

**Clergy of the ELDoNA,
affiliated congregations and missions**

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Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

Rev. Jeffrey Ahonen

Good Shepherd L.C., Tony, WI; Apologia Lutheran Mission, Deer Park, WI; Peace L.C., Ironwood, MI; Pure Blessings Lutheran Church, Brandon, WI

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

Rev. Douglas Handrich (Emeritus)

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Peoria, IL

Rev. Kent Heimbigner

Charity Lutheran Church, Burleson, TX

Rev. Benjamin Henson

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Peoria, IL

Rev. Michael Henson

Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL

Rev. Martin Jackson

Lamb of God Ev. Lutheran Church, Rogers, AR

Rev. Daniel Mensing

Faith Lutheran Church, Tualatin, OR

Rev. Mark Mueller

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Cambridge, MN

Rev. John Rutowicz

St. Boniface Lutheran Church, Niles, MI

Rev. Josiah Scheck

Christ Lutheran Church, Richmond, MO

Rev. Eric Stefanski

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Harrison, AR; Emmanuel Lutheran Mission, Conway, AR

Rev. Timothy Tolar

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

Rev. Brandon Warr

St. Patrick Lutheran Church, Chipley, FL

Rev. Dcn. Gary Harroun

Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL

Rev. Dcn. Jacob Henson

St. Henry Lutheran Mission (WI and MI), especially Apologia Lutheran Mission, Deer Park, WI

Rev. Dcn. Anthony Oncken

Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

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

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



OCTOBER 2—NOVEMBER 4, 2023

A PUBLICATION OF
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN DIOCESE OF NORTH
AMERICA

The Calendar

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

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

October 1	Trinity 17	ASBH 55*
October 8	Trinity 18	ASBH 56
October 15	Trinity 19	ASBH 57
October 17 (T)	St. Ignatius, Bishop and Martyr ASBH 102 (in this <i>Herald</i>)/TLH 589	
October 18 (W)	St. Luke, Evangelist ASBH 103 (in this <i>Herald</i>)	
October 22	Trinity 20	ASBH 58
October 28 (S)	Sts. Simon and Jude, Apostles ASBH 104 (in this <i>Herald</i>)	
October 29	Festival of the Reformation/ Trinity 21	ASBH 59
November 1 (W)	Festival of All Saints ASBH 106	



Pr. Mensing, Bp. Heiser, Pr. Tolar at St. Luke (Kenai, AK)

2023 Episcopal Visitations Underway

Bishop Heiser's visitations continued last month, with the visit to Faith Lutheran Church in Oregon on Sunday, September 17 and St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church in Alaska the following Sunday. Pr. Mensing accompanied Bishop Heiser on this year's visitation to Alaska, which provided an opportunity for Pr. Mensing and Pr. Tolar to meet.

Between the two parish visitations, Bishop Heiser officiated at the memorial service for his mother, Martha Heiser, at Mills and Mills Funeral Home and Memorial Park in Tumwater, Washington.

Thou, Lord, didst win the bat - tle That they might
 May we with zeal as ear - nest The faith of
 For these, passed on be - fore us, Sa - vior! we
 Till all the ran - somed num - ber Fall down be -

con - querors be. Their crowns of liv - ing
 Christ main - tain, And bound in love as
 Thee a - dore, And, walk - ing in their
 fore the Throne, And hon - or, pow'r, and

glo - ry Are lit with rays from Thee.
 breth - ren At length Thy rest at - tain.
 foot - steps, Would serve Thee more and more.
 glo - ry A - scribe to God a - lone. A - men.

Festival of St. Simon and St. Jude

104. From All Thy Saints in Warfare, For All Thy Saints at Rest

The Sarum Hymnal, 1868

Ach Gott vom Himmelreiche

"Musae Sioniae," VII, 1609

1. From all Thy Saints in war - fare,
 2. Praise, Lord, for Thine A - pos - tles,
 3. A - po - stles, Pro - phets, Mar - tyrs,
 Δ4. Then praise we God the Fa - ther,

For all Thy Saints at rest, To Thee, O
 Who sealed their Faith to - day, One love, one
 And all the sa - cred throng, Who wear the
 And praise we God the Son, And God the

bles - ed Je - sus, All prais - es be ad - dressed.
 zeal im - pelled them To tread the sa - cred way.
 spot - less rai - ment, Who raise the cease - less song;
 Ho - ly Spi - rit, E - ter - nal Three in One;

OFFERINGS FOR THE WORK OF THE DIOCESE—As the annual visitations are now underway, this is the time of year when there is the greatest need for offerings to support the work of the diocese. The annual financial needs of our diocese are quite modest: The general diocesan budget is a little over \$26,000 for the entire year; all other expenses, including assistance to our sister churches, comes to less than \$10,000. If your congregation did not have an opportunity to receive a **door offering** or other **special collection** last month, we request that you give consideration to such a collection this month. Individuals may also send support directly to the diocesan treasurer (c/o Trinity Lutheran Church, 1000 North Park Avenue, Herrin, IL 62948).

ASBH HYMN FOR THE FESTIVALS OF ST. IGNATIUS, ST. LUKE, AND STS. SIMON AND JUDE—The Office Hymn for the Festival days of St. Luke and Sts. Simon and Jude have now been typeset and “For All Thy Saints in Warfare, for All Thy Saints at Rest” is included near the end of this issue of *The Lutheran Herald*. (Please note: several saints days will make use of the pertinent stanzas this hymn; to avoid confusion, the decision has been made to print each of these hymns separately—rather than simply using the particular stanza associated with the saints whose day is being observed—to allow for the easiest use of the hymn on a given day.) The hymn for the Festival of St. Ignatius (ASBH 102) is the same as TLH 589, which is among the public domain hymns in *The Lutheran Hymnal*.

ASBH AUDIO FILES—Work is underway on audio files of the ASBH hymns, which will allow congregations without local musicians to make use of the new hymns. For more information, please contact Bishop Heiser.

AHONEN CALLED TO PURE BLESSINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH (BRANDON, WI)—Pr. Ahonen has received and accepted the call to serve as Pastor of Pure Blessings Lutheran Church. He will also continue to serve as Pastor to the other congregations to which he has been called; this call establishes Pure Blessings Evangelical Lutheran Church as a congregation within the fellowship of the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America and places Pr. Ahonen as the inaugural pastor. We pray that the Lord of the Church will continue to bless the pastor and all the saints of Pure Blessings Lutheran Church!

