

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



MARCH 7–APRIL 2, 2022

**A PUBLICATION OF
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN DIOCESE OF
NORTH AMERICA**

The Calendar

The Lutheran Hymnal (1941): TLH; *The Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1912): ELHB;
The Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary (1913): ELH

(Monday: M; Tuesday: T; Wednesday: W; Thursday: R; Friday: F; Saturday: S)

March 6	Lent 1—Invocavit	TLH 559
March 9 (W)	Wednesday of Ember Week in Lent	
March 11 (F)	Friday of Ember Week in Lent	
March 12 (S)	Saturday of Ember Week in Lent	
March 13	Lent 2—Reminiscere	TLH 329
March 17 (R)	St. Patrick, Bishop and Confessor	TLH 499
March 19 (S)	St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Guardian of our Lord	
March 20	Lent 3—Oculi	TLH 262
March 25 (F)	The Festival of the Annunciation	TLH 237
March 27	Lent 4—Laetare	TLH 151

ST. IGNATIUS SEMINARY UPDATE—The Winter quarter will conclude on February 18. The Spring quarter begins on February 28. The classes this quarter are as follows:

E009—Greek Readings 3 (1 hr.)

S005—Creation and Redemption (3 hrs.)

H004—Reformation (3 hrs.)

E004—Isaiah (3 hrs.)

Greek Readings will be taught as arranged with the instructor. *Creation and Redemption* will be Tuesdays and Thursday from 10 to 11:30 A.M. *Reformation* will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 to 10 A.M., and on Wednesday from 9:30 to 10:30 A.M. *Isaiah* will be on Mondays and Fridays from 9:00 to 10:30 A.M.

The seminary midterm break will begin Saturday, April 9 and classes will resume Monday, May 2. The break is situated around Holy Week, Easter, and the annual Colloquium and Synod of the diocese, as seminarians are expected to attend the diocesan meeting, as are all clergy of the diocese.

EMBER WEEK IN LENT—Entering into the season of Lent, the Ember Days of this penitential season are upon us. We encourage all members of the diocese to be mindful of the needs of the diocese and our sister churches. If you would like to provide support, offerings may be sent to “ELDoNA” care of the diocesan treasurer, Rev. Michael Henson, at Trinity Lutheran Church, 1000 North Park Ave. Herrin, IL 62948. (Please include a notation designating whether you wish to help the diocesan general fund, St. Ignatius seminary, or the sister churches.)

COLLECT AND PSALM FOR USE IN THIS TIME OF WAR—As the Russian regime engages in its barbaric and unjustifiable war against Ukraine, the bishop of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church has asked that prayer would be offered on behalf of the Ukrainian people. The following Collect is appointed for that purpose and it is to be used in the Divine Service and Prayer Offices of Matins and Vespers throughout Lent:

O almighty Lord God, who alone riddest away tyrants, stir up Thy great strength, we beseech Thee, and come and help Thy Church; scatter the counsels of them that secretly devise mischief, and do Thou bring the dealings of the violent to naught; cast down the unjust from high places, and cause the unruly to cease from troubling; allay all envious and malicious passions, and subdue the haters and evil-doers. Look in mercy on those immediately exposed to peril, conflict, sickness, and death; comfort the prisoners, relieve the sufferings of the wounded, and show mercy to the dying. Remove in Thy good providence all causes and occasions of war, dispose the hearts of those engaged therein to moderation, and of Thy great goodness restore peace among the nations; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The use of Psalm 37 as an imprecatory Psalm may also be used in the Prayer Offices, in addition to the appointed Psalm of the day or week.

—Bishop Heiser


Invocavit - 1st Sunday in Lent
20. O Christ, Who Art the Light and Day

Anon. Latin, 8th Century

L. M.
German



1. O Christ, who art the light and day,
2. All - ho - ly Lord, to Thee we bend,
3. Let not dull sleep the soul op - press,
4. Light slum - bers let our eye - lids take,
5. O Lord, our strong de - fense, be nigh;
6. Re - mem - ber us, dear Lord, we pray,



Thy beams chase night's dark shades a - way;
Thy ser - vants through this night de - fend,
Nor se - cret foe the heart po - ssess,
The heart to Thee be still a - wake;
Bid all the powers of dark - ness fly;
Whilst bur - dened in the flesh we stay;



