



Year B (2024) – Season after Pentecost, Series 5

LIVE LIKE YOU’LL LIVE FOREVER

SERIES EXPLANATION

“Live each day like it’s your last.” You have probably heard that advice. It sounds wise—an encouragement to take advantage of the time you have. However, that advice is completely backwards. Because the reality is, thanks to Jesus, we have an unending amount of time. Let that sink in. *Really* think about it. Jesus has given you the gift of eternal life. You are going to live forever.

If you really thought it was your last day, that belief would shape how you lived that day. In this series, let us consider how the gift of eternal life shapes how we live each day. Live like you’ll live forever!

Reformation Day

Live a Life of Fearless Witness

All Saints’ Day

Live Knowing Life Only Gets Better

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Live a Life of Startling Generosity

Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Live Free from the Fear of Judgment

Last Sunday after Pentecost

Live with Your Eyes on the Skies



Reformation Day observed October 27, 2024 (Year B)

LIVE LIKE YOU'LL LIVE FOREVER

LIVE A LIFE OF COURAGEOUS WITNESS

(Reformation Day)

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

Jesus repeatedly told his followers that living as his disciples would bring hardship. Living life according to God's Law is going to make one appear odd in the eyes of the world, perhaps even evil. Sharing a message of mankind's sin and God's gracious salvation can cause offense. So why not just stay silent if that makes life easier? Why not keep our faith private? Answer: because we are going to live forever. In gratitude for Christ saving us and giving us eternal life, we share the gospel with others, hoping that they will believe and be saved too. Since we know we are going to live forever in the perfection of heaven, we don't worry if being a witness for Christ brings hardship or even death.

Martin Luther wanted to reform the false teaching of the church. He stood firm in the truth of the gospel, knowing it might cost him his life. But Luther knew that, thanks to Christ, he would live forever. So will we. Therefore, like Luther, let us live a life of courageous witness.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

*Daniel 3:16-28 – In response to an evil command offered by a pagan king, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego lived lives of fearless witness.

Revelation 14:6-7– St. John sees God's messenger proclaiming the true gospel to all people. In 1546, this reading served as the text for the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther.

Mark 13:5-11 – Jesus encourages and empowers us that we might be bold in sharing the gospel in these end times.

NOTE TO THE PREACHER

The first reading was chosen for the sermon text. It provides a parallel to the life of Dr. Luther. He, like the three men, had to decide if God was worth dying for. This text also provides the preacher an opportunity to share that witnessing goes beyond sharing a law/gospel presentation of some sort or explaining what Jesus did. It includes living in a way that is countercultural. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego provide a witness, and initially they didn't even say a word. They simply refused to bend the knee to an idol. *That* then provided them the opportunity to speak about the glory of their God.

HYMNS

Opening	875 What Threat of Harm Can Hinder Me
HOD	863 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
Third/Distr	877 Reformation Song
Closing	862 Lord, Keep Us Steadfast In Your Word

SERVICE OPTIONS

Reformation is a good service to include a choir. So, if 875 is new, consider having a cantor or choir sing verse 1 to introduce it. The same with 877, which has the potential to become a Reformation favorite. NPH's *Musician's Resource* contains resources for 877. If it is sung during distribution, it could be done entirely by the choir. Or, have the choir sing the verses and the congregation join in on the refrain.

Note that *Service Builder* contains two different versions of the Prayer of the Church for Reformation.



All Saints' Day observed November 3, 2024 (Year B)

LIVE LIKE YOU'LL LIVE FOREVER

LIVE KNOWING LIFE ONLY GETS BETTER

(All Saints' Day)

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

"It will get better." We say that to try to comfort someone who is having a bad day (or maybe a whole string of bad days). Perhaps tomorrow will be better. But perhaps it's worse. In this life, there really are no guarantees that things will get better. That isn't the case with the life that is to come. That life isn't just going to be better. It will be perfect.

