

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



“But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

(From the Gospel for Oculi)

MARCH 5—APRIL 1, 2023

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The Calendar

The Lutheran Hymnal (1941): TLH; 2022 Supplement: ASBH

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

March 5	Lent 2— <i>Reminiscere</i>	ASBH 21
March 12	Lent 3— <i>Oculi</i>	ASBH 22
March 19	Lent 4— <i>Laetare</i> /St. Joseph	ASBH 23
March 25 (S)	Festival of the Annunciation	ASBH 83
March 26	Lent 5— <i>Judica</i>	ASBH 24

ST. IGNATIUS SEMINARY UPDATE—Classes for the Winter Quarter conclude February 17. The Spring Quarter Spring Quarter will be February 27–March 31; and resume after the Holy Week/Easter break with classes from April 17–May 19. Classes for the Spring Quarter:

P008—Ministry to the Homebound, Sick and Dying (1 hr.) Oncken

H006—Pietism, Rationalism, Modernism and Postmodernism (3 hrs.) Heiser

H010—Readings in Lutheran Orthodoxy (1 hr.) Heiser

S010—Apologetics 2 (3 hrs.) Heimbigner

E008—Romans (2 hrs.) Stefanski

UPDATE ON THE ASBH SUPPLEMENT—The Organist/Liturgist spiral bound resources for the *ASBH Supplement* have shipped.

As regards distribution of the *Supplement*, nearly 400 copies have been ordered for use in the diocese. The Marriage Rite is now completed, with work nearing completion on the Ordination rite.

The first “ASBH Supplement Response Form” is found at the end of this issue of *The Lutheran Herald*. (It was also included in the February issue of *The Lutheran Herald*, and is now published again for the sake of those who may have desired to have ‘input’ on hymnody, but forgot to send in the form.) The form is deliberately short, and limited to a few questions to encourage timely replies. Later response forms will address other topics pertinent to the ongoing project. Congregations may “bundle” their replies, identifying the respondents; in fairness to all who use the form, we ask that each person complete only one form.

From the Bishop

Grace and peace to you in Christ Jesus!

As many of you know, my mother, Martha Heiser, passed away on February 12. The outpouring of love and support—and the prayers on behalf of our whole family, but especially for my father, David—have touched the entire family. The consolation of brethren in Christ is a profound comfort, especially as you have all so richly proclaimed the hope of the resurrection. Knowing that my mother lived for 82 years in that blessed promise which the Lord made to her in holy Baptism gives us peace in our time of sorrows.

My father, brother, sister-in-law, and I were with mom throughout her final day in this fallen world. Reading to her from the Scriptures, praying for her, and, in the last hour we were all with her, praying the Litany for the Dying and the *Nunc Dimittis*, helped keep our minds and hearts fixed on Christ. At the end, I was able to thank her for everything she did to teach my brother and me about Jesus, and, when I affirmed to her that promise that she had in her Baptism into Christ, and that hope which she had of eternal life through faith in Him, she smiled and nodded. A few hours later, she departed in peace to be with the Lord.

Luther teaches in the Large Catechism: “The parental estate God has especially honored above all estates that are beneath Him, so that He not only commands us to love our parents, but to honor them. For with respect to brothers, sisters, and our neighbors in general He commands nothing higher than that we love them; so that He separates and distinguishes father and mother above all other persons upon earth, and places them next to Himself.” (LC, Fourth Commandment)

We receive many gifts from God through our parents, but the greatest gift which they can impart is to teach children the faith, and raise them in that faith. My parents thus taught and raised my brother and me, and I give thanks to the Lord for this blessing, even as we await the resurrection which will transpire when our Lord returns in glory.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Heiser

