First Lutheran CHURCH



Sermon Series Guide
November 1-25, 2026

Sermon Series Guide - November 1 - 22, 2026

DEEPLY ROOTED

I have always been fascinated by roots.

You can look at a huge tree and see its trunk, branches, leaves, and everything happening above ground. But some of the most important work is happening where no one can see it. Beneath the surface, roots are reaching, stretching, searching for water, holding tightly to the soil, and giving the tree what it needs to withstand whatever comes its way.

And then there are those roots that cause trouble. They crack sidewalks, wrap themselves around things, show up where you don't want them, and are nearly impossible to get rid of. You can cut something down and think it's gone—only to discover that those stubborn roots have other plans.

Maybe that's not such a bad image for faith.

In November, we are going to get DEEPLY ROOTED.

Not because Christians are supposed to have everything figured out. Not because being rooted in God means storms won't come. Quite the opposite.

We need roots because storms come.

Life changes. People disappoint us. We disappoint ourselves. Relationships change. People we love die. Plans fall apart. The world feels divided. Sometimes God feels incredibly close, and sometimes we wonder where God went. Underneath all of it is a question many of us carry: What is holding me?

Scripture is filled with people asking that same question. Throughout this series, we meet saints and sinners, prophets and disciples, faithful people and questioning people. These aren't neat little Bible stories about people who had perfect faith. They are stories about real people trying to figure out what it means to trust God in a complicated world.

In other words, they sound a lot like us.

Being Deeply Rooted invites us to look beneath the surface. What have we rooted our lives in? Success? Security? Money? Being liked? Being right? Our families? Our accomplishments? Our ability to keep everything under control?

Those things aren't necessarily bad. But they make terrible gods.

Again and again, Scripture pulls us back to the One who actually holds us. God.

We are rooted first and foremost in a God who has already claimed us. In the waters of baptism, God says, You are mine. Before we accomplish anything, prove anything, understand everything, or get our lives together, grace has already taken hold of us.

As autumn moves toward winter, the world around us changes. Leaves fall. Gardens are cleared. Fields become bare. Eventually, the landscape may look almost lifeless.

But underneath the surface, the roots remain.

Waiting. Holding. Preparing. Alive.

Maybe that's where some of us are, too. Some seasons of faith are filled with growth everyone can see. Other seasons are quieter. Sometimes faith looks less like producing fruit and more like simply holding on.

And here is the good news: our faith isn't ultimately about how tightly we can hold onto God. It is about the God who refuses to let go of us.

So let's dig a little deeper. Let's wrestle with Scripture, ask questions, listen to one another, and pay attention to what God might be growing beneath the surface.

We are God's beloved people—claimed in baptism, nourished by grace, connected to one another, and DEEPLY ROOTED in Christ.

November 1, 2026 - All Saints Day!
Theme: Rooted as a baptized child of God!

Scripture Readings: Revelation 7:9-17; Matthew 5:1-12

Key Ideas: All Saints celebrate the baptized people of God, living and dead, who are the body of Christ. As November heralds the dying of the landscape in many northern regions, the readings and liturgy call us to remember all who have died in Christ and whose baptism is complete. At the Lord's table we gather with the faithful of every time and place, trusting that the promises of God will be fulfilled and that all tears will be wiped away in the new Jerusalem.

Daily Discipleship: 31st Sunday After Pentecost - All Saints Sunday
https://resources.elca.org/bible-studies/year-a-time-after-pentecost-2/

November 8, 2026 - 32nd Sunday after Pentecost
Theme: Rooted in justice!

Scripture Readings: Amos 5:18-24; Matthew 25:1-13

Key Ideas: Today the prophet Amos calls for justice to roll down like waters. Jesus tells the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids. Surrounded by the faithful of every time and place, we celebrate Christ's coming in our midst in the word of life and the feast of victory—the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Daily Discipleship: 32nd Sunday After Pentecost
https://resources.elca.org/bible-studies/year-a-time-after-pentecost-2/

November 15, 2026 - 33rd Sunday after Pentecost
Theme: Rooted in encouragement!