Since the seventh century, Christians have marked a day to celebrate those who have died in faith and now realize the perfect joys of heaven. It is called "All Saints' Day." We thank God for bringing our Christian loved ones out of the troubles and turmoil of this world and into eternal bliss and glory. And we ask God to preserve us in our faith so that we might one day join the saints in that place where life is far more than better.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

*Isaiah 25:6-9 – The Lord Almighty promises his saints, all those who trust in him, that he will destroy the shroud of death.

Revelation 20:4-6 – St. John sees those who had been killed because of their faith in Christ now living and reigning with him in glory.

John 11:32-44 – Jesus demonstrates his power over death.

NOTE TO THE PREACHER

Care needs to be taken to avoid redundant main messages in the upcoming weeks, as multiple weeks have texts that reference the resurrection of the dead and judgment day. This worship plan helps the preacher to make the following distinctions in his sermons.

- All Saints' Day focuses on the joy of the saints in heaven. That is why the first reading is chosen. It talks about the Lord removing all the things that make life in this world hard: things that cause tears, disgrace (of sin), and impending death. (Albert Camus' *The Stranger* makes the point that it is hard to enjoy anything good in life with death hanging over you if you believe that is all there is.) This reading also alludes to how the Lord would remove those things by repeatedly referencing "this mountain," i.e., Mount Zion. The *Commentary on the Propers* references various historical events where the shroud of death was present on that mountain.
- Then, on the Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost, the preacher's main focus is on Christ's return to judge, particularly the basis on which Christ makes that judgment.
- Then, on the Final Sunday after Pentecost, the preacher talks about the importance of being ready for Christ's return.

HYMNS

Opening	891 In Our Day of Thanksgiving
HOD	880 For All the Saints
Third/Distr	883 Behold a Host Arrayed in White
Closing	884 Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See

SERVICE OPTIONS

If 891 is not well known, consider having a cantor sing at least verse 1 to introduce the hymn.

Service Builder has a responsive Prayer of the Church for All Saints Day. It has a slot where the names of the members who have died since the last All Saints Day could be read.



Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost November 10, 2024 (Proper 27B)

LIVE LIKE YOU'LL LIVE FOREVER

LIVE A LIFE OF STARTLING GENEROSITY

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

Perhaps you have heard the axiom, “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” In other words, while you still can, use what you have in order to enjoy life to the fullest. If this life is all there is, St. Paul agrees that would be a good philosophy. Paul wrote, “If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’” (1 Corinthians 15:32). However, note the “if.” Paul was saying that the epicurean approach to life makes sense only if this life is all we have. But it isn’t. Jesus will raise us from the dead and take us to live in his home, a place of perfect comfort and beauty. Knowing that, we are set free from the need to live a self-indulgent life now. Instead, we can be generous people, using the wealth that God has given us to serve both him and others. We can live a life of startling generosity.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

1 Kings 17:8-16 – A widow generously offers up the last bit of food she has to serve the prophet Elijah.

2 Corinthians 8:1-9 – The believers in Macedonia demonstrate startling generosity in collecting an offering to help fellow Christians in need.

*Mark 12:38-44 – Jesus points to a poor widow as an example of startling generosity.

NOTE TO THE PREACHER

All three readings capture the theme of the day well and stress that gratitude for God’s grace and confidence in his continued providence enable generosity. The gospel was chosen as the sermon text. The widow demonstrates childlike faith. Children aren’t sensible with money. Many Christian children, upon receiving \$20 in a birthday card, would be quick to throw all \$20 into an offering plate or to spend it all on something nice for mom. Why? A child doesn’t believe he needs the \$20, because he knows he has loving parents who will take care of him. That is the mindset of this poor widow. This can be our mindset, as we know we have a loving Father, because he gave “all [he] had,” his only Son, to make us his own.

This text also provides opportunity for application when comparing the amount of the widow’s offering to that of the “rich people.”