THE CHURCH YEAR IN WORSHIP

THE PROPER

The formal worship of the Church is centered in *The Liturgy*. It also finds expression in other services: *Matins* and *Vespers* and the *Occasional Offices*. But the atmosphere or setting of this worship is the Church Year. In *The Liturgy* or *The Holy Communion*, and in *Matins* and *Vespers*, there is a fixed structure made up of unvarying and variable parts. Some of these latter will vary with every Sunday or Festival, others will vary only with the Season. In the former group will be the *Introits*, *Collects*, *Epistles*, *Graduals*, *Gospels* of *The Liturgy*; the *Psalms*, *Lections* and *Collects* of the other Services; in the latter will be the *Season Sentences*, *Proper Prefaces*, of *The Liturgy*, and the *Invitatories*, *Responsories* and *Canticles* of the other Services. These variable parts are known as *Propria*—*Proper*s, that is, the parts that are the proper Use for such a Day or Season:—thus the *Proper*s for Advent Sunday will be the *Introit*, *Collect*, *Epistle*, *Gradual* and *Gospel*, appointed for use on that Day, Thus the influence of the Church Year is felt in the *Proper*s.

How did certain portions of Holy Scripture come to be so appointed? Where did we get the *Introits*, the *Graduals*, the *Collects*? Just here is the point of contact between the Church's worship and the Church's Year. That "Reading of the Scriptures" was a definite part of the worship of the Early Church more than one reference in the New Testament testifies; but the Scriptures read were the "Law and Prophets." It was not until the third decade, at least, after our Lord's Resurrection that the first of our New Testament writings came into existence; but we may be certain that with the spread of St. Paul's Epistles their use in the worship of the Church would find a very natural place. *Direct* narrative took the place of a reading of the Gospel until this had been committed to writing by the Evangelists, and in the course of time after very laborious copying became the treasured possession of the Churches.

Paul Z. Strodach

The Church Year (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1924)

MEMORIALS IN MEMORY OF MARTHA HEISER may be made to St. Ignatius Lutheran Seminary, c/o Rev. Michael Henson, Trinity Lutheran Church, 1000 North Park Ave., Herrin, Illinois 62948.

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

The law of God doesn't just require outward and external observance. The law of God judges hearts and minds. We understand that the "good" works of unbelievers are not really good according to God's standards. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him..." More than that, even believers (with saving faith in Jesus) need to continue to trust in God's promises regarding their daily lives—finances, children, marriage, employment, health/sickness, etc.—if they wish to please God.

In today's reading the disciples learned, as the Reminsicere collect states, "...that of ourselves we have no strength." Yes, the disciples believed in Jesus as the Savior. However, they were not trusting in Jesus' promises regarding the exorcism of the demon-possessed son. They were attempting to drive it out by their own strength. The disciples should have relied upon Jesus with prayers asking for His help. The key phrase is "all things are possible to him who believes."

Though believers confess quite regularly, "I, a poor miserable sinner..." we, too, may mistakenly think that we have our own spiritual strength to accomplish God's work. We do not. Confessing our lack of faith in God's promises, we learn to cry out with the boy's father, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" Our Lord forgives our faithless transgressions. He teaches us to bring those troubles to Him, who defends us from all adversity.

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.

Today's reading is from the fourth and fifth petition of Solomon's dedicatory prayer for the temple (2 Chronicles 6:12-42). Solomon is teaching us what kind of God we have. We have a God who hears the prayers of the weak who call upon His name. Being an Israelite or a foreigner doesn't matter, only faith. Through the designated Savior, Jesus Christ, believing sinners call upon God in the day of trouble. He forgives our sin and delivers us from evil of body and soul.

When the Old Testament describes a believer, it usually refers to him as a God-fearer. Though today we might say that a believer loves God, it is synonymous to say a believer *fears* God. Verse 43 says, "that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel." When people fear and love God, they pray to God trusting in Him. God already knows the hearts of all men (v.39), but we need to be taught to know our sinful condition. Once we know that God welcomes those who have no strength, then we will reach out to God with our prayers, relying on His strength. God desires our prayers. Solomon assures us of that, saying "when each one knows the plague of his own heart..." (v.38) and prays, God will "hear in heaven ... and forgive, and act."

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.

