

AUGUST 23, 2026
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST



Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 16:13-20	Peter's confession of Christ
Monday	Isaiah 51:1-6	The LORD will bring comfort
Tuesday	Romans 12:1-8	Christ brings new life
Wednesday	Exodus 1:8—2:10	Israelites are oppressed
Thursday	Ephesians 3:14-21	Prayer for the readers
Friday	Ephesians 6:10-20	The whole armor of God
Saturday	Psalms 138	Praise God with all your heart
Sunday	Matthew 16:21-28	Take up your cross and follow

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

"I [Jesus] will give you [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:19 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Almighty God, in a world that can divide us from one another, we pray for your rule of mercy and grace that binds us together in faith and love through Christ, the Son of God. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for this meal and pray for all to have food to eat through your abundant and fruitful creation. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May Jesus, the Son of God, give you new life.

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HYMN OF THE WEEK

We Sing to You, O God



WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What motivates someone to break the law or do something wrong?
- How is Jesus' power different from other powers in the world?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Matthew 16:13-20.

Jesus and his disciples were in Caesarea Philippi, an important center for the Roman government and a place where many gods of the ancient world were recognized and worshiped. They were fickle gods that ruled over human life rather harshly and arbitrarily. You could not trust them. This was very similar to the rule of the Roman authorities. In contrast to such untrustworthy and unkind gods and powers, Jesus as the *"the Messiah, the Son of the living God"* (v. 16) showed compassion and positively transformed lives like the Canaanite woman and her daughter in Matthew 15. Jesus has the power to bind and to loosen lives. Jesus as our Messiah intends to transform our lives from despair to hope, from broken relationships to a life of mutual forgiveness, from lives that are judged and condemned to lives that receive mercy. Jesus gave Peter and the church that power and way of life. Yes, Jesus has the authority to restrict and to free lives, but Jesus' intent is to free, to forgive, and to give new life where suffering and death had once reigned. Now, that message and life-giving power will be Peter's and the church's to do the same.

Discuss: How does knowing Jesus as the Messiah inspire you to serve others?

Pray: Almighty God, your ways are not our ways; give us hearts and minds to grasp that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God for the sake of the world you love. Amen.

SERVICE

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings and theme for this week, how can you encourage someone who is in despair or losing hope?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Psalms 138 is a song of thanksgiving and praise: *"I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart"* (v. 1a). Draw a heart on a piece of paper. Inside the heart write a list of things you thank God for in your life. Place the heart in a visible place in your home as a reminder to give thanks and praise for God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

Pray: I give you thanks, O Lord, for all you do to protect me with your steadfast love and faithfulness through Christ our Lord. Amen.



The "Four Key Faith Practices"—Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals & Traditions—are a framework developed by the Rev. Dr. David Anderson. For a brief description, go to: <https://milestonesministry.org/history-of-the-four-keys/>.

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