

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

**Rt. Rev. James Heiser**

Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

**Rev. Jeffrey Ahonen**

Good Shepherd L.C., Tony, WI; Alpha & Omega Lutheran Mission, Winter, WI; Apologia Lutheran Mission, Deer Park, WI; Peace L.C., Ironwood, MI; Pure Blessings Lutheran Mission, Fox Valley, WI

**Rev. Jerald Dulas**

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. L. C. Rogers, AR

**Rev. Daniel Mensing**

Faith Lutheran Church, Beaverton, OR

**Rev. Mark Mueller**

Redeemer L. C., 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

**Rev. Dcn. Floyd Smithey**

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

# THE LUTHERAN HERALD



(“ST. MICHAEL FIGHTING THE DRAGON” DÜRER, 1498)

SEPTEMBER 4–30, 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)

September 3	Trinity 13	ASBH 51
September 10	Trinity 14	ASBH 52
September 17	Trinity 15	ASBH 53
September 20	Ember Wednesday	
September 21 (R)	St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist ASBH 100 (in this <i>Herald</i> )	
September 22	Ember Friday	
September 23	Ember Saturday	
September 24	Trinity 16	ASBH 54
September 29 (F)	St. Michael and All Angels ASBH 101	



### 2023 Episcopal Visitations Underway

In conjunction with the installation services for Revs. Ben and Jacob Henson, Bishop Heiser continued his series of annual visitations (visitation at Trinity-Herrin [IL], with Pastor Henson and Dcn. Harroun pictured above). Thus far, Bishop Heiser has conducted his visitations in with the following Pastors and Deacons (and with their congregations, as possible): Ahonen, Dulas, Handrich, Henson, Harroun, Jackson, Rutowicz, Smithey, Stefanski. He is scheduled to visit Pastor Mensing and Pastor Tolar in September. As noted, when possible Bishop Heiser visits with as many members of the congregations served by the pastors of this diocese as possible. Laymen are encouraged to inquire of their pastors as to the schedule for upcoming visitations.



INSTALLATION OF REV. JACOB HENSON AT GOOD SHEPHERD (TONY, WI), AS DEACON FOR THE ST. HENRY LUTHERAN MISSION.

(Above: Pr. B. Henson; Bp. Heiser, Dcn. J. Henson, Pr. Ahonen, Pr. M. Henson, Below: Father Henson and sons)





**INSTALLATION OF REV. BENJAMIN HENSON AT HOLY CROSS (PEORIA, IL)**  
(Above: J. Henson; Pr. Ahonen, Pr. M. Henson, B. Henson, Bp. Heiser, Pr. Handrich, Dcn. Oncken  
Below: Christina Henson, Pr. Henson, Bp. Heiser, Pr. Handrich, Paula Handrich)



**EMBER DAYS IN SEPTEMBER**—The Church observes four series of Ember days in the course of the Church Year. In addition to the September Ember days (which occur in the same week as the Festival of St. Matthew), the Church observes these penitential days in Advent, Lent, and Pentecost. (As the Propers for the Ember days of September were omitted from the *ASBH* Supplement, they are provided, once again, in this issue of *The Lutheran Herald* to make them available for use in the church and in home devotions.) Congregations are encouraged to observe at least one of the Ember days, if possible, as an opportunity for repentance and reflection.

**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. (Part of the reason for this is that the seminary budget is only \$1,350 this year because we are in our planned hiatus between seminary trienniums.) All congregations served by the clergy of this diocese are requested to receive a **door offering** or other **special collection** on the Festival of St. Michael and All Angels (Friday, September 29), or the following Sunday (October 1—Trinity 17). 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 FESTIVAL OF ST. MATTHEW**—The Office Hymn for this Festival day has 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.)

**INSTALLATIONS OF REVS. BEN AND JACOB HENSON**—Pictures are included at the end of this issue!

# Lesson from the Book of Concord The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

## Article XVIII.

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

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

—The Augsburg Confession

## Friday:

**Introit.**

*Same as Fourth Sunday in Lent.*

**Collect.**

*Same as Fourth Sunday in Lent.*

**Lesson.** Hosea 14:1–9.

**Gradual.**

*Same as Fourth Sunday in Lent.*

**Gospel.** St. Luke 7:38–50.

## Saturday:

**Introit.** (*Same tone as Wednesday.*)

*Ant.* COME LET || us adore God, and fall down before the | Lord | -:

let us weep before Him who made us; for He is | the | Lord | our | God.

