

SATURDAY, MAY 28: JOSHUA 9:1-27

TRINITY

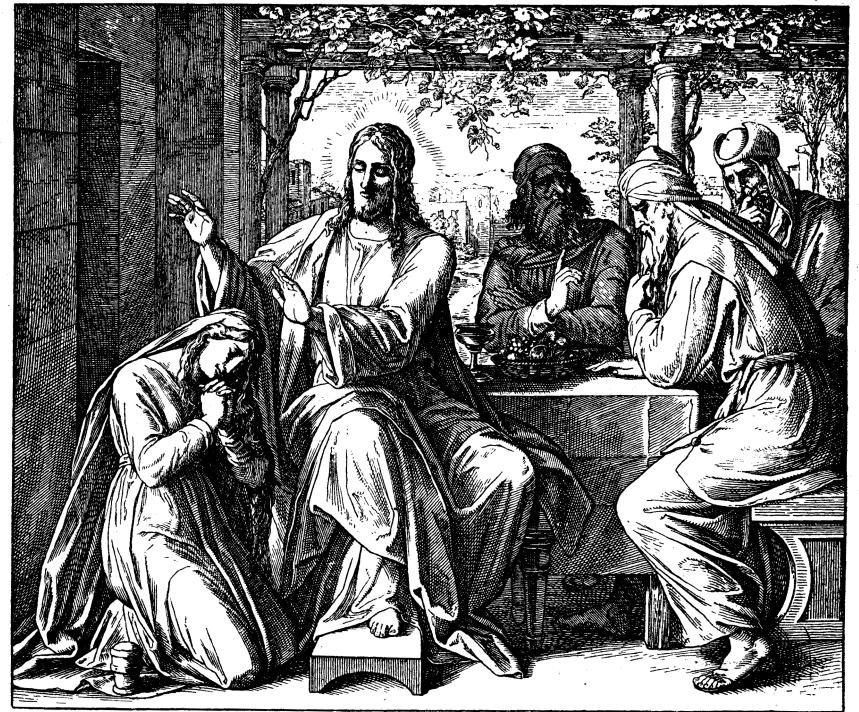
God had expressly forbidden Israel to make peace with any Canaanite tribe (Exodus 23:32; 34:12; Numbers 33:55; Deuteronomy 7:2). But Israel spares these tribes of Canaan because they were deceived. This shows the power of the oath.

When we take oaths in marriage, or confirmation, or ordination we need to understand that we are making pledges to God, not just to other people. We vow to do certain things and not to do other things. We are bound to fulfill these oaths. When pastors in the ELDoNA vowed to uphold the teachings of the scriptures and Lutheran Confessions at their ordination vows, they meant it seriously. They had to leave their former church bodies when those commitments were violated by the former church bodies. The laymen in the ELDoNA fellowship also made those commitments in their confirmation vows. And although it was not easy to leave large, national church bodies, it had to be done because of the vow. This is when integrity is tested.

God makes promises to us. He promises to save us if we trust in His Son. He promises to be present with His saving power in the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. We can rely on these promises because our God keeps His promises. He has perfect integrity. We will be known by the promises we keep.

Lord, help us to be like You in keeping our vows. Help us to be faithful, and when we fail help restore us to faithfulness again. Amen.

# THE LUTHERAN HERALD



**ROGATE—TRINITY 1**  
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Israel and Judah, indeed, all whom the Lord had led from bondage in Egypt, had grown corrupted. They no longer heeded the Word of God and they trampled on the poor of the land while living in libertine extravagance. Because of this, God proclaimed through Amos, a humble shepherd and a dresser of sycamore figs, that they faced a destruction similar to that which had befallen Sodom and Gomorrah. His message was not well received. Even Amaziah, the priest in Bethel, opposed him, speaking against him to King Jeroboam and forbidding Amos to prophesy in Israel.

We live in a society which, among other things, twists God's gift of sexuality and slays countless unborn infants in legalized abortion, in the face of the undeniable evidence that we live in the end times. Jesus will return like a thief in the night and destruction surely will fall on the world. Pastors today are also confronted with resistance when they speak and act according to God's revealed Word--often with thinly veiled threats based on a "hire-and-fire" mentality. But just as God promised through Amos that a faithful remnant would be spared, so also, because Jesus Christ has overcome the world, the faithful will be spared when He returns in judgment. Yahweh raised up the fallen tabernacle of David in remembrance of His covenant with him whose human descendant, Jesus, would prepare a place for us so that we may eternally be where He is.

