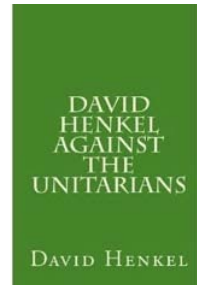


Century, Heiser traces the development of this forgotten “Reformation” undertaken by Ficino and Pico, evaluates its theology and the traces its influence on contemporary theologians and leaders of the Renaissance.

James D. Heiser is Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America (ELDoNA) and Pastor of Salem Lutheran Church in Malone, Texas. He also serves as Dean of Missions of the Augustana Ministerium. He earned his M.Div. and S.T.M. at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

ISBN 978-1461093824 • 248 pages • paperback • \$19.95



Modern liberal ‘Christianity’ has more in common with 19th century Unitarianism than the casual observer might realize. This volume by one of the earliest of America’s confessional Lutheran theologians is, if anything, more important, more timely, today than when it was originally published. Published after his death in 1830, Henkel’s last major work is a testament to his importance as a theologian of the Church of the Augsburg Confession. The ‘founding father’ of the Tennessee Synod, Henkel helped establish the foundation for the first authentically confessional Lutheran synod in America in 1820. Henkel remained the synod’s chief theologian for the remaining decade of his life, and endured as a formative influence for most of the history of the synod. Henkel’s *Against the Unitarians* remains an insightful defense of biblical Trinitarian doctrine. Dr. Louis Smith’s extensive (64 pages) introduction (*Defensor Fidei—The Polemical Theology of David Henkel*) provides an insightful overview of Henkel’s life and work.

Paperback • 172 pages • ISBN 978-1891469-367 • \$14.95

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THE LUTHERAN HERALD



AUGUST 2011

(TRINITY 10—TRINITY 14)

The Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE HOLY GOSPEL

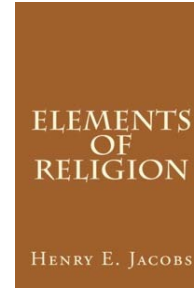
St. Luke 19:41-48 (NKJV)

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house is a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’” And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him, and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.

The COLLECT

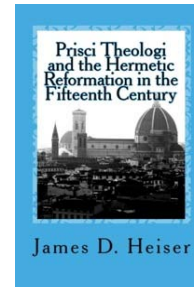
O God, who declarest Thine almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity, mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace that we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.



Originally published in 1894, *Elements of Religion* was written by Dr. Henry E. Jacobs (1844–1932) as a one volume introduction to dogmatic theology. Jacobs was Norton Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and he is still well-known within the Evangelical Lutheran Church for his translation of *The Book of Concord* and his *History of the Lutheran Church in the United States*.

Jacobs’ intention in writing *Elements of Religion* describes the ongoing value of the work today: “He does not offer his construction of the system as the best attainable, or as a great improvement on those that have already been given; but he hopes that some of the doctrines in the true—although not very usually assigned—relations in which they are placed, may gain fresh interest.” (Preface) Written primarily for lay people, the 29 chapters of *Elements of Religion* cover the major topics of Christian teaching under five general headings: (1) The Prerequisites of Redemption; (2) the Preparation of Redemption; (3) the Application of Redemption; (4) the Effects of Redemption; and (5) the Administration of Redemption.

Paperback • 256 pages • ISBN 1463667809 • \$14.99



Before Martin Luther called upon the Church to return “ad fontes” to Holy Scripture, Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) endeavored to call the Church to a far different ‘font’—the writings of the “prisci theologi” (ancient theologians) of pagan antiquity. Although Ficino and Pico are well-known for their pivotal role in the Italian Renaissance, they also sought to ‘reform’ the Church—but they wanted to have the Catholic Church treat pagan religions and various mystery cults as divinely-inspired. Neo-Platonism, Zoroastrianism, Hermetical mysticism and magic, astrology, and the Cabala were all set forth as divine revelations from the same God.

Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus were interpreted as inspired teachers whom men such as Ficino and Pico believed could provide guidance for the Church in their time. Their students included future popes (most notably Pope Leo X) and leaders of the Renaissance, such as Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522) and Konrad Mutian (1470-1526). Their influence lingers to this day in the “Traditionalist” movement and in the “postmodern” belief that all religions ultimately lead to the truth.

In *Prisci Theologi and the Hermetic Reformation in the Fifteenth*

SUPPORT FOR THE SEMINARY—As reported at this year’s synod, over half of the funds needed for opening St. Ignatius Theological Seminary have been received. It is important that we continue to make progress toward this worthy goal of training men for service in Christ’s Church. The plan is to open the seminary in September 2012; final details regarding the seminary location and precise starting date will be released as soon as possible. If you are willing to help us reach our goal of \$50,000 for support of St. Ignatius, contributions can be sent to the diocesan treasurer, Rev. Michael Henson, c/o Trinity Lutheran Church, 1000 North Park Ave., Herrin, IL, 62948. Checks should be made to “ELDoNA” with a note specifying that the funds are for seminary support.