Lesson from the Book of Concord

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

The Third Commandment.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

When, then, it is asked: "What is meant by the commandment: 'Remember the sabbath-day to sanctify it?'" Answer: To sanctify the Sabbath is the same as "to keep it holy." But what is meant by "keeping it holy"? Nothing else than to be occupied in holy words, works and life. For the day needs no sanctification for itself; for in itself it has been created holy. But God desires it to be holy to thee. Therefore it becomes holy or unholy on thy account, according as thou art occupied on the same with things that are holy or unholy.

How then does such sanctification occur? Not that we sit behind the stove and do no rough work, or deck ourselves with a garland and put on our best clothes, but (as has been said) that we occupy ourselves with God's Word, and exercise ourselves therein.

And indeed we Christians ought always to keep such a Sabbath, and to be occupied with nothing but holy things, i.e. daily to meditate upon God's Word, and carry it in our hearts and upon our lips. But because (as has been said) we do not all have leisure, we must devote several hours a week to the young, or at least a day to the mass of people, in order that we may be concerned about this alone, and especially urge the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and thus direct our whole life and being according to God's Word. The Sabbath is truly kept whenever time is devoted to earnest attention to this, and the practice of it; but that cannot be called a true Christian Sabbath where this is not done. For they who are not Christians can keep holiday and be idle just as well as the entire swarm of our ecclesiastics, who stand daily in the churches, singing, and ringing bells, but who keep no Sabbath day holy, because they neither preach nor practice God's Word, but teach and live contrary to it.

For the Word of God is the sanctuary above all sanctuaries, yea, the only one which we Christians know and have. For though we had the bones of all the saints, or all holy and consecrated garments upon a heap, they would not avail us anything; for all that is a dead thing which can sanctify nobody. But God's Word is the treasury which sanctifies everything whereby even all the saints themselves were sanctified. —The Large Catechism, §87–90

Thou, Lord, didst win the bat - tle That they might
Thy wine and oil, O Sav - ior, On bruised hearts
For these, passed on be - fore — us, Sa - vior! we
Till all the ran - somed num - ber Fall down be -

con - querors be. Their crowns of liv - ing
deign to pour, And with true Balm of
Thee a - dore, And, walk - ing in their
fore the Throne, And hon - or, pow'r, and

glo - ry Are lit with rays from Thee.
Gi - lead A - noint us ev - er - more.
foot - steps, Would serve Thee more and more.
glo - ry A - scribe to God a - lone. A - men.

Festival of St. Luke

103. From All Thy Saints in Warfare, For All Thy Saints at Rest

The Sarum Hymnal, 1868

Ach Gott vom Himmelreiche
"Musae Sioniae," VII, 1609

1. From all Thy Saints in war - fare,
2. For that "Be - loved Phy - si - cian,"
3. A - po - stles, Pro - phets, Mar - tyrs,
Δ4. Then praise we God the Fa - ther,

For all Thy Saints at rest, To Thee, O
All praise! whose Gos - pel shows The Heal - er
And all the sa - cred throng, Who wear the
And praise we God the Son, And God the

bles - ed Je - sus, All prais - es be ad - dressed.
of the na - tions, the Shar - er of our woes.
spot - less rai - ment, Who raise the cease - less song;
Ho - ly Spi - rit, E - ter - nal Three in One;

MONDAY, OCTOBER 2: JUDE 20-25 17TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

St. Jude's brief epistle is filled with divinely inspired warnings concerning the spiritual perils which confront the Lord's saints. Remembering the words of Sunday's Gospel—"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."—we know that apostasy often comes from pride. Men imagine a new doctrine for themselves, or self-confidently believe that they have the strength to resist the temptations which come to them.

In truth, our faith is often quite frail, and sometimes in mere moments some calamity or temptation can seem to challenge us to the breaking point. In such moments of peril, St. Jude's concluding words console and strengthen us, for we have been baptized into Christ Jesus, "God our Savior," who is "Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy". Trials and temptations are occasions for us to faithfully pray this week's Collect, knowing that it is the Lord who can and does so sustain us in the faith unto eternal life.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; 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, OCTOBER 3: HEB. 4:9-13 17TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

In the Large Catechism, Luther urges the Christian to believe what God's Word declares concerning the nature of the fruits of the flesh (Galatians 5:19 sqq.) and exhorts: "Therefore if you cannot feel it, only believe the Scriptures. They will not lie to you, and they know your flesh better than you yourself."

This is what God's Word declares to us today: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." We need that Word because (to again quote the Large Catechism) "... that we do not feel it [the corruption of our nature] is so much the worse; for it is a sign that there is a leprous flesh which feels nothing, and yet rages and consumes. Yet, as we have said, even if you be quite dead to all sensibility, only believe the Scriptures, which pronounce sentence upon you."

The conviction of the Law and the consolation of the Gospel are applied to us again and again throughout our lives so that we might be sustained in faith to enter into that promised "rest for the people of God."

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.



Ye have a - ris - en From the cares which
Our un - der - tak - ings Are but toils and
No cross or sad - ness There can hin - der
To you are chant - ed Songs that ne'er to
keep us still in pris - on.
trou - bles and heart - break - ings.
your un - trou - bled glad - ness.
mor - tal ears were grant - ed. A - men.

5. Ah, who would, then, not depart with gladness
To inherit heav'n for earthly sadness?
Who here would languish
Longer in bewailing and in anguish?

6. Come, O Christ, and loose the chains that bind us;
Lead us forth and cast this world behind us.
With Thee, th' Anointed,
Finds the soul its joy and rest appointed.

Festival of St. Ignatius of Antioch

102. Oh, How Blest Are Ye Whose Toils are Ended

O wie selig seid ihr doch, ihr Frommen
Simon Dach, 1635
Tr., Henry W. Longfellow, 1845, alt.

O wie selig
J. Georg Stözel's "Choral-Buch"
Stuttgart, 1744



1. Oh, how blest are ye whose toils are
2. We are still as in a — dun - geon
3. Ye mean - while are in your cham - bers
4. Christ has wiped a - way your tears for -

end - ed, Who through death have
liv - ing, Still op - pressed with
sleep - ing, Qui - et, and set
ev - er; Ye have that for

un - to God as - cend - ed!
sor - row and mis - giv - ing;
free from all our weep - ing;
which we still en - deav - or;

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 4: 2 COR. 8:1-9 17TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

St. Paul wrote of the churches of Macedonia that their faithful generosity was of such a character that “according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.” This faithfulness was according to the grace of God which had been bestowed upon them; that is, their generosity was according to that which the Lord worked within them as a fruit of the faith which the Lord had established and sustained within them.