The ver - y Light of light Thou art, Who
And grant us calm re - pose in Thee, A
Nor Sa - tan's wiles the flesh al - lure, And
And Thy right hand pro - tec - tion be To
Pre - serve and watch o'er us for good, Whom
Thou on - ly canst the soul de - fend; Be

The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff at the top and a bass clef staff at the bottom. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The melody is primarily in the treble staff, with the bass staff providing a harmonic accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the treble staff, aligned with the notes. The lyrics are: "dost that bless - ed light im - part. qui - et night from per - ils free. make us in Thy sight im - pure. those who love and trust in Thee. Thou has pur - chased with Thy blood, with us, Sa - vior, to the end. A - men." The word "A - men." is written on a separate line to the right of the final note of the treble staff.

dost that bless - ed light im - part.
qui - et night from per - ils free.
make us in Thy sight im - pure.
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Lesson from the Book of Concord Invocavit Sunday

Article XXI.

Of the Worship of Saints, they teach, that the memory of saints may be set before us, that we may follow their faith and good works, according to our calling, as the Emperor may follow the example of David in making war to drive away the Turk from his country. For both are kings. But the Scripture teaches not the invocation of saints, or to ask help of saints, since it sets before us Christ, as the only Mediator, Propitiation, High-Priest and Intercessor. He is to be prayed to, and hath promised that He will hear our prayer; and this worship He approves above all, to wit, that in all afflictions He be called upon [1 John 2:1]: “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father,” etc.

—the Augsburg Confession

Humble pie will always be hard to eat for our sinful flesh. And, yet, this is exactly what Jesus dishes out when questions of self-greatness arise. “Think less of yourself.” You don’t hear ‘health, wealth, and prosperity’ preachers declaring that. God’s way is not the way of the flesh!

The flesh is always thinking too highly of itself because it is so self-absorbed. Even believers can be found using the phrase, “I will be able to handle things when they get difficult because I have a strong faith.” Little do they realize how much they are trusting in themselves. Faith is only as good as what faith is focused upon. If someone’s faith is focused upon his own faith, then he is in for a shock when that supposed faith gets tested. It is a false comfort!

God, however, creates and sustains His people in the one true faith by working through His Divine Service of Word and Sacrament Ministry. When properly proclaimed and rightly administered, those means of grace bring His people to have a faith that is focused on Christ and His fully atoning merits for the forgiveness of sins.

Through such a Christ-centered faith your flesh is brought to nothing and you are justified and declared great in the eyes of God for Jesus’ sake! Now that brings restoration, strengthening of the brethren, and true comfort. Thanks be to God!

Prayer: O Lord, mercifully hear our prayer and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to defend us from them that rise up against us; 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 father of lies attempts to get Jesus to call God a liar. That is what temptation is—a luring away from God and His truth. And that eventually becomes the fruition of sin—an active rebellion against God, His truth, and what He ordains. It is ultimately always the enticement that God has held back something that “appears good.” Sinful flesh gets lured with these words, “God has not really taken care of you enough. His Commandments are too restrictive anyways. You should just wander the way you want and have your will done. How bad could it be? You’ve done it before.”

The devil is not the only one who brings temptations. The fallen world lures away from God and His truth, as well: “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4) Our sinful flesh, by its very nature, also joins in on the temptations: “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” (James 1:14-15)

Your new nature can now rejoice that Christ withstood the temptations for you! It is only through Him and His Word of truth that forgiveness comes with His victorious strength to stand!

Prayer: O Lord, mercifully hear our prayer and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to defend us from them that rise up against us; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

What a beautiful place the Garden of Eden was for Adam and Eve. All things supplied to them by God, having a oneness with God and each other. Some may ponder why God gave the command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Luther's thoughts on this text are a blessing: "After everything had been entrusted to him to make use of it according to his will, whether he wished to do so for necessity or for pleasure, God finally demands from Adam that at this tree of the knowledge of good and evil he demonstrate his reverence and obedience toward God and that he maintain this practice, as it were, of worshiping God by not eating anything from it." (Luther's Works, AE. Vol. 1, pg. 94).

With His command to not eat, God was testing to see how obedient Adam would be to His Word (and Eve through Adam). We all know the result; and we also know how everybody does when it comes to practicing (and maintaining) a reverence and obedience toward God—total failure, due to the total depravity of our flesh, resulting in death. Thankfully Jesus, the obedient One, came for the life world!