If the pastor ever asks you, “Why should I forgive you your sin?,” don’t answer “Because I’m sorry.” A heart-felt or sincere repentance is a good thing, but God doesn’t forgive based on your *sorry-ness*. Once again, the collect tells us that we do not have the strength. We don’t have the strength to produce a contrite heart. The realization of our sin, the contrition, and the confession are God’s work in us through the Law and His Spirit. We pray, “Create in me a clean heart, O God.”

King David spent a long time in his sin before the prophet Nathan was sent by God to visit him. As David tried to conceal his sin, he endured many sufferings and adversities. After the prophet’s story, David pronounced a sentence of death upon himself. When Nathan turned the death sentence back upon David, God produced repentance in David. It was the sacrificial death of the promised Seed, our savior Jesus, that allowed the prophet to announce, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” If asked, “Why should I forgive you your sin?,” answer, “Because Jesus died for me.”

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.

The approaching hour which would bring glorification to Jesus was His upcoming atonement for the sins of the world. Jesus would soon begin His suffering at the hands of the authorities and religious leaders, resulting in His death upon the cross. Our Savior would sacrificially endure bodily harm that we might receive salvific benefits for both our body and soul. On account of Christ, our body will rise from the dead, and our soul will forever enjoy the beatific heavenly vision. Jesus is the grain of wheat who dies so that through faith in Christ we will receive eternal life.

Today's collect reminds us that there are two realms in which we need God's defense. He has created us with both an outward body and an inward soul. These two realms are always under attack. Adversities happen to the body. Sinful, evil thoughts seek to assault and hurt the communion of our soul with our loving God.

Jesus warns us, lest by clinging to the external bodily benefits of this world we lose the benefits of eternal life in the next world. He warns us against entertaining evil thoughts which destroy faith. We need God's defense. Those who trust in Christ must be prepared to follow Christ's suffering and rely on God's defense.

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.

Jesus had defeated the devil, and thus had power over the devil, our enemy. When Jesus sent the seventy out to go from town to town, He gave them His authority over the devil with regard to many things. They had received the authority to reap the spoils of Jesus' victory. They were to snatch men from the jaws of hell. They were to gather the harvest of what Jesus has sown.

When they came back, the disciples were particularly impressed by their newly found ability to rout demons with Jesus' name. Jesus did not diminish the gift which He had bestowed, but He wished that they understand the relative importance of things. Of greater importance is another gift, that through their preaching "the kingdom of God has come near." All of Jesus' gifts were imparted to serve the purpose of bringing salvation to hearers. Having your name being written in heaven is the ultimate and greatest gift. Jesus wants to keep the focus on the main purpose.

In the stead and by the command of Christ, the pastoral office has been given the authority to forgive and retain sins. A great authority, indeed, but what is more important is the pastor's own reception of the forgiveness of sins. St. Paul speaks of the terrible possibility of giving out the Lord's gifts to others and yet losing your own salvation. 1 Corinthians 9:27, "...lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

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. Amen.

When Jesus had risen from the dead He commissioned the Pastoral Office to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching. He promised to be present in their administrations (Matthew 28:19-20). He promised them, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This Christian movement was definitely not the plan or work of men. Even Jesus said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:7).

Gamaliel the Pharisee was not a clandestine Christian seeking to release the apostles because he supported their work. Instead, like Pontius Pilate, he feared angering the people, who "glorified God for what had been done" (Acts 4:21). Rather than be held responsible for rashly killing these men, he advised a lighter approach. "Just leave them alone and it will all amount to nothing." Because of his ignorance of the Word of God, unbelieving Gamaliel does not realize that "it is of God, you cannot overthrow it." Jesus said of His Church, "...and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The success of Christ's Church does not depend upon man's strength, but upon God's gracious will.

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.

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.)

The powerful witness of the earliest martyrs was a major factor in the spread of Christianity. The early Christians expected persecution and embraced it. If they could avoid it without sin, they would, but they would not dishonor Christ with selfish cowardice. When they had to suffer such things, they embraced persecution and martyrdom as a blessing. They felt honored to suffer like their Lord.

