

“Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” This was a trap. The Jews did not care about justice; they only wanted to justify their hatred. If He said, “Stone her,” they would say, “Then You are no different from us.” If He said, “Let her go,” they would respond, “Then you oppose Moses and are a false prophet.” The Jews did not care about justice, or about Moses; they just wanted to trap the Christ.

The Lord is not fooled. Their hypocrisy was obvious. For one thing, where was the man? It takes two to commit adultery. If they cared about justice, they would have brought the man, too. It is possible they had plotted to trap the woman in sin in order to trap the Christ, and they protected the adulterous man because he was part of the plot.

Was the woman a sinner? Certainly. But the woman was sufficiently humbled by the weight of the Law. The Jews, on the other hand, were proud of their hypocrisy. Therefore, Christ shows mercy to the woman, but ignores the Jews. Even so, Christ is ready to forgive every sin, as soon as the sinner repents. There is no sin so ugly that He will not forgive it. But hypocrisy—born of unbelief—is when a man refuses to repent. As he refuses to repent, so God refuses him forgiveness.

Prayer: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; 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 LUTHERAN HERALD



(PICTURED: THE FIRST AND SECOND BUILDINGS OF SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH [MALONE, TEXAS]. THE CURRENT BUILDING IS THE FOURTH CHURCH ON THIS SITE. SALEM WAS ESTABLISHED ON JUNE 6, 1886.)

JUNE 6–JULY 3, 2021

**A PUBLICATION OF
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NORTH AMERICA**

The Calendar

June 6	Trinity 1/15 th Anniv. of ELDoNA	TLH 393
June 13	Trinity 2	ELHB 277
June 15 (T)	<i>David Henkel, Pastor and Confessor</i> TLH 472	
June 20	Trinity 3	TLH 319
June 24 (R)	<i>The Nativity of St. John the Baptist</i> TLH 292	
June 25 (F)	<i>Fest. of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession</i> TLH 267	
June 27	Trinity 4	Luth. Hymnary #98
June 29 (T)	<i>Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles</i> TLH 466	
July 2 (F)	<i>The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i> TLH 275	

(If you would like a complete list, see your pastor, or contact the diocesan office via email at info@eldona.org)

ST. IGNATIUS LUTHERAN SEMINARY—Summer Intensives begin June 7 and continue through July 9. Please note: Matins on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday will be at 7:30 A.M. with classes beginning at 8 A.M.; on Wednesday, classes will begin at 7:30 A.M., with Matins at 11:30 A.M.

June 7–11	First week of Intensives (Monday–Friday 8 A.M.–Noon) Greek: 8–10; Theology (Trinity): 10–Noon
June 14–18	Second week of Intensives (Mon.–Fri. 8 A.M.–Noon) Pentateuch: 8–10; Theology (Trinity): 10–Noon
June 21–25	Third week of Intensives (Mon.–Fri. 8 A.M.–Noon) Greek: 8–10; Pentateuch: 10–Noon
28–July 2	Fourth week of Intensives (Mon.–Fri. 8 A.M.–Noon) Pentateuch: 8–10; Liturgics 2: 10–Noon
July 5–9	Fifth week of Intensives (Mon.–Fri. 8 A.M.–Noon) Liturgics 2: 8–Noon

DIOCESAN ANNIVERSARY AND ANNIVERSARY OF SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH—June 6th is the 135th anniversary of the founding of Salem Lutheran Church in Malone, Texas; it is also the 15th anniversary of the founding of the diocese.

FRIDAY, JULY 2: LUKE 6:36–42 FESTIVAL OF THE VISITATION

The Festival of the Visitation is when Mary, the mother of God, visited Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, in accordance with the words of the angel who said to Mary, “Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age” (Luke 1:36). In the appointed Gospel lesson for the Visitation, we hear the words from Mary’s song, the Magnificat: “[God] has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty” (Luke 1:52–53).

