

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



SEPTEMBER 5-OCTOBER 1, 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)

September 4	Trinity 12	TLH 34
September 11	Trinity 13	TLH 347
September 18	Trinity 14	TLH 25
September 21 (W) <i>St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist</i>		TLH 467
September 25	Trinity 15	TLH 443
September 29 (R) <i>St. Michael and All Angels</i>		TLH 254

ST. IGNATIUS SEMINARY UPDATE—The Fall Quarter for the Third Year of the program of studies at St. Ignatius seminary begins Monday, September 5 (classes begin the next day). There will be a Vespers for the commencement of this year’s studies at 1 P.M. on Sunday, and will be broadcast on the diocesan Facebook and YouTube channels.

SEMINARY SUPPORT—It is asked that congregations would take a door offering on Sunday, Sept. 4, in support of St. Ignatius. Any financial assistance for the seminary may be sent to “ELDoNA” c/o Rev. Michael Henson, Trinity Lutheran Church, 1000 North Park Ave., Herrin, Illinois, 62948.

FALL VISITATION SCHEDULE—Bishop Heiser conducted several of his visitations in the coming weeks, visiting Pr. Dulas and St. Peter and St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church (Simpsonville, SC) on September 25 and Pr. Mensing and Faith Lutheran Church (Beaverton, OR) on October 2.

NEW HYMNAL SUPPLEMENT—Work continues on the draft of the new supplement. Building on the draft distributed at the recent Synod, the supplement will have a draft for the Common Service, the Collects, Introits, Graduals for the entire Church Year, Collects for special occasions, the draft of the Small Catechism, rites such as Baptism, Private Confession, and over 100 hymns. More details will be provided in the next *Herald*.

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Article XX. Of Good Works.

In the twentieth article they [the Roman Catholics] lay down these words, viz. that they reject and condemn our statement that men do not merit the remission of sins by good works. This article they clearly declare that they reject and condemn. What is to be said on a subject so manifest? Here the framers of the Confutation [the Papists' answer to the Augsburg Confession] openly show by what spirit they are led. For what in the Church is more certain than that the remission of sins occurs freely for Christ's sake, that Christ and not our works is the propitiation for sins, as Peter says (Acts 10:43): "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins"? To this Church of the prophets we would rather assent that to these abandoned writers of the Confutation, who so impudently blaspheme Christ. For although there were writers who held after the remission of sins men are just before God, not by faith, but by works themselves, yet they did not hold this, viz. that the remission of sins itself occurs on account of our works, and not freely for Christ's sake.

Therefore the blasphemy of ascribing Christ's honor to our works is not to be endured. These theologians are now entirely without shame, if they dare to bring such an opinion into the Church. Nor do we doubt that his most excellent imperial majesty and very many of the princes will not allow this passage of the Confutation to remain, if they be admonished of it. On this topic we could cite infinite testimonies from Scripture and from the Fathers. But above we have quoted a sufficient number on this subject. And there is no need to testimonies for one who knows why Christ has been given for us, who knows that Christ is the propitiation for our sins. Isaiah says (53:6): "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The adversaries on the other hand teach that God hath laid our iniquities not on Christ, but on our works. Neither are we disposed to mention here the sort of works which they teach. We see that a horrible decree has been prepared against us, which would terrify us still more if we were contending concerning doubtful or trifling subjects. Now since our consciences understand that by the adversaries the manifest truth is condemned, whose defense is necessary for the Church, and increases the glory of Christ; we easily despise the terrors of the world, and patiently will bear whatever is to be suffered for the glory of Christ and the advantage of the Church.

—The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, §78–82

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5: MARK 5:22–43 12TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Jairus' daughter was going to die. Jesus was on His way to her, but was interrupted by another woman who had suffered excessive bleeding for twelve years. Certainly, the Word who was in the beginning with God the Father had the power to heal both Jairus' daughter and the woman with the issue of blood. And He did.