Through repentance and belief in Him and His fully atoning merits, oneness with God and eternal life is declared. Remembering your Baptism, die and rise through Christ crucified, for He has made His cross the tree of life!

Prayer: O Lord, mercifully hear our prayer and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to defend us from them that rise up against us; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

To be sure, this is not a text that is meant to promote everyone having to become a vegetarian. The text reveals the faithfulness of Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. And concerning their example, this inspired text of God's Holy Scripture was recorded to inspire other Christians to exhibit the same faithfulness toward God.

Faithfulness is sometimes hard for Christians, as our flesh and the Spirit do battle on a daily basis. But the inspired words of St. Paul always remind us, "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." (2 Timothy 2:11-13, NKJV)

Just as the Gospel from Sunday and the previous texts this week have exhorted, Christ is the obedient, faithful One for you! He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross. It is the faithfulness of Christ's flesh and blood that brings the New Man in you to continue in faith toward God and in fervent love toward your neighbor. A Christian's faithfulness is, undoubtedly, important, but more important is to remember that it is only sustained by God working through His Word and Sacraments. May His Holy Spirit's call by the Gospel ever draw us to partake!

Prayer: O Lord, mercifully hear our prayer and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to defend us from them that rise up against us; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Following in line with Sunday’s Gospel text and purposely beginning our repentant season of Lent, this week’s texts have dealt with temptations, being tested, and displaying faithfulness. Our text for today follows suit. It is a great warning against haughtiness (which means, “thinking too much of oneself”) and idolatry (which is breaking the First Commandment, namely, determining what is more important than God; especially oneself).

Being told to not trust in the flesh, or that the flesh must be put to death, or taking heed lest you fall, doesn’t appeal to our old man, who always wants to think more highly of himself. A “presumed righteousness” is what Luther said that the old nature possesses. But all of that putting down of the flesh is meant to build up the New Man—to put total trust in the One who was tempted and overcame in your place. He is the One who was tested and remained perfect for you, and the only faithful One who humbled Himself to create the way of righteousness in fleeing to Him through faith. Christ and His fully atoning merits for the forgiveness of sins is the only way of escape, that you may be able to bear what comes your way. Yet again God comes to the rescue of man from himself! And, behold, look at who He fixes all eyes on? Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith!

Prayer: O Lord, mercifully hear our prayer and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to defend us from them that rise up against us; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

There are many who misquote a text of God’s Word saying: “Money is ‘the root of all’ evil.” But here is what Holy Scripture actually proclaims: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (1 Timothy 6:10, NKJV)

Today’s text from Ecclesiastes casts a similar warning: money is not the answer! You might think you will be happy with more money, but if it comes in abundance it usually carries with it some bad circumstances. For example, you will never be satisfied, no matter how rich you become (if not monetarily, then materially); as your riches increase, so will your expenses, and so will your anxiety over holding on to what you have acquired. Also, the more you hoard for yourself, the more susceptible you will be to misfortune and ruin. And no matter how much you acquire, you will leave this world with none of it, and you will end up making your life on earth miserable.

Our prayer isn’t for riches, nor poverty. The prayer is simply for contentment. And how might that come? Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (which is only declared through faith in Christ Jesus) and all these things will be added to you. Christ is your contentment—and the joy of your heart!

Prayer: O Lord, mercifully hear our prayer and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to defend us from them that rise up against us; 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 Reminiscere Sunday

Article XIII. How Man is Justified before God, and of Good Works.

What I have hitherto and constantly taught concerning this I cannot in the least change, viz. that by faith (as St. Peter says) we acquire a new and clean heart, and God accounts, and will account us righteous and holy, for the sake of Christ, our Mediator. And although sin in the flesh has not been altogether removed and become dead, yet He will not punish or regard this.

For good works follow this faith, renewal and forgiveness of sins. And that in them which is still sinful and imperfect is not accounted as sin and defect, even for Christ's sake; but the entire man, both as to his person and his works, is and is called just and holy, from pure grace and mercy, shed upon us and displayed in Christ. Wherefore we cannot boast of our many merits and works, if they be viewed apart from grace and mercy, but as it is written, (1 Cor. 1:31): "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," viz. that he has a gracious God. For thus all is well. We say besides that if good works do not follow, faith is false and not true.