*Psalm* || Come let us praise the Lord | with | joy:

let us joyfully sing to | God | our | Sav- | ior.

GLO-RY || be to the Father and to the | Son | - :

and to | the | Ho- | ly | Ghost.

AS IT || was in the beginning, is now, and ever | shall | be:  
world with- | out | end. | A- | men. (*Ant. Repeated.*)

**Collect.**

*Same as Wednesday.*

**Lesson.** Leviticus 23:26–32.

**Epistle.** Hebrews 9:2–12.

**Gradual.**

|| Forgive us our sins, O Lord; lest they should say at any time among the | Gen- | tiles:

— | Where | is | their | God?

|| Help us, O God our | Sav- | ior:

and for the glory of Thy Name, O Lord | de - | liv- | er | us.

**Gospel.** St. Luke 13:6–17.

PROPERS FOR EMBERS DAYS IN SEPTEMBER (20<sup>TH</sup>–23<sup>RD</sup>)

Wednesday:



**Introit.**

Ant. SING A- || loud to God | our | strength:

Make a joyful shout to the | God | of | Ja - | cob.

|| Raise a song and strike the | tim- | brel :

The pleasant | harp | with | the | lute.

Psalm. || This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of | Egypt | -:

where I heard a language which I | un- | der | stood | not.

GLO-RY || be to the Father and to the | Son | - :

and to | the | Ho- | ly | Ghost.

AS IT || was in the beginning, is now, and ever | shall | be:

world with- | out | end. | A- | men. (Ant. Repeated.)

**Collect.**

We beseech Thee, O Lord, that our weakness may be upheld by Thy healing mercy, so that what of itself is falling into ruin may be restored by Thy clemency. Through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord... Amen.

**Lesson.** Amos 9:13–15.

**Gradual.**

|| Blessed is the nation whose God is the | Lord | -:

the people whom the Lord hath chosen for His | in- | her- | i- | tance.

|| By the word of the Lord the heavens were es- | tab- | lished:

and all the power of them by the | spirit | of | His | mouth.

**Gospel.** St. Mark 9:16–28.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4: LEVITICUS 18:1–5 13<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

God wants us to not be unduly influenced by the world around us, especially when the world permits, and even encourages, practices that the Lord God condemns and forbids in His Law. This chapter of Leviticus condemns very specifically a number of sexual practices that were common both in Egypt (where sexual relationships between close family members were practiced) and in Canaan (where the worship of Baal and Asherah involved any number of sexual perversions).

Today, the world tells us that anything we do is OK as long as there is no “victim”. God’s Law says differently. Even today, most of the acts depicted in Leviticus 18 are considered abominations, but not all of them. St. Paul uses some of these as examples in Romans, chapters 1 and 2, to show how original sin infects each and every one of us.

Thanks be to God, though, that even these are sins for which Christ took on human flesh, lived, suffered, and died to forgive us. In this way, these sins are like all of the other sins we can commit. We should not self-righteously declare ourselves innocent and lord it over those who have such a past or such weaknesses. Rather, we should help our brothers and sisters flee such temptations and live as God commands us.

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

In many ways and in many places in Scripture, God commands that we should show generosity. This can be very hard for us to do; if we have labored for what we have, it can be difficult to let it go. In this passage God also makes it very clear that He understands how we can justify a lack of generosity in our own minds. For example, if we know that the needy person's debts are about to be canceled, we may think that this would be good reason not to show generosity. In this passage, that is very specifically called a "wicked thought."

This passage also warns us against doing the bare minimum, especially for those who are newly set free. Those who would be in bondage would otherwise have next to nothing as they become free again. Generosity would demand that we give them something to live on as they get established.

The Law bids the Jews to remember—and it bids us to remember—we are not our own; we were bought at a price. The Jews who first heard this Law remembered their time in Egypt as slaves. We should remember that we were once enslaved to sin. Since we were redeemed, we should be generous with our brothers and sisters who are in need, because God has been exceedingly gracious and generous to us.