The faithfulness of the saints toward their brethren is a fruit of that which trusts in the Lord for all things; in St. Paul’s words: “And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” Faith does not ask the faithless question of the lawyer: “Who is my neighbor?”; instead, faith sees the need—beginning with the household of God—and provides as the Lord has granted us the means to do so.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; 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 people had been brought back from their time of captivity, and the remnant had seen the beginning of the restoration of Judah. But the beginning of the ninth chapter of Ezra records that still the people had not learned to separate themselves from the world: “When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, ‘The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.’” (9:1–2)

The prayer of Ezra acknowledges the wickedness of the people, and implores the Lord to remember the mercy which He has shown countless times toward His saints. We have no works to appeal to as meriting the mercy of the Lord; rather, anything good in us is simply the fruit of that faith which He sustains in us. Therefore, day by day, we come before the Lord in repentance, desiring to be freed from the temptations which afflict us day by day in this fallen world.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; 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 king speaks rightly: “there is no other God who can deliver like this.” Flames so hot they kill the executioners; His children do not even smell of fire! We have sinned and lived with sinners, yet we are not consumed. We appear as Jesus depicts us in St. Matthew 25: perfect sheep to whom all manner of good works can be attributed, and no sin at all!

Such deliverance is, of course, by grace alone, by the Christ coming into fallen creation personally to rescue us. The flames of the furnace—the sin of this world and the tempting of Satan—were not our true problem, but the evil that comes from within us (St. Matthew 15:17–20). Thus, into the furnace our Deliverer comes: God the Son becomes one of us to overcome that damning defect, to recreate us in His image by His Word (2 Corinthians 3:15–18, Ephesians 4:23–24, Colossians 3:10). Since we have not been left to face those flames alone, but our dear Lord has suffered all the wrath of God and the punishment for sin Himself on the cross, those flames are turned away from us. Protected by His righteousness that is given us in Holy Baptism and that covers us like a robe (Isaiah 61:10, Galatians 3:27), there is no sin or stain to be seen, nor even the smell of the flames our sins deserved!

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness; that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

What could be more damning than Judah's response to the Lord's stated desire in our reading? Only the similar responses of those who refuse God's declarations: "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12); that Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life"; "No one comes to the Father except through [Him]" (John 14:6); and thus "by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9)!

The Lord wished to give His nation triumph over, and freedom from, those who served other gods and would ultimately work their hurt. "Returning...rest...quietness...[and] confidence" in Him would give His people victory, but they so wished to 'be in control' of their lives that they relied on their own calculations, instead. When they saw they must flee, He would teach them the futility of their desired autonomy: the pursuers would be faster! Yet, when His people would see their failure and cry out to Him, He would be found still waiting with His mercy (St. Luke 15:11-24). So He remains today—yet none ought trifle with His grace as Judgment Day approaches as a thief in the night (2 Peter 2:9-10) and death may come at any hour (Genesis 6:3, Hebrews 9:27-28, St. Luke 12:15-21).

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness; that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

As we heard yesterday of the iniquity of the people after their return from captivity, today's reading from Jeremiah presents us with a portion of the word of the Lord which warned them of that which would befall them. "Therefore I will scatter them like stubble that passes away by the wind of the wilderness. This is your lot, the portion of your measures from Me," says the Lord, 'Because you have forgotten Me and trusted in falsehood.'

In our generation, we see that there are many who are abandoning the faith. Some do so because they are caught up in obvious vice and are given over to the perversions so common in our culture. But others seem to drift away, almost as if they are bored of the truth. Such people seem to simply take it for granted that the Lord will not judge them, and they take the grace of God for granted. They have drifted so far from the truth that they imagine that they "aren't that bad." The plight of such souls is possibly worse than those who are caught up in gross sins, because they imagine that they have no sin at all.

The Law condemns those who outwardly or inwardly depart from the Lord; it speaks judgment, that there might be repentance and faith restored before the Day of Judgment.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7: ISA. 1:10-17 17TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

The wickedness of the people had become so great that Judah was likened to Sodom and Gomorrah: "Hear the word of the Lord, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?'"

It was not that the people had stopped going to offer sacrifices. The sacrifices were an offense to the Lord because they were not offered in a spirit of repentance. The people imagined that they could remain in their impenitence and simply "buy God off" with their offerings, while their hearts grew ever more distant from the Lord.

A dreadful judgment came from the Lord against the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and a dreadful judgment came upon Judah. And, in the year A.D. 70, the judgment of the Lord fell on Jerusalem through the instrumentality of the Roman army. The Lord warns of the coming judgment so that His people may be drawn to Him in repentance and faith. The Lord led His people out of Sodom and Gomorrah, and He preserved His remnant in the time of the captivity. He preserved His saints from the destruction of Jerusalem. He will preserve His people when the last judgment falls upon this world.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; 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, NOVEMBER 2: 2 CHR. 29:1-11 21ST S. A. TRINITY

Hezekiah called upon the Levites to set themselves apart from the unclean world for the task of, and by means of, restoring the Lord's Temple to fulfill His purpose. The things that didn't belong to the worship of the one true God were to be removed and the things essential to His worship reinstated.

Their fathers, he said, had brought destruction to Judah and Jerusalem—and the captivity of its people—by turning their backs on the Lord, and that chiefly by their lack of appreciation for His Means of Grace. They had not rightly esteemed the offerings that were made, the returning to God what was given by Him, and what such rites prefigured. The One given by Him would be returned to Him for their sake; One whom the unfaithful would sacrifice to the false god of works-righteousness, yet Who in truth sacrificed Himself to God in their place, as payment for the sins of all.

The wrath of God comes upon those whose worship is not fixed on the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! That is why we have the liturgy; it radiates out from the celebration of His body and blood, and every bit of it is to keep our hearts so fixed.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness; that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

‘Saint’ literally means ‘holy one’, yet to be recognized as a saint in the Roman Church today very little thought is given to one’s holiness. Instead, it requires miracles, either while alive, or by miraculous happenings or appearances involving one’s grave or the parts of one’s deceased body. Such is the result of rooting righteousness in a person’s performance of good works! Jesus warns us against such thinking in St. Matthew 7:22–23.