Scripture Readings: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25:14-30

Key Ideas: Our readings during November speak of the end times. Paul says it will come like a thief in the night and urges us to be awake and sober. Jesus tells the parable of the talents, calling us to use our gifts, while we still have time, for the greater and common good. In a world filled with violence and despair, we gather around signs of hope—word, water, bread, and wine—eager to welcome the good news of Christ's coming among us.

Daily Discipleship: 33rd Sunday After Pentecost - All Saints Sunday
https://resources.elca.org/bible-studies/year-a-time-after-pentecost-2/

November 22, 2026 - Christ the King Sunday
Theme: Rooted in the King!

Scripture Readings: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24; Matthew 25:31-46

Key Ideas: On this final Sunday of the church year our gospel is Jesus' great story of judgment. In the end, the faithful are those who served Christ by ministering to those who are poor, hungry, naked, sick, or estranged. In the first reading God is the shepherd who seeks the lost, weak, and injured and feeds them with justice. We gather this day to celebrate the reign of Christ and his victory over death, yet we await the consummation of all things yet to come. Acknowledging Christ as our merciful ruler, we go forth that his reign may be known in our loving words and deeds.

Daily Discipleship: Christ the King Sunday
https://resources.elca.org/bible-studies/year-a-time-after-pentecost-2/

The Daily Discipleship resources are free Bible Study resources from the ELCA website. You can print them from home. However, if printing presents itself as a problem, we would be delighted to print a copy for you or your Bible Study group.
https://resources.elca.org/bible-studies/year-a-time-after-pentecost-2/

First Lutheran CHURCH

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, November 1, All Saints Day (A) – Matthew 5:1-12

DEEPLY ROOTED - Rooted as a baptized child of God! All Saints Day!

The Challenge of Discipleship: *Blessed Living*

Focus Question: *What is one way God blessed you during the past week?*

word *of life*

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Matthew 5:4 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 5:1-12

This text is part of the Sermon on the Mount and is the first of five lengthy speeches given by Jesus in the gospel of Matthew. Actually, this sermon is a compilation of many of the teachings of Jesus and includes the Lord's Prayer. The Sermon on the Mount is sometimes referred to as the Christian Magna Carta. (If you have time, skim through the entire Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5:1-7:29.)

The first verses of the Sermon on the Mount focus on the *Beatitudes,* a type of blessing. Yet, these are not typical blessings as found in the psalms. Jesus adds a unique twist by lifting up attitudes not typically associated with *blessing*. This is one of many times Jesus adds new meaning to familiar teachings.

The Greek word which is often translated *blessed* can also be translated *happy* or *congratulations.* Yet those words prove confusing. We think of being happy when good things happen to us. People congratulate us on our positive fortune. A quick glance at the Beatitudes reveals something else. Jesus is not offering a blessing because of good fortune. Instead, Jesus flips everything upside down and blesses those who are emptied.

1. *What pattern do you observe in the Beatitudes?*

The timing of the blessing in these teachings is unclear. Will the blessings be known now or in the future eternal life? When will the meek inherit the earth? In the future? When will the pure in heart see God? All the blessings are written in the present tense, as in today.

2. *Are people who meet the description of the Beatitudes blessed today or the future?*

On the one hand, we could make a case for those who are poor in spirit seeing God in this lifetime. As these individuals acknowledge their dependence on God, they become open to the presence of God and God's reign. They experience God's reign this day.

Likewise, those who mourn the loss of a loved one, passing health, or tragedies faced by others, can know the present comfort provided by a loving God and a compassionate Christian community. This comfort can be experienced today – not just in the next life. Yet those who mourn still grieve, despite the comfort extended to them from others. They still anticipate a promised comfort yet to come.

3. *What has been your experience of being blessed as described in the Beatitudes?*

Sound confusing? It is. Like so many of the teachings of Jesus, the Beatitudes echo the paradox of the Christian faith. Blessings are experienced fully by those who, at first glance, do not seem blessed at all. It is to those who are emptied and who recognize a need for God that the true blessings are given.

