

“Falsely are our churches accused of Abolishing the Mass; for the Mass is retained on our part, and celebrated with the highest reverence. All the usual ceremonies are also preserved, save that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added to teach the people. ...

The people are accustomed to partake of the Sacrament together, if any be fit for it, and this also increases the reverence and devotion of public worship. For none are admitted except they be first proved. The people are also advised concerning the dignity and use of the Sacrament, how great consolation it brings to anxious consciences, that they may learn to believe God, and to expect and ask of Him all that is good. This worship pleases God; such use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God.”

(Augsburg Confession, Article 24:1-2, 5-8)

“But it can readily be judged that nothing would serve better to maintain the dignity of worship, and to nourish reverence and pious devotion among the people than that the ceremonies be rightly observed in the churches.”

(Augsburg Confession, Section 2:6)

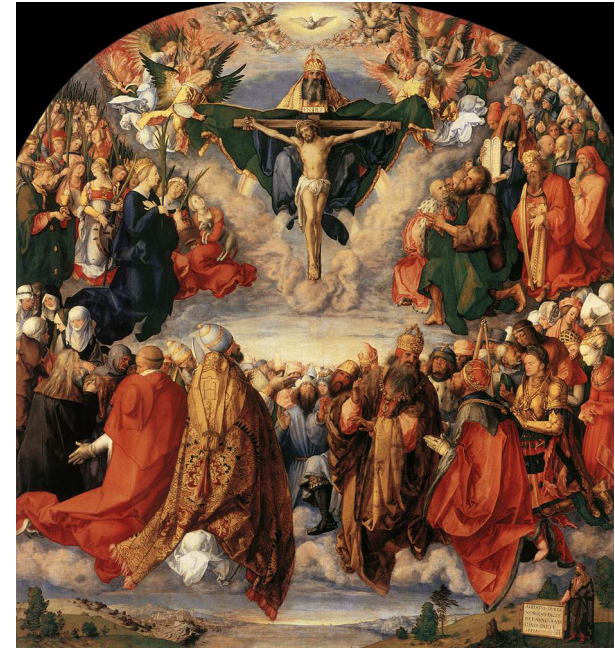
“In the beginning we must again make the preliminary statement that we do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us masses are performed every Lord’s Day and on the other festivals, in which the sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved. And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments and other like things.”

(Apology [Defense] of the Augsburg Confession, Art. 24:1)

“In the first place we assert, it is not now, nor has it ever been, in our mind to abolish entirely the whole formal cultus [worship service] of God, but to cleanse that which is in use, which has been vitiated by most abominable additions, and to point out a pious use. For this cannot be denied, that masses and the communion of bread and wine are a rite divinely instituted by Christ, which was observed, first under Christ Himself, then under the apostles, most simply and piously and without any additions.”

Martin Luther,

“Formula of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg (1523)”



TRINITY—TRINITY 3 (4–30 June 2012)

The Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America
www.eldona.org

FROM THE PROPERs FOR TRINITY SUNDAY

THE GOSPEL

St. John 3:1-15 (NKJV)

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

The COLLECT OF THE DAY

Almighty and everlasting God, who has given unto us, Thy servants, grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity, we beseech Thee that Thou would keep us steadfast in this faith and evermore defend us from all adversities; who lives and reigns, ever one God, world without end.

LUTHERAN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

The Importance of Purity in Worship.

#1

“If reality in worship is attained by faith and maintained by communion with God in fellowship with other believers, power in worship is realized through purity.

“Science holds it a truism that power is in direct proportion to purity in chemicals, drugs, and food. Health and strength depend upon cleanliness and freedom from infection. Electrical energy is sapped by short circuits, corrosion and impurities in contacts. Telescopes and microscopes are effective only when lenses are clean. In a similar way power in worship is conditioned on purity.

“First of all, worship must have a great and holy objective—nothing less than the eternal, holy God and eternal and holy things. Fellowship and common assembly for lesser ends may be important, but fellowship and assembly for the purpose of communing with God in His transcendent holiness, might, and love appeal to all men because of the elevation and purity of motive. The power inherent in this pure and lofty purpose has built churches and cathedrals everywhere, created liturgies and hymns, composed cantatas and anthems, and inspired the noblest art in the history of the race. ...

“...[W]e find the deepest experiences of our inmost souls anticipated in the story of the Psalmist who called upon the Creator of the universe: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” For in the inner sanctuary of our souls we find the same kind of world as that which David knew—the same moral disorder and dishonor. We, too, know that impurity is impotence, that sin ends in suffering. We, too, know that real satisfaction comes from communion and harmony with God, and that only the pure in heart may see Him. These convictions enable Christian worshippers to cast away unworthy motives, and with hearts purified by the sense of forgiveness to invoke the divine blessing. It is not accidental that for a thousand years and more the minister’s private preparation for public service regularly began with an Office of Confession and Absolution, and that the public worship of our congregations so begins today.”

