

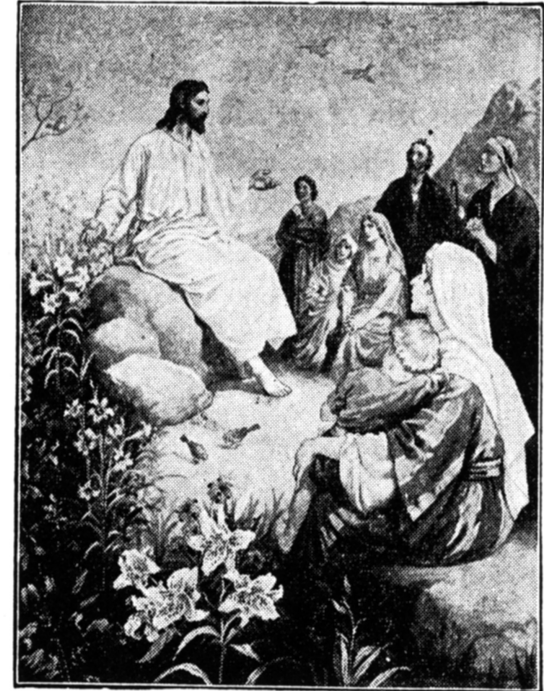
SATURDAY, AUGUST 5: 2 CHRONICLES 13-15 TRINITY 7

Zerah the Ethiopian has an army of one million men and three hundred chariots. Opposing Zerah is Asa, king of Judea. His army consists of “three hundred thousand from Judah and from Benjamin two hundred and eighty thousand men” (14:8). Zerah is too powerful a foe for Asa. But with the Lord numbers and strength mean nothing. “He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy” (Ps. 147:10-11). Asa is such a man, praying, “LORD, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude” (14:11).

As Asa had to face a daunting foe, so must the Christian. Our adversary is much more deadly than Zerah the Ethiopian. The devil prowls around as a roaring lion, seeking the opportunity to devour us with temptation. He throws his fiery darts of temptation at us continually. He is the master of a thousand arts, all of which involve tempting us to sin, accusing our consciences of our sins, and leading us into spiritual pride or spiritual despair. But we must not quake in fear at the supremacy of our foe! Asa teaches us to rest on the Lord, to rely upon His Word in the moment of temptation, and to trust His mercy when a wicked conscience attacks us. Though our foe is great, greater still is the Valiant One Who fights for us: our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus Christ, deliver us in the hour of temptation and grant us faith in Thy Word. Amen.

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



JULY 3—AUGUST 5, 2017

**A PUBLICATION OF
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN DIOCESE OF
NORTH AMERICA**

The Calendar

July 2	Trinity 3
July 9	Trinity 4
July 16	Trinity 5
July 23	Trinity 6
July 25 (Tu)	St. James the Elder, Apostle
July 29 (Sa)	St. Olaf, Martyr
July 30	Trinity 7

Summer Quarter of St. Ignatius Seminary Continues

Summer Quarter classes are being taught as intensives.

The following classes are being taught this summer:

E009—Greek Readings 4—Pastor Rydecki

P003—Liturgics Practicum II—Deacon Oncken

S006—Eschatology—Pastor Heimbigner

H005—Renaissance History—Bishop Heiser

E007—Galatians—Pastor Sullivan

S007—Ministry and Ecclesiology—Bishop Heiser

(For more information, please contact Bishop Heiser.)

FRIDAY, AUGUST 4: 2 CHRONICLES 10-12 TRINITY 7

Rehoboam forsook the Lord. To bring the king to repentance, the Lord sent Shishak, king of Egypt, against Judea. Shemaiah the prophet informs Rehoboam that this is the case, saying, “You have forsaken me, and therefore I also have left you in the hand of Shishak” (12:5). It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of your adversary, with whom there is no mercy. Rehoboam knows this will be the case if he is given over to the hand of Shishak, so he humbles himself and repents. “They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts, and humble their souls in his sight, saying, we will fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men: for as his majesty is, so is his mercy” (Sirach 2:17-18). Rehoboam wants to fall into the hands of God because God promises to be merciful. With Shishak there is no such promise.

When we forsake the Lord’s Word by worshiping the idols we craft in our hearts or looking to ourselves for every good thing, the Lord often leaves us in the hands of our sin and its temporal punishments. He does this for a brief time so that we learn to distinguish the servitude of sin from the service of God. When this happens we should humble ourselves and repent as Rehoboam, so that we may receive forgiveness, for “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9). It is far better to fall into the hands of God than the hands of men because God promises to be merciful to all who repent on account of Christ.