We pray: Thank You, heavenly Father, for sending the Holy Spirit, who keeps me in the true Church with Christ and who, on the Last Day, will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. Amen.

"...an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool."

It is interesting that God commands that the stones for the altar be un-worked. It's as if He is saying, "I've already made the altar, you can just assemble it." God is telling the Israelites that "the place where you offer sacrifices and interact with Me, was made by Me and made holy by Me. Your work, your efforts, man, has nothing to do with My blessings. I give My blessings freely. I am not like the pagan gods which must be roused to attention and action by fevered activity."

But for the people's sake the stones were coated in plaster and the law of Moses is engraved on them. Then Joshua recited "all the words of the law" before the people, to remind them of the covenant they had with God. Half the people are before Mount Gerizim and half before Mount Ebal. One half recited the blessings. One half recited the curses. This corresponds to Law and Gospel.

The way of the Lord involves both these things, but even here we are pointed beyond the Law to the Gospel. Luther said: "Finally, this people of the Law perished through the curse. But Joshua adds blessings, that he might point to Christ, who blesses all who are under the curse of the Law and yearn for Him."

Lord help us to see beyond the Law. We naturally return to the Law, but keep our eyes fixed on Christ so that we may remember who it is that gives blessings. Amen.

“And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.”

This is the sort of thing that horrifies modern Western Man. It is intolerant, in the extreme. The modern unbeliever would say something like: “I can’t believe in a god that orders genocide as an act of holy obedience.” There are a number of things to say in response. First, the cult of Baal was marked by ritual prostitution, both heterosexual and homosexual, and widespread child sacrifice. Would it be moral for God to leave such things unopposed? Secondly, we must acknowledge that the religion we confess is an intolerant and exclusive religion. We Christians are not to mix religions or religious practices with idolatry. We are not like the pluralistic world in this regard.

God was carrying out His judgment against these wicked idolaters. That is why He miraculously destroys the walls and sends his agents of wrath upon the wicked inhabitants of Jericho. This is judgment against evil, against sin. There is no virtue in the tolerance of wickedness. If it is allowed to survive and thrive, it infects all men it touches.

In our own time, how often is homosexuality tolerated, so that it now is accepted by even those who call themselves Christian? How much more aggressive and intolerant have homosexuals become in our day, now that Christian morality has been replaced with tolerant pluralism?

Lord help us to embrace the truth and convictions that you demand of Your holy people. Keep us from wickedness that we may see salvation. Amen.

The three words, “in that day,” from verse 2, are most often associated with the terror of judgment. For example, we find in Deuteronomy, “Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?’” (31:17).

That day will break upon us suddenly, like a thief in the night. As Jesus said, fire and sulfur will rain from heaven, and “In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back” (Luke 17:31). That day when Christ returns will be the dark and dreadful day of the outpouring of God’s wrath against sin.

Unrepentant sinners, here represented by the lascivious daughters of Zion, will pay forevermore for their unbelief. But for those who trust in Jesus, the Branch of the LORD, that day will be different. They will be declared holy, as they are covered not with the filthy robes of their own righteousness but, through faith, with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. They will not beg mountains and rocks for protection against God’s holy anger as, instead, they will be covered by Christ.

We pray: Lord, grant that I may dwell in the secret place of the Most High and, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, may declare evermore, “He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him will I trust.” Amen.

The Lord, through His servant Isaiah, alternately prophesies dire judgment for Israel because of selfishness and idolatry, and the good news of redemption for the faithful remnant. Saints Matthew and Mark both record Jesus citing the reference in Isaiah 29:13 to the people's duplicity, honoring God with their lips and denying Him in their hearts. Even so, five verses later we find the words "in that day" not predicting fire and sulfur from heaven, but ushering in a prophecy not only in keeping with Jesus' own preaching but also fulfilled in the presence of many witnesses, doing wonderful things by giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf.

What's more, no longer would evil men sit in the gate and bring false accusations against the innocent. It was indeed deliverance from the snare of the fowler. In Jesus we have the even greater assurance that no one will be able to bring any charge against those who, by the grace of God, trust in Him. And the Lord promises to extend His kingdom of grace, granting the gift of time so that His teachings might be understood and embraced. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

We pray: Heavenly Father, forgive me if I am guilty of any duplicity as I pray, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus," yet also ask for the sake those who do not yet trust in Jesus the gift of time that they also come to understanding and learn Your holy doctrine. Amen.