Christ says in today’s devotion, “Judge not, and you shall not be judged.” That is, do not judge by human standards, but learn to judge as God judges. It is God who humbles the mighty and exalts the lowly. Who is mightier than the Son of God? Yet the Son of God humbled Himself to the point of crucifixion. Who is humbler than the sinner? Yet Christ, through Baptism, exalts the sinner to be God’s child. Do not judge by human standards, but learn to judge as God judges through Christ. Everyone who is in Christ is holy, no matter how humble. Everyone not in Christ is condemned, no matter how mighty.

Prayer: Almighty God, who hast dealt wonderfully with Thy handmaiden, the Virgin Mary, and hast chosen her to be the mother of Thy Son and hast graciously made known that Thou regardest the poor and lowly and the despised, grant us grace in all humility and meekness to receive Thy Word with hearty faith and so to be made one with Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

In Acts 3, Saints Peter and John healed a lame man in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This had happened at one of the gates of the temple, so it attracted a crowd of Jews who had gone there to worship. Peter preached to them that the lame man had been healed by the power of Jesus Christ, whom they had killed, but whom God had raised from the dead, and that those who believed would be saved and enjoy the resurrection of the dead. It was for this miracle and this preaching of the resurrection from the dead that Peter and John were arrested.

The next day, they stood before both Annas and Caiaphas—the very priestly pair who had illegally tried and condemned the Christ. St. Peter preaches the same message all over again to them, saying, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

The message of Christ crucified remains the same, no matter who is listening. To the lame man, it was both bodily healing and eternal salvation; to Annas and Caiaphas it was condemnation for their unbelief. It is not our job to convince someone to believe. No matter who is listening, “we preach Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23), and we leave the rest to the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES—Pr. Henson will observe the 30th anniversary of his ordination on June 30; Bishop Heiser will observe the 25th anniversary of his ordination on June 25.

DIOCESAN FAMILY CAMP THIS SUMMER— Family Camp didn't happen last year due to Covid, but that's not stopping us this year. Summer Camp is a great opportunity to meet other people from diocesan congregations, learn God's Word and the Church's confession. **Here's the information you need to know about this year's Family Camp:**

When: Monday, July 19—Friday, July 23, 2021

Camp begins Monday evening with Supper and Vespers. Camp concludes with Matins on Friday morning.

Who: All youth, young adults, and families of the diocese (and friends)

Where: Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Kerrville, Texas. Daily activities, classes, games, and meals will take place at the church, located at 204 Spence St. in Kerrville.

Accommodations: La Quinta is offering us a group rate of \$89/night, which is a significant discount from its usual rate. When you call to make reservations tell them that you are with the ELDONA Family Camp. Telephone Number (830) 896-9200

If you are the only one coming from your parish, speak with your Pastor or Pastor Sullivan to find a room to share with other participants.

Travel: San Antonio International Airport is 1 hour from Kerrville. Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is 2 hours from Kerrville.

Theme: The Church's Year. The pastors of the diocese will take us through the church calendar, its feasts and festivals, saints and martyrs, to show why the Church marks time the way she does. Special Event: This year we'll be travelling to Enchanted Rock State Park for the final day of Camp. Entrance fees for the Park are \$8 for persons 13 years of age and up. Children 12 and under are free.

Cost: Besides travel and hotel, the only cost is \$20 to cover meals. Please let your pastor know ASAP if you plan on attending Camp!

Lesson from the Book of Concord

The First Sunday after Trinity

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30: MATTHEW 18:15–20 4TH S. A. 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-

There is a difference between "forgiving" and "ignoring". As fallen sinners, it is not always possible to separate them correctly, but God does. Through faith in Christ, God forgives our sins, but He does not ignore them. He no longer condemns us for our sins, but He does work to remove our sins and to keep them from hurting us.

Christians will sin against each other. But, when we do sin, God uses our fellow Christians to limit the damage of sin and to bring about healing. In particular, Christ is speaking of private sins against you, personally, for He says, "If your brother sins against you, go..." This does not apply to public sins, or to sins against someone else. If one Christian sins privately against another, it is that Christian's responsibility to speak to his brother privately and respectfully before passing judgement. In so doing, God works to limit the damage of sin through that Christian.

