

April

The seasonal canticle for April is again a song of praise from Isaiah. This one in chapter 25 celebrates the deliverance brought about by the judgments detailed in chapter 24. Note well the heavenly banquet described in vv.6-10 and remember that Jesus also spoke of heaven as a banquet and that we have a “foretaste of the feast to come” in the Sacrament of the Altar.

As usual, the seasonal canticle begins and ends the month and the cycle of Psalms continues on April’s other days. Note of Psalm 119, which occupies our attention for 22 days this month, that it is a “devotional” of sorts on the Word of God itself. As one might expect, law and Gospel are themes throughout this meditation on God’s Word, but the word translated “law” does not always mean “law”. This psalm is what is called an “acrostic poem”, where “the verses of each stanza begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet”.

In April we read through nearly all of St. Paul’s letters, also called “epistles”. St. Paul made three primary missionary journeys (more about those next month with Acts), and his letters are generally to churches he founded. Though originally directed to churches in Rome, Corinth, Galatia (a Roman province), Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica, and to young Pastor Timothy and his congregation, the Holy Spirit also does speak to us through these letters.

We read the letters in canonical order (that is, the order they appear in the New Testament), but this order is not the order in which St. Paul likely wrote them. The order of writing is far more likely: Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Romans, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy. The epistles were likely authored over a period of some 20 years, probably around the same time as the writing of the three “synoptic” Gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which accounts “see together” many of the sayings and events of Jesus’ life).

In these letters, you also will notice the strong emphasis the Divinely-inspired Paul places on both law and Gospel as he lovingly and caringly follows-up with his children in the faith. His letters encourage and chastise when each is appropriate. They have a clear focus on teaching, but at the same time they boldly preach Christ, and Him crucified.

Paul’s letter to the *Romans*, whom he had not yet visited, is a fairly complete treatment of the fallen human condition, Jew and Gentile, and the Gospel’s solution for it.

In the letters to the *Corinthians*, Paul concentrates on problems in their congregations and how they should be resolved in grace.

Paul in *Galatians* strongly emphasizes that law and Gospel cannot be confused and that salvation is by faith.

Ephesians clearly excludes the role of works in salvation, which God has elected in advance. Paul talks about the Lord’s gift of the Office of the Ministry to the Church (but watch for bad translations of 4:11—the KJV has it right).

In *Philippians*, we have a wonderful “hymn” about Christ (2:6-11) and we see the practical results of faith in the lives of the believers. Watch the NIV translation of 2:6, “form” is correct.

Paul in *Colossians* holds up the truth of Christ against a false teaching that was circulating there.

In the letters to the *Thessalonians*, persecution is a central theme, and Paul relates it to the truth about the Lord’s coming.

In the letters to *Timothy*, Paul encourages the young pastor and his people to put their trust where Paul had put his: in the Gospel.

1	Isaiah 25:1-9
	Romans 1-3
2	Psalm 114
	Romans 4-6
3	Psalm 115
	Romans 7-9
4	Psalm 116
	Romans 10-13
5	Psalm 117
	Romans 14-16
6	Psalm 118
	1 Corinthians 1-3
7	Psalm 119:1-8
	1 Corinthians 4-6
8	Psalm 119:9-16
	1 Corinthians 7-9
9	Psalm 119:17-24
	1 Corinthians 10-11
10	Psalm 119:25-32
	1 Corinthians 12-14
11	Psalm 119:33-40
	1 Corinthians 15-16
12	Psalm 119:41-48
	2 Corinthians 1-4
13	Psalm 119:49-56
	2 Corinthians 5-7
14	Psalm 119:57-64
	2 Corinthians 8-10
15	Psalm 119:65-72
	2 Corinthians 11-13
16	Psalm 119:73-80
	Galatians 1-3
17	Psalm 119:81-88
	Galatians 4-6
18	Psalm 119:89-96
	Ephesians 1-3
19	Psalm 119:97-104
	Ephesians 4-6
20	Psalm 119:105-112
	Philippians 1-2
21	Psalm 119:113-120
	Philippians 3-4
22	Psalm 119:121-128
	Colossians 1-2
23	Psalm 119:129-136
	Colossians 3-4
24	Psalm 119:137-144
	1 Thessalonians 1-3
25	Psalm 119:145-152
	1 Thessalonians 4-5
26	Psalm 119:153-160
	2 Thessalonians 1-3
27	Psalm 119:161-168
	1 Timothy 1-3
28	Psalm 119:169-176
	1 Timothy 4-6
29	Psalm 120
	2 Timothy 1-2
30	Isaiah 25:1-9
	2 Timothy 3-4