Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. ³He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

⁵“Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

⁶“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. ⁷From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM *Psalm 66:1–12; antiphon: v. 12b*

P You have brought us out to a place of abundance.

C **Shout for joy to God, all the earth;**

P sing the glory of His name; give to Him glorious praise!

C **Say to God, “How awesome are Your deeds!**

So great is Your power that Your enemies come cringing to You.

P All the earth worships You and sings praises to You; they sing praises to Your name.”

C **Come and see what God has done:**

He is awesome in His deeds toward the children of man.

P He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot.

C **There did we rejoice in Him,
who rules by His might forever,
whose eyes keep watch on the nations—
let not the rebellious exalt themselves.**

P Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of His praise be heard,

C **who has kept our soul among the living
and has not let our feet slip.**

P For You, O God, have tested us; You have tried us as silver is tried.

C **You brought us into the net;
You laid a crushing burden on our backs;**

P You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water;
yet You have brought us out to a place of abundance.

You have brought us out to a place of abundance.

C **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

EPISTLE *Philippians 1:2–11*

²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

ALLELUIA *LSB 190 Luke 3:4b, 6*

P Prepare the way of the Lord, **make His paths straight**; all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

C **Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.**

HOLY GOSPEL *Luke 3:1–20*

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the third chapter.

C **Glory be to Thee, O Lord.**

¹In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ²during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall become straight,

and the rough places shall become level ways,
⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

⁷He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ⁹Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” ¹¹And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” ¹²Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” ¹³And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

¹⁵As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, ¹⁶John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. ¹⁹But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

NICENE CREED

C I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life T of the world to come. Amen.**

HYMN OF THE DAY LSB 344 “ON JORDAN’S BANK THE BAPTIST’S CRY”

- 1 On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Awake and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings of the King of kings!
 - 2 Then cleansed be ev’ry life from sin;
Make straight the way for God within,
And let us all our hearts prepare
For Christ to come and enter there.
 - 3 We hail Thee as our Savior, Lord,
Our refuge and our great reward;
Without Thy grace we waste away
Like flow’rs that wither and decay.
 - 4 Lay on the sick Thy healing hand
And make the fallen strong to stand;
Show us the glory of Thy face
Till beauty springs in ev’ry place.
- D 5 All praise, eternal Son, to Thee
Whose advent sets Thy people free,
Whom with the Father we adore
And Holy Spirit evermore.

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PRAYER

Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

SERMON “A Thank You Letter” Philippians 1:2–11

Introduction:

Last week we read a part of a letter Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica expressing his joy for their faithfulness during a difficult time. Today, we have another letter of Paul's expressing his gratitude for the help he received from the Christians in Philippi.

I. He thank God for the Christians in Philippi.

Again, he gives thanks to God for these Christians. They had offered assistance to Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome. They were concern about Paul and the work he was doing. They wanted the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be taught to others as it was taught to them.

Paul expresses this by describing them as being in partnership with him. He saw how important the Word of God was to them. He expresses this by stating with confidence that the Lord who had created their faith will see to it that it remained until completion, that is, until the day Christ returned.

This is the desire of all good and faithful pastors. We want everyone whom God has created faith in their hearts to remain faithful in this one true faith till life everlasting. It is why we continue to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

II. He petitioned God on their behalf.

Interestingly, Paul shows his gratitude by petitioning God that the Christians in Philippi would increase in love. It was in love that they offered help to Paul and worked along side him in spreading the Gospel.

He asked God to increase their love with discernment and knowledge. Often times, we do not always discern what is love, or a loving act. Yet, with the knowledge Christ gives us through His Word, we can discern what is love. Our words, our thoughts and our actions begin to formed around the Word of God. Often times, this is in deep contrast to the world.

Take for instance, the issue of abortion. The Supreme Court is now considering a case that could change the course of history. People claim that it is a loving thought, a caring word and a helpful action to fight for the "right" of a woman to have control over their own bodies. We may even be tempted to think that legal abortions can be a choice for the woman. We think we are showing love.

The Word of God moves us to understand this is not a loving thought, a caring word or a helpful solution. Rather, the protection of the unborn is a the loving thought, the caring word and the helpful solution. The Scriptures gives us discernment and knowledge in this matter. It gives us the knowledge that this is a child. It moves us to think of them in love. It moves us to say a caring word to the mother. It moves us to offer a helpful hand in the support of the child and all who are involved with the birth of this child.

There are many more illustrations in life that could be used. For the Philippians, their work and support of the preaching of the Gospel is driven by the Word, that Word that brought them the forgiveness of sin and life everlasting. It was that Gospel through which the Holy Spirit works

to make us look blameless in the sight of God. It was that faith in Christ created by the Holy Spirit through the Word which will make us look blameless in the sight of God when Christ returns.

Conclusion:

Paul was grateful for the love the Philippians showed. He remembered them in His prayers. This is how we too can show our gratitude for all the saints who work together to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. We can continue to support them in their work and continue to give thanks for their partnership in the spreading of the Gospel.

+ AMEN +

PRAYER

O holy and most merciful God, You have taught us the way of Your commandments. We implore You to pour out Your grace into our hearts. Cause it to bear fruit in us that, being ever mindful of Your mercies and Your laws, we may always be directed to Your will and daily increase in love toward You and one another. Enable us to resist all evil and to live a godly life. Help us to follow the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to walk in His steps until we shall possess the kingdom that has been prepared for us in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

OFFERTORY *LSB 192*

**C Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen.**

OFFERING HYMN *LSB 370* “*WHAT CHILD IS THIS*”

- 1 What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary!