Lord Jesus, do not repay us as our sins deserve, but deal with us according to Your mercy. Amen.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 3: 2 CHRONICLES 7-9 TRINITY 7

“Now all the work of Solomon was well-ordered from the day of the foundation of the house of the LORD until it was finished” (8:16). Divine Wisdom guided Solomon to order the construction of the temple, provide for the sacrifices, and set the priests, Levites, singers, and gatekeepers in their proper place. The worship of the Old Testament was not casual or informal. It was orderly because God is orderly in the giving of salvation.

As Solomon’s work was well-ordered, so is the Triune God’s work in the gospel well-ordered. He has provided us with everything necessary for our salvation. He leaves none of it to happenstance, nor to us, but graciously bestows every part of our salvation in an orderly way. Foreseeing the sin of our first parents, God the Father established Christ as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” (Rev. 13:8). When the fullness of time had come, God the Son became flesh to bear our sin and die as our Passover lamb. The Lord well-ordered our salvation in that He called and ordained men to “teach all nations” and “preach the gospel to every creature.” So that this preaching would be effectual, the Holy Spirit works through the gospel message since it is “the power of God.” Even the faith which justifies sinners is itself a gift of God, “not of works, lest anyone should boast.” As Solomon ordered the Old Testament worship well, so the Triune God has set up the order of our salvation so that those who believe the Gospel have “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). By faith in Christ you lack nothing.

Heavenly Father, we give You thanks that You have graciously planned and executed our entire salvation for us. Amen.

MONDAY, JULY 3: 2 SAMUEL 4-6

Sin begets more sin. The destructive power of sin is often described in the books of Samuel (along with their consequences). Family sin is especially highlighted within these chapters as sin takes place and only leads to man’s flesh making his own conclusions. The flesh is ever thinking it has the perfect knowledge of good and evil. Yet, God’s Word of truth speaks thus about our flesh: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells” (Romans 7:18).

Thanks be to God, for He gives us His powerful, living and active Word, which keeps His believing baptized children abiding in, and centered on, Jesus Christ. The old nature, which we are conceived in, will ever be swayed into evil by the world, the devil and its own fallen, presumed righteousness (also known as pride). Sin cannot be cured; it can only be dealt with in one way: death.

Believing, baptized children of God trust in the merits of Christ’s fully atoning death to make payment for their sins. Faith in such gracious atoning good news brings us to be born anew from above. The New Man brings godly desires which the Old Man wrestles with (and ever will until our death takes place).

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

TUESDAY, JULY 4: 2 SAMUEL 7-9

Not waiting on God's divine sanction, David, relying on his own imagination (as pious as it was), thinks that building a house for God to dwell in is a superb idea. God responds with a rhetorical question: "Would you build a house for Me to dwell in?" Peter's same thinking is revealed at the Transfiguration of Jesus where he says, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matthew 7:4).

The same correction is given by God in both accounts (namely, He points to Christ Jesus). In the Transfiguration account God says, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5). In the Old Testament event God, through Nathan, reveals to David not what they will do for Him, but what He will do and make for David—namely, an everlasting house and kingdom.

David, being the type of Christ, reveals how God accomplishes that which He promises. For just as David conquers and divides the spoils, so Christ Jesus accomplishes the defeat of sin, death, the devil, and hell through His fully atoning merits. He shares His victorious spoils through His Holy Word and Sacraments and His believing and baptized children are sustained.

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2: 2 CHRONICLES 4-6 TRINITY 7

Once the temple is constructed and furnished, the Ark is brought to its resting place and the glory of the Lord fills the Temple. Solomon speaks to the people about the Lord's faithfulness to His Word. David's son sits on David's throne and has built the Lord a house, just as the Lord had promised to David. Not a single promise of God falls to the ground unfulfilled.

This is the reason why prayers are to be offered at the Temple. When a man sins against his neighbor he is to pray to the Lord Who dwells in Jerusalem so that the Lord would show him mercy. When the people transgress God's law they are to pray to the One Who dwells in the Temple so that He will forgive. When the Lord allows afflictions such as drought and famine to occur to teach them "the good way in which they should walk" (6:27), they are to pray to the Lord Who will hear from heaven and forgive. "Whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows his own burden and his own grief, and spreads out his hands to this temple: then hear from heaven your dwelling place, and forgive" (6:29-30).

We pray because the Lord always fulfills what He promises. As Solomon points out, His chief promise is the promise to forgive the sins of all who repent of their sin and flee to Him for mercy. Christians need no temple to pray toward as Israel did. Christians have the Temple, our Lord Jesus Christ, "God with us," Who promises to hear and forgive.