But what does He bid those who were witness to these miracles, and us, to think about them? Surely we can be comforted that our Lord has the power to heal, and even has power over death itself. But much more, He commends those who put their trust in Him. Surely we can and should pray that God remove earthly afflictions and diseases from us; but we should pray knowing that the sufferings of this life will have an end, and that our true home is in Heaven with our Lord and Savior. Our Lord may relieve us of our distress in this life, but even if He does not, He is our Savior from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Our true hope is in Him for salvation and eternal life.

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

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6: ISAIAH 38:9–22 12TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

King Hezekiah was one of the greatest kings of Judah. In addition to this section of Isaiah, we read more about him in 2 Kings 18. Hezekiah, we learn, did more to restore the proper worship of God than any of his predecessors or successors did. He even destroyed the bronze serpent that Moses raised in the wilderness because the people were burning incense to it improperly.

How is it fair that good King Hezekiah should fall ill and come to the point of death so relatively young? Why would the Lord take away such a faithful and good ruler from His people? As it turns out, Hezekiah did, through the grace of God, recover, and went on to serve God and His people faithfully. But he did not know that he would recover when he fell ill, and his prayer is a great reminder to us that our days are in God's hands.

Rather, together with St. Paul, let us hold that, “to live is Christ, to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Let us trust in the Lord, to walk while it is day. May we look forward, as Hezekiah did, to end our days, whenever and however that end may come, in the blessedness of faith in Christ and the confidence of our sins forgiven. May we always look forward to a blessed eternity with our God and Savior.

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

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7: ISAIAH 29:18–24 12TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

It is easy to focus on the “doom and gloom” of the world today. And indeed, there is much to lament about the world and its state. But at the same time, let us not lose our focus on who is truly in control of the future, and what a precious treasure we have in the Gospel, the good news for us of the forgiveness of our sins.

For are we not the deaf, who would hear the words of the book? Are we not the blind, who would see out of obscurity and out of darkness? Indeed, it is through the promise of the working of the Holy Spirit that God’s Word convicts us of our sin, offers and brings us the forgiveness of our sins, and gives us strength to follow God’s will.

Yet there are many who still live in this darkness and this blindness. Let us pray also for them, that God would shed His light on them; and let us each also be prepared to bear witness to our faith for those who may not yet believe. As Peter says: “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

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

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8: ISAIAH 35:5–10 12TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

What a motley crew the people of God shall be as they come to Zion! That means us, those who trust not in our own works, but in the shed blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Isaiah here describes this group as those who were blind (but now can see), as those who were deaf (but now have their ears unstopped), as those who were lame (but now can leap like deer), and those who were mute, or dumb, who can now sing.

And sing we shall! For what greater joy is there, than to know that our sins are forgiven? What greater peace is there, than to know that the payment for the rebellion that we waged against God and his Law has been paid in full? Paid, not by us, for indeed that is a debt we cannot pay, but paid by the sinless Son of God Himself! As David confesses in Psalm 32:1-2: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” What greater thing could we have to sing about?

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

Jesus healed many people during His earthly ministry, from many different afflictions, including blindness, demon possession, and even on rare occasions, death itself. It is hard to find two consecutive pages in the Gospels where Jesus does not perform at least one miracle.

But more rarely do those who seek healing from Jesus confess who He truly is. The two blind men in our reading today are a notable exception. “Son of David” they call Him—hearkening to the promise that the Christ would come from the house and lineage of David. And indeed, David confessed that he would call his Son “Lord” (Psalm 110:1).

Jesus commends these men for their faith, and heals them both. And although He commanded them not to speak of what had happened, they could not keep their silence and told everyone around them. It seems that people were focused on making Jesus a “bread king,” and were focused more on the miracles He could do for them, rather than on His message of repentance and forgiveness of sins (John 6:15).

Do we, today, have such gratitude for what God has done for us that we cannot but show and tell others of the hope that is in us? For today there is no such restriction to be silent. Let us rather joyfully confess our thanks to God to our friends and neighbors!