If, ultimately, the sin comes to the authority of the Church, God still chooses to work through Christian men. Christ says, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." He is speaking of the Office of the Keys—that special office given to the Church in the persons of the called ministers. Through the Ministry of these men, God works healing for His Church, either by removing the cancerous sin of unrepentance, or declaring forgiveness and reconciliation to the one who has faith in Christ.

Prayer: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Your brother's faith and his conscience are more important than your freedom. "If your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love." This is not only true of food, but also drink, the music you listen to, the jokes you make, the words you use, etc. If it distresses your brother, do not do it. If you enjoy it and Scripture does not forbid it, keep it between yourself and God so that you do not distress your fellow Christians.

St. Peter fell into this error, as recorded in Galatians 2. St. Paul publicly rebuked him for showing partiality to the Jews over the Gentiles. "Before certain men came from James, he [Peter] would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision" (Galatians 2:12). This is not recorded that we may ridicule St. Peter. It is recorded to show that the Gospel is offered to all men, that we must repent of offending each other, learn to labor for each other's good, and that there is forgiveness when we fail.

We do not belong to ourselves, but to Christ. Therefore, we must labor for the good of Christ's people, which was also the work of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Prayer: O God, who didst give Thine Apostles Peter and Paul grace to lay down their lives for the sake of Thy dear Son, endow us, we beseech Thee, with like constancy that we may at all times be ready to lay down our lives for Him who laid down His life for us; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

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

Pastors do not get to pick their audience. They are called and sent by the Lord of the Church. Sometimes a pastor is blessed with a congregation full of grateful hearers who love the Lord and His Word—this is a wonderful thing. Other times, a pastor has the hard duty to shepherd a church of argumentative and stubborn people who fight him on doctrine and practice. The writer to the Hebrews tells God’s people, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

Regardless of his audience, the pastor’s duty is to be faithful to the Gospel message. A pastor’s account to God is based on this faithfulness and not on the faithfulness of his hearers. He often needs to be encouraged by that fact, rather than discouraged by any lack of appreciation for his work. Whether the people hear the Word with good and honest hearts, or whether they harden themselves against it, they cannot claim the Lord has neglected them. He sends them ministers and stewards of His mysteries so that the saints may grow in the grace and knowledge of His precious Gospel.

Prayer: 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. Amen.

The Christ came into the world to pay for the sins of all mankind, so that everyone who believes in Him would be justified. John 3:17 says, “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

This is important to remember when we read those passages where Christ gives the Law. “Love your enemies,” He says, “that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” If we stop there, we may think that Christ came only to tell us what to do. If we are honest with ourselves, we realize that we do not love even our friends perfectly, let alone our enemies. It would follow, then, that we are not sons of the Father, but damned sinners.

Thanks be to God that Scripture does not stop there with the Law. Christ, whose work is to save the world, is teaching about Himself. In this life we will never love our enemies as we should. So He did. On the cross He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). He loved His enemies in our place, because we cannot.

We were once His enemies. Through Baptism He made us children of God. We cannot be perfect as our Father is perfect by trying to be perfect. Rather, the Father declares us to be perfect when we are baptized into Christ so that His perfect love is applied to us.

Prayer: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

Thou shalt not bear false witness.

Thus you see, in short, it is forbidden to speak any evil of our neighbor, and yet the civil government, preachers, father and mother are excepted, that this commandment may be so understood that evil be not unreproved. Just therefore as, according to the Fifth Commandment, no one is to be injured in body, and yet the executioner is excepted, who, by virtue of his office, does his neighbor no good, but only evil and harm, and nevertheless does not sin against God's commandment, because God has, on His own account instituted that office; for He has reserved punishment for His own good pleasure, as He has threatened in the First Commandment,—just so also, although no one has a right in his own person to judge and condemn another, yet if they to whose office it belongs refuse to do it, they sin as well as he who should do so without such office. For here necessity requires one to speak of the evil, to make accusation, to investigate and testify; and it is not different from the case of a physician who is sometimes compelled to handle and examine a patient in parts otherwise not to be examined. Just so governments, father and mother, brothers and sisters, and other good friends, are under obligation to each other to reprove evil wherever it is needful and profitable.