—The Smalcald Articles, Part III

Reminiscere
21. O Faithful God, We Worship Thee

Nik. Selnecker, 1587

L. M.

Wen wir in hoechsten Noethen sein

J. Gerard, 1555

1. O faith - ful God, we wor - ship Thee!
2. Thou, through Thy ser - vant, say'st to me:
3. O Lord, we bless Thy gra - cious heart,
4. Give us Thy Spi - rit, peace af - ford

Thou par - don'st our in - i - qui - ty,
"Thy sins are all for - giv - en thee,
For Thou Thy self dost heal our smart,
Now and for - ev - er, gra - cious Lord!

Thou grant - est help in sin's dis - tress,
De - part in peace; but sin no more,
Through Christ our Sa - vior's pre - cious blood,
Thy Word and ho - ly Sa - cra - ment

And soul and bo - dy Thou dost bless,
And e'er My par-d'ning grace a - dore,"
Which for the sake of sin - ners flowed.
Pre - serve to us, till life is spent. A - men.

It can be challenging for us to read passages like this. Not only should we feel sorrow for the demon afflicted boy and his grief-stricken father, but we should also see our own doubt and be reminded of our Lord's warnings against such unbelief.

Jesus' words against this lack of faith are reminiscent of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai to find unbelief and unfaithfulness in the Israelite camp. Even so, Jesus is not lacking compassion here. The demon-possessed boy's father pleads for this compassion and recognizes his ailment of doubt. He confesses, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

This is how we ought to confess as well. Those baptized into Christ still fight doubt from our Old Adam. Often we will look away from the compassion that Jesus shows us in His death for sinners. Our Lord may even convict us with a strong word against such doubt. This is why we confess our sins at every Divine Service. We cry out with one voice, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Prayer: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength, keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; 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 this reading, King Solomon is praying that the Temple may be a place of healing for the people. He acknowledges that evil things like famine and pestilence are an outgrowth of sin. The Lord also uses these things to convict and convince His people that, as Solomon says in verse 38, “shall know every man the plague of his own heart.”

Solomon petitions the Lord to hear the prayer of His people and forgive their sin when they “spread forth [their] hands toward this house.” The Apostle John tells us that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the Temple (John 2:18-22). Therefore, we stretch out our hands of faith toward Christ, believing that He will save us from sin and death. The Lord also calls the foreigner—those who are far off from Him—and causes them to come to His Temple, which is found in Christ. By this, the true nature of Solomon’s prayer is answered, not just in his time, but for all ages.

Prayer: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength, keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

When Nathan the Prophet tells a story to King David about a thieving rich man who takes a lamb from a lowly poor man, we read that “David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man.” Now isn’t that interesting? David had his own sins of murder and adultery—sins that he had not repented of yet—while he is angry with the sin of this rich man that Nathan describes.

Like David, we often focus on sins around us instead of the sin that still wants to cling to us. The Old Adam wants to fight against the New Man in Christ. It is easy for the Old Adam to say within us, “I’m not as bad as that sinner over there!”

This is another reason to confess our sins at every Divine Service, and with private Confession and Absolution. We are all poor sinners who need the Lord’s mercy through Christ Jesus. When we recognize our own need for God’s forgiveness, we will be aided by the Holy Ghost to show others the way of repentance properly.

Prayer: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength, keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

It is no coincidence that when the Greeks desired to see Jesus we also get a saying from the Lord about dying wheat. Jesus uses the growth of wheat from a dying seed to explain His own work. His death in a specific time and place will open the doors of salvation for people of every age and nation; providing salvation for both Jew and Greek.

Jesus now calls all nations to follow him. St. Patrick was compelled to preach the saving message of Jesus Christ to the pagan nation of Ireland. Even when the Irish enslaved St. Patrick, he knew the love of Christ could set the Irish free from their bondage to sin. The saints can teach us how we are to follow our Lord and take up our cross in our daily lives. We might not see God convert an entire nation in our lifetime, as St. Patrick did, but we can call upon the Holy Ghost to keep us faithful in following Christ.

Prayer: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength, keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Many heterodox denominations make much about their supposed control of spirits. Whether it is the Hollywood idolizing of a Roman priest doing exorcisms, or the Pentecostals who claim to wield power over the devils and the Holy Ghost himself. Even the thought of these things are hard to think about because of how twisted those ideas are! In contrast, those who had true power over the evil spirits—those whom Our Lord Jesus gave authority for that specific task—were told not to boast of such things!