—from *The Lutheran Liturgy*, by Luther Reed, 1947, p. 11

“We will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations.”

Why would Israel want to be like the other nations? They were God’s own special people, chosen out of all of the people of the world by Him, to be the objects of His love, recipients of His grace, and subjects of his royal reign. He would judge them not according not to His holy law—a standard to which none could measure up—but according to His righteousness that He graciously would impute to His people through faith in Him. He would go out before His people and win their battles for them. Why would they want to be like the nations?

Why? For the same reason that we wish to have someone other than God as our king. Our self-centered heart, which judges matters according to the measure of the world, seeks to have the self as our ruler during the course of this life. We would rather have someone ‘like ourselves’ to be our king. Truly, it is the same for us as for the Israelites of old: the fallen human nature fears the righteous reign of God.

Yet our true King is gracious: Christ came as one of us and has reconciled us to God, not counting against us our rebellion against him. He still fights our battles for us, conquering the fear in our hearts and establishing His Spirit of love and peace in its place. Through His means of grace He brings his royal and holy reign over us, that we might be his loyal subjects. May we joyfully receive His gracious reign over us forevermore!

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].)

Moses was *the* prophet of God in the Old Testament. All of the prophets that came after him were measured against him, so that it could be said with certainty whether one or the other was the prophet “like unto Moses” that the Lord promised in Deuteronomy 18—that is, whether he was the Messiah.

For those prophets (and other leaders) who were not the Messiah, it was important that their relationship to Moses be defined so that they could rightly exercise the authority that the Lord gave to them, neither exceeding it nor being denied it. God, therefore, sets the standard: “This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.” All that Joshua would do and say must be in accord with the teaching already handed down by God through Moses. As long as he would do so, not turning to the left hand nor the right, his teaching and leadership would prosper and if the people failed to say what they say in today’s reading—“All that thou commandest us we will do and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee.”—it is clear that they would not merely be rejecting Joshua and those who came after him, but Moses, as well, and, more to the point, rejecting the Lord who gave Moses that Word in the first place.

Jesus declares the same of our pastors today: “He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me.”

Faith seems simple, yet it is actually so hard that it is *impossible* for man! It takes the very power of God for us to be able to have faith in the fact that everything depends on the power of God!

Israel had become faithless and compromised their identity as God’s people. To this, Samuel proclaimed the Word of God that needed to be heard concerning their unfaithfulness: Repent! “...Prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only...” And by the grace of the Lord they were able to do and say the right thing, “We have sinned against the LORD.”

The divine theme of repentance, forgiveness, and mercy is so common throughout the Scriptures and the proclamation of the Church, yet the difficulty and seriousness of these realities often seem to be overlooked. God calls us to be faithful; He even provides the power by His Spirit, but rather than do what is right according to Him we find ourselves thinking, “Has God indeed said...?” Compromising rationales and vain excuses are like the “Baals and Ashtoreths” that must be put away, and we must serve God only.

Like Samuel offered up the lamb to the LORD, Jesus offered Himself to take away the sins of the world. His mercy and forgiveness toward us are a precious reality. The power of His Spirit, which makes us able to be faithful and live according to our repentance and His forgiveness, is also a precious reality because His Truth is spread among the nations through us. May He always keep us steadfast in these truths! Amen.

Dagon provides an awe-full example to those who would trifle with the Almighty God. The Philistines set up Dagon as a god worthy of their worship and praise alongside the God of the Hebrews—quite literally—setting the Ark of the Covenant alongside the statue of Dagon in Dagon’s temple. But the Philistines found Dagon bowed down and broken in front of the Almighty Lord, Who sits upon the mercy seat atop the Ark of the Covenant. Truly, the Holy Trinity is the God of gods and Lord of lords, the one true God. “Worship Him, all you gods!”

That means you, too, son of God! We who were created in the image and likeness of God are to worship our Creator with all that we are and have been given by Him. We who have been recreated with that glorious image and likeness thorough Holy Baptism and faith are to worship the One Who has redeemed us through Christ’s death for our sins. We who possess God’s own Holy Spirit by God’s grace in Christ are like unto gods. We therefore approach the God of gods, acknowledging him to be the *only* God—and *our* God. We rightly fear His judgment against our sin, but we kneel before Him with the trust that He provides his abundant mercy and forgiveness to all who believe. We arise forgiven to live as lords of His kingdom of grace, using the honor and riches He has provided to us in service to God and neighbor in our various earthly vocations. His grace toward us truly makes him worthy of all praise and worship. Indeed, worship him, all you gods!