Lord Jesus Christ, may we may daily flee to You in repentance, firmly trusting Your promise to forgive all our sins. Amen.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 1: 2 CHRONICLES 1-3 TRINITY 7

The Lord invites Solomon to pray, “Ask! What shall I give you?” (1:7). This is an open-ended invitation from the Lord Who is “able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). Solomon asks for wisdom and knowledge. This is a good prayer. What makes it a good prayer is that he desires wisdom and knowledge so that he can faithfully discharge the duties of his vocations and complete his God-given tasks for the benefit of his people. He sees the task before him and says, “Who can judge this great people of yours?” (1:10). The new king sees his tasks and realizes that by his own strength, power, and will, he is inadequate to rule God’s people for their good. To truly rule them for their benefit he’ll need divine wisdom and understanding.

What was true for Solomon is true for us as well. As we read yesterday, everyone has several vocations, or holy callings from God. These are given to us, not for our own benefit (though we should enjoy them), but for the benefit of our neighbor. Christ then commands us to pray to God the Father for everything we need in this life. If God the Father gave Solomon wisdom and knowledge to fulfill his vocations, “how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:13). The Holy Spirit creates and nourishes your faith so that you trust God’s mercy. The Spirit bears His fruit in your life, all of which summarized in the word “love,” both for God and neighbor.

Heavenly Father, graciously give us Thy Holy Spirit that we may love Thee with our whole heart and gladly serve our neighbor in the vocations Thou hast given us. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 5: 2 SAMUEL 10-12

God sustained David in defeating the Ammonites and Syrians. Before the battle even begins the men of Israel reveal a care for one another, trusting that the Lord will “do what is good in His sight.” Indeed, God’s will is always best, but our fallen, unbelieving flesh wrestles against such belief. Our sinful nature is inclined to think that God is holding back and hasn’t given us enough. It concludes that we must think, say, or do what we want, even if it’s forbidden.

David reveals the inclination of man’s natural, fallen, sinful flesh when the beauty of Bathsheba is beheld (that is, when her beauty becomes delightful to his eyes). David desires her, and then takes her. Sound familiar? The tree of the knowledge of good and evil had fruit that was forbidden, but it was delightful to Eve’s eyes and she took the fruit for herself.

The Lord uses Nathan to deliver His Law to make known to David how he took for himself that which was forbidden. “You are the man” leaves no room for David to escape. God’s Law wasn’t to be missed, yet David, broken by God’s law, is then comforted. The message of God’s ultimate good (namely, Christ crucified) is delivered to David: “The Lord also has put away your sin.” Thanks be to God that He delivers His same Law and Gospel to us!

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THURSDAY, JULY 6: 2 SAMUEL 13-15

Sin, yet again, threatens to divide the kingdom. Lustful flesh, desiring to take for itself what it ought not, continues as Amnon rapes his own sister Tamar. David failed to administer justice and it resulted in more sin. Absalom took justice into his own hands and killed his brother Amnon, and then fled into exile. One sin led to another, leaving a trail of consequences along the way.

Even after returning and being reconciled with his father—having tasted the power of delivering justice (albeit improperly)—the flesh of Absalom desired more power and control. He usurped the king's power by intercepting those who seek the king for judgement, delivering to them his own judgement in the place of the king. By doing so he positions himself to steal the hearts of the men of Israel.

All flesh is inclined to abuse power because it is at enmity with God from its conception, ever turned in on itself because of presumed righteousness. The triune God is the only source of true power, and, thankfully, He brings the New Man in us to pray against our very own flesh (not just in the collect for this week) but ultimately in the Lord's Prayer (see Luther's explanation to the 3rd Petition).

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

MONDAY, JULY 31: 1 CHRONICLES 26-29 TRINITY 7

Reread 1 Chronicles 28:20. David charges Solomon to build the Temple. He encourages him so that he does not become afraid because of the magnitude of the task, nor dismayed because of the time it would take to complete. The Lord would see the work through from its beginning to end.

You are also given tasks “for the service of the house of the Lord.” Your task is not to build a physical temple, though. Your tasks are your vocations. Are you a father or mother, a grandfather or grandmother? Are you a husband or wife? Are you single or a widow? Are you an employee, an employer, or a volunteer? Are you a citizen? All of these vocations are holy orders to which your God has called you. The tasks of your vocations are done to God's glory and the service of your neighbors. None of these appear to be outwardly “for the service of the house of the Lord,” as Solomon's task was, but they are because God has given them to you for the benefit of your neighbor, for as St. Peter writes, “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5). Part of your spiritual sacrifice is to serve your neighbor in your vocations. In the tasks of your various callings, your Lord is with you. Do not fear them. Do not be dismayed at their enormity, neither despise them. Your Lord is with you, even as He was with Solomon in His vocations.

Lord, grant us grace to recognize our many vocations as tasks given by You, and give us strength to fulfill our task in faith toward You and love for our neighbor. Amen.

