DAILY BREAD
LECTIONARY DEVOTIONS
PENTECOST 16 —YEAR A

INVOCATION

L: In the name of the Father
and of the Son +
and of the Holy Spirit.

G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 51a

**A: Be merciful, O Lord,
for we have sinned.**

L: Have mercy on me, O God,

G: according to your unfailing love.

L: Wash away all my iniquity,

G: and cleanse me from my sin.

L: For I know my transgressions,

G: and my sin is always before me.

L: Against you, you only, have I sinned

G: and done what is evil in your sight.

L: Surely I was sinful at birth,

G: sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

L: Hide your face from my sins,

G: and blot out all my iniquity.

L: Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

G: and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

**A: Be merciful, O Lord,
for we have sinned.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READING & MEDITATION *see next page*

PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

**A: 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.**

VERSE OF THE DAY

A: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. (Philippians 4:4)

BENEDICTION

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

A: Amen

Devotional material taken from Jonathan E. Schroeder, *Year A*. Jonathan E. Schroeder, ed., *Planning Christian Worship* (WELS Commission on Worship, 2010). *Visit www.BreadForBeggars.com for more resources.*

READING AND MEDITATION:

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost: The Church fulfills her role as her brother's keeper. The privilege, responsibility and importance of this task all rest in the words from our Gospel lesson that follow Jesus' divine directive, "I tell you the truth…" The keys of the kingdom have been placed in our hands. It is our privilege and responsibility to bind and to loose—to be our brother's keeper—because Christ has appointed the Church to carry out that task on his behalf. Note carefully today's emphasis as opposed to next Sunday's to keep from duplicating themes. Next Sunday deals with forgiving our neighbor as God forgave us. While forgiveness is inherent in Christian discipline, today we note the work of the Christian and the Church to reach out with Law and Gospel for the sake of the fallen brother.

As you study this week, seek to find the *connecting theme* in all the lessons by using Luther's Four Big Barber Questions to ponder and discuss each individual reading:

1. *What is God saying to me in this lesson?*
2. *For what does this lesson lead me to give thanks?*
3. *What sins does this lesson lead me to confess?*
4. *For what does this lesson lead me to pray?*

THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 18:15-20

"Matthew 18" has become shorthand for Christian discipline. This Sunday provides an excellent opportunity to ensure that shorthand has not become short shrift. The importance of Christian discipline lies in the fact that the keys have been placed into the hands of the Church and in no other. The Christian and the Church are a fallen sinner's only life line. Satan tries to make Christian discipline seem like the height of hypocrisy or meddling. But his is a self-interested motive: he wants the fallen brother's sins bound like his for an eternity in hell. Only love could lead the Christian and the Church to go to a fallen brother. Only love led our Savior to command it. Even the manner Jesus prescribes shows great love for the fallen. First, privately, so that offense and embarrassment might be contained, and pardon and forgiveness might all the more readily flow. Then with two or three, that the matter might be underscored without making tongues wag throughout the congregation. Finally, also in love, the Church calls and, if necessary, shuns. Such a great privilege and power has Christ bestowed on us! It leads us to even greater reliance on prayer for guidance and the presence of our Savior among us.

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: EZEKIEL 33:7-11

Since the time of Cain, man has hated being his brother's keeper. Are we any different today? Who but little Pharisees enjoy pointing out others' sins? But God tells us the task is not optional. No one wants to wake up their next door neighbor at 6:00am on a Saturday. But if his house were burning, and you let him sleep, you are not just loveless and careless. You are a killer. In the same way God drops on us the heavy message of being a watchman for our brother. God's judgment on fallen man is as clear as it is severe. If we fail to do the job God has assigned us, God promises to hold us accountable. With the Law driven deeply into our hearts, God then reminds us why he has given us this job: because of his grace and his desire for the salvation of all mankind. The responsibility of waking our neighbor asleep in a burning house becomes a joyful privilege when he emerges safely from the smoke. May our task of being our brother's keeper always be one done with such responsibility and joy.

My takeaways:

SECOND LESSON: ROMANS 13:1-10

This is the fifteenth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Paul takes up the issue of government and the Christian's relationship to it. A Christian is a citizen of two kingdoms. The first part of this text is the definitive section of Scripture on our role as citizens of an earthly kingdom. Yet the latter part of this lesson best fits with the theme for the day. We owe our neighbor a debt of love. Keeping the commandments fulfills the law of love. "Love does no harm to its neighbor." Today's lessons point out that doing harm to our neighbor also means failing to do what God tells us in his regard: being his keeper.

My takeaways:

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON: GALATIANS 2:11-21

Being your brother's keeper will lead at times to uncomfortable situations or even confrontations. Here Paul tells how he had to oppose Peter to his face. Paul did not do this out of jealously of this reputed pillar; this was no power play pitting the Apostle to the Jews against the Apostle the Gentiles. This had to do with the eternal salvation of everyone involved. Trusting in anything other than Christ is like sleeping in a burning house. Paul took his job of being a watchman seriously: if righteousness could be gained through the Judaizers' demands, then Christ died for nothing! So Paul woke his sleeping neighbor with the harsh reality of Peter's hypocrisy. But the Word did its work; Paul didn't merely keep his brother, he won his brother over.

My takeaways:

What major theme(s) connect(s) all the lessons?