If you are interested in attending St. Ignatius, please contact Bishop Heiser, c/o Salem Lutheran Church, 718 HCR 3424 E, Malone, TX, 76660 (or via email: bishopheiser@mac.com).

DIOCESAN HOME MISSION FUND—ELDoNA is considering several new mission starts. Your assistance in this work can be of critical importance. First, please let your pastor know of contacts (especially family and friends) who are seeking a confessional congregation. There may be one of our pastors closer than they may realize! Also, knowledge of such contacts helps us to evaluate various prospects for mission locations. You may also share such information with the bishop (bishopheiser@mac.com) and he will convey it to the pastors of our fellowship, as appropriate.

VIDEO BANK—Plans are underway to create a collection of papers, sermons and lectures which will be available from the diocese. It was determined at the last synod that pastors would begin reviewing their past papers, seeking those which would be of ongoing value to the pastors and laity of our fellowship.

MONDAY, AUGUST 1: GALATIANS 2:1-21

TRINITY 10

We often try to place the Apostles on a pedestal and think they weren’t troubled by sins. However, Scripture clearly shows that, like us, even St. Peter and St. Paul were subject to the temptations of the flesh. This subjection to sin is why Paul makes such a stern argument against salvation by works of the Law. Neither they nor we can keep the Law. That’s the reason why Paul says, “For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.” Like Paul, you and I have been crucified with Christ in our baptism. We, too, no longer live, but Christ lives in us; and the life which we now live in the flesh we live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Because we are justified by grace through faith does not mean that we are free from the works of the law. Rather, because of the great love and mercy that God has showered on us in Christ, we are now free to love and serve Him and our neighbor.

In spite of the fact that the Apostles were sinners, God forgave them and used them in their vocation as apostles to proclaim the blessed message of the Gospel throughout the world even to our day. So also as we daily live our lives, confessing our sin, having our sinful nature drowned and rising again to new life, God uses us in our vocations to love and serve Him by loving and serving others.

St. Paul could just have well said, “O foolish Christian of today! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?” The Galatians, who had heard and believed the message of Christ crucified, were so easily deceived and drawn into the wisdom of the world, away from the message of the cross. We too are easily drawn away from the cross into the worldly wisdom of salvation by works. That is even what our sinful nature wants to believe.

Paul reminds the Galatians and us that Christ was crucified for our sins and raised again so that we too have salvation. It was through the Spirit working in Word and Sacrament that we believe this. That is crucial to Paul’s teaching. He asks, “Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? --- just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.”

Christ has indeed redeemed us from the curse of the law. The blessing of Abraham is ours in Christ Jesus. We do receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, the salvation of our souls.

during the very hot and humid week, and other outdoor games as well as the indoor game room kept our campers engaged during our recreation times.

We had opportunity for one group meeting with Pastor Asha, and each of our fellowship's pastors spent time individually with him to become better acquainted with his doctrine and life. These discussions made it clear that there appears to be much common ground between the INLC and us, while there are also apparent differences that require further exploration.

In the midst of such a joyous week, discussion were already begun about holding another camp next year. No definite plans have been made—it is uncertain whether we will be able to coordinate such an effort by next year. But the fun and fruitful study everyone enjoyed in Holcombe had everyone ready and eager to get together again as soon as possible!



End of camp? Time for the GROUP HUG!

the first time that Pastor Ahonen and Deacon Dulas conducted a service together in their home congregation.

The campers all participated in eight catechetical sessions throughout the week which were all led by pastors of our fellowship. Six of these sessions were an examination of the six days of creation in Genesis 1, with a detailed presentation of the Lord's various works of creation on each day. Two sessions concerned a brief examination of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds in connection with their respective, liturgically-connected Sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. This creedal study illustrated the way in which Christians confess our creation by God, together with our redemption by His Son and our sanctification by His Spirit. While the youth were participating in these latter two sessions, the adults were treated to a two-part presentation by Bishop Heiser, entitled "The Seven Deadly Virtues of Contemporary Culture: The Shape of the Enemy's Weapons against Our People Today."

Recreational activities were facilitated by the camp's counselors. Swimming and boating were popular activities



Grasswhistling was part of the fun after the Ice Cream Social

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3: GALATIANS 4:8-20 TRINITY 10

St. Paul reminds the Galatian Christians of the love they had for him when he first came and spoke the Gospel message to them. He says they loved him so much that they would have "plucked out their own eyes" and given them to him. Many people love their pastors and would do almost anything for their pastor's well-being and comfort, until it becomes necessary for the pastor to speak the "hard truths" to them. Then, as Paul asks the Galatians, "Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"

Many pastors find this to be true. When they, in love, speak the truth about errors in the church or sin in our lives they become hated and reviled.