SATURDAY, JULY 29: 1 CHRONICLES 16-20 TRINITY 6

King David conquered Jerusalem. He “took up residence in the fortress and so it was called the City of David” (1 Chr. 11:4-9). Once David dwelt in Jerusalem, he immediately made plans to have the ark of the Lord brought to it. In direct contrast with Saul (1 Chr. 9-10), the author of Chronicles details David’s deep concern for the true religion of God (1 Chr. 13-16). David prepares a special tent for the ark and he directs the priests and Levites to bring it to Jerusalem.

What did the Old Testament worship look like? The priest were “to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering regularly morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the Law of the LORD which He commanded Israel; and with them Heman and Jeduthun and the rest who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because His mercy endures forever” (1 Chr. 16:40-41).

First, there was the burnt offering by the priest, a foreshadowing of our Savior Jesus Christ Who offered Himself to atone for our sins. Second, there was the giving of thanks for God’s mercy in providing forgiveness. David “appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the LORD God of Israel” (1 Chr. 16:4).

Hebrews 10:22-23, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

Almighty God, having been accounted righteous by faith in the blood of Jesus, lead us to give You thanks and praise. Amen.

FRIDAY, JULY 7: 2 SAMUEL 16-18

Though David must depart from Jerusalem, he puts his fate in the LORD’s hands. Repentant faith is displayed by David again when Shimei (a man from the family of the house of Saul) hurls stones and curses at David and his servants as they travel through Bahurim. King David spares Shimei from death, accepts the divine judgment, and further entrusts himself to God’s mercy.

God’s promised consequence of David’s sin (the evil adultery he committed with Bathsheba, from chapter 13) is carried out as Ahithophel advises Absalom to go in and commit adultery with David’s concubines in the sight of all Israel. Absalom would eventually meet his end as Joab kills him—against David’s command to spare him.

Though we, baptized and believing children of God, sin in our thoughts, words, and deeds because of our old nature, we (like David) are under the mercy of God. Often times there are consequences which we must suffer, but by the grace of God we are still made repentant and believing. Does it not bring us to recognize that our answer to the question “How are you doing?” could rightly be said: “Better than we deserve”? Thanks be to God for His Word and Sacraments which keep our eyes fixed on Christ’s atoning merits for us. His mercy endures forever!

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

SATURDAY, JULY 8: 2 SAMUEL 19-21

It's not hard to realize David lived in a chaotic, fallen world of sin. When major (or minor) disasters happen in our life—be they with health, finances, or relationships—it can take a considerable amount of time and effort to bring back a sense of order and normalcy. The world, however, just keeps on being wrought with disorder as it continues to reveal that it's fallen. God is the only One who is perfectly ordered!

On this side of glory we are so fallen we'll never really sense the depth of our chaotic sin, nor the perfection of what was lost. God's Word reveals the fact that He humbled Himself to this world of chaos for our sake. By the grace of God, through His Word of truth and Holy Spirit, He brings His believing baptized children to everlasting life and salvation with His suffering and death.

Thanks be to God for His Word and Sacraments! By grace, because of Christ's fully atoning merits, He brings you to breathe a sigh of relief—rejoicing and staying reliant upon Him in the very midst of the chaotic suffering.

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FRIDAY, JULY 28: 1 CHRONICLES 11-15 TRINITY 6

Following the battle in which Saul takes his own life (1 Chr. 10), David went up to Hebron and was anointed king by the men of Judah (1 Chr. 11). The transition between the reign of Saul and David was quite messy. Abner, Saul's commander, took Ish-Bosheth, Saul's son, and made him king at Gilead (2 Sam. 2:8). For two years, these two kings both claimed they were the rightful heir of the throne (2 Sam. 2-4). After Abner turned to David's side and Ish-Bosheth was murdered, "all Israel" was finally united again under one king. Much of today's reading gives a listing of the mighty men who were loyal to king David.

Though not original with him, Martin Luther once remarked, "Whenever God builds a church, the devil builds a chapel right next door." The devil is always sowing discord and seeking to create dissension among God's people. Just as the Davidic kingship over Israel was established in the midst of suffering, so God's Church is always being persecuted by the devil's children. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers" (Gen. 3:15).

We give thanks that the Son of David, Jesus Christ, has finally united "all Israel" in the holy Christian Church. Through his suffering and death, He has defeated the ruler of this world and given us the victory in the forgiveness of sins. "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Eph. 6:11).

Son of David, have mercy on us and clothe us with Your forgiveness. Teach us by Your Word to recognize the reign of Christ so that we continue steadfast in this confession and Church, and suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it. Amen.