The true status of ‘saint’, though, is conferred only by faith in Jesus’ payment on the cross for all mankind’s sin, and that faith is only by the grace of God given through the Gospel. Understanding that it is all by His gift, we understand today’s reading: it is about the strong and the weak in faith, and it instructs each to acknowledge that both stand purely by the grace of God. When one sees a brother do something that God has not given command against, but he believes it would lead to sin if he were doing it, he is not to condemn his brother for the sake of his own weakness. Nor is one who can safely engage in that activity to belittle his brother who cannot. Each is to see the other as seeking to glorify and give thanks to God by his actions.

Prayer: O Almighty God, Who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical Body of Thy Son, Christ our Lord: Grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which Thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love Thee; 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 Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

Chapter V. Of the Law and the Gospel.

Statement of the Controversy.

Whether the preaching of the Holy Gospel be properly not only a preaching of grace, which announces the forgiveness of sins, but also a preaching of repentance and censure, rebuking unbelief, which is rebuked not in the Law, but alone through the Gospel.

Affirmative.

Pure Doctrine of God’s Word.

1. We believe, teach and confess that the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is to be maintained in the Church as an especially brilliant light, whereby, according to the admonition of St. Paul, the Word of God may be rightly divided.

2. We believe, teach and confess that the Law is properly a divine doctrine, which teaches what is right and pleasing to God, and reproves everything that is sin and contrary to God’s will.

3. Therefore everything that reproves sin is and belongs to the preaching of the Law.

4. But the Gospel is properly such a doctrine as teaches what man who has not observed the Law, and therefore is condemned by it, should believe, viz. that Christ has expiated and made satisfaction for all sins, and, without any merit of theirs [no merit of the sinner intervening], has obtained and acquired forgiveness of sins, righteousness that avails before God, and eternal life.

5. But since the term “Gospel” is not used in one and the same sense in the Holy Scriptures, on account of which this dissension originally arose, we believe, teach and confess that if by the term “Gospel” the entire doctrine of Christ be understood, which He proposed in His ministry, as also did His apostles (in which sense it is employed, Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21), it is correctly said and written that the Gospel is a preaching of repentance and of the forgiveness of sins.

6. But if the Law and the Gospel be contrasted with one another, as Moses himself is called a teacher of the Law, and Christ a preacher of the Gospel, we believe, teach and confess that the Gospel is not a preaching of repentance or reproof, but properly nothing else than a preaching of

consolation, and a joyful message which does not reprove or terrify, but against the terrors of the Law consoles consciences, points alone to the merits of Christ, and again comforts them by the precious preaching of the grace and favor of God, obtained through Christ's merit.

7. As to the revelation of sin, because the veil of Moses hangs before the eyes of all men as long as they hear the bare preaching of the Law, and nothing concerning Christ, and therefore do not learn from the Law to perceive their sins aright, but either become presumptuous hypocrites as the Pharisees, or despair as did Judas; Christ takes the Law into His hands, and explains it spiritually (Matt. 5:21 sqq.; Rom. 7:14). And thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sinners (Rom. 1:18), how great it is; by this means they are instructed in the Law, and then from it first learn to know aright their sins—a knowledge to which Moses never could coerce them.

Therefore, although the preaching of the suffering and death of Christ, the Son of God, is an earnest and terrible proclamation and declaration of God's wrath, whereby men are for the first time led aright to the Law, after the veil of Moses has been removed from them, so that they first know aright how great things God in His Law requires of us, nothing of which we can observe, and therefore should seek all our righteousness in Christ—

8. Yet, as long as all this (namely, Christ's suffering and death) proclaims God's wrath and terrifies man, it is still not properly the preaching of the Gospel, but the preaching of Moses and the Law, and therefore a "strange work" of Christ, whereby He attains His proper office, i.e. to preach grace, console and quicken, which is properly the preaching of the Gospel.

Negative.

Contrary Doctrine which is Rejected.

Therefore we reject and regard incorrect and injurious the dogma that the Gospel is properly a preaching of repentance or reproof, and not alone a preaching of grace. For thereby the Gospel is again converted into a law, the merit of Christ and the Holy Scriptures obscured, Christians robbed of true consolation, and the door opened again to the Papacy.

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome

"...they would not listen to their judges...not heeded My voice." Trivializing and refusing to heed the voice of their Deliverer (and His sent deliverers) is a discarding of that deliverance. Deliverance consists not merely of the deliverer's actions, but by the words that declare God's continuing will (cf. St. Matthew 6:14–15, 18:21–35).

Luther rightly teaches us in the Large Catechism what a 'lord' is: not a 'boss', but a redeemer! Certainly, He sets out how we are to live, but the right to direct the lives of those who are delivered belongs to a lord precisely because he has delivered the people and desires them to have the benefits of that deliverance always.

Christ could rule through power simply because He is God, but He rules over those who are His through faith, instead, by grace. He proclaims who they are when they are connected to Him—what the Church is: His beloved Bride for whom He died and whom He continually renews in "the washing of water by the Word" through the continuing delivery of the message of redemption, and His body and blood that won it (Ephesians 5:25–32).

Prayer: Almighty God, merciful Father, who madest the light to shine out of darkness, we thank Thee that Thou hast shown mercy unto us and our fathers, and by means of Thy servant Martin Luther hast restored the pure light of Thy Gospel: keep us, we beseech Thee, in sound doctrine, that we may steadfastly believe and worthily follow Thy saving Word, and finally, by its holy comfort, depart in peace and joy; 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 prepares His disciples for a new reality: He will not be visibly present to protect and provide for them. He won't abandon them, but will now provide 'mediately', instead of 'immediately'.

Mediators stand between parties that are at odds. God the Son was appointed Mediator between God and mankind, becoming one of us while remaining True God. Similarly, Jesus appointed media—channels through which His grace flows—to offer and give His perfect righteousness to us. The Holy Spirit uses these Means of Grace to give us confidence in Christ's atoning life and death as the remedy for our sin and its consequences. Through that faith, we are counted as God's own righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

'Immediate' means 'without an intermediary'. Jesus called His disciples 'immediately', speaking to them directly, and had been visibly present to save them from storms, to argue with those who accused them, and the like (St. Mark 2:18-28, 4:37-39, 7:1-23, etc.). When He departs, His disciples must trust Him in using the means of money, tools, weapons, and civil authorities (Acts 22). The Holy Spirit now calls pastors 'mediately', through the Church, and continues to care for them mediately, as well, through the support of their congregations or through secular vocations that bring them food and shelter. Through such things they must see the Lord still supplying their daily bread and teach all Christians to confess the same.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness; that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

In yesterday's Gospel reading from Matthew 22 the Pharisees approached the Lord Jesus with a Law question: "Which is the great commandment?" The great commandment is to love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. The Lord Jesus then returns the Pharisees Law question with a Gospel question: "Whose Son is the Christ?" Since we are unable to love the Lord God and our neighbors as we should on account of our manifold sins and trespasses, our Lord Jesus gives us Himself as the answer to our lawlessness.