- 2 Why lies He in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The babe, the son of Mary!

3 So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh;
Come, peasant, king, to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
The babe, the son of Mary!

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PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

P As we prepare our hearts and minds for Christ's coming, we turn to the Lord in prayer.

A brief time of silence may be observed.

P O Wisdom from on high, guide Your Church throughout the world to repent—to turn each day to You, confessing our sins and being restored by You to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Move the leaders, pastors, teachers, and all the people of our Synod to bear fruits in keeping with repentance. We pray,

C **hear us, coming Lord.**

P O Desire of nations, bless the leaders of nations, our president and Congress, our governors and local leaders. Move all leaders to cease envy and boastfulness, injustice and corruption. Guide our leaders to be honorable people who do not neglect the poor and who strive toward the flourishing of all human beings. Bless those who serve in our armed forces and lift up refugees and all victims of war. Bring peace between us and our enemies and let Your peace reign over this broken world. We pray,

C **hear us, coming Lord.**

P O Dayspring from on high, come to the aid of all who are in need. As You humbly entered this world as a vulnerable baby, help all of us to enter humbly the lives of those who are sick, facing surgery, or dying, to offer comfort and hope, [*especially . . .*]. Bring healing according to Your will and peace to those whose suffering endures. Thank You for the work of doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals who work toward healing and restoration of wholeness. Guide scientists searching for cures for diseases that bring suffering to the world that their work might lead to healing for many. We pray,

C **hear us, coming Lord.**

P O Key of David, let Your joy, forgiveness, and peace flow freely in and among the families of this congregation. Empower parents and grandparents to love their children and children to love their parents. Watch over all who travel and comfort families who are separated by many miles. Guide families to be places where Your love is demonstrated to strangers as well as to friends. We pray,

C **hear us, coming Lord.**

P O Lord of might, empower us to hear the words of John the Baptist afresh today. Lead us to repent of those things that hinder our trust in You and fill us by the Holy Spirit to bear much fruit. We pray,

C **hear us, coming Lord.**

P O Immanuel, You deliver Your people even from the grip of death. Comfort those who mourn and use us to express the hope that comes from trusting in You. Bring us to be with them on that great day to come, and until that day give us grace to endure life's difficulties, while also abiding in Your love. We pray,

C **hear us, coming Lord.**

P You, O Lord, know the thoughts of our hearts and hear those prayers that come to You in sighs too deep for words. All our prayer we entrust to You in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER *LSB 196*

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

HYMN LSB 358 *"FROM HEAVEN ABOVE TO EARTH I COME"*

- 1 "From heav'n above to earth I come
To bear good news to ev'ry home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing:
- 2 "To you this night is born a child
Of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
This little child of lowly birth
Shall be the joy of all the earth.
- 3 "This is the Christ, our God Most High,
Who hears your sad and bitter cry;
He will Himself your Savior be
From all your sins to set you free.
- 4 "He will on you the gifts bestow
Prepared by God for all below,

- That in His kingdom, bright and fair,
You may with us His glory share.
- 5 “These are the signs that you shall mark:
The swaddling clothes and manger dark.
There you will find the infant laid
By whom the heav’ns and earth were made.”
- 6 How glad we’ll be to find it so!
Then with the shepherds let us go
To see what God for us has done
In sending us His own dear Son.
- 7 Come here, my friends, lift up your eyes,
And see what in the manger lies.
Who is this child, so young and fair?
It is the Christ Child lying there.
- 8 Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
Through whom the sinful world is blest!
You came to share my misery
That You might share Your joy with me.
- 9 Ah, Lord, though You created all,
How weak You are, so poor and small,
That You should choose to lay Your head
Where lowly cattle lately fed!
- 10 Were earth a thousand times as fair
And set with gold and jewels rare,
It would be far too poor and small
A cradle for the Lord of all.
- 11 Instead of soft and silken stuff
You have but hay and straw so rough
On which as King, so rich and great,
To be enthroned in royal state.
- 12 And so it pleases You to see
This simple truth revealed to me:
That worldly honor, wealth, and might
Are weak and worthless in Your sight.
- 13 Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled,

A quiet chamber set apart
For You to dwell within my heart.

14 My heart for very joy must leap;
My lips no more can silence keep.
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradlesong:

15 Glory to God in highest heav'n,
Who unto us His Son has giv'n!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.

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NUNC DIMITTIS *LSB 199*

**C Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word,
for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all
people,
a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

BENEDICTION *LSB 202*

P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and T give you peace.
C Amen, amen, amen.

HYMN OF DEPARTURE LSB 359 "LO, HOW A ROSE E'ER BLOOMING"

1 Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming
As prophets long have sung,
It came, a flow'ret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When half-spent was the night.

2 Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it,
The virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
She bore to us a Savior,
When half-spent was the night.

3 This flow'r, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,

Dispels with glorious splendor
The darkness ev'rywhere.
True man, yet very God,
From sin and death He saves us
And lightens ev'ry load.

- 4 O Savior, child of Mary,
Who felt our human woe;
O Savior, King of glory,
Who dost our weakness know:
Bring us at length we pray
To the bright courts of heaven,
And to the endless day.

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PRAYER

Almighty and merciful God, we have again worshiped in Your presence and received both forgiveness for our many sins and the assurance of Your love in Jesus Christ. We thank You for this undeserved grace and ask You to keep us in faith until we inherit eternal salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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