4. *How have you already experienced the blessing of the Beatitudes? How do you wait?*

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word *among us*

His death came unexpectedly. What could be said? This pillar of the congregation ushered at Sunday worship, greeting each person with his wide grin. On Tuesday he died of a heart attack. His wife, family, friends, and the congregation were in shock.

On a gray Friday afternoon in November, his family, friends, and beloved congregation gathered to remember. They remembered how much he loved Easter. They remembered how loudly he would sing the Easter hymns, his raspy, off-key voice clearly heard lofting over the rest, proclaiming the Easter message he fully believed: "Christ is risen! Alleluia!"

They sang with equal strength and gusto. What other hymns would be sung than these? Yet even as their voices proclaimed the joy of the resurrection, their tears streamed down their faces. Each mourned the death of this dear, wonderful man, even as they rejoiced at the promise of resurrection. True they felt comfort, but they also felt deep sorrow.

1. *How have you experienced comfort at times of grief?*
2. *Does comfort come once and for all or is it a gradual process? Describe.*
3. *What would you say to the grieving widow?*
4. *How would you respond at the time of grief if someone said, "You are so blessed"?*
5. *Does sorrow or suffering bring blessing? How so?*

Each year the assigned gospel reading for All Saints Sunday includes the Beatitude, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4) As Christians we do not pretend as if death has no sting. Instead we clearly speak of the pain of the grave. We give thanks to God for defeating death through Jesus Christ and promising eternal life. Consequently, we can sing Easter hymns on grim, dark days of winter. There is more to the story than the grave.

6. *Why can a Christian sing an Easter hymn at a funeral?*
7. *What message does that give to non-Christians who might attend the funeral?*

Our challenge as disciples of Jesus is to live in the reality of day-to-day hurts and pains, while trusting in his promises for the future. We experience a foretaste of the promises of the Beatitudes now while at the same time living with not-yet-here fulfillment of the promises yet to come. If that sounds like a paradox, it is. But that is the life of the disciple.

8. *How can you live a blessed life?*
9. *How can you be a blessing to others?*
10. *What makes the Beatitudes so challenging for modern-day disciples?*

Prayer

God of mercy, comfort the places in my life where I grieve.

Dig Deeper

Romans 6: 4-11

last word

This week,
take time to extend comfort
to another person
in sorrow.

Daily Discipleship
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Daily Discipleship

Sunday, November 8(A) – Matthew 25:1-13

DEEPLY ROOTED - **Rooted in justice!**

The Challenge of Discipleship: *Readiness*

Focus Question*: How do we get ready for an event at an unknown time and place?*

word *of life*

"Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." Matthew 25:13 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 25:1-13

The parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids is found only in Matthew's Gospel. The parable is placed in the middle of Jesus' teaching about the end times (24:1 -- 25:46). Jesus is speaking to his disciples while sitting on the Mount of Olives, looking at the Temple grounds (24:1-3). He has left the temple and the verbal battle with the scribes and Pharisees. The disciples come to Jesus privately (24:3) to ask Jesus about the signs of the end of the age. Jesus uses several analogies to stress the need to live faithfully and expectantly, to watch and remain ready.

The image in this week's parable of the bridegroom is found in both the Old and New Testaments to describe the covenantal relationship between God and God's people. (See Hosea 2:14-23; Isaiah 62:5; Revelation 22:17). A typical ritual at a wedding would have the bridegroom coming with his companions to the house of the bride's parents to take her to his own home. As the groom approaches, the bridesmaids would come out with lighted lamps and meet him.

1. *How do you picture that scene?*
2. *How helpful or meaningful is the image of bride and bridegroom to describe the relationship between God and people? Explain your answer.*

Note the opening verse of the parable: "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this." The word "then" and the tense of the verb imply something that will happen in the future. Contrast this with other "kingdom" parables in Matthew (Matthew 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47) which begin in the present: "The kingdom of heaven is like. . . ." While the parables in Matthew 13 emphasize the mystery of the kingdom already present in the world, the future tense of the parable of the bridesmaids points to a time when the presence of the kingdom will be clearly seen and understood.