—The Large Catechism, §274–275

TUESDAY, JUNE 8: 1 TIMOTHY 6:6–19

1ST S. A. TRINITY

Some men go into the Ministry for wrong reasons. Some want to have authority, others want prestige, and still others want a large congregation that provides a big salary. None of these motives serve the Gospel. They don't serve the Lord, and they don't serve God's people.

Faithful pastors often suffer poverty; they serve small flocks, and sometimes have to work secular jobs to survive. Rather than pursuing lucrative careers, the man of God pursues righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. And in their service to Lord they learn to be content with the simple things that He provides for them. They value faithfulness to God's Word and Sacraments above the value of riches. "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" (2 Timothy 2:21).

Having learned to be content, pastors are to teach their people to do the same. A Christian's wealth should not be wealth of money or goods, but of love and good works. His treasure should not be on earth, but laid up in heaven, and his mansion is in the house of His Father. If a Christian is blessed with temporal goods, he should learn the honor of sharing those goods with those less fortunate. Let the child of God put righteousness above riches, that the Lord may be glorified in everything!

Prayer: 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. Amen.

Every good thing that we Christians have in this life we have by the grace of God. Whether it is our intellect and academic achievements, our physical health and fitness, or the success we have in the workplace and our diligent work ethic—all of these are gifts of God. They all belong to the “Daily Bread” for which we pray in the Lord’s Prayer. The Lord warns us, as He warned the children of Israel: “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God... [lest] you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth’” (Deuteronomy 8:11, 17).

Rather than boasting in temporary things, we should boast in the enlightenment worked in us by the Holy Spirit. We should glory in the loving kindness of God, that He would sacrifice His Son—the Bread of Life that endures to everlasting life (John 6:27). We should rejoice that He gives us His righteousness to cover our sins for our justification. We should glory in tribulations, too, knowing that they produce in us hope. “[And] hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5). And we should glory in the Word of the Lord which endures forever. In short, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD” (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Prayer: 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. Amen.

So many people try to have it both ways. They don’t want to be rude and offend their Christian friends, but they don’t want Jesus telling them how to run their lives, either. So they say things like, “I believe Jesus was a great man, maybe even a prophet, but not God.” It doesn’t really work. If He was in error, if He sinned, let this be demonstrated. But if that can not be done, if Jesus told the truth when He claimed to be the Son of God and to take away the sin of the world, then believe in Him!

People go looking for a “sliding scale,” even when a situation really is a matter of black or white, right or wrong, truth or falsehood. Jesus told the truth. Jesus is the Truth, the Truth made flesh and blood. “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” He tells us.

So believe in Him. And believing, submit to Him, to His will, to His designs for your life. Repent of this “I believe in Him, but I want to do things my own way” sort of attitude. The One you believe in knows you better than you know yourself, and loves you more perfectly than you love yourself. As we trust Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, God grant us also grace to trust Him in everything else.

Prayer: 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. Amen.

“And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.”

In Hebrew, there is a little curl on the upper right corner of the first letter of the alphabet, a “tilde” or “tittle.” It is like the dot on an “i” or the cross on a “t”. Not even that much of the Law will fail. If God said it, He meant for us to understand it, and believe it; all of it!

Plainly, it isn’t easy for heaven and earth to pass away. That doesn’t happen every day! But it would be even harder for part of God’s Word to pass away. His Truth is non-negotiable. Against the “why can’t we all just agree on a few things and get along?” attitude of our age, we must insist that everything God has revealed really matters.

Today we celebrate the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession in A.D. 1530. The word “confession” actually means to say (“fess”) together with (“con”). In our Augsburg Confession we “say with” the Scriptures that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ, completely apart from our own works or the works of other people. On this article especially, the Church stands or falls. God grant that we “say together” with Scripture, into the ears of all who will hear it, the whole saving truth of the Holy Christian Faith.