Joshua has a representative man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel take a large stone from the bottom of the Jordan River and take it to Gilgal to make a monument of remembrance. It was a sign of the Lord's strong hand to save His people. It was erected so that all generations could see and be reminded that God saved His people through the midst of the water. There is wonderful typology in this.

Joshua is a type of Christ here. Joshua leads his people down into the water, and through it, to the promised land. He compares this to the crossing of the Red Sea with the same significance. Fathers would tell their children this story when they saw the stones. But many miss the second set of twelve stones in verse nine. Joshua sets up a cairn of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan River. Why? They would not be remembered as a memorial once the river began flowing again. They would be lost. Passing through the water is the path of life for God's people. If one rejects the way of the Lord, the water is a symbol of judgment. Pharaoh's army was destroyed in the water. The sinner is lost in the depths of the waters until he is caught in the net of the Gospel. The waters sweep away the rebellious people and they are remembered no more. But the people of God are remembered forever because their God remembers them.

Lord God make us to remember Your mighty deeds for us so that we may always be a part of your eternal family. Amen.

What is the promised land? What is that good land flowing with milk and honey? Obviously for Joshua and the Israelites, as they entered into Canaan, they believed they had arrived at that place. But as we learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews, this event is but a type, a foreshadowing of the real entrance into the true promised land. All the patriarchs were following God to a place they did not know. They were seeking a homeland. But that homeland was always a heavenly one, and it always was obtained not through obedience to the tablets of the law that were in the ark, but through the God of the law. “For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13).

It is faith in Christ that gives the promised land. “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). If all this is the case, can one miss that one enters the promised land by passing through the midst of the water? Jordan is an echo, a repetition of the Red Sea. “...all [our fathers] were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Corinthians 10:2). We should see our baptism in this story of the Israelites crossing the Jordan. Our entrance into heaven is made possible by the water that flowed from our Savior’s side and flowed over us in baptism. We are the children of promise and heirs of that heavenly promised land.

Lord, remind us of our baptism often so that we may thank you. Amen.

Jesus, after His resurrection from the dead, presented Himself alive many times to His disciples during the following forty days. He commissioned them to go into all the world to preach the Gospel of salvation and to baptize in the name of the Triune God. He instructed them to stay put in Jerusalem for just a little longer, when the Holy Spirit would come upon them in power, thereby equipping them to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the end of the earth. And then, before their very eyes He was taken up into heaven beyond their sight.

He had ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father, to dwell in the high and holy place as the High and Lofty One, all the while continuing to revive the spirit of the humble and the heart of the contrite, keeping His promise to be with us always, even to the end of the ages. He has risen as He said He would, has ascended, and is even now there with the Father, interceding for us. He has not abandoned or forsaken us. He will return again in the same manner in which the disciples saw Him depart. Heaven forbid we should grow weary or hardhearted. Trusting in His promises, we are made strong. We take heart and wait on the Lord.

We pray: O King of Glory, Lord of hosts, who didst this day ascend in triumph far above all heavens, we beseech Thee, leave us not comfortless, but send to us the Spirit of Truth, promised of the Father; O Thou who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen (TLH, page 71).

Micah, a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah, prophesied of “one who is to be ruler in Israel” being born in tiny Bethlehem Ephrathah and, inconsequential though it otherwise was, it was there the magi brought their gifts after the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2:6). Micah preached against the widespread shoddy treatment of the poor, commending justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God. He prophesied the Assyrian invasion of the land for want of these qualities, the people’s exile and captivity, and the eventual deliverance of a remnant and their return to the land which had been promised to their forebears.

Unbelievers would mock the faithful remnant for their steadfast trust in the Lord’s salvation. The remnant would not waver, but would bear the indignation of the Lord. They were willing to accept the consequences for sinful actions. Unbelievers taunted them—“Where is the Lord your God?” Their derision was uttered in the same sour voices which, centuries later, would shout, “He saved others but He can’t save Himself.”

We live in a world which either jeers at the faithful or associates with churches that have caved in to worldly pressures. Similarly, Micah wrote that the people would select for themselves not men who would preach God’s unvarnished truth, but who would laud the joys of wine and strong drink (2:11). But we cling to God’s promises in Christ and with the faithful in Micah’s day, and also with longsuffering Job, we know that we too will see with our own eyes the righteousness of God.