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

It seems impossible to read these words and not think of God's work of establishing the office of the Ministry and placing ministers into it to preach His Word and administer His sacraments, for the edification of His Church.

Surely, God could have proclaimed His Word through angels, but for reasons He alone knows, He called men to do it. The men who occupy His ministry on earth are mere men, with special education and training, but men nonetheless. They are sinful men, but men who are saved by the grace of God, and whose sins are covered by the precious blood of Jesus.

The work of such a watchman is hard—it requires long hours, considerable patience, and much labor that is done out of the public view, for which there is no real hope of earthly gain or reward. And indeed, it would be foolish to undertake such an office for hope of worldly reputation or benefit.

But let us thank God, that He has provided such men for us. Let us pray that He keeps them faithful to Himself. And those of us that serve as such watchmen, let us pray that we not be carried away or distracted by worldly considerations or distractions, but ever to hold fast to our Lord and the full counsel of God.

Prayer: Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises; through Jesus 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 Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Article XVIII.

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

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

—The Augsburg Confession

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12: LEVITICUS 18:1–5 13TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

In John 17, Jesus prayed for His disciples: “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.” From childhood, the faithful are taught to be in the world, but not of the world.

The words of Leviticus 18 remind us that this is not a new teaching; Israel had to be reminded of this truth in preparation to live in the land promised to Abraham. As they were in their pilgrimage from Egypt to Canaan, the people were to understand that the “doings” and “ordinances” of neither place were to be found among the people of God. Obviously, the rejection was not of such “doings” and “ordinances” as were consistent with the moral law (for the Lord does not contradict Himself, and the Word of God declares: “. . . whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God. . .” [Rom. 13:2]); rather, the faithful of all generations must refuse all such things of this world as are contrary to the Word. That which may be ‘legal’ may be immoral, and must be rejected. The life of repentance requires refusing that which is evil, regardless of the kings or presidents who may support such wickedness.

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

Reading the words of Deuteronomy 15, how could we not think of poor Lazarus? Reading this passage instructs us concerning the depravity of the rich man. The Lord had established His Law so that debt could not build up and crush the debtors. Even a man who was enslaved for his debts was set free in the seventh year, and he returned to his freedom with those things which he needed to sustain his life.

The Lord took into account the depravity of the human heart; that is, that men would hesitate to loan to those who might be able to walk away without restoring that which had been loaned to them. (Thus their hesitancy on the cusp of the seventh year: “The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand”.) The Lord is the Author of all good things; that which is given had its origin in His mercy, and the Christian rejoices to be God’s instrument in caring for our brethren in need. As St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Cor. 9:6–7) And we remember that we are recipients of a Gift beyond measure—forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in Christ Jesus.

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

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14: JAMES 2:14–26 13TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

This is a passage which confuses many people. The key to understanding it is found in Abraham, who is repeatedly presented in Scripture as being saved by grace through faith. His willingness to offer up Isaac in sacrifice—as the Lord instructed—was a work which was the fruit of faith. James’ emphasis is on the nature of true faith to be expressed in works.

Living faith is distinguished from the dead faith—a mere acknowledgment of the truthfulness and historical accuracy of the Scriptures—which is that of the demons. “Even the demons believe—and tremble!” So, too, Judas proclaimed the Word just like the rest of the twelve and the seventy during the time of our Lord’s earthly ministry. But as early as John 6, Jesus declared him to be a devil (v. 70). As our Lord declared concerning the judgment: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Mat. 7) Their works seem impressive, but they did not spring from living faith, therefore they were sins, and not good works.

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

That which St. Paul wrote to Philemon concerning his slave, Onesimus, testifies to the ongoing work of the Law in the Christian as a guide to God-pleasing works. As St. Paul explained, he sent Onesimus back to Philemon even though he might have demanded that Philemon free him: “But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.” The apostle proclaimed the Word so that Philemon might know that good work which is pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

Repeatedly, the apostle noted that he could command Philemon—but he quite pointedly does not use that authority. Instead, St. Paul declared, “Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.” The apostle knew Philemon’s character, as he knew the character of Onesimus— now a “beloved brother” to both Paul and Philemon. It is thus that Paul wrote, “If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me.” How could Philemon keep Onesimus enslaved while Paul told Philemon to receive him even as he would receive Paul?