David here speaks of God “my deliverer.” He had been delivered from his enemies, but Christians praise and thank God regardless of the outcome. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from tyrants, but if He chooses not to in His wisdom, He will deliver us by bringing us to heaven. The blood of the martyrs is seeds of the Church.

It was the early Christians' confidence and their commitment to our Lord that impressed the pagans. When ungodliness and death surrounded the saints they “called upon the Lord.” They did not worship the fickle gods of the pagans. Those gods were feared, but not loved. Our God is intimate and dependable. He is a never-failing defender. We may be called upon in our day to suffer for Christ. And in that hour of trial we can confidently call upon our Mighty Fortress and Deliverer.

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.

Ancient people in the Near East wore long, loose robes. The lighter fabrics and looser fit suited the hot desert environment. They were meant to keep the wearer as cool as possible. But such clothing is not good for working or any sort of vigorous action. When a man had to work or run or do anything vigorously, he girded up his loins and robes. That is, he pulled up his robes higher, folded them, and belted or fastened them, so his legs were free and the robes were not flowing. This meant he was ready for work, ready for action, and not relaxing.

Peter is telling us that since we have these great blessings waiting for us in heaven, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober.” We all have a tendency to relax spiritually. The mundane cares of our lives distract us. The longer we are distracted by the world, the more likely we are to start thinking and acting like the world. St. Peter reminds us that we are to be different. We are to be a “set apart” holy people, not given to the pattern of thinking or acting that the world displays. Our God is not like the pagan gods. He is holy. He is righteous.

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.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15: JOSHUA 7:10-26 OCULI

We think in very individualistic terms in this age. “I have faith, I sinned, I repented...” We see things from the perspective of the individual acting or not acting; being responsible or not responsible. But in this reading God said: “Israel has sinned.” Israel is held responsible for Achan’s sin. This offends our sensibilities.

Instead of destroying all of Israel, God reduces the punishment to his family. Achan and his plundered objects, along with “his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had,” were stoned and then burned. All of Achan’s household paid a terrible price for his sin.

In fear and trembling we must remember that God does send His wrath against groups, tribes, or nations. His wrath fell upon all of Egypt for the sins of Pharaoh. Or as the Formula of Concord says: “For they are well-deserved penalties of sins when God so punishes a land or nation for despising His Word that the punishment extends also to their posterity, as is to be seen in the Jews” (SD XI:58-59). All of us deserve death for our sins. God’s grace stays our punishment. When His wrath falls upon a group or nation, many are swept away. We must cling to Christ so that even if we are swept up in God’s wrath against a nation, we as individuals may find our eternal home with Christ.

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.

Sometimes we are amazed at how the faith spread in the ancient world. The contrast is all the more stark when compared with the withering and dying faith in the West today. What is different now? One thing that is different is our wealth and comfort. The West, in this sense, is a victim of its own success. Western man is no longer motivated by hunger or poverty. Even with disease, Western man puts his faith in pharmaceutical companies, face masks, and the Center for Disease Control. Ancient man could only pray.

Today's Western man isn't trying to appease any god. He is being entertained to death. St. Paul spoke "the gospel of God in much conflict." There was much violent opposition to the Gospel. Our conflict today is battling the idols Western man loves: comfort, entertainment, respectability. We live in a much safer world, but if we are not in conflict with the world, something is wrong. St. Paul spoke "not as pleasing men, but God." The world should be amazed at how radical we are. Christ bids us to take up the cross and follow Him through everything, both great and small.

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.

Who were “deacons”? They were obviously not bishops. We, of course, today have quite a time sorting out the different titles. They have gone through many changes down through the years. That is why there is so much confusion. Also, the Bible does not give us specific instructions on how the Church is to be organized. We have been given the principle that there is one divinely ordained Office of the Ministry. By human right, we may order the grades within the one office as we see fit.

H. E. Jacobs believed that the deacons referred to in 1 Timothy were in the Office of the Ministry. He says: “Acts 7 and 8 clearly show that ‘the seven’ preached as well as attended to the secular responsibilities of the infant Church. The qualifications of deacons required by I Tim. 3:8-13 show that their duties were not purely secular.” (*A Summary of the Christian Faith*, pp. 444-445) In any event, these deacons were to be serious, no nonsense people; not flighty, immature persons.