The parable begins with grace. At first, all ten bridesmaids, wise or foolish, are equal members of the wedding party. All are to be included in the celebration. Both the foolish and the wise are prepared for the ordinary, usual events. But as in other parables in Matthew, grace calls for a "wise" response.

3. *What message of grace and challenge is in the parable?*

The challenging question for the church of Matthew's day (and for the church today) is: How are we to live during the "in-between" time – the time between the inbreaking of the kingdom of heaven in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the promised coming of the victorious Christ at the end of the age? Do we trust in One whose presence is not readily seen? The answer Jesus speaks in Matthew's Gospel is to live a life of active faithfulness, of *doing* what we *believe*.

4. *What are the characteristics of a faithful disciple who waits and prepares for Christ's coming?*
5. *What does it mean to live a life of active faithfulness?*

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word *among us*

As I was growing up, I couldn't wait for Christmas. It's not that I was eager for the gifts under the tree. No, I longed for Christmas because of a promise of the star – not the one *over* Bethlehem, but rather the promise to be the star *of* Bethlehem. For the budding thespians of the Sunday school, *the* coveted role to have in the Christmas play was to be Mary or Joseph.

True, the roles didn't have any lines to memorize. But a truly gifted actor is able to embody the message through a gesture of a hand, an empathetic glance, a posture expressing love and adoration. And I had the part down pat.

The year finally arrived for my light to shine as Joseph. This was also the year the director was expecting her first child. Her first-born arrived three weeks before Christmas; and the birth inspired her to announce that the baby in the Christmas pageant that year would be a living, breathing infant.

The weeks prior to Christmas were spent in preparation. As the shepherds arrived on stage after their fear-filled encounter with the heavenly host, I was to gently pick up the child, cradle her in my arms with fatherly compassion, and hold her as the shepherds worshipped and adored.

Rehearsals went smoothly; the baby was adorable, a helpful supporting cast member for my acting debut. But the night of the performance was a different story. As I picked up the child, she began to cry. I tried rocking her back and forth as I had seen the director do, but the cries only increased. How could I emote love and compassion holding a screaming baby? The child was stealing my moment to shine! Finally, in desperation, I gave the baby to Mary, who wrapped the blanket (which I had forgotten to pick up with the child) around the cold infant; and of course, the crying stopped.

Afterwards, I was glum and disappointed. My big moment had been upstaged by a crying baby. But many said that they experienced Christ's coming in a new and meaningful way through that shivering, crying child.

Christ came that night. I was ready, but I wasn't prepared. I knew the part, but I had forgotten the most important role. I was so busy with my own aspirations that I failed to see the precious gift represented in my arms.

1. *How do you face the challenge of waiting for Christ?*
2. *What distracts you from your waiting?*
3. *How do you prepare as you wait for Christ?*
4. *How do you face the challenge of being ready for Christ to return?*

Prayer

Christ, calm our impatient hearts as we wait for your return.

Dig Deeper

Revelation 22:17

last **word**

This week, be still and wait upon the Lord,
listening, being ready to hear.

Daily Discipleship
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Daily Discipleship

Sunday, November 13(A) – Matthew 25:14-30

The Challenge of Discipleship: *Stewardship*
Focus Question: *What is your typical response when someone gives you a lavish gift?*

word *of life*

"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'" Matthew 25:21 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 25:14-30
The parable of the talents follows immediately after the parable of the wise and foolish maidens. A talent was the largest monetary unit of the ancient world. One talent was equal to 6,000 denarii. The amount entrusted to the servants is huge, implying a great deal of trust on behalf of the master.

The servants in the parable do not know how long the master will be gone, but they are to be vigilant and faithful until the master returns. The servants will be held accountable for how they use the resources entrusted to them while the master is gone.

1. *Were the servants actively working on the master's behalf, or were they only concerned about their own security? How so?*
2. *Why would the master trust the servants with so much money?*

Note the familiar theme of grace in the parable. All are given the gift of talents; none is left outside the gift of grace. The challenge in this parable (as in all of Matthew) for the disciple is: What will we do with the lavish, generous gifts the master has given?