He does the same thing in today's reading from John 15. The Scriptures are filled with the imagery of vineyards and grapes. But as Isaiah 5 (and other places) points out, on account of sin dwelling in us we can produce only "wild grapes." Our love for God and our neighbor is incomplete and insufficient; it produces not good fruit, but only "wild grapes." Our loving Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ, the Son of David, takes upon Himself our flesh. He joins Himself to us, connecting us to the true vine. Now all those grafted into Him, the true vine, bear good fruit. He credits us with His perfect fulfilling of the Law. Just like with the Pharisees in yesterday's Gospel reading, He gives to us Himself, so that we may be free from the penalty of the Law and have eternal life in Him.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee: Mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; 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 preaching of Moses reflects the answer of our Lord to the Pharisees from this past Sunday's Gospel reading. Moses commands the Israelites to "fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord." Why are they to do this? Because the Lord God chose their fathers above all peoples of the earth. They were the elect of the Lord to be His people and He would be their God, their only God. The physical sign of this was through circumcision. But Moses commands the Israelites to have circumcised hearts, that is, to cleanse their hearts through contrition over their sins and faith in the Lord God's grace and forgiveness.

We have also been chosen by the Lord God. We are His elect, whom He has chosen since before the world's foundation. The proof of this is in the Son of David, the Lord Jesus, who became flesh for us in order that He might buy us back from sin, death, and the power of the devil by His innocent suffering and death. We have been buried with the Christ through Holy Baptism. He is our God, and we are His people. We have received the spiritual circumcision which by the faith created in us leads us into contrition and faith in the Lord God's grace and forgiveness.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee: Mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

as follows: "Redemption by the Blood of Christ would become of little value, neither would the preeminence of man's works be superseded by the mercy of God, if justification, which is wrought through grace, were due to the merits going before, so as to be, not the free gift of a donor, but the reward due to a laborer."

But, although this doctrine is despised by the inexperienced, nevertheless, God-fearing and anxious consciences find by experience that it brings the greatest consolation, because consciences cannot be pacified through any works, but only by faith, when they are sure that, for Christ's sake, they have a gracious God. As Paul teaches [Rom. 5:11]: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." This whole doctrine is to be referred to that conflict of the terrified conscience; neither can it be understood apart from that conflict. Therefore inexperienced and profane men judge ill concerning this matter, who dream that Christian righteousness is nothing but the civil righteousness of natural reason.

Heretofore consciences were plagued with the doctrine of works, nor did they hear any consolation from the Gospel. Some persons were driven by conscience into the desert, into monasteries, hoping there to merit grace by a monastic life. Some also devised other works whereby to merit grace and make satisfaction for sins. There was very great need to treat of and renew this doctrine of faith in Christ, to the end that anxious consciences should not be without consolation, but that they might know that grace and forgiveness of sins and justification are apprehended by faith in Christ.

Men are also admonished that here the term "faith" doth not signify merely the knowledge of the history, such as in the ungodly and in the devil, but signifieth a faith which believes, not merely the history, but also the effect of the history—namely, this article of the forgiveness of sins, to wit, that we have grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins, through Christ.

Now he that knoweth that he has a Father reconciled to him through Christ, since he truly knows God, knows also that God careth for him, and calls upon God; in a word, he is not without God, as the heathen. For devils and the ungodly are not able to believe this article of the forgiveness of sins. Hence, they hate God as an enemy; call not upon Him; and expect no good from Him. Augustine also admonishes his readers concerning the word "faith," and teaches that the term "faith" is accepted in the Scriptures, not for knowledge such as in the ungodly, but for confidence which consoles and encourages the terrified mind.

Furthermore, it is taught on our part, that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God.
—The Augsburg Confession, §1–27

Lesson from the Book of Concord

The Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity

Article XX.

Our teachers are falsely accused of forbidding Good Works. For their published writings on the Ten Commandments, and others of like import, bear witness that they have taught to good purpose concerning all estates and duties of life, as to what estates of life and what works in every calling be pleasing to God. Concerning these things preachers heretofore taught but little, and urged only childish and needless works, as particular holy days, particular fasts, brotherhoods, pilgrimages, services in honor of saints, the use of rosaries, monasticism, and such like. Since our adversaries have been admonished of these things they are now unlearning them, and do not preach these unprofitable works as heretofore. Besides they begin to mention faith, of which there was heretofore marvellous silence. They teach that we are justified not by works only, but they conjoin faith and works, and say that we are justified by faith and works. This doctrine is more tolerable than the former one, and can afford more consolation than their old doctrine.

Forasmuch, therefore, as the doctrine concerning faith, which ought to be the chief one in the Church, has lain so long unknown, as all must needs grant that there was the deepest silence in their sermons concerning the righteousness of faith, while only the doctrine of works was treated in the churches, our teachers have instructed the churches concerning faith as follows:

First, that our works cannot reconcile God or merit forgiveness of sins, grace and justification, but that we obtain this only by faith, when we believe that we are received into favor for Christ's sake, who alone has been set forth the Mediator and Propitiation [1 Tim. 2:5], in order that the Father may be reconciled through Him. Whoever, therefore, trusts that by works he merits grace, despises the merit and grace of Christ, and seeks a way to God without Christ, by human strength, although Christ said of Himself: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" [John 14:6].

This doctrine concerning faith is everywhere treated by Paul [Eph. 2:8]: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works," etc.

And lest anyone should craftily say that a new interpretation of Paul has been devised by us, this entire matter is supported by the testimonies of the Fathers. For Augustine, in many volumes, defends grace and the righteousness of faith, over against the merits of works. And Ambrose, in his *De Vocatione Gentium*, and elsewhere, teaches to like effect. For in his *De Vocatione Gentium* he says

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11: DEU. 30:11-20 18TH S. A. TRINITY

Today is another reflection of the Gospel reading from Trinity 18, which we heard last Sunday: "I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments." If the Israelites did this, they would inherit the Promised Land, the land which the Lord swore to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. With the promise, however, comes a warning. If they did not obey the Law, they would surely perish. Without the Lord God as their God, they would not take possession of the Promised Land. And as history bears out, they did not keep the Lord God as their only God, and both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah were led into exile.