We have too many silly people in positions of authority today. Deacons must understand the faith. All those who are to serve in the Office of the Ministry must go through spiritual formation and be tested by the Church before being given great authority. Then such men are a wonderful blessing to the faithful.

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.

Paul commands Titus to speak or teach healthy doctrine. This is vital for the Church. The older men are to be balanced and dignified. They also ought to be knowledgeable in the faith as fits their years of study. They must be examples of the faith in action. And they must be pillars of the Church, remaining faithful under the burden of duty. This is what “patience” means; even in hard times, one stays the course.

The pastor must encourage all the members of the Church to strive for lives of holiness and study the Word. The Christian life is one of continual study and self discipline. Today, older people should speak the truth openly on all subjects, especially on controversial or sensitive subjects. When they do this, it gives courage to younger people, who are more vulnerable in society. When older people show courage, it infects younger people. Those who are more experienced often see past current fads and misconceptions and should help the young avoid the lies of popular culture. The pastor and everyone in the flock must “speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.”

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 necessities 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 necessities, 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 necessities 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

The title of “high priest” carries great weight in this text. That title and statement make it clear that Caiaphas was not speaking or acting as a private citizen, but was God’s high priest; and God overruled in what he said. Within the context of this Gospel narrative his words were true in a way he did not imagine.

Prophecy in Scripture is divinely revealed truth, thus all of the Bible can be called prophetic in that sense. In reality, Caiaphas’ words meant that Jesus’ death would be for the nation. The Lord’s death would save them, not by way of removing political trouble with Rome, but by taking away the sins of those who believed in Him. Those (from all nations) who look to Jesus Christ as their Redeemer and Lord are the true spiritual nation of Israel, who descend from their spiritual father of the faith, Abraham.

The “sign” (miracle) of the resurrection of Lazarus, which the Sanhedrin acknowledged, made Jesus a man of substantial reputation. He was sought after by the pilgrims filling Jerusalem in preparation for the annual high Jewish festival of the Passover. The Light of the world had but a little while to shine in that context; Jesus knew that His Passion loomed large on the horizon.

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.

The Hebrew word “manna” translates as “What is it?” It is useful not to translate the Hebrew word here, but instead *transliterate* it, which means to write or print a letter or word using the closest corresponding letters in a different alphabet or script. This transliteration attempts to produce a sound that is similar to the original word in the original language. The intent is to bring the meaning and sound of the original into the new version. This simple Hebrew word is the theme of today’s text.

So many things of God, His will and work among us, result in our having to say, “What is it?” His ways are not our ways, but they are always gracious, and work for the good of those who love Him. Even when we resist and rebel against our Lord—not unlike the Israelites in our appointed text—He still feeds us with His Bread of Life from heaven: Jesus Christ.

It does not make sense to treat enemies and rebels this lovingly and mercifully. But the Lord does, and thus leaves us dumbfounded and saying “*what is it* that the Lord is doing here?” The answer is always the same: He blesses us purely by grace.

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.

The Gospel text which is our appointed reading for today beautifully brings yesterday's Old Testament text into the New Testament context. Jesus graciously offers Himself to be the Lamb of God for all our sins, and is the Bread of Life come down from heaven. All who eat of this food and drink of this drink will never hunger or thirst, and shall inherit eternal life in the life to come after this dark age and vale of tears.

Flesh and blood here point to Christ as the crucified One and the source of life. Jesus speaks of faith's appropriation of Himself as God's appointed sacrifice, which atones for the sins of the world. He emphasizes that one must eat and drink of that atoning sacrifice to receive what it graciously brings. Jesus clarifies the divine fact that the value of the Old Testament manna is limited, and is contrasted with the heavenly food Christ gives throughout the New Testament.