We pray: Heavenly Father, preserve us steadfast in the true faith, impervious to the siren call of worldly temptation, yet not callously unloving toward the people all around us who are dying for want of faith in our crucified, risen and ascended Lord Jesus. Amen.

“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.”

That is some extensive territory! National Israel has never occupied such a vast territory. The land of the Hittites was in modern Turkey. The Euphrates is in modern Iraq. Some Jewish Zionists and Christian Zionists believe it is just a matter of time until national Israel attains its full imperial borders. But why has Israel never attained these borders? Were they not zealous and obedient enough? Did God fail to fulfill His promise?

Hebrews 11 says “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.” But Abraham and the prophets “all died in faith, not having received the promises.” Was the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 the vehicle by which God finally fulfilled His promises? Will some future adherence to zealous, orthodox Judaism finally move God to give the Jews an empire from the Nile to the Euphrates? Or is the fulfillment something different?

In Hebrews it says that the faithful were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” and that God “has prepared a city for them.” God has not failed in His promises. He always had a better promised land for us, an eternal one. Jesus fulfills the promise and tells us, “I go to prepare a place for you.” Our promised land is with our Lord.

Lord help us to see all of scripture through Your Son. He is our Hope and our Promise. Amen.

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## Trinity Sunday

### ARTICLE I.

Our Churches, with common consent, do teach, that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence and concerning the Three Persons, is true and to be believed without any doubting; that is to say, there is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet that there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are co-eternal, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. And the term “person” they use as the fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.

They condemn all heresies which have sprung up against this article, as the Manichaeans who assumed two principles [gods], one Good, the other Evil; also the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and all such. They condemn also the Samosatenes, old and new, who contending that there is but one Person, sophistically and impiously argue that the Word and the Holy Ghost are not distinct Persons, but that “Word” signifies a spoken word, and “Spirit” [Ghost] signifies motion created in things.

—The Augsburg Confession

*The selections from the Book of Concord for the Sundays of the Church Year are from H. E. Jacobs’ translation of the Book of Concord, and are taken from the table of suggested lessons for Sundays and Festivals of the Church. (The table of appropriate lessons was originally found in Pipping’s Christliches Concordienbuch [Leipzig, 1734].)*

SATURDAY, MAY 7: MICAH 7:14-20

EASTER 5

“Who is a God like You?” the prophet asks, making a play on words based on his own name, “Micah.” In answer to this question, He is a God who will show His people “wonders,” the most wondrous of which was the birth His own Son by the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem Ephrathah.

“Shepherd Your people with Your staff,” Micah prays. He, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, would lead His people not only to green pastures and still waters, but will lead them to the banks of the river of the water of life which flows through the new Zion, along whose banks grows the tree of life with its leaves for the healing of the nations. There the deathly consequences of Adam and Eve’s rebellion will be set right as Paradise is restored.

As this unfolds, the nations will imitate their father, the serpent-devil, and crawl in the dust, fearful of the Lord our God. We pray that our God, who is like no other and delights in mercy, will bring them to faith also and they too may stand with us to praise Jesus in that home of righteousness where there is no more darkness, but only the light of Christ.

We pray: The Lord my pasture shall prepare and feed me with a shepherd’s care; His presence shall my wants supply and guard me with a watchful eye; my noonday walks He shall attend and all my midnight hours defend (TLH 368:1). Amen.

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## Exaudi Sunday

### IX. Of Excommunication.

The greater excommunication [i.e., execution or banishment], as the Pope calls it, we regard only as a civil penalty, and not pertaining to us ministers of the Church. But the less [i.e., the so-called 'lesser excommunication'] is true Christian excommunication, which prohibits manifest and obstinate sinners from the sacrament and other communion of the Church until they are reformed and avoid sin. And ministers ought not to confound this ecclesiastical punishment or excommunication with civil penalties.

—The Smalcald Articles, Part III

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SATURDAY, MAY 21: ISAIAH 44:6-8

WHITSUNDAY

“I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.” (from The Apostles Creed)

“I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life. This is most certainly true.” (from Luther's Small Catechism)

“Learn, then, to understand this article most clearly. If you are asked: ‘What do you mean by the words: I believe in the Holy Ghost?’ you can answer: ‘I believe that the Holy Ghost makes me holy, as His name implies.’ But whereby does He accomplish this, or what are His method and means to this end? Answer: By the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. For, in the first place, He has a peculiar congregation in the world, which is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God, which He reveals and preaches, [and through which] He illumines and enkindles hearts, that they understand, accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it.” (from Luther's Large Catechism)

We pray: O Holy Spirit, sanctify me ever in the truth, for Your Word is truth, and leads to everlasting life. Amen.