Today’s reading continues the theme of Joshua (leading the people of God in accord with what the Lord had revealed through Moses) being made ‘equal with Moses’ in the eyes of the people. That is, when the Word of the Lord is faithfully spoken, it is “as valid and certain, even in Heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord were dealing with us Himself.” (Nürnberg addition to the Small Catechism) God shows through Joshua a sign to end the Exodus like unto that which He worked through Moses at its beginning. Thus, the Lord says, He exalts Joshua in the eyes of the people: the one who faithfully bears God’s Word here has it shown and declared by God that His Word produces the same powerful effect as when it was first spoken and written, even though the man himself may be less capable and less regarded. As we confess in the Small Catechism regarding Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar, it is the Word itself that does the work, and not the piety of the one administering or the one receiving.

It is worth noting, too, that the priests bore the Ark of the Covenant—the repository or ‘treasure chest’ of God’s treaty with Israel. In it were the documents (the stone tablets of the Decalogue) and signs of His treaty, which served to keep its reality before them and to declare the nature of that treaty: that it was no bilateral covenant, as if between equal partners, but the declaration of a lord who had freed this people from slavery, along with the tokens of His continued benevolence.

This setting up of a memorial of the crossing of the Jordan has rich significance for us every bit as much as it did for the people of Israel, for through it the Triune God teaches us what memorials that He establishes consist of and what they do.

The memorial of the twelve stones effectively brought the event of the parting of the Jordan into the present for everyone who would see it. It took from the event and gave testimony to the people of what the Lord had done, and would also indicate to them (and to those who would have opposed them) that He would continue to act mightily for their sake. (Verse 23's shift from "Israel" to "you," prevents thinking of this deliverance being only for Israel "back then," but includes those later born or grafted onto Israel.) That there was a stone for each tribe showed that His gracious might was intended to benefit all the people, being offered to all who were physically attached to Israel and forming those who would receive it into the blessed remnant that is the true Israel, the Church.

The Lord's Supper has several points of similarity to this. It takes from the event of the crucifixion and brings the very Body and Blood of Jesus offered on the Cross to you today, assuring you that God still remembers that sacrifice and gives you the deliverance there won for you. He thereby bids you to remember that you are included in the world from which the Lamb of God carried away all sins and that you are, therefore, now God's Israel.

"God has come into the camp!"

The Ark of the Covenant was more than a symbol, more than a visible representation of God's presence among his people Israel. Rather, it was the very sacramental presence of God among Israel; where the Ark of the Covenant is, there God is Himself. From that Ark, God Himself serves His lambs through his Word and His Spirit while His ministers preach, teach, and administer the sacramental acts through which the people of God receive His grace from the God Who is with them.

It was to Israel's great shame that the Ark of the Covenant was taken from them by the Philistines. The Israelites had forgotten the reason for God's gracious presence among them—to forgive their sins and to provide them with salvation and new life in His name—and instead treated Him like the men of the world treated their gods. They treated the one true God as though He were a lucky charm, to bring them victory in their earthly battles. What would they have thought when their "luck" ran out, and they lost the battle—and their God?

God grant His Israel of our day—all faithful Christians—to be kept in mind of God's gracious and real presence among us through his Word and his sacraments in His Church. He abides among us through these means to give us grace to win the spiritual battles over sin, death, and the devil. When we seek him and his righteous first, we obtain all of the blessings of life in this world, in accordance with His promise to us.

“And the Word of the Lord was precious in those days.” (KJV)

Indeed, the Word of the Lord was ‘precious’ (scarce) in the days in which Eli’s sons were serving as the priests in the Lord’s tabernacle at Shiloh. Woefully, Eli himself did nothing to restrain his sons from their false teaching and wicked practice, and the ones who suffered were not only those of the house of Eli, but the people of God generally. Indeed, how rare was that word in that time!

The Word of the Lord is precious in our own day for the same reason. The Name of the Lord is taken in vain even in many churches, as His word is not taught in its full truth and purity. His Word, the pure preaching of Christ crucified, and the proper administration of the holy sacraments are so often despised! May God, by his Holy Word and Holy Spirit, bring repentance to the pastors and the people among whom such is the case!

Indeed, the Word being so precious, God grant His people to seek and find those congregations in which His Word is rightly proclaimed to the joy and edifying of Christ’s holy people, that the Spirit raise up people having ears to hear, so that none of the Lord’s precious words would fall to the ground and be snatched away by the Bird of Prey. Rather, may the Word fall upon hearts good and noble by grace, taking deep root, as in the heart of young Samuel, that all of Christ’s saints minister before Him like Samuel, rendering the spiritual sacrifices that are fitting for such holy priests.

The Ark is again presented as the visible bearer of the Lord’s treaty with Israel. God tells His people to do things that should not produce the results that they do, and to do them with the Ark before them, so that it is clear that He brings the victory, that those whom He has made His own by freeing them from bondage will be provided for in ways that seem senseless to the world. Because of what the Lord had already done as Joshua spoke and led the people in the way revealed through Moses, the priests and all of Israel simply did the seemingly nonsensical thing the Lord had him tell them to do, and God gave them victory.