THURSDAY, JULY 27: 1 CHRONICLES 6-10 TRINITY 6

The Levites served as assistants to the Aaronic priests on behalf of the whole community. 1 Chronicles six lists the sons of Levi, who were “to take care of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, fulfilling the obligations of the Israelites by doing the work of the tabernacle” (Num. 3:8). Beginning with 6:31, we have those Levites who were appointed as musicians in the Temple.

The enumeration of these lists gives authorization to those who were appointed to serve God. Hebrews 5:4-6, “And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’ As He also says in another place: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’ The Christ was not a descendant of Aaron or Levi, but from the tribe of Judah. The Levitical priesthood could not bring perfection, but required another priest like Melchizedek. Our Lord Jesus ‘has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life’” (Heb. 7:16). Jesus’ propitiatory death secures eternal life once and for all. These former external regulations have passed away. Our High Priest has cleansed our conscience, so that we are appointed to serve “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). The book of Revelation (7:15) says of us, “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.”

O Lord, open our lips to praise You with heart and mind.
Amen.

MONDAY, JULY 10: 1 KINGS 1-2 TRINITY 4

The sin of Adam continues through the generations. Adam assumed to take on for himself that which was not given to him, namely the knowledge of good and evil. Like his ancestor Adam, Adonijah assumed for himself that which was not given to him, namely being king of Israel. If we truly fear, love, and trust in God, we obey all His commandments. But as we know all too well, we don’t love God or our neighbor as we ought.

Adonijah longed to be king but God had other plans. Solomon would rule after David and Solomon is rightfully placed on David’s throne. Adonijah’s subterfuge continues as he enlists the aid of Solomon’s mother, Bathsheba. He would have Bathsheba ask Solomon to give Abishag, the wife of his father David, be given to him by Solomon thereby giving the appearance that Solomon recognizes Adonijah’s right to the throne.

Such is the way of sin. We long for what belongs to another and look for ways to justify our evil actions in trying to obtain it.

But, in a strange sort of way, God’s grace works in a similar fashion. Because of sin, we belong to the devil. Yet, God longs for us and our salvation. Thus, He sends His One and Only Son into this world as a real man. However, Jesus does not seek to justify our evil actions. Instead, He pays the price for our sins by dying on the cross and rises to life again on the third day. Now, through the gift of faith, we stand justified before our Father in Heaven.

Grant us, Almighty God, a steadfast faith in Jesus, a cheerful hope in Thy mercy, and a sincere love to Thee and our fellow men; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY, JULY 11: 1 KINGS 3-6 TRINITY 4

“If you could have anything in the world, what would you ask for?” It is a question asked of people for countless generations and one that opens the door to countless answers.

So what would you ask for? It is easy to come up with a long list. But as the old saying goes, “Be careful what you ask for.” For example, if your one wish was to wish for a mansion and your wish came true.... Great! Well, great for a while. Then comes the matter of paying the property taxes and the expenses of keeping up the mansion. Suddenly the wish becomes a burden.

However, Solomon didn’t ask for something to benefit himself. Instead, he asked for something that would benefit the people over whom he was king. He asked for wisdom. Wisdom isn’t something that first comes to mind when I wonder, “What would I ask for?” I think I would go down the road of some self-indulgent “toy”. But Solomon didn’t. He wanted to serve his people.

Not only did God grant Solomon wisdom in his dealings with the people, God granted Solomon the privilege of building the Temple. This would be the place where God comes to His people and forgives their sins.

Though the Temple is gone, there remains a place where God gladly brings forgiveness to His people for Jesus’ sake. Every Sunday we hear the words of forgiveness through God’s appointed means of Word and Sacrament. Forgiveness isn’t something you have to wish for. It’s as real as Christ Himself.

O Lord God, let Thy Holy Spirit dwell in us that He may enlighten and lead us into all truth and evermore defend us from all adversities; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26: 1 CHRONICLES 1-5 TRINITY 6

Unlike the Gilgamesh Epic and other made-up tales from antiquity, the holy Scriptures are not humanly-devised stories to explain natural occurrences. “Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). 1 Chronicles begins with the genealogical record of “Adam, Seth, Enosh....,” followed by lots and lots of names. These are the names of historical men through whom our Lord was working out his plan of salvation. St. Paul tells us, “And God [He] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’” (Acts 17:26-28).

St. Paul told Timothy that the purpose of the Holy Scriptures is “to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The Scriptures include not only theological explanations, but also historical narratives, poetry and even genealogies. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:15-17). With the fulfillment of our salvation in Jesus Christ, the genealogies have achieved their purpose.

O Lord God, lead us to find our Savior Jesus Christ in all the words of Your Scriptures. Amen.