Bound together in holy Baptism, our faith in the Christ has ongoing implications for our relationship with one another. The vertical relationship which the Lord has established with us necessarily places us in a horizontal connection with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

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

Habakkuk saw how evil men seem to prosper. “Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours a person more righteous than he?” This is a perennial question in the minds of the faithful. But the prophet knows not to believe his reason: “I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected.” Habakkuk does not attribute to the Lord any sort of double mindedness. Instead, he recognizes that something is wrong in his own reasoning, and he pledges to be attentive—“stand my watch and set myself on the rampart”—as he awaits the Lord’s word of correction.

Like Job before him, Habakkuk is profoundly grieved to see the wicked appearing to escape, even as they afflict the faithful. The Lord proclaims the consolation of the faithful, and the promise which is our in the Christ: “Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.” As St. Paul declared, “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’” Justifying faith is faith in Jesus, who made atonement for all sin through His suffering and death, so that all who believe would have salvation in Him.

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

“Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by injustice, Who uses his neighbor’s service without wages And gives him nothing for his work,…” Again, like the rich man who did not love poor Lazarus, there will be those who imagine themselves to be righteous, even while they exploit the poor and neglect the needs of the downtrodden. The Lord beholds those who exploit the poor and needy, and He declares: “Yet your eyes and your heart are for nothing but your covetousness, For shedding innocent blood, And practicing oppression and violence.”

The Word teaches that all that we have has been given to us for use in such ways as are in keeping with the divine Law. And those who imagine that they might exploit others without fear of the judgment have the Lord declaring to them that He beholds their wickedness and will punish in due season if there is not repentance.

Throughout this week, we have heard much concerning the works which are the fruit of faith. It remains as we confess in the Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article III: “But after man has been justified by faith, then a true living faith worketh by love, Gal. 5:6, so that thus good works always follow justifying faith, and are surely found with it, if it be true and living; for it never is alone, but always has with it love and hope.”

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

Lesson from the Book of Concord

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

I. Of Sin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19: JOHN 5:1–15 14TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Thirty-eight years ago, from the date of this devotion, Ronald Reagan was just finishing his first term as President of the United States. While some of us can remember that well, some may not yet have been born. That is how long the man in today's reading had been sick, and hoped and prayed for a miraculous healing. All he lacked, he thought, was someone to put him into the water when the angel came. His response indicates that he had seen others healed by this miraculous pool-stirring, but could not benefit himself because he had no one to put him in the water. So close, for so long, and yet so far.

Little did he suspect that the very Lord of Life Himself was going to heal him that day! So it is that we often pray for the things that we think we need, but the Lord knows better than we do what is good for us. He gives us things that are even better for us than what we asked for! Let this man's example teach us to not grow weary of asking for God's blessings, and to faithfully carry our burdens in this life, whatever they may be, in the meantime.

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

We confess together that there is not a fixed amount or percentage that is required of Christians to give for the benefit of the poor, or for the maintenance of the Church and its ministry. Do we find that we are reluctant givers in this regard? Especially as the storm clouds of a bad economy seem to be gathering, it can be hard to give away that which we have earned by the sweat of our brows.

However, we must all remember that nothing we have is truly our own—we are merely stewards of gifts that God has given us. God has promised to bless us richly when we are generous with those gifts toward others. Jesus tells us how fleeting treasure on earth is in His Sermon on the Mount: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19,21)

We should not give because we fear that we will look bad, or because we want to do the bare minimum. We ought to give because we are genuinely thankful for what God has given us, and because we want to share that bounty with our brothers and sisters on earth.

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

We rightfully honor the Apostles and Evangelists, but it is easy to forget that some of them came from less than noble backgrounds. Paul persecuted the Church! Matthew was a tax collector, an agent of the hated Roman government. Yet Jesus Christ Himself chose both of these men to be eyewitnesses of His resurrection, and committed to them the charge of preaching His Gospel in all the world. He called them to this work, which these men, and others, faithfully did until their deaths.