Thus, we see again the authority of God’s servant (the Word of God) and are given insight into the Sacraments. St. Paul says that those in the Office of the Holy Ministry (Bishops, Pastors, Deacons) are stewards of the mysteries of God. A mystery, to the Greeks, was something that had to be revealed and explained to be understood; thus, a mystery in Scripture is something that cannot be understood except the Lord Himself gives us understanding. Tiny portions of bread and wine, a little water...as Luther asks, how can these do such great things? They are made powerful to forgive sins in precisely the way that a sinner like Joshua or your pastor are made worth listening to: it is God’s Word that invests them with the ability to break down the walls of a sin-encrusted heart and to conquer you with grace, so that you have life in His Kingdom forever.

The people of Ai learned what happens to those who underestimate the one true God. While the fame of the Lord's conquests spread before the people of Israel, the men of Ai and Bethel did not see the retreat of Joshua's army as a reason to pause and consider how the Lord might use this to destroy them. Throughout history, God has shown His might by saving us when we were without any hope in our own strength, when we look most defeated. Thus, St. Paul says (2 Corinthians 12) that he glories in his weaknesses, because when he is weak it is all the more apparent that Christ is his only real strength. When we suffer, it gives us reason not to despair, but to realize how dependent upon our Lord we truly are.

Second, we see throughout the reading the unity between what the Lord commands and what Joshua commands. At the end of the chapter, Joshua does what is necessary for this to be the case not only for him, but for all of the people: he causes the Word of God to be posted where it can be read...and then he reads it to them, to the men, the women, the children, and even to those who were not born of Israelite birth. Certainly, this is just what the Church does to this day in the Divine Service (and through the vocations of Her children): the Word is read, sung, and proclaimed among us, first for the benefit of those who are already a part of the New Testament Israel (the Church), and then for any who will hear.

“Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the Lord is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.”

They did not speak out of self-centered pride on that day, though some doubtlessly thought it a matter of arrogance. The two men who stood before the assembly of government officials and churchmen on that 25th day of June in AD 1530 were themselves chancellors of the German state of Saxony and men of the Church, and had come simply to speak the truth in love. Christian Beyer and Gregor Bruck read the words of a document drafted and approved by theologians of the Church and subscribed by the officials of their various lands. These two stood as the representatives of the body of God's people, humbly speaking together the truth in love. Through this profession of faith made that day in Augsburg, Germany, these Christians together testified about the marvelous truth of God's love in Christ, distributed through the Word and Sacrament ministry of Christ, in order to raise up a faithful people of Christ marked by love for God's truth and by a love for sharing His truth with our neighbors.

On this day of the Festival of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession—and for all our days in this world—let us believe, teach, and confess the truth in love. Profess with your words and your deeds before God and before all the world the truth that gives us and our neighbor the hope for everlasting life through the forgiveness of our sins by the Word of Truth—even Christ Jesus our Savior!

Lesson from the Book of Concord

The Third Sunday after Trinity

ARTICLE XII. Of Repentance.

In the twelfth article they [the Romanists] approve of the first part, in which we set forth that, to those who have fallen since baptism, the remission of sins can be imparted at whatever time, and as often as they are converted. ...

Let any one of the adversaries come forth and tell us when the remission of sins takes place. O good God, what darkness there is! They doubt whether it be in attrition or in contrition that remission of sins occurs. And if it occur on account of contrition, what need is there of absolution, what does the power of the keys effect, if sin have been already remitted? Here indeed they also labor much more, and wickedly detract from the power of the keys. ... For if the power of the keys do not console us before God, what then will pacify the conscience?

Moreover, the power of the keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which is the true voice of the Gospel. Thus we also comprise absolution, when we speak of faith, because “faith cometh by hearing” (Rom. 10:17). For when the Gospel is heard, and the absolution is heard, the conscience is encouraged, and receives consolation. And because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly remit sins before God, according to Luke 10:16: “He that heareth you heareth Me.” Wherefore the voice of the one absolving must be believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven. And absolution properly can be called a sacrament of repentance, as also the more learned scholastic theologians speak. ... Thus faith is conceived and strengthened through absolution, through the hearing of the Gospel, through the use of the sacraments, so that it may not succumb while it struggles with the terrors of sin and death. This theory of repentance is plain and clear, and increases the worth of the power of the keys and of the sacraments and illumines the benefit of Christ, and teaches us to avail ourselves of Christ as Mediator and Propitiator.

—The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, §1, 5, 7, 39–41, 42–43

SATURDAY, JUNE 9: JOSHUA 9:1-27

TRINITY

“The mouth of the Lord they did not ask,” verse fourteen tells us; thus, were they deceived.

So we see it in the world around us and, sadly, it so often appears the case within parishes and church bodies, as well. When inquiry is not made of the Lord’s mouth—when Holy Scripture is not searched or not allowed to be the norm (the standard and measure) of all we teach and do, we are easily deceived. These men of Gibeon remind us of both the falsely pious (who would prevent our seeing their denial of the Word of Truth by displaying their personal ‘holiness’ and good works) and the pseudo-scientific (who dismiss without consideration the facts testified to by the One who showed Himself to be Creator by His works and resurrection).