There is a good reason why our Lord tells the disciples not to rejoice in their power over spirits. There is a better knowledge than the devil being subject to them; it is the knowledge of forgiveness by Christ's death and resurrection! In the Lamb's Book of Life, Christians are not included because of our merits or power, but because of what Christ has done in defeating sin, death, and the devil. That is true power! It is the power of Christ to forgive sins! That is where our hope is! And that is what the devil truly fears.

Prayer: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength, keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

One of the most famous rabbis of his time, Gamaliel, was Paul's teacher and probably a grandson of Rabbi Hillel, the leader of one of the two great schools of Jewish legal interpretation. We have no evidence that Gamaliel was a believer in the Lord Jesus, but his logic is something to be admired.

Everyone has examples set for them in this life; some good and some not so good. The Apostles counted themselves worthy to suffer for Christ, following the example of our Lord who suffered for our sakes to win forgiveness of sin. Today, as we remember St. Joseph, we should reflect on the godly example that parents are called to set for their children, as well as the holiest example of our Father in heaven, who adopted us through His Son Jesus Christ. Because of the adoption, the Holy Ghost gives us the ability to cry out, "Abba, Father!" This is so that we may always live in the example of our Father in heaven, His beloved Son, and even the example of our fathers in the faith.

Prayer: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength, keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Oculi

22. A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Dr. Martin Luther, 1529

8, 7, 8, 7, 5, 5, 6, 7

Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott

Dr. Martin Luther, 1529

1. A might - y fort - ress is our God,
2. With might of ours can naught be done,

A trust - y shield and wea - pon;
Soon were our loss ef - fact - ed;

He helps us free from ev - 'ry need
But for us fights the Val - iant One,

That hath us now o'er - tak - en,
Whom God Him - self e - lect - ed.

The old Ask ye, E - vil Who is this? Foe Now means Je - sus Christ, it is, dead - ly woe;

Deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight,
Of Sab - a - oth Lord, And there's none oth - er God,

On earth is not his e - qual.
He holds the field for - ev - er. A - men.

3. Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill,
They shall not overpower us.
This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none, He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.

4. The Word they still shall let remain,
And not a thank have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife;
Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won;
The kingdom ours remaineth.

Lesson from the Book of Concord

Oculi Sunday

Article II.

Also they [the Lutheran pastors] teach, that since the Fall of Adam, all men begotten according to nature, are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through baptism and the Holy Ghost.

They condemn the Pelagians and others, who deny that the vice of origin is sin, and who, to obscure the glory of Christ's merit and benefits, argue that man can be justified before God by his own strength and reason.

—The Augsburg Confession

Article II.

Of Original Sin.

The second article, Of Original Sin, the adversaries [the Roman Catholic theologians] approve, but in such a way, that they, nevertheless, censure the definition of Original Sin, which we incidentally gave. Here at the very threshold, his Imperial Majesty will discover that the writers of the Confutation [the Romanist response to the Augsburg Confession] were deficient not only in judgment, but also in candor. For whereas we, with a simple mind, desired, in passing, to recount those things which Original Sin embraces, these men, by framing an invidious interpretation, artfully distort a proposition that has in it nothing which of itself is wrong. Thus they say: "To be without the fear of God, to be without faith, is actual guilt"; and therefore they deny that it is original guilt.

—The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
(The Augsburg Confession was written in 1530, the Roman Confutation responded to the Confession in 1530, and then the Lutheran Apology (Defense) was written in 1531.)

This entire “Song of Deliverance” composed by David can be summed up by verse four, where the king declares, “I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies.” This song is one that can be recommended to all sinners for deliverance from their daily battle against the great enemies of their fallen flesh, the sin-darkened world, and the devil. Every believer should feel joy and comfort from every verse of this beautiful prayer-song of praise and thanksgiving to the most merciful and gracious Lord.

David uses the figure of a Rock, which is particularly appropriate to David’s experience. He had taken refuge among the rocks of the desert often, but realized that true security was found only in the Lord. The image of a shield is just as appropriate, for the Lord is our shield against every attack of the devil, self, and the world. Like the author, we should be drawn to the Lord’s house where we can always receive all of His precious Means of Grace to fortify us for the battles of this earthly life.