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HYMNS

Opening	695 Take My Life and Let It Be
HOD	807 All Depends on Our Possessing
Third/Distr	752 Gracious God, You Send Great Blessings
Closing	750 We Give Thee But Thine Own

SERVICE OPTIONS

752 is new, but set to the familiar tune HOLY MANNA.



Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost November 17, 2024 (Proper 28B)

LIVE LIKE YOU'LL LIVE FOREVER

LIVE FREE FROM THE FEAR OF JUDGMENT

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) affects many millions of adults. It is more than shyness. SAD includes an acute fear of being judged. An individual with SAD struggles with everyday tasks like talking to people at work or school because he is terrified that he is constantly being evaluated. Even if you don't have that disorder, perhaps you have experienced that uncomfortable feeling that others are watching you, trying to find something to criticize. We don't want others judging us. It is bad enough listening to the voice inside our own head, whispering that we aren't worthy.

How do we overcome the fear of judgment? It begins by realizing that there is only one person whose opinion ultimately matters—the Judge. Everyone is going to live forever in one of two very different places. Where you spend eternity depends on a judgment that Jesus will render. This week we see why his judgment need not trigger any sort of anxiety. Judgment day is something we can joyfully anticipate. We can live free from the fear of judgment.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

Daniel 12:1-3 – The prophet Daniel foretells that the world will get worse and then judgment day will come. All whose names are written by Christ in his book of life need not fear that judgment.

*Hebrews 9:24-28 – We can live free of the fear of God's judgment because of the sacrifice our high priest made.

John 5:25-29 – God the Father has given Jesus Christ the authority to judge.

NOTE TO THE PREACHER

The second reading was chosen as the sermon text since it provides in vivid, straightforward language the reason we live free from the fear of God's judgment. It clarifies what is meant when Jesus says, "Those who have done what is good will rise to live. The "good" is not avoiding sin. That, we cannot do. The "good" is trusting in our high priest who made the sacrifice "once for all... to do away with sin."

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HYMNS

Opening	495 The King Shall Come
HOD	485 Day of Wrath
Third/Distr	546 Since Our Great High Priest, Christ Jesus
Closing	819 If God Himself Be for Me - v1-4

SERVICE OPTIONS

546 was sung earlier in the year. It might still be good to have a cantor introduce verse 1.



**Last Sunday of the Church Year November 24, 2024
(Proper Last Sunday – Year B)**

LIVE LIKE YOU’LL LIVE FOREVER

LIVE WITH YOUR EYES ON THE SKIES

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

“Eyes on the prize.” That axiom stresses that when pursuing some good goal, focus is important. You don’t want distractions or a lack of self-discipline to keep you from obtaining whatever that prize might be. “Eyes on the prize.” You summon the willpower to fixate on that good thing. You let nothing divert your attention from obtaining the prize.

The prize that we want most is spending eternity with Jesus. As the Church Year comes to a close, Jesus promises that he will come again “in clouds with great power and glory” to give us that prize. That prize will be so unbelievably good, it is worth fixating on. It merits our striving to set aside all that would distract us from Christ. Let us be ready. Let us keep watch. Let us live with our eyes on the skies.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

Isaiah 51:4-6 – The Lord encourages his people to live in joyful expectation of salvation, with eyes lifted up to the skies.

Jude 20-25 – St. Jude explains how we live in anticipation of Jesus’ return—by doing the things that build up our faith and by showing mercy to our neighbor.

*Mark 13:26-37 – You do not know when Jesus will come again. So be alert, with your eyes on the skies.

NOTE TO THE PREACHER

The gospel reading was chosen to be the sermon text. The two pictures Jesus uses—the fig tree and the servants waiting for the owner of the home to return—emphasize different aspects of a state of watchfulness.

HYMNS

Opening	487 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending
HOD	488 The Day Is Surely Drawing Near
Third/Distr	493 Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers
Closing	491 Come, You Thankful People, Come

SERVICE OPTIONS

Service Builder contains a special Prayer of the Church for the final Sunday of the Church Year.