We are also unable to keep the commandments of the Lord God perfectly. We also rightly deserve to perish eternally on account of our unbelief and rebellion against God's Law; to be led into eternal exile. But our Lord God does not forget His promises. He knows that we are unable to perfectly keep the Law, so He sends to us His Only-Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be our Lord and Savior. He fulfills the Law perfectly for us, and by His death He opens to us the way of eternal life with Him. Through faith in Him we can enter into the Promised Land of the Resurrection and live with Him for all eternity.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee: Mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; 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, OCTOBER 12: 3 JOHN 2–8 18TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

St. John's third epistle compares two people: Gaius, who walks in the truth, and does whatever is necessary for the brethren and strangers; and Diotrophes, who seeks only preeminence in the Church, but does not receive the preachers of the Word of God. This reading also hearkens back to Sunday's Gospel reading. Our Lord Jesus answered the Pharisees that the second great commandment was to love our neighbors as ourselves. According to St. John's third epistle, Gaius (and Demetrius who is mentioned later in the epistle) clearly does this, while Diotrophes does not.

While the kindness of Gaius to his fellowman is commendable, St. John's praise is really centered on what that kindness does. It opens up the way for all to hear the preaching of the Gospel. Both brethren and strangers were able to hear of the good works that the Lord Jesus had done for them. His kindness was really a fruit of the Spirit which dwelled within him. He willingly opened up his home so that all who gathered there might benefit from the preaching of the Word of God. His kindness led to the enlightenment of all those who heard the Word of God and believed on the Lord Jesus. Gaius sets a good example for us all. May we all not hinder the word like Diotrophes, who sought only after the vain glories of this world, but freely welcome both brethren and strangers to hear about the Christ.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee: Mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28: ACTS 13:26–41 STS. SIMON & JUDE

The Son, according to Paul's Gospel, is the incarnation and revelation of God's grace. Every man of Israel knew that the Old Testament history of Israel is a record of Israel's persistent failure and God's indomitable grace. That grace overruled even Israel's ultimate failure and crowning disobedience—the rejection of the Son and Savior—by raising His Son from the dead and raising up witnesses and evangelists to attest to His guilty people the good news of the fulfillment of what God promised to the fathers.

What the Law could not do, God has done: Israel is free; freed by the forgiveness of sins proclaimed in Jesus. Before this incredible miracle of grace Israel must be moved to bow in fear and faith. This beautiful proclamation of the Gospel echoes in our ears this day. According to the Law we have no choice but to confess we are also guilty of the same disobedient failure toward our gracious call to be Jesus Christ's disciples. None of us dare claim we have lived up to the call to be good stewards of God's gifts and faithful servants doing our vocation in His holy vineyard. But by His Gospel and forgiveness in Christ, the Lord's Bride is the shining light she is meant to be through her holy, righteous Bridegroom.

Prayer: O almighty God, who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Head Cornerstone, grant us to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine that we may be made a holy temple acceptable unto Thee; 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 applied the same “because ... therefore” to Jerusalem and the temple of His day when He predicted their destruction in Matthew 23:37 ff. It still is true that “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Christ references the same words of warning used in this Old Testament proclamation to Solomon’s prayerful plea of blessing toward the temple he has endeavored to build for God.

The Lord is long suffering, merciful, and abundantly gracious—but He will not tolerate hypocrisy or idolatry in those He has called to be His elect people of grace and faith. The faithful believer who clings to the promise of the Redeemer will be blessed in grace and faith, while the unfaithful hypocrite, apostate, and idolater will be the recipient of a righteous and just condemnation for his rebellion and rejection of God’s merciful grace. We, like Solomon, know abundance and prosperity through the gracious blessing of being God’s chosen people. This reality makes it especially imperative that we look to our Lord and continuously thank Him for all that we have received, and shall receive.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

What is the fruit of righteousness? What is it that righteousness produces? Let us examine the question this way: Who is the only one who is righteous? Our Lord Jesus is the only one who is righteous. He is the only one who perfectly fulfilled the Law of God. What then does His righteousness produce? What is the fruit of His righteousness? His righteousness produces forgiveness of all our sins as the Holy Ghost brings us to contrition and faith in Him. It produces an eternal life with our Lord and Savior in His kingdom with all of the saints and angels. And it produces rescue and salvation from all of our spiritual enemies, especially sin, death, and the devil.

St. James says that “the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” This fruit of righteousness is sown among us by the Christ. The Holy Ghost uses preaching of the Christ to produce in us faith to cling to His works and merits. He is the one who made peace for us with the heavenly Father. We cling in faith to this promise of peace with the Lord God and are declared righteous. We then naturally produce the fruit of righteousness by the in-working of the Holy Ghost and do the other works that St. James lists in today’s reading: We become wise and understanding, and this produces peace, gentleness, and mercy for our neighbors in us.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee: Mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

How does one despise one's neighbor? By not showing him mercy. We are once again taken back to this past Sunday's Gospel reading. The last two days we have heard about the second great commandment, loving thy neighbor as thyself. To love thy neighbor is to show mercy toward him. Not showing mercy toward our neighbor, the writer of the Book of Proverbs says, is a reproach to our Maker. Why? Because He made both our neighbor and us. Our neighbor deserves our mercy because he also is a creation of our Maker.

What then is mercy? Mercy is not treating someone the way that they deserve to be treated. We are shown mercy by the Lord God, as even our neighbor is, because we are given all the things that we need to support this body and life. Even more, we have been given the preaching of the Word of God, which preaches into our ears the Christ, the Son of David, our Lord Jesus, who showed us perfect mercy by offering up His life as a ransom for ours.

We in turn show mercy to our neighbors by also opening up the way for them to hear about the works of the Christ. The Lord God desires for all men to be saved. We do good when we help rescue unbelievers from their rebellion against the Lord God and teach them about repentance so that they no longer trust in themselves and their works, but rather cling in faith to the true Vine, our Lord Jesus, the Christ.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee: Mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

The appointed text for this day's meditation tells us what we are called to be as Christ's disciples—and what we are called to avoid and resist. The Lord declares that our words and actions reveal what is in our heart, for the fruit of the tree confesses the nature of the tree. The bramble bush produces brambles, the fig tree produces figs, the thorn bush bears thorns, and the grape vine bears grapes. Just as naturally, the evil produce evil things, and the good produce good things.