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

Thou, Lord, didst win the bat - tle That they might  
From all un - righ - teous mam - mon, Oh, give us  
For these, passed on be - fore — us, Sa - vior! we  
Till all the ran - sored num - ber Fall down be -

con - querors be. Their crowns of liv - ing  
hearts set free; That we, what - e'er - ing  
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,  
call - ing, May rise and fol - low Thee,  
foot - steps, Would serve Thee more and more.  
glo - ry A - scribe to God a - lone. A - men.

Festival of St. Matthew

100. 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 him whose Gos - pel  
3. A - po - stles, Pro - phets, Mar - tyrs,  
4. Then praise we God the Fa - ther,

For all Thy Saints at rest, To Thee, O  
Thy hu - man life de - clared, Who, world - ly  
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,  
gains for - sak - ing, Thy path of suff'r - ing shared.  
spot - less rai - ment, Who raise the cease - less song;  
Ho - ly Spi - rit, E - ter - nal Three in One;

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6: JAMES 2:14-26 13<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

This passage is often considered one of the hardest passages of Scripture, but it does not need to be. We believe, teach, and confess that we are saved by grace alone, through faith, not through works. St. Paul says this very clearly in Romans 4:1-3: "What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'"

Is James here denying that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone? By no means! He is simply saying that saving faith expresses itself in love for God and for our neighbor. It is hypocrisy for those of us who claim to believe to then turn around and refuse to help those in need. James also uses the example of Abraham, but he shows how Abraham's works demonstrated his faith, because Abraham trusted that God could raise him from the dead. What James is speaking against, as he says, is someone who claims to have faith, but refuses to show generosity by giving to those in need. Abraham believed, and it showed through in what he did; we believe, and it shows in what we do. It is only God's grace and Christ's merit that save us.

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

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7: PHILEMON 1-25 13<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

Philemon had a problem. We see this from what Paul wrote to him about Onesimus. Onesimus had been a slave to Philemon, and had run away from him; but Onesimus was now a Christian. What, then, should Philemon do? And what should Onesimus do? Philemon may have had the legal right to punish Onesimus, but Paul pleads with him not to, because Onesimus has been very helpful to Paul while he was in chains for the Gospel's sake.

And it seems that Onesimus is sorry for any of the grief he may have caused by departing as he did. Paul even asks that Philemon allow Onesimus to remain with him! Nor does Paul think Onesimus should return as a slave when he returns to Philemon, but as "a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord."

The historical events involving Philemon, Paul, and Onesimus show us how we can and should deal in grace and kindness with those who have repented of their sins. Their story shows that we should forgive as God has forgiven us. Likewise, we can and should receive those who repent and amend their lives, with the help of the Holy Ghost, as brothers in the faith.

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

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30: EZE. 3:17-21 16<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

God has a right to His expectations. He is holy, He is benevolent, and He is our almighty Maker. He has every right to expect sinners to hear and repent. He has the right to expect His servants and messengers to do as they are commanded. And He has every right to hold all of us accountable for our carelessness, disobedience, and selfishness.

We are not God; we are His servants. He gives us responsibilities, but He also commands us to carry those out with faith and humility. If others sin, that does not justify our sins. If others wrongfully cause us to suffer, that does not change the fact that our Lord calls us to faithful service and patience under trials.

Our whole life as Christ's people is to live, love, and work as He has taught us, observing all that He has commanded. We are to help sinners. We are to love our enemies. We are to endure crosses. We can expect good from Him, but He tells us plainly that we can expect difficulties in this world. In Philippians 4 St. Paul teaches about peace and contentment in all circumstances as we serve the Lord. And his inspired words culminate in verse 13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Whether we are called to preach, teach, and warn, or to hear, serve, and obey, God is loving in His holy will for us. He strengthens us in faith and protects us during suffering, all so that we may be saved by His grace in Jesus Christ crucified.

Collect: Lord, we pray Thee, that Thy grace may always go before and follow after us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.



God's holy angels are those that did not fall as Satan and the other evil ones did. All angels are messengers, and all have to submit to God's almighty will. These verses from Revelation show us the difference between the work of the holy angels and the unholy messengers, but it also teaches us that both are made to serve God's mercy toward His people.

His holy angel warns the Church that they will continue to endure tribulation from satanic forces. But the holy messenger also brings a word of encouragement and hope that is like the very Words of our Savior. "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. 10:28) Our Lord Jesus says these things as a warning, but also as an encouragement. The faithful sons and daughters of God will have life everlasting according to His power and grace, even if they have to suffer imprisonment or other trials. But those who turn from Him and reject His Words—which include His command to endure affliction—will face condemnation for their unfaithfulness.

