

Clergy of the ELDoNA, affiliated congregations and missions, and sister churches

Rt. Rev. James Heiser

Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX
(Vacancy) Faith L. C., Beaverton, OR

Rev. Jeffrey Ahonen

Good Shepherd L.C., Tony, WI; Alpha & Omega Lutheran Mission, Winter, WI; Apologia Lutheran Mission, Deer Park, WI; Peace L.C., Ironwood, MI

Rev. Ernest Bernet

Discipleship L. C., Mineral Wells, TX

Rev. David Carver

St. Paul L. C., Taylorsville, NC

Rev. Jerald Dulas

Sts. Peter & Paul L. C., Simpsonville, SC; All Saints Lutheran Mission, Myrtle Beach, SC; St. Michael & All Angels Lutheran Mission, Martinez, GA

Rev. Douglas Handrich

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Peoria, IL

Rev. Kent Heimbigner

Charity Lutheran Church, Burleson, TX

Rev. Michael Henson

Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL; Port Charlotte Lutheran Mission, Port Charlotte, FL; Memphis Lutheran Mission, Lakeland, TN

Rev. Daniel Mensing

Good Shepherd L. C., Tucson, AZ

Rev. Randy Moll

Good Shepherd L.C., Rogers, AR

Rev. Mark Mueller

Redeemer L. C., Cambridge, MN

Rev. John Rutowicz

St. Boniface Lutheran Church, Niles, MI

Rev. Paul Rydecki

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Las Cruces, NM; Sts. Peter & Paul Lutheran Mission, Silver City, NM

Rev. Josiah Scheck

Christ Lutheran Church, Richmond, MO

Rev. Eric Stefanski

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Harrison, AR; Emmanuel Lutheran Mission, Conway, AR; Lamb of God Lutheran Mission, Rogers, AR

Rev. Joshua Sullivan

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Kerrville, TX; Faith Lutheran Mission, Leander, TX

Rev. Timothy Tolar

St. Luke Lutheran Church, Kenai, AK
Homer Lutheran Mission, Homer, AK

Rev. Brandon Warr

St. Patrick Lutheran Church, Chipley, FL

Rev. Dcn. Gary Harroun

Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL

Rev. Dcn. Martin Jackson

Good Shepherd L. C. Rogers, AR

Rev. Dcn. Anthony Oncken

Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX
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Rev. Dcn. Floyd Smithey

Sts. Peter & Paul Lutheran Church, Simpsonville, SC; Sts. Peter & Paul Lutheran Mission, Knoxville, TN

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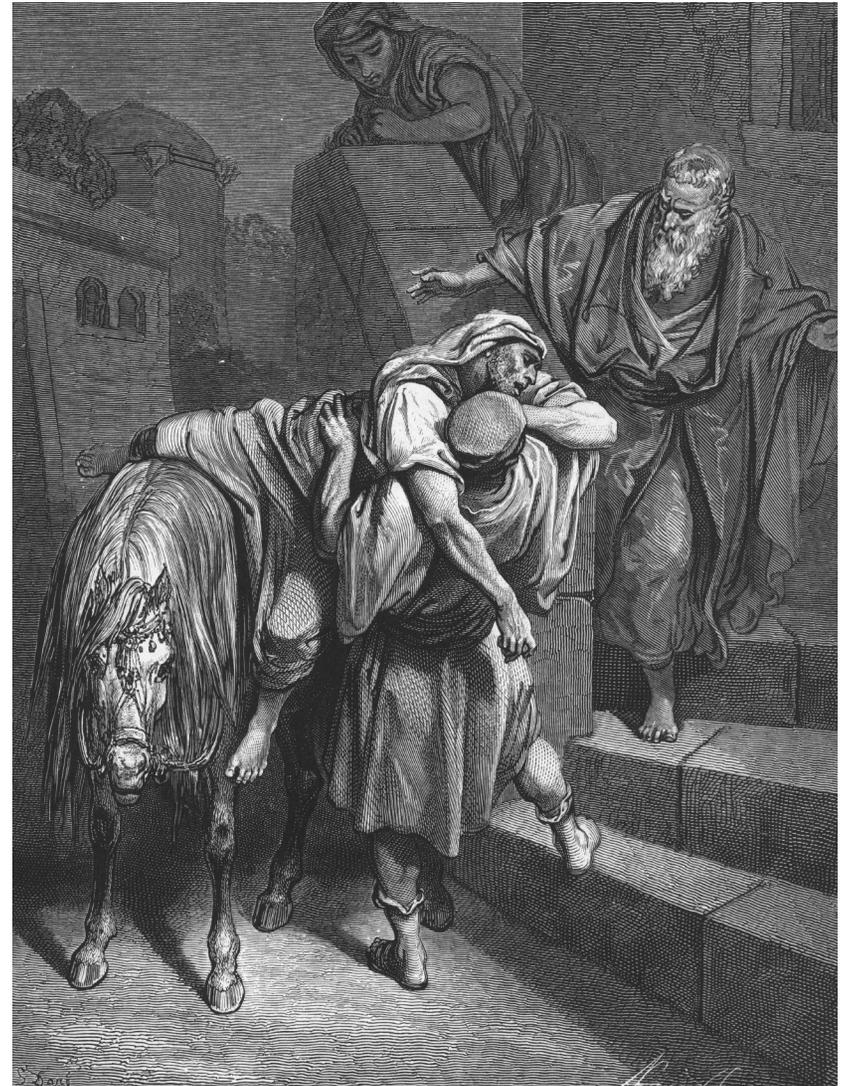
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Iglesia Confesional de Colombia
Medellin, Colombia