Like we dare not ignore someone's public confession, the public position of their church, or social/professional associations, we must likewise be careful of our own public confessions and associations through word and deed. This section of the Gospel account presents Christ teaching His disciples how to be apostles. They are to be representatives of their Lord, leading men by being what they proclaim, good trees bearing good fruit, good men producing good from the treasury of their hearts filled with God's Word. They can fulfill their function by hearing and doing the words of their Lord, by taking up His teaching into their mind, heart, and will—and then allowing that doctrine to shine in the darkened, sin-fallen world through them as His Church by grace and faith.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; 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, OCTOBER 25: MAT. 9:35–38 20TH S.A. TRINITY

Today we meditate upon the text setting up and leading into the commissioning (sending out) of the Twelve on their first formal mission circuit of the Lord's Gospel to the lost sheep of Israel. This is early in Jesus' earthly ministry and the first time the apostles are sent out in their vocation as His appointed ministers of the Gospel. Here they begin a ministry that will consume each of their lives and mark the establishment of the Christian Church and Office of the Holy Ministry in which we rejoice to this very day.

With this appointed text we learn that this was not some coincidental or accidental occurrence, because our Lord proclaims that the "harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few." The context in the Greek implies it is God who is the Lord of the harvest, and Jesus' instruction for His disciples to pray earnestly for the Lord of the harvest to send out His laborers is a command to the disciples to align their will (their prayers) with the will of the Lord. The disciples do not coerce "the Lord of the harvest" (God) to perform any action that He has not previously committed to accomplish. It is also important to recognize that the Lord of the harvest "sends" laborers, not just disciples.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; 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 Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

Article IV.

Also they teach, that men cannot be Justified before God by their own strength, merits or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, hath made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.

—Augsburg Confession

Each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper we say in the preface, "The Lord be with you," and respond, "And with thy spirit." The pastor chants, "Lift up your hearts," and you respond, "We lift them up unto the Lord." If you've ever wondered, the versicle "Lift up your hearts" is based on Colossians 3:1-10, where St. Paul tells the Colossians "seek those things which are above." So, when the pastor says, "Lift up your hearts," he is telling us to put away ourselves. Put away all the notions about our own righteousness and the good things we do. Put yourself in the hands of the only One who can make you righteous. And we answer, "We lift them up unto the Lord." We give our "amen" to the Apostle's admonition.

The ritual thankfulness of Matins, Vespers, litanies, and the Divine Service shape our hearts so that we might live in genuine faith and thankfulness. Liturgical and sacramental Christianity is the most genuine form of the Faith, and it is the true way of shaping a truly grateful heart. All the power that you need to live a holy life is right there. All those things that are "above" are right there. Set your mind on those things.

Prayer: O Almighty and most Merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done; 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 two parables spoken by Jesus and recorded in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew appointed for our meditation this day were aimed at the religious leaders of His time. The parables can be applied to all believers, though; especially to the heterodox and apostate "pastors" and "ecclesiastic supervisors" of this rebellious and stiff-necked generation in which we live. Both parables present the harsh judgment and horrible punishment that awaits all those who dare to play the harlot with the countless idols of the temporal world and simultaneously want to hypocritically claim the title of disciple of Christ or Christian. All such pretenders will face the crushing blow of Christ's words recorded in Matthew 6: "And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

The Gospel of Saint Matthew is filled with judgment upon judgment against those who dare to pretend to be faithful followers of Christ while living a life of earthly desire and temporal attachment. The Lord, through His apostle, strongly condemns all who stain and cover with filth His holy Bride through their hypocritical thoughts, words, and deeds.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Luther said, "This prophet lived after the Babylonian captivity. With his colleague, Haggai, he helped to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple and to bring the scattered people together again, so that government and order might be set up in the land again. He is truly one of the most comforting of the prophets." (Luther's Works, Vol. 35, pg. 330)

The theological teaching of this book is Messianic, as well as apocalyptic and eschatological. Zechariah foretold Christ's coming in lowliness and humanity, His rejection, betrayal, and crucifixion. The prophet also foretells Christ's priesthood, kingship, coming in glory, and building of the Lord's temple. He also prophesies of Christ's reign and the establishment of enduring peace and prosperity. These Messianic passages are abundantly quoted by Christ, giving added emphasis to Jesus' words divinely recorded in the New Testament.

"Zechariah" can be translated as "Yahweh remembers." This title beautifully reveals the central content of the book, which continuously reminds the Old and New Testament believer that Yahweh remembers His divine promise of sending a Redeemer to ransom His Elect from their sin, hell, and the devil. We can join the faithful people of the Old Testament period in rejoicing over the words prophesied in our appointed verses, as well as throughout this blessed book. This prophet calls us to remember that our Lord remembers His promise and continuously calls sinners to return to Him and His divine grace.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, Merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

En route to his martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius wrote a series of letters which have been preserved as an example of very early Christian theology. In fact, he wrote seven letters while traveling from Antioch to Rome, where he would be martyred in the Coliseum, being devoured by lions. He did not lay up treasure for himself on earth, but in heaven. "I write to all the Churches, and impress on them all, that I shall willingly die for God... Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. ... I am, even until now, a servant. But when I suffer, I shall be the freedman of Jesus Christ, and shall rise again emancipated in Him. And now, being in bonds for Him, I learn not to desire anything worldly or vain." (The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans, Chapter IV)

Sometimes our Lord gives us the blessing of being weary and disgusted with the world so that we might learn to let it go. Our Lord would have us cast off the vain honor and glory of this world for the glory of heaven.

Prayer: Almighty God, behold our weakness and the sorrows of Thy people, and as Thou didst grant the consolation of Thy Holy Spirit to St. Ignatius in his time of affliction for Thy Name's sake, so uphold us in our generation, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

We as Christians are often annoyed with the bumper sticker morality of our modern society. The current American motto is "be kind." One sees this saccharine sentiment printed everywhere. But the world has no basis for this sentiment. Without God there is no reason to be kind. There is no reason for anything. But the response to this silliness isn't to become calloused toward humanity; it is to find mercy and forgiveness in God. This is the genuine perspective we should have, rather than shallow kindness.

Our God takes foreigners like St. Luke and makes them His own. He takes the filthy and sinful and forgives them. The fatherless find mercy and the backsliding find love. St. Luke came from a pagan background, living in darkness, but the Word of God came to him and made him alive. He found in Christ, the One who is Compassion, the One who ultimately restores and heals. St. Luke then devoted himself to sharing the Word of God. He writes for us the good news about Jesus so that we might walk in the way of the Lord and find mercy and forgiveness as he did. When you feel far from God, when you feel alone, embrace the Gospel. Christ is there with His mercy and forgiveness.