TUESDAY, JULY 25: 2 KINGS 23-25 TRINITY 6

King Josiah begins to repair the Temple and restore the pure worship of the true God. Finding the Book of the Covenant, Josiah determines to renew the covenant “to follow the Lord and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul...” (23:3). Josiah restored the celebration of the Passover in Jerusalem. He pulled down the altars to false gods. He demolished the high places where there was mixed, syncretistic worship. He killed the idolatrous priests. Josiah “did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left” (22:2).

Did the people give thanks for the reformation and rejoice in the good news of salvation? They did not! Despite the good things which Josiah did, the people generally remained unfaithful. Although Josiah was able to cause an external and outward change in the religious life of the people, he was unable to change their deep-seated apostasy. They did not embrace the LORD God with all their heart and soul. Ezekiel 3:19, “Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”

After long ages of darkness, we have been delivered from the bondage of error and the tyranny of works-righteousness so that we have received a reformation unto the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

O Lord, preserve among us Your pure Word and Sacraments. Keep us steadfast in the true faith that we may not ignore or misuse our Lord’s priceless gift of liberty. Amen

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12: 1 KINGS 7-8 TRINITY 4

It must have been a quite a sight. The people of Israel saw the Temple in all its glory. They witnessed the cloud, the visible presence of God with His people, fill “the house of the Lord.” It was as God had always intended it to be: God with His people.

The detailed accounting of the building of the Temple and all its fixtures gives us a glimpse at the beauty of the Temple. It was a magnificent structure. Yet, as Solomon says in the opening of his prayer to God at the dedication of the Temple, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth?”

Solomon, in all the wisdom given him by God, understood the magnitude of what was taking place. Indeed, God would reside in this place so as to be with His people.

Solomon’s wisdom shone brightly that day in his prayer. He understood that people needed forgiveness. He prayed that God would lead His people to acknowledge their sins and come to Him for forgiveness.

As we know, the Temple built of stone and wood did not last forever. Instead, God would come to be with His people in a way that is beyond our wildest imaginations. God would become man. This “Temple” was crucified, raised on the Third Day, and lives forever. Those found in Christ have no reason to fear death. “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

O Lord, favorably receive the prayers of Thy Church, that, being delivered from all adversity and error, it may serve Thee in safety and freedom; and grant us Thy peace in our time; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY, JULY 13: 1 KINGS 9-11 TRINITY 4

It's not as though God hadn't warned Solomon what would happen. All God asked Solomon to do was "walk before me as your father David walked" and things would be fine. Worship other gods and "calamity" will befall the nation.

Solomon's reputation for being wise was known to the surrounding nations. However, though he was wise in dealing with others, Solomon's wisdom was less than stellar when it came to his personal life. Though richly blessed by God with earthly wealth, Solomon forsook the God who had blessed him by offering sacrifices to the false gods of his many wives.

As we read in today's chapters from 1 Kings, things went downhill quite fast. When once there was peace, adversaries arose against Solomon from outside and from within the kingdom. Solomon's orderly rule is now turned into disarray.

Yet, in the midst of the turmoil surrounding Solomon's betrayal of God, God does not deny Himself and the promise He made to David. One day God would seat a Perfect King upon David's throne.

True Wisdom sent from God would come in human flesh to rescue God's people from certain death if their sins were not paid for. Though turmoil would surround Jesus' ministry, it did not arise because of Jesus' sin but because of sinners in this world. This turmoil would reach its apex when Jesus was crucified. The very foundation of the world convulsed when its Creator died.

But as we know, the horror of the crucifixion was at the same time a beautiful thing. There on the cross the price for sin was paid and after three days the Creator arose. The tomb proved to be the entrance to eternal life.

Dear Jesus, give me a willing heart to bear the crosses that come my way. Amen.

MONDAY, JULY 24: 2 KINGS 19-22 TRINITY 6

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had come with a large army to destroy Jerusalem and Hezekiah, Israel's vassal king. By belittling their small resources and their trust in God, the Assyrian field commander attempted to get the Israelites to surrender—rather than be destroyed. He said, "Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you, 'Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?' (18:33). Their bleak situation is described as "...when children come to the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them" (19:3).

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed the Lord's promise of deliverance, "The zeal of the LORD almighty will accomplish this... [Sennacherib] will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here" (19:31). The Israelites trusted in the Lord's promise and "that night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp" (19:35). They were delivered.

We have the Lord's promise included at the beginning of the Divine Service, "Our help is in the Name of the Lord, Who made Heaven and Earth." It is not by our own strength that we face our enemies—the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. They are much more numerous and powerful than we are. The Creator of all things is on our side. The Redeemer forgives our iniquities and grants us rescue from sin and death. He fights our battles, lengthens our life, and gives us the victory.

Almighty God, all things are in Your hands. Give us faith in Your promise that we trust in Your Son Jesus Christ for our deliverance. Amen.