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



SEPTEMBER 6–OCTOBER 3, 2020

A PUBLICATION OF
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN DIOCESE OF
NORTH AMERICA

The Calendar

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|------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| September 6 | Trinity 13 | TLH 347 |
| September 13 | Trinity 14 | TLH 25 |
| September 20 | Trinity 15 | TLH 443 |
| September 21 (M) | St. Matthew, Apostle, Evangelist | |
| September 27 | Trinity 16 | TLH 596 |
| September 29 (T) | St. Michael and All Angels | TLH 254 |

Seminary Commencement

All are invited for the Commencement Vespers for the 2020-2021 Academic Year of St. Ignatius Lutheran Theological Seminary. The Vespers will be at 6 P.M. on September 6 at Salem Lutheran Church. (Clergy should bring cassock, surplice, and green stole.) Classes begin on Tuesday, September 8.

Seminary Schedule

The classes which are being offered this quarter are Greek (3 hrs.), taught by Pr. Stefanski; Prolegomena (2 hrs.), taught by Bishop Heiser; O.T. Survey (1 hr.) taught by Deacon Oncken; Classical Antiquity (1 hr.) taught by Bishop Heiser; and Liturgics 1 (3 hrs.), taught by Deacon Oncken. These classes establish the foundation of further studies in the four branches of theological study. Classes are taught Tuesday through Friday morning, with Matins each morning. The Fall Quarter ends on November 13.

Support for the Diocese and Seminary

The start of seminary classes has us all mindful of the ongoing expenses of the seminary. There is also a need for support of the diocesan general fund, as the focused visitation schedule has support running a little behind expenses at this point. If you would be willing to help meet these ongoing needs, support for ELDoNA (either general fund, or seminary) can be sent care of the diocesan treasurer, Pastor Michael Henson, c/o Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church 1000 North Park Ave. Herrin, IL 62948.

Doctrine and Practice

Chanting

#4

“Is the Chanting in the Evangelical Lutheran Church Really Roman Catholic?”

“Whenever the Divine Service once again follows the old Evangelical Lutheran agendas or church books it seems that many raise a great cry that it is ‘Roman Catholic’ when the pastor sings ‘The Lord be with you’ and the congregation responds by singing ‘And with thy spirit.’; or if the pastor sings the Collect and the blessing and the people respond with a sung ‘Amen.’ Even the simplest Christian can respond to this outcry, ‘Prove to me that this chanting is contrary to the Word of God, then I, too, will call it ‘Roman Catholic’ and have nothing more to do with it. However, you cannot prove this to me. If you insist upon calling every element in the Divine Service ‘Roman’ that has been used by the Roman Catholic Church, it must follow that the reading of the Epistle and Gospel is also ‘Romish’; indeed, it is mischief to sing or preach in church, for the Roman church has also done this. ... Those who cry out should remember that the Roman Catholic Church possesses every beautiful song of the old orthodox church; the chants and antiphons and responses were brought into the church long before the false teaching of Rome crept in. The Christian Church since the beginning, even in the Old Testament, has derived great joy from singing ... For more than 1700 years orthodox Christians have joyfully participated in the Divine Service; should we today carry on that such joyful participation is ‘Roman Catholic’? God prevent it.

Therefore, as we continue to hold and restore our wonderful Divine Services in places where they have been forgotten, let us boldly confess that our worship forms do not unite us with the modern sects or the church of Rome, rather they join us to the one, holy Christian Church that is as old as the world and is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” — from *Der Lutheraner* (forerunner of *The Lutheran Witness*), 1856, quoted in C.F.W. Walther: *The American Luther*, p. 89-90.

Doctrine and Practice

The Lutheran Rite

#2

“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)

FROM THE BISHOP

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

With many of the visitations now completed for this year, we are getting ready for the beginning of the new year of studies at St. Ignatius seminary. We also had a diocesan phone conference to attend to several matters, especially the admission of two new pastors to the diocese: Pastor Randy Moll and Deacon Martin Jackson of Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church in Rogers, Arkansas. It is always a great joy to recognize agreement with brethren in a common confession of the faith and pray for the Lord’s continue blessings on the fellowship of this diocese. Also, one of our pastors—Dr. Kent Heimbigner—recently celebrated the 30th anniversary of his ordination; it was a great joy to mark such an occasion, especially with two of our incoming seminarians being present for the occasion.

Yours in Christ, Bishop Heiser



(Above: Visitation with Pr. Rutowicz and St. Boniface L.C.; below: Pr. Heimbigner’s ordination anniversary, with Seminarians Jacob and Ben Henson.)



Lesson from the Book of Concord The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Article XVIII.

Of the Freedom of the Will, they teach, that man's will has some liberty for the attainment of civil righteousness, and for the choice of things subject to reason. Nevertheless, it has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God [1 Cor. 2:14]; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received through the Word. These things are said in as many words by Augustine in his *Hypognosticon*, book iii: "We grant that all men have a certain freedom of will in judging according to [natural] reason; not such freedom, however, whereby it is capable, without God, either to begin, or much less to complete aught in things pertaining to God, but only in works of this life, whether good or evil. 'Good,' I call those works which spring from the good in Nature, that is, to have a will to labor in the field, to eat and drink, to have a friend, to clothe oneself, to build a house, to marry, to keep cattle, to learn diverse useful arts, or whatsoever good pertains to this life, none of which things are without dependence on the providence of God; yea, of Him and through Him they are and have their beginning. 'Evil,' I call such works as have a will to worship an idol, to commit murder," etc.