Paul had to tell the Galatians that the Judaizers, with whom they had become enamored, were enticing them into believing that the works of the law played a part in their salvation. Paul had to speak the "hard truth" to them that they were being deceived and to teach them again that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus' atoning suffering and death for them.

When our pastors speak to us the "hard truth" about errors in the church or sins in our lives, that is God's grace at work to lead us to return to His Word, to see these errors and these sins for what they are, confess our sin, and return in faith to our forgiving and loving Savior.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 4: GALATIANS 5:1-15 TRINITY 10

Several times in the Book of Galatians, St. Paul talks about Christians being the “children of promise.” We are not bound to keep God’s Law for our salvation. Paul says “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

Luther comments about this liberty: “We are not dealing with political liberty but with a different one---one which the devil intensely hates and opposes.

“It is ‘the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,’ not from human servitude... but from eternal wrath..... for Christ did not free us in the political... sense but in the spiritual sense, that is, He has freed us that our conscience is free and glad because it does not fear the wrath that is to come. This is real liberty... For who can tell how great a matter it is for anyone to be sure that God is not angry..., but that to eternity He will be a gracious and kind Father for Christ’s sake? The fact that we enjoy the favor, protection and help of the Supreme Majesty and that He will finally free us... that our body, which is sowed in corruption, shame and weakness, will rise again in incorruption, in glory and power---this fact is certainly a great and incomprehensible liberty.” (WLS, 2410).



The prayer offices of the Church were central to the life of the camp. We prayed Matins four times and Vespers three times at camp, and the hearers were blessed with the preaching of the Word of God by each pastor of our fellowship in attendance. A great joy for our campers was the celebration of the Festival of Saint Mary Magdalene on its eve, traveling twenty miles to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Tony, Wisconsin, on Thursday evening for the Divine Service; this also marked



Clergy in attendance: Heimbigner, Dulas, Heiser, Asha, Lawson, Ahonen, Henson and Heck.



DIOCESAN SUMMER YOUTH CAMP 2011

The ELDoNA joined together with her brethren of the Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches (ACLIC) to have our first youth camp. The camp was held at Christian Harbor Youth Camp on Lake Holcombe in Chippewa County, Wisconsin during the week of July 18–22. The entire week was best summarized by the camp coordinator, Pastor Jeffrey Ahonen: “In a word, it was wonderful.”

A total of 46 campers were in attendance, divided between 33 youth and 13 adults. In addition, four members from the local parish were present for the adult track for a total of 50 participants. The clergy of our fellowship were well-represented, including Bishop Heiser, Pastor Ahonen, Dr. Heimbigner, Pastor Henson and Deacon Dulas from our diocese, and Superintendent Lawson and Pastor Heck of the ACLIC. (Pastor Eric Stefanski last-minute cancellation due to the accident in which his unoccupied vehicle was involved.)

In addition to pastors and parishioners of our fellowship, Pastor Hans Asha of the India National Lutheran Church, together with his wife Umilla, were our special guests for the week.

The sixth chapter of Galatians speaks about suffering for Christ. Paul certainly speaks from first hand experience about this. He was persecuted, imprisoned, beaten, scourged, and finally executed because of the proclamation of the Gospel. Persecution for the Gospel is not something new. Faithful Christians have been persecuted throughout history. Most of the pastors in our own fellowship have experienced some form of persecution because they were speaking the truth in love. Even many of the lay people have been persecuted, ridiculed, and shunned for taking a stand against the false teaching in our former fellowship.

Paul writes, “God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Whatever we may have to endure in our Christian walk is nothing compared to the suffering endured by Christ on our behalf. But Paul continues “Let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

Luther says, “St. Paul here admonishes every Christian also to bear these scars of the Lord Christ. By this encouragement he keeps Christians from becoming terrified, notwithstanding the wrong of every description being done to them.” (WLS 1056).

If we suffer for Christ, we can with the Apostles, rejoice “that [we] were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

“But as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” Does this describe how we do our earthly work most of the time, or are our actions the same as that of many workers, who care nothing about really doing their work well, but only work to pass inspection and win their employer’s approval? Even when we do our work diligently, are we serving Christ or seeking mere human approval? Those who try only to please men, make men their highest masters.

St. Paul tells us how Christian servants work for their masters. “...with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” The Christian, in his or her vocation, as we serve an employer, our family, our community or country, our congregation, is at the same time a servant of Christ. In all our work we know Christ’s eyes are always on our heart, so we are always doing our work for our earthly masters just as though we are doing it for Christ, from the heart.