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

May we always rejoice in the great freedom we receive through our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Redeemer. All the things that Saint Peter calls us to achieve are fulfilled completely in our Baptism into Christ, which creates the New Man within us purely by grace through faith. Christ in us allows us to live the life called for in these verses with a confidence that knows God’s Word does not change and is always true.

As men gird up their robes in preparation for vigorous action, so we are able to likewise gird our mind and spirit for the vigorous action of living the Christian life. That life flows from the Holy Spirit working vigorously in us to build up the faith delivered in Holy Baptism, and strengthened daily through His holy Word and Sacrament Ministry provided through His ministers in His Church. For holiness is God’s gift; His effective call sets men apart for the Lord, and makes them His “called saints,” literally His “called holy ones.” This reality bestows holiness, asks from men—and makes possible for men—a holy life lived to God. In this way they are sanctified (made holy) for obedience. Thus the just requirement of the Law is fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit.

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

This text beautifully demonstrates what repentance looks like in the life of faithful believers. Joshua, the minister of the Lord, is crushed by the reality of sin amongst God’s people to such a great extent that he is filled with remorse that drives him to fall prostrate before the Lord. God’s reaction to Joshua’s shame for Israel’s sinful behavior must not mistakenly be seen as a repudiation of Joshua’s prostration in abject humility, for this is exactly the way sin should shame and grieve all the Lord’s people.

However, true repentance entails more than an expression of guilt, shame, and/or grief. Repentance for the true believer must lead to appropriate action. The cause of offense (in this case “the devoted things”) must be removed. The coveting and taking of things devoted to God is described as an “outrageous thing.” It should always be considered outrageous that any of God’s people would consider violating any of the Lord’s Word and will, much less act on those sinful thoughts and fulfill this act of sin begun in the heart. Verses 16 through 26 present the details of the search for the unrepentant soul lurking within Israel that it might be brought forward to face the consequences of its sinful thoughts and deeds before the Lord. The end of the text presents the horrible cost of sin when it is allowed to rule our thoughts and deeds to the point of refusing to repent.

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; 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 Apostle presents a complete, yet brief, description of a truly faithful minister of the Lord: the true minister's message is God's good news (the Gospel). The faithful minister's motive is not infected with impurity, nor does he focus on pleasing people or allow greed and seeking praise from people to drive the message. The truly faithful minister's only motivation must be pleasing God.

This style of ministry does not tolerate deception, flattery, or a camouflaging of sin—but has a spirit of courage, gentleness, love, toil, and holiness. This ministry presents only Jesus Christ, and Him crucified for the atonement of the sins of the world, with a level of love and care for those receiving the Gospel that presents the true love of God for His Creation. Such a ministry, and such a minister, is driven by righteous love for the recipient, never allowing the use of false or flattering language that conceals the speaker's intention, or seeks at getting money or glory from his hearers.

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; 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 mystery of the faith that must be held in the conscience with reverence is the mystery of the revealed Gospel. These are the same Means of Grace that Saint Paul declares as the mysteries of which he and other ministers (holders of the Office of the Holy Ministry) are the stewards.

Since Christian charity is care for the whole man, the deacon is not merely a “practical” functionary or doer of social ministry; he must be a man of Christian spirituality, able to apply the Gospel mysteries to man’s need in the various areas of life. The deacon’s service must be ultimately driven by Christian doctrine and the practicing or living out of a life of Christ-like love toward the neighbor. This concern for love promoted through and by pure doctrine is echoed in verse ten’s call for testing prior to calling the man into the office of deacon. The first calling of men into the diaconship of the Christian community was to allow the ministers freedom to apply more time and energy to the all-important duties of Word and Sacraments, along with prayer, etc.

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; 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 believer, especially those living as servants, are called to adorn their lives with the fruits of Christian love based on the true orthodox doctrine of God delivered through Christ. This pastoral epistle presents Saint Paul's common proclamation and concern that every believer and their faithful Christian living should help, rather than hinder, the spread of the Gospel.

This epistle is sent to Titus by the Apostle to strengthen this minister in standing firm for Christian doctrine in faith and life. The proclamation of the Gospel is not to be a ministry of word alone, but is to be a message of faithful Christ-like words and deeds lived through a life of pious behavior. Saint Paul opens this text with an admonition that sound doctrine demands right conduct of all believers, regardless of age, sex, or status. Basically, all believers are being called to be moral and spiritual examples, temperate in all things, not slanderous or crass, but doers of holy, righteous living and speech by God's grace in faith.