They condemn the Pelagians and others who teach that, without the Holy Ghost, by the power of nature alone, we are able to love God above all things; also to do the commandments of God as touching "the substance of the act." For, although nature is able in some sort to do the outward work (for it is able to keep the hands from theft and murder), yet it cannot work the inward motions, such as the fear of God, trust in God, chastity, patience, etc.

—The Augsburg Confession

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3: HEBREWS 11:1-7 16TH S. A. TRINITY

Hebrews 11 is sometimes called the "Hall of Faith." But this label gives the impression that the men and women listed are "great" people. But all the people in the Bible (except our Lord) are flawed, just like us. Whatever good works a man does is solely the result of what God has done for him, in him, and through him.

Therefore, it is necessary that we not skip over the very first verse of this chapter: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The key word to understand is "faith". It is not "playing a hunch," nor is it a "blind leap," and it is certainly not "making a decision for Jesus." It is none of those things, because faith is not something we do. It is the work of God. Faith makes what we hope for in the future (eternal life) as certain as if it were already a past event. It takes what our earthly eyes cannot see and gives us 20/20 spiritual vision.

All of the "Biblical titans" that are subsequently listed are introduced with the phrase "by faith." It is only because of the gift of faith that they were able to trust and act according to God's plan. The people of the Church in our time are no different. We have their same substance—both the seed of Adam and the seed of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we too can accomplish great things for God, as He works in us.

Prayer: Dear Father, thank You for the gift of faith. May we hold fast to it, immersing ourselves in Your Means of Grace, and exercise it by loving our neighbor. Though Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, Amen.

In Hebrews 10 we have a re-emphasis on what the author has already stated, as well as some new ground. After elevating the once-for-all sacrifice that is made through Jesus Christ, the author describes what that sacrifice means to us: "... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." To approach God under the old covenant, and then only on the Day of Atonement, the high priest had to be ceremonially washed and sprinkle blood on the Ark of the Covenant. But now, through Christ, all believers have unlimited access through the washing of Holy Baptism.

With this tremendous gift and opportunity, why wouldn't we desire to take advantage of gathering together with fellow believers in God's House? "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." We have a duty to ourselves and to our brothers and sisters in Christ to hold the Divine Service as the most important time of the week. No less than God Himself is present, eager to serve us with all of His grace, blessing, and forgiveness.

Prayer: I love Thy kingdom, Lord, the house of Thine abode, the Church our blest Redeemer saved with His own precious blood. (TLH 462:1)

As St. Paul concludes his first epistle to the Thessalonians, he emphasizes the catholicity of that which has been written: "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren." That which has been written to the Church is edifying in every generation. Even when the holy apostle is addressing circumstances in a particular church, that which is taught is applicable to the whole Church.

As he concluded his epistle, the apostle once again appealed to the Church to show due respect for the servants of the Word: "And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves." The Word and Sacraments were instituted by the Lord of the Church to be those instruments through which He would continue to guide us in repentance and faith toward Him.

"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all." In the care of souls, all of this is accomplished through the Word, as the Law admonishes and warns, and the Gospel grants peace. The unruly may need to hear the word which binds their sin; the weak, the consolation of the absolution. In all things, the Word accomplishes that for which the Lord has sent it, and it will not return to Him void.

Prayer: Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

St. Paul wrote to St. Timothy in order to combat false doctrine: “remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine...” Human traditions and opinions were being raised in opposition to the truth, and the defense of gross immorality was “contrary to sound doctrine”.

The holy apostle leaves no room for anyone who might, in a spirit of defensiveness, try to bring up his own past in an effort to negate his charge to Timothy. Paul readily acknowledged he had been “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man”; thus he declares that he had been the chief of sinners. “However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”

St. Paul reverses the point which the false teachers might try to raise against him; far from any hypocrisy, the holy apostle offers up his life as a type of that which is to be manifest in Church: as the chief of sinners found life and salvation in repentance and faith in the Christ, so, too, may all those who are turned from their iniquity by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments.

Prayer: Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

In general terms, a covenant is an agreement made between two persons. In Biblical terms, as the author of this letter to the Hebrews states, there can be no covenant made without the shedding of blood. The covenant is better understood as a testament when the direction is one-sided, and when a death is involved: “For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.”

The Father’s will and testament was to give man His only begotten Son (John 3:16). The Son’s dying will and testament was to institute His Holy Supper for the forgiveness of our sin (1 Corinthians 11:23-25). Both of these gifts are “one-sided”, initiated and enacted by God alone. The giving of the Son and the Son giving of Himself constitute God’s great love for mankind. As the new High Priest, Jesus not only offered, but also became the sacrifice. In doing so, the testament was ratified by the shed blood of the Testator. The testament would be unique, for it was to include all people, not just a chosen nation. It would not be a relationship in time, but an eternal one which culminates in the resurrection and the life of the world to come.

Prayer: Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me; died that I might live on high, lived that I might never die. As the branch is to the vine, I am His, and He is mine. (TLH 342:1)

Today's reading takes us into the heart of the Old Testament tabernacle. While the author gives us some general information about its layout, a much fuller description can be found in Exodus, chapters 25 through 40. Only the highlights are given in Hebrews, so that the greater New Testament fulfillment may be emphasized. In particular, the Most Holy Place bears the greatest significance. Only the high priest could enter, and then only on the Day of Atonement. To enter this inner sanctuary, he brought not offerings, but sacrificial blood. Such were the sharp restrictions that God had commanded, to emphasize the chasm that exists between an infinitely Holy God and hopelessly sinful man.