If we are honest, we have to confess that we are guilty also of this sin, but we take comfort in receiving Christ’s forgiveness and in knowing that Christ, as our substitute, kept this precept perfectly. We go forward with joy as we attempt over and over again to do our work as doing it for Christ, from the heart.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

“All Scripture ought to be distributed into these two principal topics, the Law and the promises,” Martin Luther professed, providing a simple explanation for St. Paul’s exhortation to divide rightly the Word of Truth. The later reformers amplified Luther’s teaching in the Formula of Concord: “We believe, teach, and confess that the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is to be maintained in the Church with great diligence as an especially brilliant light, by which, according to the admonition of St. Paul, the Word of God is rightly divided.” (FC Ep V.1)

Such diligence is necessary not only for upholding the Truth—as important as that is—that God’s Word is composed of Law and Gospel, but indeed, it is for the very sake of the hearers of the Word that this division be made, that the purposes for which God speaks in this way might be accomplished—to the joy and edifying of His people. As the Formula of Concord states:

“As the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is a special brilliant light, which serves to the end that God’s Word may be rightly divided, and the Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles may be properly explained and understood, we must guard it with especial care, in order that these two doctrines may not be mingled with one another, or a law be made out of the Gospel, whereby the merit of Christ is obscured and troubled consciences are robbed of their comfort, which they otherwise have in the holy Gospel when it is preached genuinely and in its purity, and by which they can support themselves in their most grievous trials against the terrors of the Law.” (FC SD V.1)

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

Good carpenters and seamstresses know well the importance of a pattern for their work. The pattern is a form that has been proven itself through real-life trials, and following carefully that pattern brings about a good result, time after time.

So also it is with the teaching of the Word of God. The Holy Scriptures were written by men moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21), and these prophets and apostles have established the pattern for the Christian Church to follow in teaching and in learning the Word of God. The Apostle Paul here encourages Timothy to be diligent in following this pattern; our Lutheran fathers encourage us likewise in the Formula of Concord, indicating this in their treatment of the doctrine of good works thusly:

“For although before this controversy quite a few pure teachers employed such and similar expressions in the exposition of the Holy Scriptures, in no way, however, intending thereby to confirm the above-mentioned errors of the Papists, still, since afterwards a controversy arose concerning such expressions, from which all sorts of offensive distractions [debates, offenses, and dissensions] followed, it is safest of all, according to the admonition of St. Paul, 2 Tim. 1:13, to hold fast as well to the form of sound words as to the pure doctrine itself, whereby much unnecessary wrangling may be cut off and the Church preserved from many scandals.” (FC SD IV.36).

Truly, this pattern of sound words has proven to convey “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) and the loving concord between the saints to this day. God grant it to the end of this age!

THE HOLY GOSPEL**St. Luke 18:9-14 (NKJV)**

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God, who is always more ready to hear than we to pray and are wont to give more than either we desire or deserve, pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy, forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

“Praying . . . for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel.”

Our Lord entrusts the Holy Ministry to mere mortal men. Pastors are not given a new and indelible character when they are ordained. Jesus sets them apart to be His forgiveness-of-sins distributors, but they remain the same men they have always been, with the same histories, the same weaknesses, and the same need for the forgiveness of their own sins that they have always had.

One of those “weaknesses” so to speak, is that they love the people they serve. Now, of course, that is not truly a weakness, but when their love for people turns into such a strong desire not to offend them or hurt their feelings that they start to water down their bold confession of the Gospel, then that *is* a problem! Surely St. Paul did not “enjoy” being disliked any more than anyone. And in his day, people disliking him could translate into physical persecution easily enough!

The temptation was there for him, as it is for Pastors today, to “go easy” on making known the mystery of the Gospel. He asked the people of Ephesus, and I ask you, to pray against that! The mystery of the Gospel, the Good News that Jesus completely saves us, will always go against our desire to “do it my way.” The truth may make us uncomfortable. But it is exactly what we need. Therefore pray for your Pastor, that he too may “open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel,” the good news of forgiveness of sins and eternal life on account of the holy life, the innocent death, and the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Suggested Hymn: *“God of the Prophets, Bless the Prophets’ Sons”*
TLH 483, LSB 682

“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, . . . [f]rom such withdraw yourself.”

By these words of instruction, the Lord’s Apostle exhorts every Christian to withdraw himself from a pastor and congregation in which the Word of God and the doctrine of His apostles is contradicted. While easily said, this instruction is not easily followed. The strong emotional attachment that develops between one’s congregation and pastor is, humanly speaking, a difficult bond to break. Separation anxiety becomes more intense when only a small number—or only one Christian (St. Luke 17:11-19)—is prepared to follow this divine mandate to withdraw. Hearing the claim that one is schismatic rings sharply in the ears of one who is seeking to be a faithful member of the one Body of Christ.

By his further words, St. Paul makes it clear that the schismatic here is not the one who is withdrawing. Truly, it is one who “does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ” who is the one “obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, [and] useless wranglings.” Indeed, the Christian is to withdraw from this assembly for the very sake of unity—unity with a pastor and congregation in which is manifest the unity created by the Holy Ghost through the purely preached Word of God and the rightly-administered means of grace, whose work unites us with Christ Jesus in the one true faith within the one Holy Christian and Apostolic Church, for now and forever.

THE HOLY GOSPEL **St. Luke 17:11-19 (NKJV)**

Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

So when He saw them, He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?”