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; 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

Laetare Sunday

The Fourth Petition.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Here we are mindful of the poor breadbasket, namely, of our body and the necessaries of the temporal life. It is a brief and simple word, but it is also very broad and comprehensive. For if you speak of, and pray for, daily bread, you pray for everything that is necessary in order to have and enjoy the same, and also against everything which interferes with it. Therefore you must enlarge your thoughts and extend them afar, not only to the oven or the flour-barrel, but to the distant field and the entire land, which bears and brings to us daily bread and every sort of sustenance. For if God did not cause it to grow, and bless and preserve it in the field, we could never take bread from the oven or have any to set upon the table.

To speak briefly, this petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in the world. For on that account alone do we need daily bread. But to our life it is not only necessary that our body have food and covering and other necessaries, but also that we live in peace and quiet with those among whom we live and have our intercourse in daily business and conversation and in every manner possible; in short, whatever pertains to the interests of family, of neighbors and of government. For where these things do not prosper as they ought, the necessaries of life also must fail, and life cannot be maintained. There is, besides, the greatest need to pray for temporal authority and government, as that by which, most of all, God preserves to us our daily bread and all the comforts of this life. For though we had received of God all good things in abundance, we should not be able to retain any of them, or use them in security and happiness, if He did not give us a permanent and peaceful government. For where there are dissension, strife and war, there the daily bread is already taken away, or at least diminished.

—The Large Catechism, §71–74

Laetare

23. Christ, the Life of All the Living

Ernst Christoph Homburg, 1659

8, 7, 8, 7, 8, 8, 7, 7

Jesu, meines Lebens Leben

Darmstadt H. B., 1687

1. Christ, the Life of all the liv - ing,
2. Thou, ah! Thou, hast ta - ken on Thee

Christ, the Death of death our foe, Who, Thy - self for
Bonds and stripes, a cru - el rod; Pain and scorn were

me once giv - ing To the dark - est depths of woe,
heaped up - on Thee, O Thou sin - less Son of God!

Ma - dest rec - on - cil - i - a - tion, And didst save me
Thus didst Thou my soul de - liv - er From the bonds of

The musical score is written for two voices (Soprano and Bass) and a basso continuo. It features a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is primarily composed of quarter and eighth notes, with some rests and phrasing slurs. The lyrics are printed below the vocal lines, with some words underlined to indicate syllable placement. The score is divided into four systems, each with a vocal line and a basso continuo line.

from dam - na - tion; Thou - sand, thou - sand
sin for - ev - er. Thou - sand, thou - sand

thanks shall be, Dear - est Je - sus, un - to Thee.
thanks shall be, Dear - est Je - sus, un - to Thee. A - men.

3. Thou hast borne the smiting only
That my wounds might all be whole;
Thou hast suffered, sad and lonely,
Rest to give my weary soul;
Yea, the curse of God enduring,
Blessing unto me securing,
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

5. Thou hast suffered men to bruise Thee,
That from pain I might be free;
Falsely did Thy foes accuse Thee—
Thence I gain security;
Comfortless once Thou didst languish,
Me to comfort in my anguish.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

4. Heartless scoffers did surround Thee,
Treating Thee with cruel scorn,
And with piercing thorns
they crowned Thee;
All disgrace Thou, Lord, hast borne,
That as Thine Thou mightest own me,
And with heav'nly glory crown me.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

6. Thou hast suffered great affliction,
And hast borne it patiently,
Even death by crucifixion,
Fully to atone for me;
Thou didst choose to be tormented,
That my doom should be prevented.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

7. Then for all that wrought our pardon,
For Thy sorrows deep and sore,
For Thine anguish in the garden,
I will thank Thee evermore;
Thank Thee with my latest breath
For Thy sad and cruel death,
For that last most bitter cry,
And shall praise Thee, Lord, on high.

“If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.”

Believing in Jesus can be inconvenient. In Jesus’ day, many in Israel not only could not bear the changes that would be required in their lives were they to follow Jesus. They trembled at the thought of how their lives would change if other people believed in Him too. We may well see parallels in our “culture wars” today.

The real issue for such people is that they feared, loved, and trusted in something else more than God. Their “nation,” and particularly their place in the social order, mattered more to them than the Messiah for which they had supposedly been waiting for centuries.