Prayer: O Almighty God, Who hast instructed Thy holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of Thy Evangelists: Give us grace, that being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the Truth of Thy holy Gospel; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

7. Thus Christ calls to Himself all sinners, and promises them rest, and He is anxious that all men should come to Him and permit Him to help them. To them He offers Himself in His Word, and wishes them to hear it, and not to stop their ears or despise the Word. He promises besides the power and efficiency of the Holy Ghost, and divine assistance for perseverance and eternal salvation.

8. Therefore we should judge concerning this our election to eternal life neither from reason nor from the Law of God, which would lead either into a dissipated, dissolute epicurean life, or into despair, and would excite in the heart of men pernicious thoughts (and such thoughts cannot be effectually guarded against as long as they follow their own reason), so that they think to themselves: "If God has elected me to salvation, I cannot be condemned, although I do whatever I will." And again: "If I am not elected to eternal life, it matters not what good I do; for my efforts are nevertheless all in vain."

9. But the true judgment concerning predestination must be learned alone from the Holy Gospel concerning Christ, in which it is clearly testified that "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all," and that "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (Rom. 11:32; Ez. 18:23; 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2).

10. To him, therefore, who is really concerned about the revealed will of God, and proceeds according to the order which St. Paul has observed in the Epistle to the Romans, who first directs men to repentance, knowledge of sins, to faith in Christ, to divine obedience, before he speaks of the mystery of the eternal election of God, this doctrine [concerning God's predestination] is useful and consolatory.

11. That, however, "many are called, few are chosen," does not mean that God is unwilling that all should be saved, but the reason is that they either do not at all hear God's Word, but wilfully despise it, close their ears and harden their hearts, and in this manner foreclose the ordinary way to the Holy Ghost, so that He cannot effect His work in them, or, when it is heard, they consider it of no account, and do not heed it. For this [that they perish] not God or His election, but their wickedness is responsible (2 Pet. 2:1 sqq.; Luke 11:49, 52; Heb. 12:25 sq.).

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome, §1-12

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

Chapter XI.

OF GOD'S ETERNAL FOREKNOWLEDGE AND ELECTION.

Concerning this article no public dissension has occurred among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession. But since it is a consolatory article, if treated properly, and by this means the introduction in the future of a controversy likely to cause offense may be avoided, it is also explained in this writing.

AFFIRMATIVE

The Pure and True Doctrine concerning this Article.

1. First of all, the distinction between foreknowledge and predestination, that is, between God's foreknowledge and His eternal election, ought to be accurately observed.

2. For the foreknowledge of God is nothing else than that God knows all things before they happen, as it is written (Dan. 2:28): "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."

3. This foreknowledge is occupied alike with the godly and the wicked; but it is not the cause of evil or of sin, so that men do what is wrong (which originally arises from the devil and the wicked, perverse will of man); nor the cause of their ruin, for which they themselves are responsible; but only regulates it, and fixes to it a limit how long it should last, and that everything, notwithstanding that in itself it is evil, should serve His elect for their salvation.

4. The predestination or eternal election of God, however, is occupied only with the godly, beloved children of God, and this is a cause of their salvation, which He also provides as well as disposes what belongs thereto. Upon this [predestination of God] our salvation is founded so firmly that the gates of hell cannot overcome it (John 10:28; Matt. 16:18).

5. This is not to be investigated in the secret counsel of God, but to be sought in the Word of God, where it is also revealed.

6. But the Word of God leads us to Christ, who is the Book of Life, in whom all are written and elected that are to be saved, as it is written (Eph. 1:4): "He hath chosen us in Him" [Christ] "before the foundation of the world."

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19: HEB. 10:1-10 19TH S. A. TRINITY

The natural inclination of all men is to be legalistic. Men want to live by the Law. They want to be declared righteous by the work of their own hands. When something goes wrong, they try to deflect blame from themselves. When praise is to be had, they try to take credit. Men also instinctively try to compare themselves to others so that they can use the standard of the failed man as the rule to measure their own performance. "Compared to others, I'm not so bad."

But the real measure is God's perfect, exacting standard. And since we cannot measure up to that standard, God allowed punishment to be put aside in exchange for sacrifices. The very nature of the animal sacrifices shows that they really cannot adequately cover for the sins we have committed. They have to be repeated over and over again. They were just a shadow of Righteousness to come. The sacrifices were pitiful substitutes for that which was really needed.

Christ was needed to make sacrifice for sin. In His body we are brought finally to the goal of justification and unity with God. His sacrifice was once for all. It does not need to be repeated. It is the perfect sacrifice that covers all men for all time.

Prayer: O Almighty and most Merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

In our current state in this world we are like children when it comes to the mysteries of the faith. We understand the faith correctly, but the way a child does. There are questions we don't know to ask. There are truths we have not conceived of, yet we are not misled. We know enough to be on the right path, but there is so much more that we can't imagine.

Charismatic gifts, like speaking in tongues, are childish. The public "baby talk" that modern Pentecostals engage in isn't even the tongues described in the Bible. It's just the babbling a baby would do. It's not that they are not Christians, it's just that such nonsense should be seen for the silliness it is. But we have all had our immature moments as Christians.

In our heavenly perfection we will be mature in our understanding of the faith. Our image of Christ will no longer be from paintings or movies, but we will face Him. Our knowledge of Him will no longer be mediated, but immediate. The mystical union will be brought to its completion. Then we will be content without the things of spiritual childhood.

Prayer: O Almighty and most Merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Our God restores and makes whole those who were broken. Not only does our God do this in His restoring the children of Israel in their land after the Babylonian captivity, but he does it ultimately for His Church. Israel was the shadow. The Church is the fulfillment. Zephaniah says, "The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst." And again he says, "The Lord your God in your midst." This is not just in a general way in the Old Testament, but most fully in the incarnation of the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, revealed in His Church of the New Testament.

Christ is in our midst in a very real, sacramental way, bringing blessing, joy, and restoration. All the Scriptures speak of Christ. Even this shout of joy in Zephaniah points us to the coming Christ. Christ comes into our midst bringing gifts with Him. When we think of our Lord in our midst, our minds should immediately be drawn to the chalice and the font. We should overflow with joy and thanksgiving when we think on the fact that our Lord God has condescended to be in our midst. He loves us so much that He wants to come to us and dwell with us. Praise God, our Immanuel!

Prayer: O Almighty and most Merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.