Joshua shows us how to live with the consequences of our having been deceived without being ruled by such errors. He returns to the Word of God and acts in accord with it, showing His mercy in such a way as to make clear the necessity of its reception. The people of Gibeon were hoping in such mercy when they sought to deceive Israel; they hoped, as well, in the integrity of those who had such a gracious and mighty God. While those consulting only their flesh would have made the wrong decision again, Joshua spared their people...but only in such a fashion as would always remind them of this mercy and that would have them forever serving the one true God. This same thing God does for us through our trials and by daily bringing us forgiveness in His Church.

FROM THE PROPERs FOR 1ST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE HOLY GOSPEL

St. Luke 16:19-31 (NKJV)

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

But Abraham said, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us."

Then he said, "I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment."

Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

And he said, "No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent."

But he said to him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."

The COLLECT OF THE DAY

O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

FROM THE PROPERs FOR 3RD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

THE HOLY GOSPEL

St. Luke 15:1-10 (NKJV)

Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The COLLECT OF THE DAY

O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

We began this week with the Collect, “O Lord, who never fails to help and govern those whom Thou does bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love, make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name...,” and we have now considered again the lives of several Old Testament saints whom the Lord sent as His means to help and govern His people. In Gideon and Samson, we have seen the deliverance of the Lord by means of unworthy men. Now, in the birth of a son to Hannah, we behold the instrument by which the Lord would establish the throne of David.

To Peninnah, one of the wives of Elkanah, many sons and daughters were given, and Hannah felt shame for many years because she had no child. But the names of Elkanah, Penninah and Hannah are remembered today because of the one son which the Lord granted to Hannah. Samuel would, at the appointed time, be the one to consecrate not one king, but two—first Saul, and then David—to the throne of Israel. By means of Samuel, the Lord would establish the house of David, and from that line would come, in the fullness of time, the One who would help and govern God’s people for endless ages. Samuel, the son promised to Hannah, would anoint David, the last of the sons of Jesse, to be the king given the promise: “And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Sam. 7:16) The Lord has established our salvation, and His salvation never fails.

Lesson from the Book of Concord The First Sunday after Trinity

ARTICLE XXIV.

Falsely are our churches accused of Abolishing the Mass; for the Mass is retained on our part, and celebrated with the highest reverence. All the usual ceremonies are also preserved, save that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added to teach the people. For ceremonies are needed to this end alone, that the unlearned be taught. And not only has Paul commanded to use in the Church a language understood by the people [1 Cor. 14: 2, 9], but it has also be so ordained by man’s law.

The people are accustomed to partake of the Sacrament together, if any be fit for it, and this also increases the reverence and devotion of public worship. For none are admitted except they be first proved. The people are also advised concerning the dignity and use of the Sacrament, how great consolation it brings anxious consciences, that they may learn to believe God, and to expect and ask of Him all that is good. This worship pleases God; such use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God. It does not, therefore, appear that the Mass is more devoutly celebrated among our adversaries, than among us.

But it is evident that for a long time, it has been the public and most grievous complaint of all good men, that Masses have been basely profaned and applied to purposes of lucre. For it is unknown how far this abuse obtains in all the churches, by what manner of men Masses are said only for fees or stipends, and how many celebrate them contrary to the Canons. But Paul severely threatens those who deal unworthily with the Eucharist, when he says [1 Cor. 11:27]: “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” When, therefore, our priests were admonished concerning this sin, Private Masses were discontinued among us, as scarcely any Private Masses were celebrated except for lucre’s sake.

Neither were the bishops ignorant of these abuses, and if they had corrected them in time, there would now be less dissension. Heretofore, by their own negligence, they suffered many corruptions to creep into the Church. Now, when it is too late, they begin to complain of the troubles of the Church, seeing that this disturbance has been occasioned simply by those abuses, which were so manifest that they could be borne no longer. Great dissensions have arisen concerning the Mass, concerning the Sacrament. Perhaps the world is being punished for such long-continued profanations of the Mass, as have been tolerated in the churches for so many centuries, by the very men who were both able and in duty bound to correct them. For, in the Ten Commandments, it is written (Exodus 20), “The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.” But since the world began, nothing that God ever ordained seems to have been so abused for filthy lucre as the Mass.

There was also added the opinion which infinitely increased Private Masses, namely, that Christ, by His passion, had made satisfaction for original sin, and insti-

tuted the Mass wherein an offering should be made for daily sins, venial and mortal. From this has arisen the common opinion that the Mass taketh away the sins of the living and the dead, by the outward act. Then they began to dispute whether one Mass said for many were worth as much as special Masses for individuals, and this brought forth that infinite multitude of Masses. Concerning these opinions our teachers have given warning, that they depart from the Holy Scriptures and diminish the glory of the passion of Christ. For Christ's passion was an oblation and satisfaction, not for original guilt only, but also for all sins, as it is written to the Hebrews (10:10), "We are sanctified through the offering of Jesus Christ, once for all." Also, 10:14: "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Scripture also teaches that we are justified before God through faith in Christ, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. Now if the Mass take away the sins of the living and the dead by the outward act, justification comes of the work of Masses, and not of faith, which Scripture does not allow.