God graciously sends His Word and His holy messengers to save us from eternal death. May He bless us with His Spirit and power to faithfully hear them and remain steadfast through all joys and suffering!

Collect: O everlasting God, Who hast ordained and constituted the services of angels and men in a wonderful order: Mercifully grant, that as Thy holy angels always do Thee service in Heaven, so by Thy appointment they may succor and defend us on earth; 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 can a righteous God allow evil to persist in the world? And more than just persist, but run rampant? This passage of the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk shows us that the question goes back to at least the Babylonian Captivity of the Jews, over 2600 years ago. The question was probably not new then, either.

The prophet Habakkuk asks the question, but God does not address it by solving the dilemma directly. Rather, God responds: "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith." We seek the immediate judgment of those we feel have wronged us. And to be sure, many of them have. Our God is a God of judgment, but He is also a God of mercy. We must remember that He loves us and is looking out for our eternal well-being; but He also loves our enemies and those who may oppress us. He is looking out for their eternal well-being, as well. St. Paul started out persecuting Christians, and he held the coats for the crowd as they stoned St. Stephen, the first martyr. God had other plans for St. Paul, though, and we have no way of knowing what plans He may have for others. Thus, He bids us live by faith, and trust that He will take care of us.

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

Jeremiah the Prophet had the unpleasant—but very necessary—task of delivering bad news to people who did not want to hear it. But the news that Jeremiah had for them was God’s Word of warning, to call them to repentance for sins against Him and against each other. In particular, Jeremiah had these words to deliver to Shallum, the son of Josiah. Josiah had been a good and righteous king, but Shallum was content to use the wealth that he had inherited (a “wide house with spacious chambers”), and not fulfill his duties as king faithfully and honorably, as his father had. King Josiah had judged the cause of the poor and needy, but Shallum was much more focused on his own covetousness—especially his large and fancy house—and was not concerned with the welfare of his people.

Jeremiah prophesies that Shallum would not be remembered, but would be buried with the burial of a donkey, dragged out beyond the gates of Jerusalem. Today, we remember King Josiah, and parents name their children after him. We do not see many boys named “Shallum” today.

May God give us faith to value and esteem His righteousness more than the earthly wealth and comforts He may allow us to have stewardship of in this life, so that we can be more like Josiah than Shallum.

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

Some suffering is a matter of attacks initiated by the devil for no other reason than to afflict God’s faithful people. Some suffering is a matter of chastening and correction that properly is the result of our own mistakes. God blesses us and makes us stronger through both. And whether or not we understand which type of suffering it is, in either case we need to act as our Lord has commanded us. We are to be patient, humble, and still love our neighbors, even if they are the ones afflicting us.

How much more should we also love our faithful masters! The Fourth Commandment teaches us to honor our father and mother, which also means all our parents, masters, and authorities. God chastises us, and often He does it through those who are charged with faithfully loving us and leading us. We are not to sin against our enemy who afflicts us, so we definitely are not to sin against our faithful masters who correct our mistakes!

Our sinful hearts struggle with this. Our wicked nature hates correction, and it definitely hates chastening. But suffering makes us stronger if we endure it faithfully. The crosses and discipline that our Lord places on us make us grow in holiness, and through that we can reflect the glory of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus all the more!

Collect: Lord, we pray Thee, that Thy grace may always go before and follow after us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

“Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?”

Our Lord preached, “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:44-45). God gives everyone good things, and He commands us to do faithful good works that show this same love to others, especially our enemies. Adversity, foolishness, and offense do not give us the right to stop obeying our Lord.

Our Lord also tells us that the faithful must endure suffering, especially from the enemy who satanically attacks us without cause. “He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt. 10:38). Our Savior endured adversity from His own beloved people. He loved them, He taught them, He helped them even when they failed to understand what He was doing. And they—even more than the godless unbelievers—despised His Words and His work, and they sought to silence Him at any cost. He calls His sons and daughters to endure the same crosses and attacks from Satan. We are to be patient, wise, and hopeful according to His Spirit, His example, and all that He teaches us throughout His Word.