For the tenth time in this chapter, reference is made to Jesus' coming down from heaven or to bread from heaven. The believer, through faith, receives Jesus as the sustenance of one's life. Jesus points to His flesh, which He will give unto crucifixion, and His blood, which will be shed as propitiation for sin. Jesus bids His hearers to look forward to Calvary, where providing eternal life would be costly to the Giver.

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.

Here Jesus expounds on the divine understanding of the flesh of the Lamb of God, of the Crucified, whose blood is shed for the life of the world. Whosoever eats that flesh and drinks that blood (in the sacrament which the Son of Man instituted as the perpetual memorial of His death and as the vehicle of its blessing) has eternal life and shall be raised up by the Son of Man at the last day. Whoever eats it shall be in abiding communion with Him who shares the life of the Father, the Source and Creator of all life.

The Jews react negatively, murmuring when the “son of Joseph” dares to lay claim to divine Sonship and descent from heaven. They dispute among themselves when the grace and love of the Father confront them with the incredible gift of eternal life in the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, given “for us Christians to eat and to drink.” Even many of the disciples find the words of Jesus a hard saying and take offense at them. They draw back and forsake His fellowship just when they encounter the “greater things” which Jesus had promised, just when they behold the glory of the Son of Man.

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.

This may be hard to accept, but it is not hard to understand. The thought of eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking His blood was doubtless shocking to most of Jesus' Jewish hearers. They saw consuming any blood as a clear sin against God. The Mosaic Levitical laws made it clear that the blood was God's exclusively, because it contained the life of the creature, and thus could not be taken or consumed by man.

"What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending where He was before?" Then they would have all the more reason to take offense, for the Son of Man will ascend to where He was before by going to the cross, to a criminal's death. When Jesus has ascended where He was before, He will bestow the Spirit on those who believe in Him. The Spirit will lead those who believe into all truth. He will enable the believer to understand that the flesh of Jesus is in fact the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, given for the life of the world. The Spirit will recall and confirm in the believer the divinity of the words of Jesus which gave His flesh this significance and power; thus the Spirit will give 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.

“From this time” may also mean “For this reason.” “Many... turned back.” Jesus had already made clear what discipleship meant, and many were not ready to receive life in the way He taught. As in the synoptic Gospels, Peter acts as spokesman with his confession of “words of eternal life.” The expression is general. Peter was not speaking of a formula, but of the meaning of Jesus’ teaching. He perceived the truth of verse 63. “We believe and know...” Since the Greek verbs are in the perfect tense, they mean, “We have entered a state of belief and knowledge that has continued until the present time.”

St. Peter’s designation of Jesus as “the Holy One of God” (see also Acts 2:27) indicates that Peter is confessing more than the term “Christ” (or “Messiah”) commonly connoted. In his confession recorded in Matthew 16:16 this *more* is expressed in the words “the Son of the living God.” Peter is confessing the deity of his Lord.

Jesus’ condemnation of “one of you is a devil” shows that Judas has become so much a part of the diabolical attack on Jesus as to be identified with such a title. The betrayal is in the spirit of Satan. *Iscairiot* means “a man from Kerioth” (in Judea) and would apply equally to the father and the son. Judas seems to have been the only non-Galilean among the Twelve—and therefore one of the last persons likely to betray Jesus.

Prayer: We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts, that, as we have known the incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord

Judica Sunday

Chapter VI. Of the Third Use of the Law.

1. We believe, teach and confess that although men rightly believing and truly converted to God have been freed and exempted from the curse and coercion of the Law, they nevertheless are not on this account without Law, but have been redeemed by the Son of God, in order that they should exercise themselves in it day and night, (Ps. 119). For even our first parents before the fall did not live without Law, which Law of God was also written upon their hearts, because they were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26sq.; 2:16 sqq.; 3:3).

2. We believe, teach and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be urged with diligence, not only upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon the rightly believing, truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith.