If the world praises you for your wisdom, Wise Man, become wiser. Seek the higher wisdom. That greater wisdom is the knowledge of God and the understanding of His Word. It is a wisdom that only the Holy Spirit can give and expand, doing so through His teaching of the Divine Word to the faithful hearer of the Word, making you wise to the way of salvation. This is the wisdom that God is delighted to teach to you by His Spirit.

If the world lauds you for your strength, Mighty Man, become stronger. Build up the inner strength. That greater strength is the strength of the Lord that He provides to the soul. It is a strength that only the Holy Spirit can engender and grow, doing so through His wrestling with faithful Israel in the midst of his earthly trials, enabling you to overcome all challenges to faith. This is the strength that God is delighted to build up within you through His Spirit.

If the world acknowledges you for your wealth, Rich Man, become richer. Enrich yourself with a true treasure. That higher treasure is the inheritance that is laid up in Heaven for you. It is a wealth that only the Holy Spirit can deliver and guard, doing so through the truth that He speaks and the faith that He creates through the Word, leading you to treasure the life—and all of the material and spiritual blessings pertaining to it—that God has given to you. This is the wealth that God is delighted to give to you in His Spirit.

We pray: All Wise, Almighty, and Ever-Gracious Lord, make me wise by Your Word and strengthen me by Your Spirit, that I might treasure now and forever Your lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

In Matthew 26:31 Jesus uses the words of our text to warn His Apostles that they would forsake Him and flee before His crucifixion. In the garden and at Golgotha the Apostles thought the wheels had fallen off the cart. They didn't understand the prophecy. Indeed, Jesus would be crucified as the Scriptures had said. He would take the punishment for the sins of all mankind upon Himself. He would make the payment for all sin.

However, having reminded His disciples of this text, they could remember and be comforted that the text goes on to say, "They will call on My name. And I will answer them. I will say 'This is My people;' and each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.'"

As you and I live in the days after Easter and the Ascension, we know the rest of the story. Jesus did rise victorious over death. He ascended into heaven. He sent these weak deserters out into the world to be courageous, invincible heralds of His kingdom.

The history of the New Testament Church is the story of "little ones" doing unbelievably great things through the power of the Savior's might. By the preaching of the Word of the prophets and the apostles, by the administration of the Sacraments, you and I have been brought into this great company of believers. There we too call on God's name. He says, "This is My people." And we respond, "The Lord is my God."

We pray: Almighty, everlasting God, make us to have always a devout will toward Thee and to serve Thy Majesty with a pure heart; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

In these days and weeks after the Ascension, the Church of Jesus Christ here on earth lives in the blessed assurance given to His Apostles before He ascended into heaven. He promised that, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Now it is true, as Zechariah prophesies, the Church on earth undergoes constant persecution. There are those who hate Her; those who want to destroy Her; those who try to deceive Her and lead Her astray. That has always been true and it always will be true as long as this earth remains!

But Zechariah also writes, “the living waters shall flow from Jerusalem.” Throughout the time of the Church on earth Christ’s faithful under-shepherds will continue to faithfully preach His Word and faithfully administer His Sacraments. And the Holy Spirit will continue to use these means of grace to work and sustain faith in the hearts of God’s people. In this God-given faith we have been united with Christ. And if we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6).

No matter how bad things look in these last days, that is, in the days following His death, resurrection, and ascension, by faith we know that we have the victory! The Devil, the world, and our old sinful nature will not overcome us! We are Christ’s Church and He will keep us.

We pray: Almighty, everlasting God, make us to have always a devout will toward Thee and to serve Thy Majesty with a pure heart; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

It is God’s desire that all people would look to Him and be saved. He has sworn, by an oath taken in His own Name, that He will work mightily to accomplish His purpose. He speaks His Gospel and send His Holy Spirit into the world, even to the very ends of the earth, that all might be rescued from sin, death, and Hell.