What is it in your life that you are tempted to fear, love, and/or trust more than God? We must thus ever examine ourselves, as these allurements continually sneak into the lives of us all. God grant us grace and courage to be honest with ourselves, and to repent of our many sins. And God grant us faith to trust in the forgiveness that our Lord suffered and died to give us.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full!” (Exodus 16:3)

In Genesis 19, Lot fled Sodom with his wife and two daughters. They were commanded not to look back, but Lot’s wife did, and was turned into a pillar of salt. Our text reminds us of that: the Israelites look back at the “good old days” (of slavery!) when they had plenty to eat. We can be like this too. One thinks of the conveniences of belonging to a larger organization, and perhaps longing for the ways that made “doing church” easier. Or it may be much more personal, longing for a previous home, or job, or relationship, or whatever else that is now “yesterday’s news.”

It is no accident that you are where you are right now. The Lord may have us walking through harder times, but if so, it is because He loves us, and wants to make us grow. He has not forgotten you. Jesus walked the hard road to procure our salvation. God grant us, therefore, to repent of our selfish longing for the easy road, and to trust in Him and His loving purposes for us, even in the midst of the hardships of life.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

As we shall see not only today, but also in the coming days’ devotions, Jesus speaks some challenging words in John 6. He draws on the imagery of the manna in the desert, speaking of Himself and particularly His flesh as the bread from heaven. This, He says, He “shall give for the life of the world.”

He has done so. His body has been nailed to the cross, and His blood shed, to take away the sin of the world. His atoning sacrifice paid for all of it; not just the sins of the elect, or the “lesser sins” (leaving us to be punished for the rest!). No, because His flesh was the flesh of infinite God, His unlimited atonement paid for all of the sins of all people throughout all time.

What great comfort this gives us! We are justified through faith in Christ’s sacrifice on the cross alone. No need to speculate about whether that sacrifice counts for us or not. He atoned for the sin of the world. Faithfully, we live in the confidence that this includes our sins also.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”

Forgiveness of sins is no mere abstraction! Read with your physical eyes—better yet, read out loud so you hear with your physical ears—how graphically Jesus describes our union with Himself! It was so graphic that many who had believed in Him turned away at this point; and Jesus let them walk! There was no “wait a minute, guys, I was just speaking figuratively.” He let them go.

Our Lord gives Himself to us in the holy sacraments: physical water on our physical skin in holy Baptism, and certainly His body and blood in the physical bread and wine of the holy Supper! Also, we understand sound well enough to know how sound waves strike our eardrums. So holy absolution is also, in a sense, a physical insertion of the Word of forgiveness into our ears. By extension, we can think of the whole of preaching and God’s Word this way.

For the certainty of our salvation, we do not try to gaze into our hearts to see if we have faith going on in there. Rather, we look to these objective means, Word and sacrament, confident that we have these. And then we rest easy, knowing that it is in fact faith, living and active, that seeks the comfort of our Savior’s physical delivery of Himself to us.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“No one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”

Some stick with Jesus; others walk away. We are those who abide in Him. Shall we then glory in our own decision-making ability? Are we so much wiser than those who turned away? We should know better than that. We come to Jesus because we have been granted to do so by God the Father, the Holy Ghost having called us by the Gospel to faith in Christ Jesus.

It matters. If we have something to do with our own salvation, we can spend the rest of our days in this world worried about whether or not we have done our part well enough. Worse yet, if we think we have, we then reduce Jesus to only partly our Savior, for by this error we make ourselves partly our own savior. It is by grace you have been saved through faith (alone!), and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

Rejoice, dear ones in Christ, in the comfort of the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus alone. He alone is your Savior, and so you may walk in absolute confidence that there is nothing lacking in the salvation He has accomplished for you.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

Jesus says that unless we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we have no part in Him. These words sound so esoteric and bizarre that from that time forth many of those who had followed Him turned away and no longer believed in Him. Jesus lets them go, and then turns to His disciples, asking them if they will also leave Him.

Peter answers for them all: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” It does not say that Peter understood those words; several instances in the Gospels show us how badly he misunderstood them sometimes. But whether he understands them or not, Peter clings to His Lord, and clings particularly to His words “of eternal life.”

Dear ones in Christ, there may be many things in God’s Word that you do not understand, questions for which you would have answers and none has yet been given you. Do not walk away. The words of Jesus are the words of eternal life, and they will save you. His Word will yet be a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

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