Do we feel inadequate or not up to the task set before us? Paul acknowledges that he certainly felt this way at times, and it seems likely that Matthew did too. These men had seen the risen Christ with their own eyes! They had spoken face to face with the incarnate God!

Let us remember that it is not our pasts that define us. God has called all of us to new life in Him—and that is the most important thing for us now. For truly, all of us were sinners; but by God's grace in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, in whom alone we have pardon and forgiveness for our sins, we are made holy through faith. Just like St. Matthew, and just like St. Paul. We too hope to stand alongside them someday, forever with Jesus in His kingdom.

Prayer: O almighty God, who through Thy blessed Son didst call Saint Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an Apostle and Evangelist, grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches and to follow 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.

Lutherans are sometimes criticized for not emphasizing good works as much as we could. We focus on the Means of Grace, the preached Gospel, and the Sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism because they strengthen and sustain faith. But how strong can that faith be if we do not also do good works? We know that no work of ours—not prayer, not trying to keep the Law—can save us or atone for even a single one of our countless sins. We trust in the merciful promises of our God, who alone can save us. Jesus alone paid that price by living a perfect life and dying an innocent death on the cross. He paid the price that avails before God.

We trust that the Holy Spirit will show us good works to do, and will give us opportunities to do them. May we be like the Thessalonians, who were known far and wide for their good works; not because we seek to earn God's favor, but because we are grateful to God for his great mercy, as we await Jesus' return in glory.

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

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23: PHILIPPIANS 1:12–18 14TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

St. Paul certainly was not in a position to rejoice, as the world would reckon it. After many missionary journeys, he was—in some ways at his own insistence—now in chains for the Gospel. His fate was far from certain, from a purely human standpoint. Some would argue that he was mad to insist on appealing to Caesar, as was his right as a Roman citizen.

Paul still saw reason to rejoice. The Gospel was being preached now to the palace guard; something that might not have happened had Paul remained free. And Paul knew that the Gospel would still be preached after he and the other Apostles died. Indeed, it is still being preached today! Even if there are some who preach Christ for less than the best motives, Christ is still being preached. In this, Paul rejoiced, and so should we. For even when things look dark, according to the world's wisdom, we have the promises of Christ and heaven to look forward to. Let us confess, with St. Paul, "To live is Christ, and to die is gain!" (Philippians 1:21)

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

Leprosy was no small matter in the ancient world. Lepers were ceremonially unclean, forbidden to enter the temple, and outcasts from society. Even today, though we have treatments for leprosy, we refer to being cast out from society as being “treated like a leper.”

Jesus had several people who trusted in His ability to heal them. The leper in our reading for today was one such person. He believed that Jesus could heal him, and he confessed that if Jesus was willing, He could heal him. Jesus did heal him, but commanded that he should offer the ordinary sacrifices according to the Mosaic Law for the cleansing from leprosy.

However, the man did not keep silent—unlike the nine lepers from a separate healing, whom Jesus healed and we never hear from again. This leper’s gratitude knew no bounds, and according to Mark, he told so many people that Jesus had to spend more time in the wilderness preaching.

Are we as grateful as we should be for the blessings our Lord showers upon us? And even though we have no command to be silent, do we keep silent, or do we let the source of our blessings be known? Jesus changed this man’s life; He changes ours as well. May we be found to be properly grateful, and to keep the Word of the One who blessed us!

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

Lesson from the Book of Concord

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

ARTICLE I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—The Large Catechism

It is very common, and very easy, for people to fall into the sin of being self-centered. The devil encourages us to think and act according to what seems right in our own eyes. Christians often fall into the trap of focusing on “me and Jesus,” forgetting that we are members and parts of things that are far bigger than our own wants and experiences.