And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”

The COLLECT

Keep, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Church with Thy perpetual mercy; and because the frailty of man without Thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by Thy help from all things hurtful and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

“Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

“Let’s just agree to disagree.” Have you heard that line before? It sounds so loving, so peaceful, and no doubt those who say it genuinely desire to avoid conflict and declare a cease-fire in some disagreement. In our pluralistic society, no wonder these words are spoken so often!

Yet, in the Church, they can be absolute poison. In plain English, they can mean, “Let’s not do the hard work of examining the Scriptures, seeking the Holy Spirit’s help, so that we can truly be one in the confession of the Faith. Instead, let’s take the easy way out, and sweep our differences under the rug and pretend they don’t matter.” Is it any wonder that denomination after denomination in our country today (and all over the world, for that matter) find themselves unable to assert with any clarity what exactly it is they believe?

The truth be told, many have just plain given up. They do not believe that the Scriptures are sufficiently clear, such that they could actually teach two thoughtful individuals to believe, teach, and confess the same things! Nevertheless, that is exactly what St. Paul encourages us to do. Dear ones in Christ, beginning with Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the forgiveness of sins: God grant us to acknowledge that a) God is perfectly capable of speaking clearly, and that b) in the Scriptures He has actually done so. Then, God grant us His Spirit that we would *believe* what His Word says, *be one* in that Faith with each other, *love* those who are one with us as great gifts of God, and *cling* to that faith in Christ and Him crucified unto life everlasting. Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “*Lord, Keep us Steadfast in your Word*” TLH 261, LSB 655.

“For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.”

St. Paul is explaining to the Philippians why he wants to send St. Timothy to them, and how St. Timothy is exceptional. He is, by the grace of God, exceptional, because he is not like all those others who “seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.” What a word of Law that is to us!

Do you seek your own? Do you pursue selfish and self-gratifying things? Or do you seek first and foremost the things which are of Christ Jesus, content to receive whatever personal satisfactions and pleasures our gracious Lord gives you along the way? Of course, the theoretical answer is simple: according to the old Adam, we seek nothing but “our own,” while according to the New Creation, we are all about Christ Jesus. In practical terms, the end result is the messy mix of the sinner/saint lives we all lead.

Yet, that recognition is exactly what leads us to seek “the things which are of Christ Jesus”: mercy, forgiveness, salvation, and life. “Seeking our own” is ultimately futility. As Christians, we rejoice in “the things which are of Christ Jesus,” for in them alone do we find eternal contentment and satisfaction. What joy to know that we have “the things which are of Christ Jesus!” Amen.

Suggested Hymn: *“I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord”* TLH 462, LSB 651

“Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.”

This is a little known fact in these times, but above is the early rubric governing the order of deaconess. This is what St. Paul is talking about with the phrase, “taken into the number.” For anciently, it was widows that served as deaconesses, and here St. Paul points out what qualities she was to have: First, she was to be sixty years old or older.

Second, she was to be the wife of one man, just like the Bishop and Deacon were to be husbands of one wife. Now clearly, since she is a widow (her husband had died) this means she only had one husband throughout her life, as Origen says, “Anyone twice married may be neither a bishop nor a presbyter nor a deacon nor a widow.” (Homilies on Luke 17:10)

Thirdly, she was to be reported to be diligent in good works. And the good works that St. Paul desires from her are raising children, lodging strangers, washing the feet of the saints (meaning those of the believers), and relieved the afflicted.

Although St. Paul does not mention their duties here, a deaconess’ duties were *not* to teach or minister to the sick, or whatever else modern “deaconesses” do, but simply to pray for the faithful and the catechumens. For by their persistence in prayer, the Church was strengthened and enlarged.

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

“In latter times some will depart from the faith.” They will listen to “deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” They will forbid marrying, and they will command to abstain from foods which God has blessed and given us to eat. My dear friends, these are the times in which we now live. The papists forbid their priests to marry. There are people within the Church which claim that all Christians should be vegetarians, because that is what Adam and Eve were. In short, the Church is under attack from within her by false doctrine. It is for this reason that St. Paul instructs St. Timothy to “take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

We should take especial note of St. Paul’s words, for they tell us why maintaining pure doctrine is so important. It tells us why people who complain about quibbling over words should be ignored. For purity of doctrine, and continuing in that pure doctrine, is what saves both the preacher and those to whom he preaches.

False doctrine is called by St. Paul “deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” In other words, false doctrine kills and deceives; it leads to hell. Therefore, the Church and her Ministers must remain faithful to God’s pure doctrine. It is also the Church’s task to boldly speak out against false doctrine, and correct false teachings, not letting anyone remain in their error, for it is not egos and personalities that are at stake, but men’s souls.

“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

There was a big problem back in St. Paul’s day. There were people running around saying that Jesus is good, but Jesus isn’t enough. You need Jesus plus circumcision. St. Paul spends no small amount of energy and ink refuting this error. Jesus plus something is always something less than Jesus. It says that Jesus, His life, death and resurrection, His grace, just isn’t enough by itself. And it drives us into the desperation of works righteousness.