SATURDAY, JULY 22: 2 KINGS 13-15

Elisha lived to an old age. He had been a prophet for about sixty years. Not much is said about him before his calling as a prophet or how old he was at the time, other than he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen (1 Kgs. 19:19). Even though he had a double portion of the spirit of Elijah, he is not carried away into Heaven. This does not mean that he was unfaithful in his calling, but only that God willed his death to be in this manner.

Joash hears of his illness and visits him. He honors him with the same words that Elisha cried when Elijah was taken up into Heaven. This shows, first, some goodness in the heart of Joash. Second, it shows the honor that is due to all men of God who proclaim His Word. For this honor shown him Elisha provides one more blessing from God upon Joash—he would have victory over the Syrians three times.

After his burial a person who was unintentionally buried with Elisha is raised from the dead when he touched the bones of the prophet. This is a sign of God's power over death. He can raise a person who just touches the bones of His prophets. He can also raise His Son from the dead on the third day. And He can, and will, raise up on the Last Day all those who hear and believe His Word to dwell in everlasting life.

We pray: O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward Thee that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

FRIDAY, JULY 14: 1 KINGS 12-14 TRINITY 4

Upon the death of Solomon, the unraveling of the kingdom begins just as God had told Solomon it would. It was all downhill from there. The abhorrent behavior was most evident when Jeroboam made two golden calves and offered up sacrifices to them...“Here are your gods, O Israel.”

God's clear words, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” meant nothing to Jeroboam. What was most important to Jeroboam was...Jeroboam. The god that Jeroboam worshipped was himself. Though there were golden calves, what lies behind every sin is “self.” The temptation in the Garden of Eden was that upon eating the forbidden fruit “You will be like God.”

When Jeroboam tried to point out who was in charge by ordering the arrest of the “man of God,” his ability to point literally withered before his eyes. Even though Jeroboam's hand had withered and he was humbled by God, he would not acknowledge the true God. “Please entreat the favor of the Lord your God.” He did not say, “my God,” but “your God.” His stubborn apostasy would not allow him to repent even though God both withered Jeroboam's hand and then restored it.

We may oft times wonder why people refuse to believe and why God grants faith to others. The answer remains His, and His alone. “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”

Almighty God, Who hast given to them that believe exceeding great and precious promises, grant us so perfectly and without all doubt to believe in thy Son Jesus Christ that our faith in Thy sight never may be reproved. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Savior, Thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY, JULY 15: 1 KINGS 15-17 TRINITY 4

As we see in today's reading, there was a succession of kings in both Judah and Israel. Most did what was evil in the sight of God. By the time we get to Ahab, life in Israel is really bad. Ahab "did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him."

Yet, with all this evil going on God remains faithful to his people. He sends Elijah to proclaim to Ahab that there would be a drought. God knows the anger of Ahab and protects Elijah from Ahab's wrath. God also makes sure Elijah has food and water in the midst of the drought.

But the greater than His power to cause the drought upon the land while yet providing food the widow, her son, and Elijah was God's raising to life the widow's son. God heard the prayer of Elijah and restored the life of the widow's son.

As Christians, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray that God would protect them. We pray for them in times of illness. We pray that God would spare them when they are near death.

But what about those times when health and life of a brother or sister in Christ isn't restored? Has God failed to answer our prayers? Our first response might be to say, "Yes." But has God really failed our brother or sister in Christ, or failed to hear our prayer? He has promised eternal life to His people. And His promises never fail.

Almighty, Everlasting God, Who didst give Thine Only Son to be High Priest of good things to come, hereafter grant unto us, Thine unworthy servants, to have our share of the company of the blessed; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY, JULY 21: 2 KINGS 10-12

The massacre of the infants in Bethlehem after the birth of our Lord Jesus is not the first time that the devil tried to destroy the seed of David. Athaliah, upon hearing of her son Ahaziah's death, sought to wipe out the line of David. In her grief and anger she sought to wipe out the entire line of David. She further showed her rebellion against God by usurping the throne of David and allowing the Temple to fall into disrepair.

But our Lord God shows His providence in that He preserves an heir of the line of David, Joash, whose name means "given by the Lord." He was given by the Lord to rule over the house of David. During his reign he wiped out the worship of Baal from Judah. At the same time, Jehu wiped out the worship of Baal from Israel. But Joash left the high places intact, and Jehu left the calves that Jeroboam placed in Bethel and Dan in place, so that the people still had false idols to which they turned.

Our Lord Jesus comes out of this line to redeem those who do not worship Him. Such is His love for us, that while we were yet sinners, He came to redeem us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Many false idols remain in this world, but those who forsake these idols and cling to our Lord have forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and salvation as the Lord promised.