Prayer: Almighty God, who, through the preaching of Thy servants, the blessed Reformers, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine forth, grant, we beseech Thee, that, knowing its saving power, we may faithfully guard and defend it against all enemies, and joyfully proclaim it, to the salvation of souls and the glory of Thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Our fear of God should be greater than our fear of the world. When we fear the world, it is because it threatens us in our body and makes our lives difficult. When we fear the Lord, it is because He threatens with eternal punishment all those who hate Him and transgress His Commandments. The world can only kill us once, but the death of the wicked is an everlasting thing.

Also, our love of God should be greater than our love of the world. While we fear God according to His Law, we love Him for His Gospel. Dr. Luther writes, “But terrible as are these threatenings, so much the more powerful is the consolation in the Promise, that those who cling to God alone should be sure that He will show them mercy, that is, show them pure goodness and blessing” (Large Catechism, First Commandment). To love the world is to throw God’s love back in His face, but to confess His love to others is to believe in Him as a gracious and loving Savior.

Whether we are called and ordained servants in His Church, or simply brothers and sisters in the faith, we all have occasion to confess our Savior before men. Let us not shy away from that confession, but be bold and walk in faithful love as Christ was bold in His love for us.

Prayer: 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. Amen.

The goal of Jesus' redemptive work was never peace among the worldly nations. Jesus told His disciples, "My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27). Our Savior came to establish peace between God and men by blotting out our sins on the cross. This is the peace we Christians have with God, being justified by faith (Romans 5:1).

The world was not peaceful when it dealt with our Lord—it hated Him and killed Him. Similarly, the world hates the Church because it follows its Head. When the Gospel goes out, it divides (Hebrews 4:12). It enlightens and quickens some, while others reject it and remain in darkness. It is a test of faith when Christian parents must choose between the Lord and their children. Likewise, when children have to choose the Lord over their own parents. It is a test of one's resolve to follow the Lord while he must deny himself and embrace the cross over an easy life. But Christ doesn't ask anything more of us than what He went through Himself. Not all of His relatives believed in Him, and His life led Him to the cross. But He promises that, no matter what we lose in this life, we will find more in the life that is to come.

Prayer: 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. Amen.

"For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Faith starts with Jesus. We don't start with something else (e.g., our understanding of God, or of man, or of the Law) and then check out Jesus to see if He measures up. We start with Jesus, and so we understand who God is, what man was meant to be, and how the Law serves us.

The Pharisees had it backward. They figured they knew the Law, and they believed the disciples were breaking it by "harvesting" (picking heads of grain and eating them) on the Sabbath; and Jesus was letting them get away with it, therefore He didn't measure up. Jesus corrects the Pharisees. The Sabbath is His, and He teaches what He wants with it.

By means of the Law we see our need for Jesus, but that Law never was going to save us. Hence, John the Baptist called people to repentance, but pointed them to Jesus. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). So as the days begin to shorten, we celebrate the Nativity of John the Baptist; as they begin to lengthen (increase) again, we celebrate the Nativity of Jesus (Christmas). The Sabbath was the Old Testament day of rest. Now, Jesus says, "Come to Me ... and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). We find rest for our souls, not in a day, but in Jesus.

Prayer: Almighty God, who through John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, didst proclaim salvation, grant that we may know this Thy salvation and serve Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

“He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.”

Have you ever wondered why pastors wear black shirts with those white tabs at the neck? The symbolism suggests this: we admit that we are “black in sin” like anyone else, but the Lord has set us apart, to use our throat boxes to speak His holy Words to you, so there is white at the throat. We find this idea in the words of our Lord Himself. “He who hears you hears Me.”

Can pastors speak words that are not true? Of course they can, and history is littered with way too many examples of that. But there is an opposite error we can make too: the error of dismissing the Word of God as nothing more than the word of a man, when that word says something to us that we do not want to hear. Dear ones in Christ, a faithful pastor does not speak words of rebuke because he likes to upset you, or because he wants you to dislike him. He does it because he is watching out for your soul, and calling you back to repentant faith in Jesus. So hear him, and thus, hear Jesus.

Prayer: 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 liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Dr. Luther writes: “A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe Him from the [whole] heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol” (Large Catechism, First Commandment).