Our Lord teaches us His Word and His statutes so that we may be part of His work and His Church. He establishes His people so that we can help others and bring glory to the Gospel of Jesus Christ crucified. It is good for us to have joy and peace in the knowledge of our own salvation, but He also teaches us to serve others as we live out that salvation. His purpose for Israel was the same as His purpose for us. Each of us is to believe, learn, and act according to His Word. As He blesses us in those things, He also continues His work through them for the sake of others!

Satan and all those who teach contrary to God’s Word are playing a game of divide-and-conquer. False gospels, works-righteousness, and vain misconceptions are all tools that the enemy uses to distract God’s people. But our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus, gives us His own Words and deeds to see that we are to be faithful children of our Father who is in heaven, and to love all others as He has loved us!

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

This story of Mary and Martha also illustrates the proper understanding of God’s Word and pious works for His people. Martha believed, but she had become distracted with misconceptions about her work. She thought she was doing good work for the Lord, but her focus was on “me”. “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? ...tell her to help me.” Martha was trying to dictate her own terms for how she would serve. But her ideas were not the Lord’s ideas.

Sometimes Satan tries to seduce us with wicked works, but other times he can be just as effective by misleading us with “pious” works. Both are bad if they make us focus on our own wants and expectations more than what Jesus actually says in His Word. God prepares our righteous works for us. He is the One who calls us to our godly vocations. Sometimes He tells us to speak, or do certain works; other times He tells us to be still, to rest, and to learn. But all of it must be done in submission to His will, not ours.

It is not always easy to know what we ought to do in some situations. The Word of God does condemn laziness (e.g., Matt. 25:26), but it also condemns being a “busybody” who grabs at work that is not one’s to do (e.g., 1 Pet. 4:15). That is why we need to hear and learn from Him, so that we may better understand the difference.

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is a profoundly valuable gift. As we are His holy people in the Church through faith, this prayer summarizes all that we should think and do so that we may faithfully serve Him and all others. It shapes our will so that it is not turned in on what we want, but directed to things above, according to His kingdom and His righteousness.

It also teaches us humility. Rather than pray like a Pharisee, thanking God for how pious we think we are, it teaches us to understand that we are as children, and that we are lowly sinners who are forgiven by Him. He teaches us to forgive as He forgives us, which means we all are supposed to repent and confess our sins. False teachers often twist this to mean we should ignore sins and spread a cheap grace that is dishonest about forgiveness. But our Father calls His children to repent in truth and faithfulness so that they may rightly understand His love! Otherwise, sinners would just be encouraged to remain focused on their own desire to do as they please and not feel judged.

All these words that our Lord commends to us are so that we may grow in our understanding of His gracious will. His Spirit makes us pray rightly and walk diligently. We pray for His blessings, but we also pray for all others who are fellow sons and daughters in His Church, and all those who might be brought in and saved by His Word, as well!

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

God calls us according to His purposes. He wants us to believe and be saved, but He also wants us to work and serve in ways that are constructive. That is the difference between walking in His will and working according to what seems right in our own eyes. His will teaches good order for the sake of His kingdom, the Church. Laziness, being a “busybody”, and rejecting the faithful received teachings of God’s Word are all destructive because they encourage disorder between faithfully hearing and faithfully doing.

From the beginning the evil one, Satan, has taught self-will and chaos. But God has also continued to send His holy messengers to work against Satan’s efforts. Just as God called man to faithful work, He also appointed angels to serve His will. At the Festival of St. Michael and All Angels we remember that some fell away, such as Satan and his fellow evil angels, but others are still faithful, and they do great things for the sake of God’s beloved people!

Both men and angels were made to serve the Lord and His righteousness. That is the good order that was established when God first made all things. It is by His gracious Word and blessed help that He restores us to faithful order and service, where we have the joy of serving and worshiping along with the angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven, to the glory of Christ!