But Christ commands us [Luke 22:19]: "This do in remembrance of Me"; therefore the Mass was instituted that the faith of those who use the Sacrament should remember what benefit it receives through Christ, and cheer and comfort the anxious conscience. For, to remember Christ, is to remember His benefits, and to realize that they are truly offered unto us. Nor is it enough only to remember the history, for this the Jew and the ungodly also can remember. Wherefore the Mass is to be used to this end, that there the Sacrament [Communion] may be administered to them that have need of consolation; as Ambrose says: "Because I always sin, I am always bound to take the medicine."

Now, forasmuch as the Mass is such a giving of the Sacrament, we hold one communion every holyday, and also other days, when any desire the Sacrament it is given to such as ask for it. And this custom is not new in the Church; for the Fathers before Gregory make no mention of any private Mass, but of the common Mass they speak very much. Chrysostom says that the priest stands daily at the altar, inviting some to the Communion and keeping back others. And it appears from the ancient Canons, that someone celebrated the Mass from whom all the other presbyters and deacons receive the Body of the Lord, for thus the words of the Nicene Canon says: "Let the deacons, according to their order, receive the Holy Communion after the presbyters, from the bishop or from a presbyter." And Paul [1 Cor. 11:33] commands concerning the Communion: "Tarry for one another," so that there may be a common participation.

Forasmuch, therefore, as the Mass with us has the example of the Church taken from the Scripture and the Fathers, we are confident that it cannot be disapproved, especially since the public ceremonies are retained for the most part, like those hitherto in use; only the number of Masses differs, which, because of very great and manifest abuses, doubtless might be profitably reduced. For in olden times, even in churches most frequented, the Mass was not celebrated every day, as the Tripartite History (Book 9, chapt. 33) testifies: "Again in Alexandria, every Wednesday and Friday, the Scriptures are read, and the doctors expound them, and all things are done, except only the celebration of the Eucharist."

—The Augsburg Confession

Samson's betrayal by Delilah—whose name means "she who weakened"—seems almost inexplicable. How could the one who judged Israel for twenty years be so undiscerning with a woman bent on destroying him? Hadn't he learned anything from his experience with his Philistine wife?

Delilah's motivation is quite clear: the lords of the Philistines offered her a fortune to entice and betray Samson. Samson loved her, but there is no sign that love was reciprocated. Delilah was turned against Samson by the lure of lucre; she never had any other motivation than the silver she was offered. Three times, Samson is betrayed by Delilah—"The Philistines are upon you, Samson!"—and his response is not vengeance, but despair. "And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death."

The sorrow of Samson, and his betrayal into the hands of his enemies, was viewed by the idolatrous Philistines as a victory for their false god; but the betrayal purchased with their silver brought about their own destruction, when in his death Samson killed more Philistines than he had slain in life. But how much greater is the victory of Christ, whose death and Resurrection destroyed the might of Satan, and delivered all His people from the fear of our enemies! Samson brought justice for a generation—20 years—but our victorious Lord brings countless ages of life and peace in the salvation He has won for us.

“I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.” (Psalm 3:6) Samson did not fear the Philistines; it was from his own people that it was necessary for him to extract the oath: “Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves.”

For forty years, Israel had endured the affliction of the Philistines, and yet when Samson was the instrument of vengeance on the wickedness of the heathen, the tremulous people of his own nation would rather sacrifice the greatest man among them than stand up to the wickedness of the nations. The Israelites came against Samson with three times as many men as it would be necessary for him to kill to free his people from the fear of the Philistines; the pathetic spiritual weakness of the people is evidenced in their whining words to Samson: “Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this that you have done to us?”—These were words that made them sound very much like their ancestors, after Moses led them out of their captivity in Egypt.

Samson, the one who was dedicated to the Lord from the womb, and was the Lord’s instrument in “seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines,” (14:4) was miraculously provisioned as the people had been in the wilderness. As the Lord caused water to flow from the rock, now He sent water to Samson from a hollow in the earth. Our strength is not our own; the Lord gives us all that we have and all that we need, for with a jawbone He can grant 20 years of justice.

Joshua ten describes the defeat of the southern Canaanite kings and their armies. When the vassal, Gibeon, pleads for Israel’s help against five armies, Joshua is encouraged by the Lord’s promise of victory over them. (10:8) He marches all night from Gilgal to Gibeon twenty miles away. Early in the morning, they catch the enemy by surprise. The victory belonged to the Lord, as He killed more by sending large hailstones than perished by the sword of the Israelites. (10:11) Joshua’s confident prayer of faith is based on the promises of the Lord. The Lord causes the sun (and moon) to remain in the sky for two whole days, so that Israel might completely defeat her enemies.