When Jesus died, that relationship changed. The curtain of the temple was rent in two (Matthew 27:51), thus declaring the end of the old covenant and the dawn of the new. From that moment on there would be free access to the Father, but only through the blood of the spotless Lamb, Jesus Christ. And now, the door from heaven is opened, allowing the Father to see us in a new and forgiven light, and granting us every grace and blessing. It also grants us the privilege of prayer, as we can now knock on the very doors of heaven, knowing that our Father is eager to hear our petitions and grant our requests according to His good and gracious will.

Prayer: Alas! and did my Savior bleed, and did my Sov'reign die? Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I? (TLH 154:1)

The words with which this chapter begins form the basis for the General Prayer of the Church: "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." This is a place for prayers regarding particular circumstances, but the majority of the General Prayer of the Church is of such a character that the needs of all men are addressed.

St. Paul's words concerning the way in which men are to pray—"the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting"—is reflected to this day particularly by the pastor during the General Prayer and other prayers in the service. In the words of the Ceremonial: "The General Prayer shall be spoken by the Pastor or Deacon, who shall face the altar and pray with unclasped hands, palms open, fingers together, elbows in; his hands shall not be raised higher than his shoulders." Paul's words concerning the decorum of women are not limited to one time and place, but are applicable to all generations, reflecting the order of creation.

Prayer: Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Having addressed the significance of the order of creation to the Church, St. Paul turns to the necessary qualifications for consideration of those men who may be called to the office of the ministry. As St. Timothy and St. Titus were charged with examining such men as might be ordained to the one office of the ministry, whether serving as bishops, presbyters, or deacons, the holy apostle sets forth such criteria as form an important aspect of such examinations to this day.

The words of 1 Timothy 2 have already very clearly taught that no woman may be considered for the office of the ministry; the point of what St Paul sets forth in chapter 3 is that many Christian men within the congregation are also not to be called to this office, lest scandal ensue.

And the criteria which are set forth are those for consideration of a man for his ordination. Removal from office centers around three points of offense: false doctrine, impenitent immoral life, and willful neglect of the duties of the office (and the assessment of those duties is according to the biblical standard, not something which people imagine should be the duties of the office). Service in the ministry is troubled by many afflictions from without and within, and that situation is only made worse when there are many within the Church who desire something else from their pastors besides faithful preaching, teaching, and administration of the Sacraments. And it is only made worse when pastors share in that confusion.

Prayer: Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.”

In the first covenant between man and God, He promised earthly blessings in exchange for man’s obedience to His commandments. The people did not hesitate in their reply: “Then all the people answered together and said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do’” (Exodus 19:8). Many thought they could see an easy way to garner God’s promise of protection and prosperity. But God knew they would fall short. All mankind, carrying the sickness of our sinful nature, is incapable of obeying the Law.

As a result, God used Israel’s failure in the first covenant as a mirror of the Law to teach the truth about man’s inadequacy. The first covenant could never last since fallen man could never perform up to God’s righteous standard. Its purpose was to prepare those who would hear. It would reveal the need for a second covenant, a testament, where God would be the merciful Savior who blesses us in spite of our sinful failure. “‘For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”

Prayer: Most gracious God, keep us ever mindful of our need for a Savior. May Your Spirit continually work repentance in us, that our hearts may always be fixed on You. We pray this in Jesus’ holy name, Amen.

The author of this letter to the Hebrews has already introduced the concept of “high priest” as it applies to Jesus, and has linked together the priesthood of Christ with Melchizedek. But now in chapter 7, he describes this relationship in much greater detail. In the Old Testament we have only four verses which mention Melchizedek. In those brief references we see a character who not only blesses the patriarch Abraham, but who himself receives a tithe from him. Undoubtedly Melchizedek is at least a type, if not the pre-incarnate Christ Himself. Whatever the case, the author of Hebrews makes clear the point that Melchizedek, as well as Christ, are from a superior line of priests than that of Levi. Jesus is not “more of the same,” but the “one and only” Great High Priest—the very Son of God.

So what is the significance of Jesus’ elite office of Great High Priest? Throughout the Old Testament priests could only offer imperfect sacrifices. No matter how good the sacrificial animal was, it was never good enough. No matter the quality or the quantity, the animal could never be a sufficient offering to pay for the gravity of man’s sin. Additionally, it would have to be a man—a sinless man—to be the once-for-all sacrifice for all mankind. Thanks be to God for fulfilling that sacrifice in Jesus Christ!

Prayer: Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away the stain. But Christ, the heav’nly Lamb, takes all our sins away; a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they. (TLH 156:1-2)

Jesus declared in Luke 18: “And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” St. Paul reiterates this teaching in his epistle: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” The faithful Church will contend with those who depart from the faith and who establishes themselves according to the doctrines of demons. Those things which St. Paul specifically identifies have been witnessed in the Roman church, and elsewhere, as men departed from the truth. Now, the Church where the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ’s institution is mocked and ridiculed by those who now believe, and live according to, a different doctrine.

The Church will endure against the gates of Hades, and the mockery to which she is subjected by such false teachers cannot overthrow the truth. The faithful Church remains the Bride of Christ.

Prayer: Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

St. Paul's concern for the care, and faithfulness, of the widows of the Church demonstrates the obligations which Christians have toward one another. St. Paul is concerned, first, that Christians care for their loved ones, and he admonishes the saints to remember what children owe in terms of support toward their parents: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Again, "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows." Paul is not challenging the fact that they are widows; he's establishing who is responsible for their care.