Collect: Lord, we pray Thee, that Thy grace may always go before and follow after us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

## Lesson from the Book of Concord The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

### I. Of Sin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11: JOHN 5:1-15 14<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

The Church has much in common with the man who was healed by our Lord at the pool of Bethesda. The man's infirmity caused him to have no ability to go into the water to be healed; we are unable to accomplish our salvation through our works. The Lord is compassionate on him and saves him by the Word; the Lord has compassion on us and saves us by water and the Word.

When the unbelieving Jews criticized this man for carrying his bed on the Sabbath, they did not rejoice that the Lord had healed someone. They should have sought out Jesus to honor Him as their Messiah. We also face criticism and rejection from the unbelieving world despite the great things the Lord has done for us in salvation.

The man at the pool of Bethesda should help us to understand the Lord's compassion, His power and mercy to save those who believe and are baptized, and the fact that the unbelieving world will not rejoice with us but will be skeptical and critical of our life in Christ.

Like the man at the pool, we cannot pick ourselves up to go to the water. But we are brought to the waters of Holy Baptism by the power of God. As our Lord says: "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

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

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26: HEB. 10:35-39 16<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

God's Word in the book of Hebrews proclaims the same wisdom as was proclaimed through the Old Testament prophets. God's people are to be patient and wait on the Lord, especially when they are suffering trials! The Lord has always called His people to trust and confidence in His promises. From the beginning they were to trust in the Son who would crush the Serpent. They were to trust that He would continue to make them a people and give them a land and kingdom. They were to trust that He would save and deliver them from slavery. They were to trust that the Son of David would come and rule over them in glory. They were to have confidence in all these holy, divine promises.

Now our confidence is in the revealed kingdom of Jesus Christ! We still must hope and trust, but His promises point us to the end of the age, the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. It is still holy and divine. It is still established by His power and will, not according to our timelines. And it is still going to be a very glorious kingdom! But we must live by faith, not by our own notions of wisdom, nor by our own will and expectations. We are to cling to the hope He gives us through faith in His Word, according to the power of His Spirit.

Collect: Lord, we pray Thee, that Thy grace may always go before and follow after us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

St. James encourages the faithful to remember patience and humility, especially in the face of various trials. The world encourages us to complain. The devil would have us think that we already possess all wisdom and therefore have the right to carry on with many words and much indignation when we suffer some difficulty or injustice.

The world is thoroughly damaged and filled with sin, so there is never a lack of things to complain about. But the Lord and His faithful servants remind us that Christ is our cause for comfort and patience! "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). It is the harder work to which we are called, to be patient, humble, and even cheerfully hopeful, but our Savior has given us His own example.

The way of Christ's cross is difficult, but the results are holy and profoundly better than anything the way of the world offers us. The broken wisdom of self-important complaining does not bring us to better ends; it distracts us and weakens us as we are looking at our own feelings, rather than the power and victory of Jesus Christ's cross. If we see our trials as part of our life in the crucified Savior, that is the wisdom and stability that the Lord's Holy Spirit gives us!

Collect: Lord, we pray Thee, that Thy grace may always go before and follow after us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

It may not be too surprising to say that the Apostle Paul had a talent for teaching the Church about various topics. Even in some topics that we may see as difficult, the Apostle Paul is able to bring proper teaching with grace, always pointing back to Jesus. We can thank the Holy Spirit for the Apostle Paul's talents in this passage since it can be difficult to discuss cheerful giving.

The Apostle does not say, "You ought to give a certain percent of your income." He doesn't say, "If you give the Church a \$1000 seed offering, all your financial troubles will go away." Instead, the Apostle relies on the truth that Jesus has saved His people and has given them a new heart that will love the Church and the fellow brethren. Therefore, the Church is instructed to give in a way that is cheerful and not begrudging.

The Apostle then reminds the faithful that the Lord is the one who brings the increase and will provide for His people. This certainly relieves the conscience of the burden of the Law. We instead look to Christ so that the faithful may know how to give in a cheerful way that serves our neighbor.

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

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13: I TIM. 1:12–17 14<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

The Apostle Paul has not attributed his ministry to anything other than the kindness and mercy of Jesus Christ, our Lord. That seems like an obvious thing to acknowledge. Most of us would say that the Lord deserves all the glory, but rarely do we employ that in our lives. We witness so many who take credit for success in ministry, or even in daily vocations. That is not to say that people do not work hard in these tasks and vocations.