That problem hasn’t gone away! Oh, today it’s not circumcision so much; but there are plenty of people who think they need Christ plus a little extra to help make Jesus a little more certain. It may be Christ plus good works, penances, or works of supererogation. It may be tithing, or “no drinking, dancing, or tobacco” rules. It may be rolling in the aisles or “speaking in tongues” extraordinary manifestations of “the (so-called) Spirit.”

Dear ones in Christ, do not water Jesus down. We are the people of God, “the circumcision,” those who worship God (the Father), the Spirit, and the Son Jesus Christ. Place no confidence in your flesh, or you will spend the rest of your life worrying about whether or not your flesh is good enough. Place all your confidence in Jesus, for His perfect life, death, and resurrection are forever “good enough” to guarantee your eternal salvation! Amen.

Suggested Hymn: *“Praise the Almighty”* TLH 26, LSB 797

“Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.”

At the end of Philippians 3, St. Paul speaks of our heavenly citizenship and the transformation of our bodies to be like Jesus’ glorious body which we await. Then he gives us this encouragement: “Stand fast!” How simple, and yet how challenging, especially in our day!

As a society, we are not given to the “patient endurance” that the admonition to stand fast calls for. We want results, immediate successes, and the excitement that comes with it. If we’re not seeing the results we want, we find ourselves sorely tempted to modify what we are doing, or even to scrap it entirely, in favor of something that looks more like it is “working.” Faithfulness to the Lord calls for just the opposite.

Dear ones in Christ, the ultimate “success” of the “project” is assured. Christ has died on the cross, He is risen from the dead, our sins are forgiven us, and eternal life is ours! These are God’s gifts to us; we are but to stand fast in them. As we do, God may have use of us to bring others to the Faith. There are seasons in the history of the world where, in some places, the Gospel spreads rapidly. At other times, it seems people’s ears are dull of hearing. No matter. Stand fast. Confess the salvation you have yourself received in Jesus Christ. And at the last, receive the crown of everlasting life, won for you by the precious Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Suggested Hymn: *“Be Still, My Soul”* TLH 651, LSB 752

“I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

At the end of yesterday’s pericope St. Paul gave some instructions to St. Timothy about the conduct of the Holy Mass: Women should adorn themselves modestly (that is, church is not a fashion show, nor is it a place to dress as one would when one goes out to the bar on a night out). St. Paul also tells St. Timothy that women are to learn in all submission, and to remain silent in the churches and not usurp the authority of the man, for man was created first then woman. This is what the Church calls the Order of Creation. Therefore, yesterday’s pericope ended with how the conduct of the house of God is not to be.

Today, St. Paul instructs us how the house of God is to be conducted: Bishops and deacons who are men and married to one wife who are not only blameless and reverent, but also possess the ability to preach and teach, and who must be faithful to the pure teaching of the Word of God are to be called and ordained to serve God’s holy people. St. Paul even gives instructions on the conduct of their wives, who should be reverent and faithful, so that their wives do not lead them into unbelief, shame and despair.

Therefore, we can see from St. Paul’s Epistle to St. Timothy how the conduct of the house of God is to be conducted and not conducted, and who is to serve as a Minister of God, and who is not.

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.”

Today’s pericope is a continuation of yesterday’s where St. Paul spoke about the sins and temptations that mankind faces, especially about unbelief. Today, St. Paul tells St. Timothy that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.” In other words, it is one of the tasks of the Church to petition our Lord God to grant grace to all men. For as St. Paul goes on to say in today’s pericope that our Lord Jesus “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

St. Paul also tells St. Timothy that there is only “one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” That is, that there is only one God and one intercessor for mankind to whom we should pray and from whom we should ask blessings. The world is all too familiar with prayer. We hear the phrase spoken it seems by everyone in the world, “our thoughts and prayers go out to” whomever. However, unless the prayer is prayed in faith to the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it is no prayer, and is simply vain and idle talk. And those who participate in such prayers, or don’t condemn them are condoning syncretism and unionism.

However, if the Church prays with one accord to the true God, God will grant her prayers, and lead sinners to hear the holy Word proclaimed by her, and grant them grace to believe on the Lord Jesus as the one and only Savior.

“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

I remember as a teenager, hearing a grown-up joking about publishing a book called “How To Be Like Me.” It was funny, just because it was so arrogant! Really? You think people would pay money to buy a book to learn how to be like you? And yet, look what St. Paul says, absolutely seriously, essentially, “be like me.” And that may seem all the more strange when we remember that this is the same man who said “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Romans 7:19).

But we hear St. Paul wrongly when we hear his words only according to the Law, and not also according to the Gospel. Did he teach true doctrine? Of course! Did he in many ways back it up with purity of speech and holiness of life? Undoubtedly! Would people have seen his weaknesses, perceived a shortness of temper, and observed other sins and flaws in St. Paul as well? He certainly admits that he had them! So was he telling people to emulate his sinful behaviors as well? Of course not!