But not all will look to Him and be saved. All people are not justified and declared righteous in God’s sight. Not every knee shall bow before Him in humble adoration, and not every tongue shall confess how great God is. For not all will turn in faith to Him. His means for creating and sustaining such faith can be resisted by men. Ears are stopped to the hearing of His Word. Heads refuse to receive His Baptism. Mouths are shut tight against receiving His Body and Blood.

Yet, He continues His work, for the sake of His promise and for the sake of all those will be saved through faith in Him. In His church and by His ministers He works mightily through the means of grace to create and strengthen faith in the hearts of those who hear His Word in faith, are baptized into the faith, and are justified by faith. These stand in full communion with Him and with every member of faithful Israel. They bow in gratitude before Him and confess Him to all the world, that many more might join with us in declaring. “Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength!”

We pray: O Holy Spirit, lead me by Your Word to ever bow at the Name of Jesus, My Savior, and to confess before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Together with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit created the world. God the Holy Trinity did not create the world without purpose, but established it as a place to be inhabited—a place to be filled with life.

Filling the world with life has been the work of the Holy Spirit from the very beginning. He is the Lord and Giver of Life, who brings the breath of life to flesh to create living beings (Genesis 2:7) and, even more, who brings the life of the Spirit to those who are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). From ancient time—from the very beginning of the habitation of this world by man—the Holy Spirit has declared to all mankind the tender mercies of the One True God. Through the preaching of the Word in the world, the Spirit who always accompanies that Word has drawn unbelievers into faith. He calls out idolaters who worship a god made in their own image, calling them to faith in the God who has made man in His own image. He dwells within the hearts of believers and leads them to pray not to a god made of wood who cannot save, but to the Ever-Living God not made with hands who saves His faithful people from sin and death by Christ Jesus.

We pray: Lord and Giver of Life, continue to bring life to me daily by Your grace through the Word and Sacraments of Christ Jesus, My Savior, that I might enjoy the fullness of Your life here, and the fullness of eternal life hereafter; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Throughout the Old Testament God promised to extend peace to His people. This peace is given to His people to comfort them. This is not a worldly peace, but an inner peace from God, received by faith in His Word. From Adam and Eve in Genesis to Malachi, the promise of God-given peace is entwined with the promise to send a Redeemer to save God’s people from the curse brought on mankind through sin.

In John 14:27, Jesus, the fulfillment of all these Old Testament promises, says to His Church, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” In this world we can find many things to take away our peace, but Jesus’ promise of peace is an inner peace that nothing can take away.

With the Church we confess: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.” In this God-given faith we do indeed have peace—peace with God to all eternity.

We pray: Almighty, everlasting God, make us to have always a devout will toward Thee and to serve Thy Majesty with a pure heart; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

You and I live in a time when it seems the world is undergoing great changes. There are great forces in the world which are threatening changes to the very fabric of life as we have known it. "Political Correctness" is the new norm for everything and it has made meaningful communication almost impossible.

In the time of Jeremiah God's people were undergoing similar trials. They were living in slavery in a foreign land. Their worship had been interrupted, and things had fallen in around them. Then God spoke to them through the prophet Jeremiah, saying: "Do not fear, O My servant Jacob, and do not be dismayed, O Israel! For behold, I will save you from afar."

The Lord also speaks to us throughout Scripture, "Do not fear, O My people; do not be dismayed. For I have saved you!" He has saved us through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ!

With the Church we confess: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ."

We pray: Almighty God, make us to have a devout will toward Thee and to serve Thee with a pure heart; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

In today's reading the prophet Ezekiel is shown a vision featuring flowing water. It begins at the very heart of the temple of God, springing up from the right side of the altar. The water streams out of the side of the temple, becoming a great river as it stretches toward the sea. These waters bring abundant life throughout the river valley, sustaining trees whose leaves never wither and whose fruits never fail, providing food and medicine. The waters also convey life to the sea, healing the saline waters and giving rise to exceedingly many fish.

This is a depiction of the living water of Holy Baptism. It is the water that flows from the very heart of God, the heart of Jesus, whose body is the very Temple of God. This water flows out of His side, pierced by the soldier's spear, after He has finished the work of atoning for the sins of the world. This flow of water becomes a mighty stream of grace as it is poured upon one's head at the baptismal font, bringing healing to the sinner through the forgiveness of sins and delivering new and everlasting life through the Word, the Spirit, and the faith that are bound in and with the water. These waters bring abundant life to the Christian throughout his entire being, sustaining a never-withering faithfulness toward God and engendering a never-failing fruitfulness in love for our neighbor. Even as we continue to founder in a sea polluted by our own sin, the living water continues to bring healing and life, forgiveness and salvation.