At the same time, St. Paul establishes fixed criteria for those whom the Church would receive as widows who are cared for by the Church (when, presumably, their family is unable to aid them), with public testimony to their godly conduct. The concern is avoiding offense, and also the spiritual dangers posed by such a status for those who are younger: "Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some have already turned aside after Satan." We care for the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ, but we do so in the way which is best for their spiritual needs.

Prayer: Almighty and Everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

which He reveals and preaches, and through which He illumines and enkindles hearts, that they understand and accept it, cling to it and persevere in it.

For where He does not cause it to be preached and made alive in the heart, so as to be understood, it is lost, as was the case under the Papacy, where faith was entirely put under a bushel, and no one recognized Christ as his Lord or the Holy Ghost as his Sanctifier, i.e. no one believed that Christ is our Lord in the sense that He has acquired this treasure for us, and, without our works and merit, made us acceptable to the Father. And what indeed was the cause? This, verily, that the Holy Ghost was not there to reveal it, and caused it to be preached; but men evil spirits were there, who taught us to obtain grace and be saved by our works. Therefore it is no Christian Church; for where Christ is not preached there is no Holy Ghost who makes, calls and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord. ...

The holy Christian Church the Creed denominates a communion of saints, for both expressions are taken together as one idea. But formerly the one point was not there, as it is also unintelligible in the translation. If it is to be given very plainly, it must be expressed quite differently. For the word *ecclesia* is properly an assembly. But we are accustomed to the word church, which the simple do not refer to an assembled multitude, but to the consecrated house or building. Although the house ought not to be called church, except for the reason that the multitude assembles there. For we who assemble constitute and occupy a particular space, and give a name to the house according to the assembly.

Everything therefore in the Christian Church is so ordered that we shall daily obtain free and full forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. Thus, although we have sin, the Holy Ghost does not allow it to injure us, because we are in the Christian Church, where there is full forgiveness of sin, both in that God forgives us, and in that we forgive, bear with and help each other.

But outside of this Christian Church, where the Gospel is not, there is no forgiveness, as also there can be no sanctification. Therefore all who do not seek sanctification through the Gospel and the forgiveness of sin, but expect to merit it by their works, have expelled and severed themselves from the Christian Church.

These articles of the Creed, therefore, separate and distinguish us Christians from all other people upon earth. For all outside of Christianity, whether heathen, Turks, Jews or false Christians and hypocrites, although they believe in and worship only one true God, yet know not what His mind toward them is, and cannot confide in His love or expect any good from Him; therefore they abide in eternal wrath and damnation. For they have not the Lord Christ, and besides are not illumined and favored by the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

ARTICLE III.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

This article I cannot explain better than (as I have said) that it treats of Sanctification, viz. that thereby the Holy Ghost, with His office, is declared and set forth, namely, that He makes holy.

Therefore we must establish ourselves upon the word HOLY GHOST, because it is so precise and comprehensive that we cannot use another like it. For there are besides many kinds of spirits mentioned in the Holy Scriptures—the spirit of man, heavenly spirits and evil spirits. But the Spirit of God alone is called the Holy Ghost, that is, He which has sanctified and still sanctifies us. For as the Father is called Creator, the Son Redeemer, so the Holy Ghost, from His work, must be called Sanctifier, or one that makes holy. But what is the process of such sanctification? Answer: Just as the Son obtains dominion, whereby He redeems us, by His birth, death, resurrection, etc., so also the Holy Ghost effects our sanctification, as follows, namely, by the communion of saints or Christian Church, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body and eternal life; that is, He first leads us into His holy congregation, and places us in the bosom of the Church, whereby He preaches to us and brings us to Christ.

For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him and have Him for our Lord, except as it is offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Gospel. The work is finished and accomplished; for Christ, by His suffering, death, resurrection, etc., has acquired and gained the treasure for us. But if the work remained concealed, so that no one knew of it, they it were in vain and lost. That this treasure therefore might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and apply it to us. Therefore sanctification is nothing else but bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which, of ourselves, we could not attain.

Learn then to understand this article most clearly. If you are asked: What do you mean by the words: “I believe in the Holy Ghost,” you can answer: I believe that the Holy Ghost makes me holy, as His name implies. But whereby does He accomplish this end? Or what are His means and method to this end? Answer: The Christian Church, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. For in the first place He has a peculiar congregation in the world, which is the mother that bears every Christian through the Word of God,

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

I. Of Sin.

Here we must confess, as Paul says in Rom. 5:11, that sin originated from one man Adam, by whose disobedience all men were made sinners, and subject to death and the devil. This is called original or capital sin.

The fruits of this sin are afterwards evil deeds which are forbidden in the Ten Commandments, such as unbelief, false faith, idolatry, to be without the fear of God, arrogance, blindness, and, to speak briefly, not to know or regard God; secondly, to lie, to swear by God’s name, not to pray, not to call upon God, not to regard God’s Word, to be disobedient to parents, to murder, to be unchaste, to steal, to deceive, etc.

This hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of nature, that no reason can understand it, but it must be believed from the revelation of Scriptures, Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12 sqq.; Ex. 33:3; Gen 3:7 sqq. Wherefore the dogmas of the scholastic doctors [that is, medieval Roman Catholic theologians] are pure errors and obscurations contrary to this article, for by them it is taught:

That since the fall of Adam the natural powers of man have remained entire and incorrupt, and that man by nature has right reason and a good will, as the philosophers teach.

And that man has a free will to do good and omit evil, and, again, to omit good and do evil.

Also that man by his natural powers can observe and do all the commandments of God.