This is where the Gospel comes in! What did Paul do, when he recognized his sins? Make excuses? Blame others? No! He repented, and received the forgiveness that he knew Jesus suffered and died to give him. That is what we “learned and received and heard and saw in” St. Paul that we are invited also to do. Dear ones in Christ, as we consider all that we admire in the lives of those great men of God who have gone before us, God grant us to be like them in this above all else, that we repent of our sins, and trust in the suffering and death of Jesus for our salvation. Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “*Chief of Sinners Though I Be*” TLH 342, LSB 611.

THE HOLY GOSPEL **St. Mark 7:31-37 (NKJV)**

Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”

Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

The COLLECT

Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it comes that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises; through Jesus Thy Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

The St. Paul begins this Epistle to St. Timothy by listing a long list of sins: “the law is . . . for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.” He first preaches the Law, and then the Gospel, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

These two doctrines stand opposed to one another. The Law condemns, and those who practice the things listed face condemnation if they continue in these evil practices; not just the “murderers,” “fornicators” and “sodomites,” but also the “liars,” “perjurers,” and those who teach and preach false doctrine. St. Paul’s point is that God going to condemn transgressors of the Law, because all of these sins show a sinner’s unbelief.

But St. Paul also preaches to our ears the Gospel, for he writes that he “was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man,” but “our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” Having been lead into repentance by the Holy Ghost, he now receives the faith and forgiveness that Christ won for him on the holy Cross. St. Paul receives this grace, even though he was the chief of sinners, because he believed that the Lord Jesus was the Christ, Who came to save sinners.

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”

When the St. Paul addresses the Thessalonians by calling them “brethren” it does not mean that he was only speaking to the clergy, or only to the men of the parish. Certainly, the Ministers of God are called to warn, comfort, and uphold all the saints entrusted to them through the pure preaching of the Word of God, and the right administration of the Sacraments so that the Holy Ghost may be given free rein to do His work of calling, gathering, enlightening, sanctifying and keeping Christians in the one, true faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, this admonition of St. Paul should also apply to all Christians.

For if we see our brother in Christ deceived or tempted into sin, our Lord desires us to draw them back through our warning and admonition. This is why one of the great tasks of the Church is to preach the Law, that is, point out what is both forbidden and required of by God according to His commandments. When a church body only talks about forgiveness, but doesn’t condemn sin, or allows certain sins to exist within her, or worst of all, calls that which God calls a sin, not a sin, then that church body is not fulfilling her call by our Lord, to “warn those who are unruly.”

This is a terrible thing, for a person who does not know their sin, does not truly know forgiveness, and therefore cannot be comforted and upheld through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments.

Jesus has done all things well. It is not that our Lord is only better than others, exceeding them to a certain degree. Jesus is in a class by Himself. In today’s reading, St. Paul proclaims the full sufficiency of Christ and His work that we might have the “full assurance of understanding.” With faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, described as the “mystery of God,” we have “all riches.” “You are complete in Christ...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” There is nothing lacking for the one forgiven in Christ. “As you have received Christ the Lord, so walk in Him....”

St. Paul warns us not to be deceived by the “persuasive words” of false teachers. “Beware . . . let no one judge you . . . let no one cheat you . . .” In accordance with St. Paul, we do not continue in fellowship with false teachers lest their self-imposed regulations, based on philosophy and worldly principles, rob us of the Gospel. Though they may grow the Church by allowing falsehood, that increase is not “from God” (v.19). Though their actions may have an appearance of wisdom, it is “of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

Though men may be concerned with numbers of converts/members, the maintenance of institutions, and the false humility of outward works, St. Paul’s one concern is “the good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.” Everything else will take care of itself. With the truth, “hearts may be encouraged,” and believers are “being knit together in love.” God’s good order is that the Gospel of Christ produces faith and faith produces love with thanksgiving.

Jesus Christ sets us free from having to keep the law in order to earn our salvation (see yesterday's reading and devotion.) God's good order is that the Gospel of Christ produces faith in Christ's forgiveness and faith produces acts of love with thanksgiving. The reason St. Paul can say "with thanksgiving" (2:7, 3:2) is because all of our good works are done out of thankfulness to God for His gracious gift of forgiveness.

When the false teachers have the goal of producing good works by means of their regulations, they accomplish nothing—neither good works nor faith. When the true teachers (St. Paul, Epaphras, Archippus and others in today's reading) "take heed to the ministry" which they have received in the Lord, they bring God's good order to fulfillment (see v. 17). The Word produces both faith in Christ and good works done "in sincerity of heart, fearing God."