We pray: O Holy Spirit, put me daily in remembrance of my Holy Baptism, that the living waters once poured upon me may continue to deliver to me forgiveness, salvation, and abundant life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The festival being celebrated in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost was a harvest festival. It was a celebration of the arrival of the firstfruits, the earliest-ripening produce of the growing season. God commanded Israel to observe this festival annually (Exodus 23). He directed them to bring a portion of this early harvest to the Lord's House in remembrance of His deliverance of His people out of bondage in Egypt into this fruitful land, a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Deuteronomy 26). Through the fruitfulness of the land, God led His people in a demonstration of their own fruitfulness: the good works of love for God and neighbor that flow out of a faithful heart.

In today's reading the prophet Isaiah likewise uses the fruitfulness of the land as a symbol for the fruitfulness of God's people fulfilled in Christ. As the ministers of God proclaim His Word and administer His Sacraments, the Holy Spirit is poured out to cause the seed of the Gospel to germinate in the soil of a barren heart. This will sprout up into a vibrant faith, become firmly rooted in Jesus, drink deeply of the living water of Holy Baptism, be nourished by Christ's Holy Food, and bear the fruit of righteousness. As the Spirit works through the means of grace upon all the members of a congregation, the increasingly-fruitful field with each faithful heart grows into a fruitful grove, abounding in the fruit of the Spirit: justice, righteousness, peace, quietness and assurance of God's deliverance into the everlasting peaceful habitation.

We pray: Pour out Your Spirit upon us, O Most High, that in this wilderness of sin Your Church becomes a fruitful field, bearing a final harvest of a hundredfold of souls; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

The Book of Isaiah was written about 700 B.C. Through Isaiah God warns His people that if they continue in their sin, Jerusalem will be destroyed. Even the most cursory study of the Old Testament reveals that the people of God, Israel, seldom did what His spokesmen, the Prophets revealed to them. Through the prophets God revealed His will. He encouraged the people to be faithful to Him, but from the hardness of their hearts they ignored Him, rejected the prophets, and often killed them.

Today the Book of Isaiah is still a warning to us. But God is still faithful. He still wants His chosen people to listen to His Word. In Matthew 28 the risen Christ says to His Church through the apostles, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples... baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with always..."

We know by God's Law that we, like Old Testament Israel, are guilty of grave sin, but by the Gospel we know that we have been made new people—God's people who listen to God's shepherd calling us with His Word. We come for confession, absolution, the nourishment of His Word and of the Lord's Supper. We come and in His grace and mercy He forgives, renews, and strengthens us through His means of grace—Word and Sacrament. By grace He keeps us faithful, and brings us to our eternal home in heaven in His own time.

We pray: Almighty, everlasting God, make us to have always a devout will toward Thee and to serve Thy Majesty with a pure heart; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

This past week we have looked at several Old Testament prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.; the rejection of the Messiah in 30 A.D.; the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.; and the End Times. Today's text points us to tomorrow—Pentecost—the time of which the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity says, “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit (Jesus Christ), to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

On Pentecost the Holy Spirit empowered the Apostles to proclaim, “‘Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:36-38).

You and I have been baptized into the Name of the Holy Trinity. We have received the promise of God. We, too, “continue steadfast in the Apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

It is with Thanksgiving for this wonderful gift God has given to us that we have celebrated Easter, Ascension, and have now come to the Feast of Pentecost.

We pray: Almighty, everlasting God, make us to have always a devout will toward Thee and to serve Thy Majesty with a pure heart; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Lesson from the Book of Concord Pentecost Sunday

### THE THIRD ARTICLE.

#### Of Sanctification.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; the Resurrection of the body; and the Life everlasting. Amen.

*What is meant by this Article?*

Answer. I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me through the gospel, enlightened me by His gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith; in like manner as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the true faith; in which Christian Church He daily forgives abundantly all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and will raise up me and all the dead at the last day, and will grant everlasting life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true.

—The Small Catechism, Part II

*The selections from the Book of Concord for the Sundays of the Church Year are from H. E. Jacobs’ translation of the Book of Concord, and are taken from the table of suggested lessons for Sundays and Festivals of the Church. (The table of appropriate lessons was originally found in Pipping’s Christliches Concordienbuch [Leipzig, 1734].)*