However, the Apostle Paul cannot even think of his part in furtherance of the Gospel without exalting the Lord, and giving Jesus Christ the glory above all. We see why Paul feels this way as he says, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

When we begin to understand the depths of sin from which Jesus Christ has saved us, we start to confess as Paul did, knowing that “I am the chief of sinners, and yet Jesus died for me.” Once a person understands the greatness of the mercy of Christ in saving a poor sinner, then it follows that He will get all the glory and honor, even in our labors for Him.

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

reveals and preaches, and through which He illumines and enkindles hearts, that they understand and accept it, cling to it and persevere in it.

For where He does not cause it to be preached and made alive in the heart, so as to be understood, it is lost, as was the case under the Papacy, where faith was entirely put under a bushel, and no one recognized Christ as his Lord or the Holy Ghost as his Sanctifier, i.e. no one believed that Christ is our Lord in the sense that He has acquired this treasure for us, and, without our works and merit, made us acceptable to the Father. And what indeed was the cause? This, verily, that the Holy Ghost was not there to reveal it, and caused it to be preached; but men evil spirits were there, who taught us to obtain grace and be saved by our works. Therefore it is no Christian Church; for where Christ is not preached there is no Holy Ghost who makes, calls and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord. ...

The holy Christian Church the Creed denominates a communion of saints, for both expressions are taken together as one idea. But formerly the one point was not there, as it is also unintelligible in the translation. If it is to be given very plainly, it must be expressed quite differently. For the word *ecclesia* is properly an assembly. But we are accustomed to the word *church*, which the simple do not refer to an assembled multitude, but to the consecrated house or building. Although the house ought not to be called church, except for the reason that the multitude assembles there. For we who assemble constitute and occupy a particular space, and give a name to the house according to the assembly.

Everything therefore in the Christian Church is so ordered that we shall daily obtain free and full forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. Thus, although we have sin, the Holy Ghost does not allow it to injure us, because we are in the Christian Church, where there is full forgiveness of sin, both in that God forgives us, and in that we forgive, bear with and help each other.

But outside of this Christian Church, where the Gospel is not, there is no forgiveness, as also there can be no sanctification. Therefore all who do not seek sanctification through the Gospel and the forgiveness of sin, but expect to merit it by their works, have expelled and severed themselves from the Christian Church.

These articles of the Creed, therefore, separate and distinguish us Christians from all other people upon earth. For all outside of Christianity, whether heathen, Turks, Jews or false Christians and hypocrites, although they believe in and worship only one true God, yet know not what His mind toward them is, and cannot confide in His love or expect any good from Him; therefore they abide in eternal wrath and damnation. For they have not the Lord Christ, and besides are not illumined and favored by the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

—The Large Catechism, §34–45, 47–48, 56, 66

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

### ARTICLE III.

*I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

This article I cannot explain better than (as I have said) that it treats of Sanctification, viz. that thereby the Holy Ghost, with His office, is declared and set forth, namely, that He makes holy.

Therefore we must establish ourselves upon the word HOLY GHOST, because it is so precise and comprehensive that we cannot use another like it. For there are besides many kinds of spirits mentioned in the Holy Scriptures—the spirit of man, heavenly spirits and evil spirits. But the Spirit of God alone is called the Holy Ghost, that is, He which has sanctified and still sanctifies us. For as the Father is called Creator, the Son Redeemer, so the Holy Ghost, from His work, must be called Sanctifier, or one that makes holy. But what is the process of such sanctification? Answer: Just as the Son obtains dominion, whereby He redeems us, by His birth, death, resurrection, etc., so also the Holy Ghost effects our sanctification, as follows, namely, by the communion of saints or Christian Church, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body and eternal life; that is, He first leads us into His holy congregation, and places us in the bosom of the Church, whereby He preaches to us and brings us to Christ.

For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him and have Him for our Lord, except as it is offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Gospel. The work is finished and accomplished; for Christ, by His suffering, death, resurrection, etc., has acquired and gained the treasure for us. But if the work remained concealed, so that no one knew of it, they it were in vain and lost. That this treasure therefore might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and apply it to us. Therefore sanctification is nothing else but bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which, of ourselves, we could not attain.