And that, by his natural powers, he can love God above all things, and his neighbor as himself.

Also if a man do as much as is in him, God certainly grants to him His grace.

And if he wish to come to the sacrament, there is no need of a good intention to do good, but it is sufficient if he have not a wicked purpose to commit sin; so entirely good is his nature and so efficacious the sacrament.

Also that it is not founded upon Scripture that, for a good work, the Holy Ghost with His grace is necessary.

Such and many other things have arisen from want of understanding and learning concerning both sins and Christ our Saviour, and they are truly heathen dogmas which we cannot endure. For if these dogmas would be right, Christ has died in vain, since there is in man no sin and misery for which He should have died; or He would have died only for the body, not for the soul, inasmuch as the soul is entirely sound, and the body only is subject to death. —The Smalcald Articles

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14: 1 TIM. 6:1-21 14TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

The Scriptures often exhort, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Nevertheless, not all hearing is to be commended. St. Luke 8:18 warns, “Therefore take heed how you hear.” Similarly, the pastor is exhorted, “Preach the Word, in season and out of season” (see 2 Timothy 4:2), and yet not all preaching is profitable. In today’s reading St. Paul warns Timothy, “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, he is proud, knowing nothing...” The Word of God can be misused to puff up the reputation of the preacher with useless wranglings. It can be used to always stir up “disputes and arguments.” Others seek to use the preaching of the Word as “a means of (financial) gain.”

Timothy, the man of God, is directed to use “wholesome words.” Those wholesome words are both “the words of our Lord Jesus Christ” and “the doctrine which accords with godliness.” “Wholesome” is that which is balanced. Just as a wholesome meal includes a proper balance of the food groups, so Timothy is to use the Word of God to teach that proper balance of Law and Gospel. First, pursue the righteousness of Christ which comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Then the believer seeks godliness, out of thankfulness for the gift of salvation. The believer is to live a life of contentment with what God provides in this world, and he is to be willing to share with others. In this way, Timothy is to make “the good confession.”

Prayer: O Lord, may the preacher teach wholesome words and the hearer consent to them, that both may lay hold on eternal life in Jesus Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26: HEB. 6:1-20 15TH S. A. TRINITY

It has been said that the Christian truth revealed in Scripture is so simple a child may understand it and, at the same time, so complex and awe-inspiring that a theologian can swim in it for centuries and still not reach the bottom.

The author of Hebrews calls us to press forward to maturity in our faith and leave behind elemental principles, but he is not calling us to abandon our previous instruction. On the contrary, those principles are the foundation, and now the Holy Ghost builds upon that with the Scriptures.

You may have read the Bible from cover to cover, and yet you will never outgrow studying it. Even Martin Luther berated foolish pastors and parishioners who thought they were too smart and educated to continue to study their Catechism. A true student of God’s Word will never tire of even the basic principles, because they contain infinite truths which will press us forward into maturity. By God’s grace we continue to learn and mature, knowing that the Holy Ghost is building us up in the Gospel of Christ crucified.

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25: HEB. 4:14-5:14 15TH S. A. TRINITY

The humbling of Christ is a profound fact for our trust in His coming, because we know that He came down for our sake. The Lord is not unsympathetic to our struggles, but instead has endured suffering for us that we may know Him.

This is why we must hold fast to this confession. Anything that would deter us from boldly coming to the God of grace for our strength must be cast out of our mind. Even our own sins and shortcomings must be dealt with at the Lord's throne of grace, namely, by receiving His Word and Sacraments. If we neglect this great comfort in Christ, we become spiritually immature and dull. We forget the confession of faith which is given to us graciously by the Lord in our Baptism.

Our flesh tells us to flee and trust our own strength when confronted with sin and weakness. The Lord calls us to His throne of grace to repent and daily drown our old Adam by faith that we may stand firm in this confession and grow in maturity with the love of Christ.

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15: 2 TIM. 1:1-18 14TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

St. Paul declares that “our Savior Jesus Christ... has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” St. Paul ceaselessly draws attention to the Gospel, the good news of our salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, who overcame death. Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” Once the Law has revealed our sin, we have a guilty conscience. But the Gospel message of forgiveness drives out “the spirit of fear” of punishment. St. Paul sees his work as a Gospel preacher: “I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.”

What yesterday's devotion described as “wholesome words” (1 Timothy 6:3) is now described as “the pattern of sound words.” “Sound” and “wholesome” come from the same Greek word. What is that balanced pattern? St. Paul says, “...in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” Faith in Jesus Christ comes first, then love toward God and man follows after. Once we have received the Gospel message of forgiveness of sins, we have a “sound mind,” which says, “...I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” The Gospel gives God's power to live a life of good works in thankfulness.

Prayer: Almighty Father, You have given preachers the pattern of sound words for the increase of faith and love. Through faith in Your Gospel message give me a pure conscience, a genuine faith, and a sound mind, so that I lead a life of love until the day of our Lord's return. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16: 2 TIM. 2:1-26 14TH S. A. TRINITY

Here is St. Paul's description of a New Testament minister: "A worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The Word of truth is divided into Law and Gospel. Through the preaching of sin and grace, dying and rising, the person comes to believe the truth that "Jesus Christ, of the seed of David was raised from the dead."

In this chapter St. Paul explains the dishonor of sin and the honor of righteousness through the sanctifying water of Holy Baptism. The words of the hymn which St. Paul cites in verse 11 is an allusion to Holy Baptism: "For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him." (See Romans 6.)