Jesus warns against covetousness because it is tantamount to idolatry. The fool in Jesus’ parable expected that his amassed wealth would assure his ultimate success. But because it consumed his heart it led to his ultimate demise. It is not a sin to be wealthy in this life—God gives us different portions in this life according to His gracious providence. This sin is not in possessing wealth, but loving and trusting in it more than in God Himself. To store up treasure for yourself in this way proves you to be nothing but a brigand with no true love for the Lord. Instead, if a Christian is blessed with an abundance of goods, then he should use it to extend God’s kingdom on earth by supporting the Church and the Ministry of the Word, and to help one’s neighbor, showing charity to those who are less fortunate. Someone who does these things shows himself to be a child of God whose real treasure is stored up in heaven.

Prayer: 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. Amen.

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

TUESDAY, JUNE 22: MARK 10:13–16

3RD S. A. TRINITY

“Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”

How sadly misunderstood these words of our Lord are! Many people think they mean “children are sweet and innocent, so we must become sweet and innocent like them to be saved.” It seems innocuous, but it is a formula for all the horrors of a works-righteous plan of salvation. How sweet is sweet enough? How can I return to innocence, since I have so often strayed?

Little children, just like the rest of us, are born sinful and unclean. The point of analogy, rather, is this: children have nothing to offer. They do not come to Jesus with bargains. They simply receive what He graciously gives. It is in this sense that we are to receive the kingdom of God “as a little child.” No bargaining with God. No deals. No manipulations. It is simply the faithful confession that we deserve nothing, and the faithful trust that, simply by grace through faith for Christ’s sake, God will bestow on us His saving gifts; He will yet be merciful toward us.

Prayer: 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 liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

How true to life our Lord’s parable is. The older son, the overachiever, is not just a little contemptuous of the younger brother, who can never be as good as he is. The younger son, not even particularly interested in excelsior accomplishments, just wants to have fun. And he does. He receives his father’s grace, and he squanders it. The Law does its work, and he comes home with this confession, “I am no longer worthy...” The father is in such a hurry to bestow grace that he doesn’t even let his son finish his confession of sins! The older son, well, he’s the one who is in trouble! He thinks he actually is the father’s son because of his own worthiness! And he won’t go in and join his forgiven mess-up younger brother’s party.

Which one are you? No matter how good we think we have been, we don’t deserve our Father’s mercies. And yet, for Christ’s sake, we have them. God grant us therefore, from the heart, to embrace our fellow unworthy ones, and to eat and drink with them in the joy of our salvation, by grace through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer: 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 liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Verses seven through eleven are beyond a doubt meant for any faithful disciple who avoids hypocrisy in the practice of the faith and seeks fulfillment of his heavenly Father’s will in all things. By God’s Spirit working faith in him, he judges himself and makes requests according to the divine Word and heavenly will. This section of the Apostle Matthew’s inspired recording of Christ’s Gospel is connected with the call to be about the work of doing the Father’s will mentioned in Matthew 7:21 and Matthew 12:50, and they should not be separated. A disciple seeks Christ by God’s power and provision, and will likewise receive the faith and grace to live and work as His true disciple. This theme about our heavenly Father so prominent throughout our Lord’s sermon cannot help but point the hearer back to the Lord’s Prayer in chapter six, and remind all who look to that prayer that they have a loving, merciful Father who desires what is best for them.

Prayer: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost 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 liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The inerrant Word of God guides, comforts, and strengthens us throughout our sojourn in this fallen world. That same inerrant Word does not lie, nor contradict itself, but speaks only the one Divine Truth of God—and in these verses it clearly tells us what we are to experience after death!

In the Gospel of John we are told, “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die...’” Jesus Christ, God Himself, makes a sure and unbreakable promise that we shall live eternally in His kingdom. The faithful will be honored guests at that bridal feast of well-aged wine and rich food full of marrow that is described in our Old Testament text. With that banquet He also wipes away every tear, and we will radiate with the joy of eternal glory as the heavenly host rejoices that another saint has been seated at the table of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. We will join our brothers and sisters in the Church Triumphant, as we all gaze upon the awesome radiance of our heavenly Father. We will receive the Cup of Blessing, not just from the earthly steward of the mysteries of God, but instead be blessed to see the face of the Master of the mysteries for all eternity, in all His glory.