We pray: O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward Thee that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

THURSDAY, JULY 20: 2 KINGS 7-9

There can be no peace for the wicked. Joram asks Jehu if he comes in peace, but there can never be peace for the impenitent. Ahab had certainly committed his evils, continuing to worship the false god, Baal, and encouraging others to do likewise. It was, therefore, prophesied that his household would be cut off. However, because Ahab had humbled himself before God after hearing the prophesy against him, these things would not come to pass until the time of his son.

His son Joram did not repent. He continued in the false religion of his parents. Just as bad, he did not censure his mother Jezebel's wickedness. These are the crimes that Jehu lists against Joram. Make note that according to Jehu's words it is just as sinful to allow sinful behavior to continue in others when you have the power to restrain it as it is to commit sin. Joram was king of Israel, he had the power to remove his mother from her position of power, and cleanse the land of the false religion of Baal. But he did not do it.

For Joram and Jezebel there could be no peace, especially eternal peace. The same is true of all those who remain in their impenitence and unbelief—there can be no eternal peace. On account of their unbelief they cannot “rest in peace.”

Our Lord justifies all those who believe on Him. Be contrite and believe on Him and He will give you the promises of Heaven.

We pray: O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward Thee that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

MONDAY, JULY 17: 1 KINGS 21-22

Our Lord Jesus repeats the words of Micaiah regarding the people of Israel. They were “as sheep that have no shepherd” (Mt. 9:36; Mk 6:34). The prophets of Ahab (about four hundred men) could only tell lies, for they possessed a lying spirit. Ahab, who is used to the lies of his wife Jezebel, readily listens to the false prophets. They tell him what he wants to hear. The people of Israel are scattered like sheep with no shepherd because they are not taught the truth, but only hear what they want to hear. Therefore, they are lost.

Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, appears to be accustomed to hearing the truth, because he recognizes that these prophets are not speaking on behalf of God and asks for another prophet. There is only one prophet who speaks the truth, but Ahab does not want to hear him because Micaiah, in Ahab's estimation, only speaks evil against him. But Micaiah does not speak good or evil, he only speaks the truth; he speaks the Word of God.

When our Lord Jesus came things had not changed. Israel was still as sheep without a shepherd. Our Lord had compassion on them, and taught them many things. He preached to them the truth. He was their Shepherd. And now He gathers people from all nations into His flock to feed them with the Word of truth: the truth that by His death He has won for us forgiveness, life, and salvation!

We pray: O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward Thee that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

TUESDAY, JULY 18: 2 KINGS 1-3

Elijah was summoned by Ahaziah not because he cared about what Elijah had to prophesy, but because he stood in opposition to Ahaziah's true god, Baal-Zebub. Ahaziah had no need for the Lord God, for he already had his own false god. His two captains who were killed clearly believed the same way since they treated Elijah with contempt. The second one was even more contemptuous to Elijah, even after what happened to the first captain and his men. They all perished on account of their unbelief in God and their disdain for His voice spoken through Elijah.

The same is true of the youth in Bethel. They were mauled to death by two she bears because their mocking was not really about Elisha's lack of hair, but about their disdain for the Lord God. It is important to remember that Bethel is one of the cities where Jeroboam set up a gold calf for the people to worship and established false priests to offer up sacrifices to this gold calf (1 Kgs 12). The people of Bethel had their false god and false prophets, so they felt they had no need of the Lord God, nor His prophet.

All of this is meant to lead the hearts of the people of Israel to repentance and contrition over their sin, to turn them away from their false gods and works to faith in the One, True God for their salvation. The Lord saves all who trust on Him.

We pray: O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward Thee that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 19: 2 KINGS 4-6

There are three persons who petition the Prophet Elisha: the widow of one of the sons of the prophets, the Shunammite woman, and Naaman. However, their requests are not meant to be looked at as being directed to Elisha, but to God. God grants the requests of these individuals through Elisha in order that He might strengthen their faith.

The oil does not run out until all the jars are filled, the debt is paid, and there is enough left over to sustain the widow and her sons. By this she sees the goodness of the Lord, that He can provide all that she needs to support this body and life.

When the Shunammite woman's son died, notice that her first response is to go to Elisha. It is as if she believes that the child can still be raised if she goes to the servant of the One who can raise her son. When the son is raised this strengthens the woman's faith in the Lord God, that He is the Lord of Life and will provide all who believe on Him a resurrection from the dead.

Naaman is healed of his leprosy. In fact, he is converted by this miracle. He brings back dirt to Syria so that he might worship God on it. He believed enough to seek out a cure, but now his faith is perfected and he gives thanks to God even in a foreign land.

We pray: O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward Thee that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.