Every one of us was born with a sinful nature, and by nature were "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). Through a baptism of repentance you received the forgiveness of sins. 1 Corinthians 6:11 describes that baptismal change saying, "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Verse 21 of today's reading says, "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work."

The forgiven pastor is to "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Through baptismal repentance, the forgiven layman is to "know the truth" and "escape the snare of the devil."

Prayer: Heavenly Father, having made us Your children in Holy Baptism, let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Amen.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24: HEB. 2:5-3:6 15TH S. A. TRINITY

The unbelieving mind cannot comprehend the might and power of God. Moreover, it cannot accept that this God would humble Himself, being born of a virgin, to die for unworthy sinners. Faithless reason says that is not the way earthly power is gained and it certainly seems foolish to think that Jesus would be willing to die, and by that death conquer sin itself. Defeating death by dying is "unreasonable".

The unbelieving crowds who witnessed the crucifixion could have echoed the words of Isaiah, saying, "We saw Jesus despised and rejected!" And yet, this was the Lord's plan all along. The second person of the Triune God came in flesh to redeem fallen humanity. He gives His great sacrifice for sin because He loves sinners and builds His kingdom by bringing many sons to glory.

The author of the book of Hebrews emphasizes this point by mentioning the angels as he did in chapter one. Jesus, who is over the angels, chose to be made lower than the angels for a time to take on the suffering of death. By this the victory is won, and all of Jesus' enemies lie defeated. The unbelieving world scoffs at this kind of power, but those who believe rejoice!

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The writer to the Hebrews starts his Epistle by establishing the authority of Jesus Christ. The Lord has chosen in these last days to speak exclusively through the Word which Jesus brings. He doesn't point to dreams or visions or out-of-this-world signs. He has given us His Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit and written by His Apostles.

Jesus has been given this authority, as well as authority over angels and heavenly realms. This is not the authority of a simple man, a prophet, or a charismatic moral teacher. This is the type of authority that comes only from God. The writer to the Hebrews makes it very clear: Jesus is God.

He is the God-Man. He took on human flesh to die for our sins and rose from the dead to defeat sin, death, and the devil. He has overcome the world and shown it that He is who he said He was. He is the Word made flesh; the everlasting Son of the Father; true God and true Man. Therefore, let us trust Jesus Christ and hear His Word alone.

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

St. Paul calls himself a bondservant (Greek: *doulos*, “bondservant” is a nice way of saying “slave”). The service of a slave is not a matter of choice. It is done at the will of the owner/master. With the word “slave” St. Paul is emphasizing that the service which he performs of preaching the Gospel is not self-chosen, but was committed to him “according to the commandment of God our Savior.” Ever since his conversion, St. Paul desired with fervent love to give thanks by His obedience to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19). Nevertheless, St. Paul makes it clear: “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Many pastors today have Luther's Sacristy Prayer displayed in their study. “O Lord God, Thou hast made me a pastor and teacher in the church. Thou seest how unfit I am to administer rightly this great and responsible Office; and had I been without Thy aid and counsel I would surely have ruined it all long ago. Therefore, do I invoke Thee. How gladly do I desire to yield and consecrate my heart and mouth to this ministry! I desire to teach the congregation. I, too, desire ever to learn and to keep Thy Word my constant companion and to meditate thereupon earnestly. Use me as Thy instrument in Thy service. Only, do not forsake me, for if I am left to myself, I will certainly bring it all to destruction. Amen.”

Prayer: O Lord, give our pastors the will to preach the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, which grants the blessed hope of eternal life. Amen.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18: TITUS 2:1-10 14TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

The term vocation can be synonymous with occupation. The term “vocation” originated with Christianity, which saw that a believer is to serve God according to his place in life. It is a vocation or calling, because God, the divine Mover, has seen fit to draw us into our vocation. In Titus, chapter two, St. Paul gives exhortations that correspond to various vocations: older men, older women, young women, young men, and bondservants. Luther’s Table of Duties in the Small Catechism does the same thing. Each one is to behave in accordance with the vocation in which they find themselves.

Not only is Titus to preach “the doctrine of God our Savior,” but those who believe in Christ are to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.” The word “adorn” means to put something on. First, the good news of the forgiveness of sins is to be believed so that we receive the benefits of Christ’s atonement: righteousness. Second, we are to put that Gospel on! Believers are to adorn the Gospel with a life of thankfulness and good works. The words following today’s text explain what Christians are to do in their vocation. “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age...”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach us to serve wholeheartedly in our vocation with all good fidelity, that the Gospel we believe may show forth in our words and deeds. Amen.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22: PHILEMON 1-25 15TH S. A. TRINITY

When the Apostle Paul appealed to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus to receive the former bondservant back, we get a picture of the Gospel in this short Epistle. Onesimus had previously disobeyed his master, but since he had received faith by the Holy Spirit--at work in Paul’s preaching--the appeal for Philemon to receive him back is heard and given.

We, too, being slaves to sin were once disobedient in our lack of faith. When the Lord opens our eyes to see His great love for us, as we receive these gifts by faith, we are welcomed back and are called God’s children.

The Apostle Paul also imitates Christ by telling Philemon to charge to Paul’s account what Onesimus owes. Paul, like Christ, is willing to pay for Onesimus’ crime of abandoning his master. So, the second Person of the Triune Godhead, the God-Man Jesus, has our sins credited to His account, paying for those sins on the cross, so our disobedience is no longer counted against us and bearing on our conscience. How great a salvation we have in Christ Jesus!