3. For although they are regenerate and renewed in the spirit of their mind, yet, in the present life, this regeneration and renewal are not complete, but are only begun, and believers are, in the spirit of their mind, in a constant struggle against the flesh, i.e. against the corrupt nature and disposition which cleaves to us unto death. On account of this old Adam, which still inheres in the understanding, will and all the powers of man, it is needful that the Law of the Lord always shine upon the way before him, in order that he may do nothing from self-imposed human devotion; likewise, that the old Adam also may not employ his own will, but may be subdued against his will, not only by the admonition and threatening of the Law, but also by punishments and blows, so that he may follow and surrender himself captive to the Spirit (1 Cor. 9:27; Rom. 6:12; Gal. 6:14; Ps. 119:1 sqq.; Heb. 13:21).

4. Then as to the distinction between the works of the Law and the fruits of the Spirit, we believe, teach and confess that the works which are done according to the Law, as long as they are and are called works of the Law, are only extorted from man by the force of punishment and the threatening of God's wrath.

5. But the fruits of the Spirit are the works which the Spirit of God who dwells in believers works through the regenerate, and are done by believers so far as they are regenerate [spontaneously and freely], as though they knew of no command, threat or reward; for in this manner the children of God live in the Law and walk according to the Law of God, a manner which St. Paul, in his Epistles, calls the Law of Christ and the Law of the mind (Rom. 7:25; 8:7).

6. Thus the Law is and remains both to the penitent and impenitent, both to regenerate and unregenerate men, one and the same Law, namely, the immutable will of God; and the distinction, so far as it concerns obedience, is alone in the men, inasmuch as one who is not yet regenerate does what is required him by the Law out of constraint and unwillingly (as also the regenerate do according to the flesh); but the believer, so far as he is regenerate, without constraint and with a willing spirit, does that which no threatening of the Law could ever extort from him.

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome, Art. VI

St. John faithfully follows through on our Lord's instructions in his epistles. He and the other Apostles write about love, works, and discipline among the saints in Christ's Church. This is a great blessing from God and an important aspect of how He glorifies Himself as the Lord of our salvation!

People say lots of things. They say things that sound really good, and seem to have sincere good intentions when they say them. But Christ teaches us to *do* the things that reflect God's glory and love for us all. We can say (or type) nice ideas or pious plans, but if we do not carry out the works of love that He prepares for us, then we are *acting* unfaithfully.

The world thinks that love is about the self. "I feel this way about you..." "I do this thing for you so you know I care..." "I'm making sure others see that I'm loving and praising you..." Even Peter said he intended to lay down his life for Jesus' sake, but soon after that his actions displayed more concern with protecting himself.

Christ teaches us the better way and, through faith in Him, His way is credited to us and we begin to walk in it. He taught and acted according to His vocations, not according to vanities. As He loved His disciples, and us, He did the will of the Father. He kept the Ten Commandments. He glorified the name of the Lord. By these things—not our own glory—will people see the kingdom of God and His righteousness!

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

It is an important aspect of the Lord's Church that we manifest the love of God for one another. Talking about "love" and "peace" can seem vague and philosophical, but outward acts concretely show what these words truly mean!

The world is full of corruption and pain, which bring trouble for the faithful and the unfaithful alike. Satan spreads his lies about love and peace, and they only add to the mania and suffering, bringing no lasting help or comfort. But the Lord sends real help through His people, the Church. His Word and the fruit that He makes His saints bear by it are blessings that comfort people when the consequences of evil cannot be avoided. Such blessings are also a help that can strengthen and protect people to avoid the evil that can be avoided.

Superficial vanities are not comforts, but merely distractions. The love that God the Holy Ghost works through His Word provides true comfort and help. He who made all things calls people to come to the place where His name is glorified and His Words are taught. He comforts through tangible things like water, food, and drink in the Sacraments, where spiritual content is connected to the bodily things of creation, so that our bodies may be used to help our souls receive His gifts. Again, He shows His love in the mutual comfort and service of those who are made faithful in Jesus Christ. He is the only one who gives us real love and peace—His forgiveness, won on the cross and delivered through these gifts!

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

There is no source of true help and blessing but the Lord. Vanity compels us to think that we can help ourselves, but the Word of God is sent again and again to teach us that “our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 124:8).