Prayer: O everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the services of angels and men in a wonderful order, mercifully grant that, as Thy holy angels always do Thee service in heaven, so by Thine appointment they may help and defend us on earth; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

In some parts of the Scripture, God says His faithful are to work and pray and they will receive daily bread. Other parts say man should rest and fast. Still other parts say the unfaithful will go wanting and reap the consequences of their vanity. Then there are parts that remind us the wicked will seem successful and wealthy, whereas the faithful will go hungry in suffering. All of this continues to show the theme of the week's readings, which is the lesson that God's faithful people must stay focused on His Word through all circumstances. In all things, His will must be done, not ours.

Our sinful hearts want to only have the good things. We want them on our terms, and if things don't go the way we think they should, we want to call it evil and unacceptable. But our Lord came and humbled Himself to show us that our desires and our expectations are not what make for true righteousness. He submitted to the selfish will of man and it brought destruction, suffering, and death. But He also brought miracles through that destruction. That is what the will of God does! He brings good from chaos.

Our works often don't bring about the good we expect, but the will of God can bring good from even the worst situation. As He promises, He can and does make all things work together for good for His people (Rom. 8:28).

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Scripture does not condone the evils of any type of slavery and oppression. St. Paul is using the example of slavery as another instance of how God can and does work great blessings through bad situations. In this case, he is emphasizing that the godly understanding of vocation and humility is proper over and against man's illusions about freedom, pride, and self-will.

St. Paul also teaches about contentment in Philippians 4 and 1 Timothy 6. The Word of God makes the point that our hope and our peace is not in our control or comfort in earthly situations, but in God and His blessings. We do not pretend the trials and tribulations of any vocation are good any more than we say slavery is good. Such bad situations are an unavoidable reality in this broken, sinful world. But God's Word and Spirit makes us able to love, serve, and be content in any circumstance because He makes us able to focus on His good things and look forward to the better things that will come according to His promises in Christ Jesus.

As we are called to be God's faithful children, we are also to serve faithfully where we are called. We have no right to dictate our terms for improvement, just as Martha had no right to dictate to Jesus that He should make Mary help her. We each have our burdens, but we also each have our specific circumstances through which God will work His merciful plan for His people!

Prayer: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy help, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

OVERVIEW OF THE “COMMON SERVICE”—PART V & VI Pastor Scheck (Christ Ev. Lutheran Church)

V. ELHB of 1889

The first hymnal to include the Common Service was the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (ELHB) of 1889. We are already a little familiar with this hymnal, because whenever we have a hymn not in TLH, most of them come from the ELHB.

In preparing the Common Service and, therefore, the ELHB, Rev. Horn identified three parts of the service which the Lutheran reformers had distinctly added to the Roman liturgy: “1. The reintroduction of the Sermon, which had fallen out of the Roman Mass, 2. The restoration of the General Prayer, and 3. The insertion of an Exhortation before the Communion.”

In comparing ELHB to TLH, the greatest difference is the Exhortation before Communion, which is included in ELHB and excluded in TLH. Other than that, the wording is identical with TLH’s “page 15” service, except that the Confession of Sins in ELHB is that found in the “page 5” service of TLH.

VI. The Common Service in TLH

Following the publication of the Common Service in 1888 and the ELHB in 1889, many synods published their own hymnals, but shared the Common Service, which was the intent. The Common Service was adapted and modified in some places for local differences, but one could plainly see that the Common Service was becoming truly common. Even though we observed, for example, that TLH is missing the Exhortation before Communion, it is still clearly the Common Service.

It is not until TLH, in 1941, that American Lutheranism has not only a common Service, but a common hymnal. Bishop Heiser identifies TLH as being “the most enduring hymnal of the twentieth century,” having been in use for eighty years and enjoying the most wide-spread use, although now increasingly abandoned.

Bishop Heiser closes a chapter of his study with this summary: “Publication of The Lutheran Hymnal brought even the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod to the “Common Service.” After 1941, the goal enunciated by Henry Melchior Muhlenberg in 1783, and largely fulfilled through publication of the ‘Common Service’ in 1888/1891, is complete. There was a universal English service of the Church of the Augsburg Confession, in keeping with ‘the Rule’.”

(To be continued...)