Learn then to understand this article most clearly. If you are asked: What do you mean by the words: “I believe in the Holy Ghost,” you can answer: I believe that the Holy Ghost makes me holy, as His name implies. But whereby does He accomplish this end? Or what are His means and method to this end? Answer: The Christian Church, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. For in the first place He has a peculiar congregation in the world, which is the mother that bears every Christian through the Word of God, which He

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14: I THE. 1:2–10 14<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

The good example of the Church shows the brethren the Lord. Notice that the Apostle Paul praises the works of the Church at Thessalonica by telling them how they have helped their neighbor. Their fellow believers are strengthened by the great example that the Church at Thessalonica had in believing the Gospel which Paul preached, and in worshiping the Lord. We may be tempted to think that simply receiving the Word is small work, or no real work at all. That is not how the Apostles, nor the Church at Thessalonica, saw it.

By simply believing in the Lord Jesus and receiving His gifts, the Church of Thessalonica became an example and comfort for their brethren, and certainly bore witness to those around them that the Word of God is true. Extraordinary examples of faith oftentimes are simply those examples of faithful Christians who live out their love for Christ in the ordinary. The flesh wants works that are more attractive, more radical, more dynamic. But quiet faithfulness exalts Christ over our own accomplishments. This is comforting to fellow believers as it gives an example of someone depending on Christ, and not themselves. The Thessalonians simply believed Jesus and received His gifts, and their example was exalted.

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

Our Augsburg Confession in the 8th Article teaches that, “Although the Church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless, since in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled therewith, it is lawful to use Sacraments administered by evil men, according to the saying of Christ: The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat, etc. Matt. 23:2. Both the Sacraments and Word are effectual by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, notwithstanding they be administered by evil men.”

Certainly, no one wants there to be insincere or corrupt ministers. Further, this is not an excuse for unfaithful ministers to continue on without discipline or removal from office. This article has us focus on Christ being the sole authority in the Church and that His Word is effectual. This is why the Apostle Paul rejoices that the Gospel goes forth even by the mouths of insincere ministers. The Lord will sort out those unfaithful men by His ordinary means of Church discipline, even while we endure insincerity. Therefore, we do not despair.

Since Christ is head over the Church, and since His Word is the efficient cause of the Sacraments, we do not fear even if we find unfaithful or insincere ministers. Instead, we rejoice that Christ is preached and pray the Lord of the Church bring the unfaithful to repentance by His means.

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

What does Scripture teach about slavery? St. Paul is clear: it is better to be free than a slave. But he is not saying that it is sinful to be a slave, nor to own slaves. Thus, some slavery is an “adiaphoron”—something which Scripture neither commands nor forbids (see Formula of Concord, X). Not all adiaphora are equal. Both slavery and marriage are “adiaphora”, but marriage is encouraged, while slavery is dangerous. The Lutheran theologian, Valentin Ernst Loescher, teaches a distinction between kinds of adiaphora and warns against dangerous ones: “The above-mentioned and similar adiaphora, even if they are used in moderation, are ... mistakes, to which one can advise no Christian, and he does better if he avoids them” (*The Complete Timotheus Verinus*, Vo. 1, ch. 8). Some adiaphora are helpful; others are dangerous. Slavery is not, of itself, a sin, but it is a “mistake” which is best avoided.

St. Paul’s concern, though, is not earthly slavery, but spiritual. “He who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave.” Spiritually speaking, all men are slaves of something—either of sin or of Christ. The slave of Christ is truly free—free from sin, from death, and from fear. Christ Himself is a good Master, and more than a Master; He is a gracious Lord and a loving Husband, who cherishes and protects His own.

Collect: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succor, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; 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 passage is not about social distinctions, but about spiritual ones. The “blessings” in the first part are for the Christian, and the “woes” in the second part are for the unbeliever. This becomes clear from the double comparison to the prophets—the true prophets in the first part, and the false prophets in the second.

Outwardly in the world, the Christian Church appears poor, hungry, weeping, and hated. But she is rich toward God in faith. Therefore God comforts her—and every individual Christian in her—with His kingdom and all good things. This truth does not change, even if some individual Christians happen to be wealthy and well-off in this life. Their faith in the Christ makes them members of the Christian Church, and so the blessings apply to them by promise.

On the other hand, those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will, in the end, go hungry and will weep without comfort, because they rejected the Son of God. This does not change, even though they appear outwardly to be rich and happy now. Nor does the fact that certain unbelievers happen to be poor change the fact that they will suffer the consequences of rejecting the true God.