Unlike those who practice the self-imposed religious works (2:23) of the false teachers, God's people are to do good works from within their vocation as husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter or worker. It may not be impressive to the world for a husband to sacrificially give of his money, time, and effort to love and serve his wife and to raise his children in the love of the Lord, but these things are "well-pleasing to the Lord." Your vocation includes being a hearer of the Word at a particular parish. Thus, "continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving." Whatever your God-given vocations, "do it heartily, as to the Lord . . ." (v.23).

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
THE HOLY GOSPEL St. Luke 10:23-37 (NKJV)

Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

So he answered and said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself." And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'

So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

The COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou does promise, make us to love that which Thou does command; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

In this letter, St. Paul is rejoicing because of the Thessalonians' enduring faith in Jesus Christ. It is by faith alone in Christ's sacrifice for our sins that we are saved. In chapter 4:1-7, St. Paul concludes by encouraging the fruits of faith: good works of love. He says, "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality" And lest they think that good works following faith are optional for a Christian, St. Paul says, "Therefore he who rejects this [teaching on sanctification] does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit. But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another" (v.8-9).

The Augsburg Confession teaches the same thing. "Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God. It is only by faith that forgiveness of sins is apprehended, and that, for nothing. And because through faith the Holy Ghost is received, hearts are renewed and endowed with new affections, so as to be able to bring forth good works. For Ambrose says: Faith is the mother of a good will and right doing" (Augsburg Confession, XX, 27-30).

I assumed that the grandparents, who were my members, had been encouraging their visiting, but out-of-state son or daughter, to get their grandchild baptized, because at some point the parents get the idea to get it done right now over a holiday and give me a call. Although I desire to baptize as many as I can, there are a host of issues that need to be discussed with such parents. One is that Holy Baptism is not done only to appease grandma. Jesus connects Holy Baptism with teaching (Mt 28:19-20). Every child I baptize becomes a member of this parish and I become their pastor. Now I can't be the pastor of someone five states away, nor can this parish be God's house of teaching for this newly baptized child of God.

Sometimes people want a religion that is devoid of any physical reality—no parish, no pastor, no sacraments—just me and Jesus. I would liken it to an online purchase. Just send me the goods; I don't want to have any interaction with a store, clerks, etc. However, that's not the way God works! God works through means—real elements of water, bread, and wine, real ministers (Sts. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) and real hearers (Thessalonians). Verse 6 says, "And you became followers of us and of the Lord" Not just the Lord, but followers of "us"—St. Paul and the other ministers. The Gospel which St. Paul preached was not just detached words, but had a real power in their lives worked by the Holy Spirit. For the Thessalonians who "received the word," their conversion from idolatry involved "much affliction." Their word-fortified lives of faith became examples to others.

It is easy to dismiss someone's "supposed" concern for you, when they are trying to sell you something and will benefit from the sale themselves. St. Paul reminds the Church at Thessalonica that their "manner of entry" (1 Thess. 1:9-2:1) with the Gospel was not with deceit or flattery at all. Just before coming to them, Sts. Paul and Silas had been severely flogged and thrown into prison at Philippi (Acts 17:22-40). And yet, St. Paul says, "we were bold in our God to speak to you the Gospel of God in much conflict." Sts. Paul and Silas worked in a secular vocation in order that they might not be a burden to these new believers.

Many of our pastors work in secular jobs in order that the faithful might receive the truth, apart from fellowship with falsehood. A part-time pastor is not the ideal situation, as the minister needs time to study God's Word, teach his members and visit the sick and shut-in. These pastors today could cite 1 Cor. 9:14, "The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the Gospel." However, their willing sacrifice is a proof of their sincerity to impart the Gospel of the free forgiveness of Jesus Christ for your salvation. Whether part-time or full-time, all of our pastors have taken a bold stand, as fathers in the faith imparting the pure word of God for their children. We give thanks for you, "because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God.

Sts. Paul and Silas had been whisked away to Berea after a mob riot by the Thessalonian Jews caused Jason and some other brothers to be dragged before the city officials (Acts 17:1-9). St. Paul was well-received by the Bereans, but the Thessalonian Jews went to Berea and caused more trouble (Acts 17:10-14). Then, St. Paul was sent to Athens (Acts 17:15ff). Is it any wonder that St. Paul (in Athens) sent St. Timothy back to Thessalonica in order to find out how the congregation there had fared in their absence? Had the congregation succumbed to the same affliction St. Paul had received? But more importantly, St. Paul said, "I sent to know [whether] your faith [remains, or] lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain."

The labor of preaching and teaching and administering the sacraments has the goal of creating and strengthening faith in Christ! And, standing fast in the Lord, "receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:9).

We are saved by faith in Christ alone! I do not know what the future holds for your own earthly life, nor do I know the Lord's plans for your parish or for your pastor. I do not wish that you would receive tribulation or affliction. Nevertheless, none of those things are able to wrestle away your salvation. The tempter cares nothing about your life or health or goods, but his real concern is to destroy your faith and thus separate you from Christ. My ultimate concern is that you keep faith in Christ, no matter what the future holds.