3. *How would you assess the stewardship practices of each of the servants?*
4. *Should all of the servants been given the same amount of talents? Why or why not?*

The first two servants "went off at once" to multiply the gift (vs. 16-17). They trusted in their relationship with the master. They were future-focused, willing to risk for the master's increase. In contrast, the one-talent servant fearfully focused on the past. "I knew you were a harsh man… so, I was afraid." He did not trust that his relationship with the master could risk failure. He did not trust his own abilities. His fear immobilized him and led him to hide the gift until the master's return.

5. *Why did the master respond differently to each servant?*
6. *How would you describe each of the servants using modern images?*

Applying this parable to the church, the message is clear. Do we encourage one another to try to avoid disaster; or do we foster an attitude of trust and faithfulness, of willing risk-taking for the increase of the kingdom? There are some who put the gifts into action. And there are some who, out of fear, doubt, or selfishness, choose to keep it all for themselves and fail to see that the gifts given are intended to be invested on behalf of others. To these is spoken the word of judgment: If you try to keep the gift for yourself alone, you will lose everything.

7. *Where do you find yourself in the parable?*
8. *Would that be the same place as when you were younger? Explain.*
9. *What is the message of this parable for you?*

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word *among us*

There was once a village chief who had three sons – each with a special talent. The oldest cared for the olive trees, providing the village olive oil for food and trade. The second son was a shepherd, keeping the herds in good health, providing food and clothing for the village. The third son was a dancer, bringing cheer, beauty, and joy to the village.

One day, the chief had to go on a long journey and left the village in his sons' care. For awhile, things went well, but then the cold winds began to blow. The olive branches, cracked from the ice, failed to bloom. Soon the villagers had no fuel, and they begged the first son to cut down the trees. He finally relented, for he knew it was foolish to save the trees only to lose the village.

The ice made it impossible to travel, and soon the villagers had nothing to eat. They begged the second son to kill the sheep so they wouldn't starve. At first he refused; but he finally realized it was foolish to save the sheep only to have the people perish.

The villagers had just enough food and fuel to survive, but the hardships broke their spirits. They lost hope and became desperate. One by one they left the village in search of a better home. The chief finally returned to find smoke from his own chimney alone. Troubled, he rushed into the house, surprising his sons. "What has become of the trees? Where are the sheep? And what has happened to the people?"

The first two sons with sorrow explained what had happened to the trees and the sheep. The father consoled them, "You did your best to save the village. But what has become of the people?" The third son spoke up. "It hardly seemed proper to dance during such suffering. And besides, I wanted to conserve my strength to welcome you." "Then dance, my son," the father said, "for my village and my heart is empty."

But as the third son went to get up, he grimaced and fell. His legs were so stiff from sitting that they were no longer fit for dancing. The father, filled more with sadness than anger said, "Our village could survive with little food and fuel; but it could not without hope." And they wept.

(Adapted from a story by William J. Bausch, *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith*, Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1984)

1. *What gifts have you (individually or as a congregation) been given?*
2. *How do you try to be a good steward of the God-given gifts you have?*
3. *What does it mean to faithfully use these gifts?*
4. *How might you encourage people to use their gifts?*

Prayer

Giver of all gifts, help us to be good stewards of your gifts.

Dig Deeper

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

last **word**

This week,
assess your God-given gifts
and your stewardship of those gifts.

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Daily Discipleship

Sunday, November 22 - Christ the King Sunday (A)
Matthew 25:31-46

DEEPLY ROOTED - Rooted in the King!

The Challenge of Discipleship: *Compassion*

Focus Question: *When in the previous week did someone extend compassion to you?*

word *of life*

"Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Matthew 25:40 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 25:31-46

This text is often referred to as the Last Judgment, describing the end of time when the Son of Man returns. Jesus uses the phrase "Son of Man" to describe himself sitting on the throne with all the angels at the time of judgment. All nations gather before him.