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21: TITUS 3:8-15 15TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

Life as a baptized member of the Body of Christ is not always easy. There are many times when dissention and “foolish disputes”, as the Apostle Paul says, will arise, even amongst ourselves. These types of works will ultimately distract us from Christ and make us act more like our Old Adam. Works of foolishness and dissention always carry our mind and actions away from Christ and away from His life-giving Word.

This is why the Apostle Paul highlights the “faithful sayings” of God’s Word and exalts good works within the life of the Christian. We are not justified or saved from sin by these good works. However, the Lord does not call us to a life of dissention and foolishness which is contrary to His Word. Instead, the Lord invites us to grow in Him and to excel in good works. The Lord has given us a new heart and mind, with new desires, when He washed us in Holy Baptism. By faith we trust the “faithful sayings” of God’s Holy Word, praying that the Holy Ghost will help us live less from our Old Adam, and more from Christ.

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19: TITUS 2:15-3:3 14TH S. A. TRINITY

When Luther was being opposed and slandered on account of the Reformation teaching that a man is saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ, he distinguished between his person and his office. If his opponents wished to attack his person, Luther did not defend himself. However, if they attacked his office of doctor/teacher in the Church, Luther said that he was compelled to defend his office. According to his office of doctor/teacher, he was required to make judgments concerning matters of religion. Dr. Luther was called by God to preach the truth and rebuke falsehood. St. Paul tells Titus, “Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” And Paul means they ought not to despise Titus’ office!

There is a difference between authority and power. Power is the brute might needed to make something happen. Authority is the authorization by another to carry out a task. Our Lord and Savior authorized the pastoral work of teaching and baptizing to be carried out first by the Apostle and then by those who have been divinely called into the Pastoral Office. Matthew 28:18-20, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

Prayer: Almighty God, needing forgiveness ourselves, make us merciful in our rebukes that we show humility to all men. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

ARTICLE I.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

This represents and sets forth most briefly the essence, will, action and work of God the Father. Since the Ten Commandments have taught that we have no other gods, it is natural to ask the question: What kind of a being is God? What does He do? How shall we praise, represent or describe Him, that He may be known? ... So that the Creed is nothing else than the answer and confession of Christians, arranged with respect to the First Commandment. As if you were to ask a little child: My dear, what sort of a God have you? What do you know of Him? He could say: First, indeed, my God is God the Father, who has created heaven and earth; besides Him I believe in nothing else as God; for there is no one else who could create heaven and earth.

But for the learned, and those who have acquired some scriptural knowledge, these three articles may be extended and divided into as many parts as there are words. But now for young scholars let it suffice to indicate the most necessary points, namely, as we have said, that this article refers to the Creation: that we emphasize the words: CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. But what is the force of this or what do you mean by these words: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker, etc. Answer: I believe and mean to say that I am a creature of God; that is, that He has given and constantly preserves to me my body, soul and life, members great and small, all my senses, reason and understanding, food and drink, shelter and support, wife and child, domestics, house and possessions, etc. Besides, He causes all creatures to serve for the necessities and uses of life—sun, moon and stars in the firmament, day and night, air, fire, water, earth and whatever it bears and produces, bird and fish, beasts, grain and all kinds of produce, and whatever else there is of bodily and temporal goods, good government, peace, security. So that we learn in this article that none of us has his life of himself, or anything that is here enumerated or can be enumerated, neither can he of himself preserve them, however small and unimportant a thing it might be, for all is comprehended in the word: CREATOR.

Besides this we also confess that God the Father has not only given us all that we have and see before our eyes, but daily preserves and defends against all evil and misfortune, averts all sort of danger and calamity; and that He does

all without our merit of pure love and goodness, as a friendly Father, who cares for us that no evil befall us. But to speak more of this pertains to the other two parts of this article, where we say: "Father Almighty."

Hence we must infer and conclude, since everything which we have and are, and whatever is in heaven and upon the earth, are daily given and preserved to us by God, that it is our duty to love, praise and thank Him without ceasing; and in short to serve Him with all these things, as He has enjoined in the Ten Commandments.

Here we could say much if we would attempt to show how few there are that believe this article. For we all pass over it, hear it, and say it, but neither see nor consider what the words teach us. For if we believed it with the heart, we would also act accordingly, and not stalk about proudly, bid defiance and boast as though we had life, riches, power and honor, etc. all of ourselves, so that others must fear and serve us, as is the practice of the unhappy, perverted world, which is immured in darkness, and abuses all the good things and gifts of God only for its own pride, avarice, lust and luxury, and never once regards God, so as to thank Him or acknowledge Him as Lord and Creator.

Therefore, if we only believed it, this article must humble and terrify us all. For we sin daily with eyes, ears, hands, body and soul, money and possessions, and with everything we have, as especially do those who even fight against the Word of God. Yet Christians have this advantage, that they acknowledge themselves in duty bound to serve God for all these things, and to be obedient to Him.

We ought, therefore, daily to practice this article, to remember and consider in all that we see, and in all good that falls to or lot, and wherever we escape from calamity or danger, that it is God who gives and does all these things; that therein we perceive and see His paternal heart and His transcendent love toward us. Thereby the heart would be aroused and kindled to be thankful for all such good things, and to employ them to the honor and praise of God. Thus we have most briefly presented the meaning of this article, as much as it is at first necessary for the most simple to learn, both as to what we have and receive from God, and what we owe in return, which is a most excellent object of knowledge, but a far greater treasure. For here we see how the Father has given Himself to us, together with all creatures, and has most richly provided for us in this life, besides that He has overwhelmed us with unspeakable, eternal treasures in His Son and the Holy Ghost...

—The Large Catechism