Someone may say, “You just have to have faith.” Faith is trust or belief. Faith always has an object—something in which one trusts. Talk about faith, without the object in which faith trusts, is nonsense. Thus, God’s promise to Joshua to take over the Promised Land is repeatedly mentioned. “Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.” (Joshua 1:6)

Our “Joshua” is Jesus, the new leader of God’s people. He defeats every enemy for us so that we may inherit the Promised Land of heaven. (Lk 1:71) The Lord fights for us. Trusting in His promises, we receive the spoils of Jesus’ victory: forgiveness of sins. If the LORD listened to the voice of the man Joshua, (10:14) He will certainly listen to the voice of the God-Man Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, “who gives us the victory.” (1 Cor 15:57)

Due to the great multitude of the enemy and his horses and chariots, God gave Joshua another promise upon which his faith might rest: “Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.” (Josh 11:6)

Unlike the relatively quick victory over the southern kings in the period of a lengthened day, the subjugation of the northern lands only *began* with Joshua’s military victory that day. Verse 18 records, “Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.” The battle to “utterly destroy” the Canaanites, “as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded” (v.12) took seven years before “the land rested from war.” (v. 23)

Our Lord Jesus fought for you and gave you the victory in His death and resurrection. Nevertheless, you aren’t immediately translated to heaven; rather, relying on the Lord’s promises, you are daily to drown and kill the Old Adam with all his sins and evil desires. You are not to make treaties with your sin, “Do not be partakers with them” (Eph 5:7); you are mercilessly to “put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry...You yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.” (Col 3:5–8) Gross sin should “not even be named among you...For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” (Eph 5:3,5)

Hearing of Samson’s marriage to a woman of Timnah, one cannot help but notice that they are the very definition of “unequally yoked” (2 Cor. 6:14)—a fact which was not lost on his parents, who admonished him, “Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” Thus many of the commentators see the occasion of this marriage as an occasion to castigate Samson for following his desires, even portraying him as “weak and foolish.”

In all of the armchair analysis of Samson’s desires, what becomes apparent is that few commentators pay much attention to verse 4: “But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.” Samson’s desire was not just some youthful extravagance; the Lord Himself led Samson to bring about a conflict with the Philistines. Scripture has no concern for Samson’s motivations, and neither should we. When the treachery was manifest, “Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father’s house.”

The account of Samson teaches us to search the Scriptures to hear the Word of the Lord, not a justification for our own preconceptions. And it teaches us that the Lord accomplishes His will in all things—despite our weaknesses and sin.

As Gideon was chosen by the Lord to be His instrument against the Midianites and Amalekites, so Samson was chosen by the Lord in a time when the people of God had suffered under the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

The two-fold visitation of the Angel of the Lord and the repetition of the instructions governing Samuel's rearing are indications that God's intervention on behalf of His people was as miraculous as in the time of Gideon.

Gideon was slow to believe the word of the Angel of the Lord, so the wife of Manoah was slow to believe that He had appeared to her. In both visitations—to Gideon and to Manoah—the person of the One who was speaking to them was made clear in the moment of sacrifice. In the time of Gideon, “Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the Lord departed out of his sight.” (Judges 6:21) And with the sacrifice of Manoah, “it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar—the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar!” The gracious visitation was a Theophany—an appearance of the Son of God before His Incarnation—caused both Manoah and Gideon to fear; as Manoah said, “...we have seen God!” But the visitation of the Lord came about from the Lord's gracious will toward Gideon, Manoah and all His people.

Joshua, upwards of 90 to 100 years old, follows in the footsteps of Moses (Deut. 31) and determines to give the Israelites one more address before he dies. He teaches them about the Lord's work in fighting for them against the Canaanites. He reminds them how the Lord gave them the land. He encourages them with the Lord's promise, “The LORD your God will expel them...So you shall possess the land.” (v. 5) He instructs them in righteousness saying, “Be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses.” (v. 6) He reproves them: “When you have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which He commanded you...then the anger of the Lord will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you.” (v.16)

2 Timothy 3:16–17, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” The term “man of God” is not generic for some Christian; it refers to the one called into the pastoral office. Joshua knows, by virtue of his divine call, (Deut 31:7–8) that the inspired Word of God is what all Christians need. “Not one word of them has failed.” (v. 14) “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (1 Jn 5:11) “Jesus is the Word become flesh.” (Jn 1:14) “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev 2:10)

“Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem...”

Why Shechem? Having arrived in the Promised Land, it was at the great tree of Moreh at Shechem that the LORD first appeared to Abraham. (Gen 12:6f) When Jacob returns from his lengthy stay with Laban—and Esau doesn’t kill him—he camps at Shechem. (Gen 33:19) Most importantly, it is “under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem” that Jacob buried “all the foreign gods which were in their hands.” (Gen 35:4) The tree at Shechem is where Israel has gone before to sanctify herself from the curse of foreign gods.