The age-old questions about the second coming of Christ – *when?* and "*what sign?"* – are answered in a surprising way: Christ comes now, in the "least." The poor and the suffering are signs of Christ's presence.

1. *How does Christ connect and identify with those in need?*

Jesus uses the image of a shepherd who divides the sheep from the goats. This would have been a commonly understood image. Sheep and goats mingle and graze together in the pastures during the day; but at night, or when the sheep are to be sheared or the goats milked, they are separated. The Great Shepherd is the shepherd for both the sheep and goats and knows them all.

Note that neither those identified in the parable as the sheep nor the goats knew who it was that they were serving (or not serving). They did not act (or fail to act) to earn Jesus' favor or to gain their salvation. Rather, the faithful lived out their faith daily in the ordinary actions and service to others in need. They are called "blessed" – the word Jesus uses in the Beatitudes to describe the faithful disciple (Matthew 5:1-12). They have an *attitude* of a servant, reaching out and caring for those in need with the heart of Jesus. They fulfill what Jesus described earlier in Matthew as the great commandment: to love God and to love the neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). Followers of Jesus of every time and place are to act with the same attitude of servanthood and compassion.

This parable sheds light on the sins of omission – the things we are called to do that we fail to do. It is one thing to admit and confess our sins of commission, naming the wrongs we have done. We can often readily identify and name our sinful actions. But it is a more difficult task to name and identify those things we failed to do – those needs we did not even recognize. This passage shakes us to our core. The world is big; the needs are great.

2. *What are some sins of omission, those things left undone?*

The parable of the Last Judgment leads directly in Matthew's Gospel into the account of the passion and death of Jesus. Just as Jesus has identified in the parable with the least and the suffering, so he enters into his own suffering and death.

3. *What role does compassion have in this passage?*
4. *What is the surprise in this passage?*

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word *among us*

Small, seemingly insignificant and forgotten deeds done in everyday living are lifted up as service to Jesus himself. The sheep in the parable today were surprised – unaware of the good things they were doing. Their ministry had become a natural response to being a part of Christ's family, a natural outflowing of life, an internalized faith and lifestyle – so much so that they were unaware of the good works they were doing as they shared God's love.

Following Jesus means being an every-day disciple, not just one who shows up on Sundays. Instead, the challenge of being a disciple is to live with eyes open, seeing Christ in each person and extending the love of Christ to each.

1. *Identify ways you could live out this passage and "do" for Christ.*
2. *What attitude does Jesus want us to embrace as we encounter others with needs?*
3. *What does it feel like when someone extends compassion to you?*
4. *Is it easier to give than to receive acts of kindness? Why so?*

What needs do you see around you? Look closely, for you just might be surprised at whom you might meet in your neighbor, in the poor in your community, in the imprisoned, the lonely, and the hungry. It just might be the very face of Christ in your midst. Close your eyes and imagine driving home from your congregation. As you imagine driving by buildings, and people, try to identify people who might have special needs. The challenge of the disciple is to extend compassion today, tomorrow and then the next day.

5. *How might you get involved in helping others, especially the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and those imprisoned?*
6. *How might your congregation further help those in need?*

Yet compassion is not the only challenge for disciples. Each day we, as disciples of Jesus, struggle with forgiveness, grace, responsible living, courage, love, stewardship and other issues. Sin yanks at us to go our own way with no regard for anyone but ourselves. Thankfully, we have other Christians to encourage, support, and challenge us. We have God's Word to ground us in the teachings of Jesus. We have the Spirit to nudge and prod us.

7. *How have the challenges of being a disciple of Jesus changed for you over the years?*
8. *Today, what is the greatest challenge for you as a disciple of Jesus?*
9. *What might help you face that challenge?*

Prayer

O Christ, continue to teach us to be your disciples. Forgive us when we seem slow to learn. Challenge us to grow in your Word.

Dig Deeper

1 John 4:7-12

last **word**

This week,
each day, name your greatest challenge
as a disciple of Christ.
Ask God to help you with that challenge.

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