God made all things, sustains all things, and promises to bless those who fear, love, and trust in Him. He has always offered His help. The satanic lie encourages us to take what we want, ignoring God’s order in blessing us. Eve had a whole garden full of food, but the serpent taught her to reach her hand out to feed herself on her own terms. Adam knew his Maker directly, yet he took and ate in sin from his wife’s hand, listening to the serpent’s voice through her, rather than the voice and command of the Lord. God promises love and peace in the Church, through His Word and Sacraments, but people still ignore His grace there and seek after all manner of empty things in the world—and worldly things brought into the Church—instead.

Christ Jesus was lifted up on the cross to be seen throughout all history. His holy sacrifice was the manifestation and fulfillment of God’s love and promises. He helped, He served, He taught, and He even gave up His life, all to show the truth of God’s merciful providence and to secure it for us. His Church continues to point to that cross and proclaim the gracious power of God in Christ’s death and resurrection!

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

God makes and sustains all things. He is the one who establishes the terms and boundaries for what is true and right. Moses had good intentions in seeking to make atonement for the sins of the people, but the Lord declared that atonement, judgment, and punishment would happen according to His divine will, not according to the efforts of Moses.

Man's efforts are empty and pointless if they are not conformed to God's Word and will. That is why He gives us His Commandments and the rest of His teachings in the Scriptures. His Spirit brings us to the right knowledge, understanding, and proper disposition to obey His will. But there will still be times when the weakness of our sinful flesh confuses the matter. That is why He also works humility in us by His Spirit, and we are made to know our place as servants, to repent, and to receive both correction and Absolution.

Our Lord Jesus Christ never made any of the mistakes that Moses did. He submitted to the will of the Father perfectly. He was the one who could truly make atonement for the people, but even as He taught and led in faithfulness, He exemplified humility and service. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explains that those who neglect the will of the Lord are dismissed as lawless (Matthew 7:21-23). John's Gospel shows many examples of our Savior directing the faithful to the will of the Father. It is no wonder that our Lord teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done"!

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

St. Paul teaches plainly in Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” There was no bloodshed and death in the beginning, but Adam and Eve’s sin made death a necessity. The sons of Adam would make that spiritual reality manifest bodily. Abel made a faithful offering to the Lord with the bloody sacrifice from his flock, and the Lord accepted it. Cain served his own vanity and sought the blood and death of his brother.

Hebrews gives us the Lord’s profound wisdom in taking the need for bloodshed and death that resulted from man’s faithless wickedness and making those things work together for the good of His people, called and blessed according to His will. Fulfilling the prophetic types, Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, came as the Great High Priest and Sacrifice: He offered up His own holy blood and innocent death to establish our eternal inheritance.

The Communion of Saints is sanctified by His blood shed on the holy cross. He did this bodily, once for all, yet as we faithfully receive the Sacrament of His Supper, even today we are sanctified by it. So, also, we are baptized into His death (Romans 6:3). From this reality come the blessed liturgical practices of His people: the sign of the cross and the name of Jesus mark and identify all the things that are used for the purpose of teaching, helping, and strengthening people in His holy Church!

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

This teaching of St. Paul connects back to 1 Corinthians 13. The love about which Paul teaches the Corinthians is not the world's idea of love. There is a consistent, unified witness according to God's truth and Spirit that teaches the whole Church about the love of *Christ* in these things. According to His love we are brought to say and do those things that manifest God's grace and wisdom. As His people, we seek the things of His kingdom and righteousness, because those result in the fruit that shows others the salvation available to them in Christ's blood and death!

The terror of God's Law is necessary, because we all need such instruction in discipline to fear His righteous wrath and repent of our sins. But it is the love that Christ has displayed toward us, sacrificing Himself for us, that brings us to do the works He has given us to do (Ephesians 2:10), that we might bear witness to the gift of His love and mercy. Such is a vital part of what the Lord does in us and through us, His holy Church, for the sake of the world and to proclaim the glory of His grace (Ephesians 1:6) to all who would believe and be saved through faith in Jesus Christ!

Prayer: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.