“Joshua made a covenant with the people that day.” (v.25) This ‘covenant’ is not an agreement between two equal parties. Nor is it a works-righteous conditional agreement of God with some employees. Joshua lays out everything which the LORD did for the idol-worshipping Abraham, Jacob, and all God’s people in verses 1–13. It is by grace you are saved. The LORD has taken us from idolatry and brought us to the truth of Jesus Christ. No one can boast, because, “all of us lived among them at one time...” (Eph 2:3). “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30)

Our sins and idolatries are buried at the great tree that bore the sins of the world. The “blood of the covenant” shed on that cross gives free forgiveness in Jesus Christ. We cannot choose to be saved, but having been called to faith in Jesus Christ, we need to be warned, “You cannot serve the Lord and foreign gods.”

Even with 32,000 men under his command, Gideon had no hope of victory if he depended on the might of men. After all, the enemy armies were so large that they were “as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.” Even at its largest, Gideon’s army was incapable of emerging victorious against such a force.

However, the desperate wickedness in the heart of man is such that the Lord makes it known to Gideon that even such a miraculous victory of a mere 32,000 against an immeasurable multitude would be attributed to the works of men: “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”

Men still seek their own glory in the Church today. That the Remnant would succumb neither to vanity nor to despair, the Lord reduces her to but a mere 300, and then sends her into the enemy camp without reliance on the might of men so that His victory would be manifest to all. “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.” (1 Cor. 1:27-29)

Lesson from the Book of Concord

The Second Sunday after Trinity

ARTICLE XIII.

Of the Use of the Sacraments, they [the Lutheran theologians] teach, that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the Sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered and set forth through the Sacraments.

They therefore condemn those who teach that the Sacraments justify by the outward act, and do not teach that, in the use of the Sacraments, faith which believes that sins are forgiven, is required.

—The Augsburg Confession

FRIDAY, JUNE 15: JUDGES 2:1–23

TRINITY 1

Our faithful God always keeps His promises. That statement usually is said to comfort someone regarding an undeserved gift of the Gospel. However, it is also true with regard to the threats of the Law. In accordance with His warning in Joshua 23:13, our righteous God afflicted wayward Israel with punishments. When they disobeyed “and played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them,” the Lord allowed foreign nations to overtake them. The LORD no longer drove these nations out of the Promised Land.

Despite every effort on God’s part, the Israelites continued to do evil. They failed to do as the Lord told them and did not keep the Word of the LORD. They engaged in syncretistic behavior, combining the worship of the one true God with the Canaanite worship of Baal and Ashtoreth. God chastised them, but they did not return. Moved to pity by their groaning, He sent them judges (local leaders to deliver them from foreign nations), “yet they would not listen to their judges” but “behaved more corruptly than their fathers.” (v. 19).

God’s holiness is seen in His punishment of their sins and His mercy is seen in His gracious help and forgiveness. Only in Jesus Christ does God keep both His promise of punishment and His promise of forgiveness. The Father punishes His Son with our death and hell. The perfectly obedient Jesus then receives a resurrection unto eternal life and shares it with us. Although the Lord tempts no one (James 1:13–14) to sin, our faithful God does “tempt” believers to do good so that we learn to rely upon His gracious help.

Outward punishment, by itself, is *not* the Divine tool that works repentance. For seven years, the Lord had allowed the Midianites to oppress Israel. “So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.” (Judges 6:6) People often complain and grumble about the just consequences of their sins. Some complain that they don’t like the punishment, others that it “isn’t fair,” and still others are upset that they were caught in their sin. “Crying out” doesn’t necessarily mean that Israel is sorry for their sins.

With verse 7, the Lord sends one of His prophets, who begins using the Law to work repentance. The law is designed to show us the just punishment for our sins. The Law is not the Lord’s final word, though: the ultimate purpose of killing us with the Law is so that we will receive the good news of the forgiveness of sins. Beginning with verse 11, the Lord makes plans to send the judge (local leader/deliverer), Gideon, “to save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.”

God always gives a sign as proof of His faithfulness to save. Gideon receives the miraculous fire consuming his offering and, later, the dew with the fleece. For us, the sign of the Lord’s resurrection is the proof that Jesus, our Gideon, has delivered us from our enemies of sin, death, and the devil. “The cause is God’s; oh, hear His call: into His hand commit your all and fear no ill impending! Though not yet seen by human eyes, His Gideon shall for you arise, God’s Word and you defending.”

THE HOLY GOSPEL**St. Luke 14:16-24 (NKJV)**

Then He said to him, “A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’ But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’”

So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.”

And the servant said, “Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.”

Then the master said to the servant, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.”

The COLLECT OF THE DAY

O Lord, who never fails to help and govern those whom Thou does bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love, make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.