Prayer: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost 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 liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

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

To “hope” is just another way of showing faith. The Israelites’ lack of faithfulness and hope is addressed throughout the book of Isaiah. The ones who trust in or look expectantly to the Lord in faith are those who shall not be disappointed, for “the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.” God the Lord is beyond the human mind’s ability to comprehend, thus we joyfully receive the wonderful blessing from Philippians 4:7 after sermons in our parishes: “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

In Isaiah 40:31 we are told the Lord will “renew”, literally “exchange.” Their weakness will give way to God’s strength. This Hebrew verb is used when speaking of changes of clothes, which can symbolize strength and beauty. Paul tells believers to clothe themselves with Christ (Romans 13:14). Also, eagles are commonly recognized and admired for their vigor and speed. The faithful will happily march ever onward toward their promised eternal home in the holy Paradise that Christ has won and prepared for them purely by grace, made theirs through faith.

Prayer: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost 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 liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

We must remember that Christ speaks with Messianic authority when He interprets the Law. He does so in order that the intention of the Law may be fully realized. The Law prescribed oaths to remind man that he is always speaking in the presence of his God. Jesus instructs against the oath in order that His disciple may speak their every “Yes and No” as in the presence of God.

Consider these verses in the context of the entirety of chapter five and the harsh condemnation against hypocrisy that occurs through the entire account of Saint Matthew. The verses of chapter five reinforce and enhance each other powerfully. In verses 28, 32, 34, 39, and 44, Jesus’ disciples seem to be held to a higher standard than the Old Testament believers. Why is this the case? Because their righteousness should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees who misuse the Word of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:20). Also, this statement is a command of the Lord. Look at each one of these topics and you will fully appreciate the wretched state of poor sinners when compared to our Lord and Teacher. Who will save us from this body of death? Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ, our Redeemer! (Romans 7:21-25)

Prayer: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost 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 liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Because of who the Suffering Servant is and what He has been divinely sent to do, God will ratify a covenant to take away the sins of the world. He will free men from death for rebellion against Him, purely by grace, through faith in this Servant and His holy work. The Messiah will fulfill the Davidic covenant as King, and will institute the new covenant of divine grace through faith by His death. The people of Israel and the other nations will share alike in the spiritual benefits won and delivered by the Messiah, as if they constituted one global community.

The conclusion of verse six is a beautifully concise Gospel message in a few simple words: “light to the Gentiles.” Paul and Barnabas brought “the light of the world” (John 8:12) to the Gentiles by proclaiming the Word to all who would listen, regardless of their ethnic heritage. Paul and Barnabas justified bringing “the light of the world” to the Gentiles by referring to these very verses and to 49:6 (Acts 13:47; see also Simeon’s words in Luke 2:30–32).

Prayer: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost 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 liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Lord, in this wonderful Gospel narrative of Saint Matthew, continues to point out the terrible price of hypocrisy and the evil, diabolical “fruit” of the hypocrite. Hypocrites will be given away by their evil works (the bad fruit of their false doctrine) with word and deed stemming from their unbelief (hypocrisy), as described in verses fifteen through twenty. Our Lord declares this is not hard to spot if we will simply look and listen with eyes and ears divinely taught by the holy, orthodox doctrine of His pure Word.

It is amazing how many who want to claim to be Christians (Christ’s disciples) are willing, at times seeming almost eager, to compromise God’s pure doctrine by blending a little heresy to soothe the itching ears and indulge the hearts of sinners. Most claim their reason for practicing hypocrisy and heresy is to reach a broader audience—but their false message has nothing worth offering. Through their hypocrisy they destroy the one thing that can help and ultimately save the sinner. This is the truly bad fruit of hypocrisy that destroys souls and brings the eternal death of unbelief, and denial of Christ and His holy Gospel.

Prayer: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost 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 liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.