The point is spiritual. The Christian is blessed because he is rich toward God, though poor toward the world. The unbeliever is rich toward the world and poor toward God, therefore he is cursed.

Collect: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succor, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

“Did the leper just sin by disobeying Jesus?” This is a question I have heard people ask about this passage in particular. Interestingly, the question itself may have the answer within it. This leper is willing to kneel down and worship Jesus, even acknowledging His will above that of the leper. “If you are willing...” The leper does not look to anything except the mercy and will of the Savior.

Jesus, being the perfect lawgiver, tells the leper to follow the command of Moses for cleansing and tell no one. The bringing of the offering for cleansing was to be the testimony that the Lord had healed the man. But the leper does not listen, and instead proclaims the goodness of Jesus throughout the city.

This is what Martin Luther meant when he said to “sin boldly.” He was not saying that we should sin—far from it—but Luther recognized that believers will fail to live up to what is expected of them, even when they think they are doing the right thing. This leper ‘sinned boldly’ by doing the right thing at the wrong time. It is right to proclaim Christ, but not at the expense of what the Lord has told us. The comfort here is knowing that when we do sin, and even boldly so, the Lord is gracious and knows our weakness.

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

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

### ARTICLE I.

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

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

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

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

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21: 2 THE. 3:6–13 FESTIVAL OF ST. MATTHEW

This passage teaches the doctrine of Vocation, which confesses that the duties a man has in this life—if they are not wicked—have been laid on him by God, that he may know how to worship God and how to love his neighbor. When the Small Catechism teaches about confession and absolution, it urges us to “reflect in your condition, according to the Ten Commandments, namely: Whether you are a father or mother, a son or daughter, a master or mistress, a man-servant or maid-servant,” etc.

In today’s text, St. Paul rebukes those who are not fulfilling their vocations. He accuses them of laziness—not doing their own work—but also of disorderliness, which is the fruit of laziness. For, if anyone will not do his duty, those who depend on him will suffer. Therefore, the Apostle gives this universal command: “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”

Vocations are gifts. God gives vocations so that each will know how to worship Him. Every Christian should be comforted to know that simply doing his duty faithfully—whether as parent, child, employer, or worker—is a good work, which God rewards in this life, and in the life to come. We cannot earn God’s favor by our vocations, but because we are saved through faith in Christ, our vocations become pleasing to God on account of faith.

Collect: O Almighty God, Who by Thy blessed Son didst call Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an Apostle and Evangelist: Grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires, and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same, Thy Son Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

That word, “pray”, is a command. Christians must pray the Lord’s Prayer because their Lord has commanded it. The Christ did not command a set number of times to pray, but as long as one is careful not to neglect the Lord’s Prayer and to pray it regularly, he may comfort himself that he is obeying the command of the Lord. As a good, pious example, Luther’s Small Catechism recommends praying the Lord’s Prayer eight times a day (at morning, at evening, and before and after each meal). Since the Holy Spirit also works through the Word, he who prays the Lord’s Prayer faithfully will also be taught by it. Therefore, it is no empty rule which our Lord gives, but a divine means of our growth in sanctification.

But the flesh despises this command and desires to disobey it. Beware those who make excuses not to pray the Lord’s Prayer as it was given; this does not proceed from faith, but from sin. And when we do sin against this—or any other—command, the Lord’s Prayer itself offers the solution, saying, “forgive us our debts.” This simple prayer contains everything that a Christian should pray. What comfort, when we ourselves do not know what to pray, that our Lord has taught it to us. Therefore, no matter the circumstances, this prayer always pleases Him when prayed out of obedience to His command.

Collect: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succor, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

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

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

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

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

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

—The Large Catechism

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18: DEU. 4:4–7 15<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

Prior to this, Israel had an episode of unfaithfulness. Numbers 25 records how some had taken part in the Moabite worship of Baal: “So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.” As a result, “those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand” (Num. 25:3, 9). “But,” says Moses in our text, “you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you.” At certain times God punished unfaithfulness with death. This is a stumbling block for some, not fully understanding that, in God, jealousy is a virtue: “The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Ex. 34:14).

Jealousy is the proper feeling of protectiveness that a man has for his wife, hence, “Jealousy is a husband’s fury” (Prov. 6:34). A husband should jealously protect his wife so that no other man may touch her; that is his duty and his joy, because of the marriage union. God rightly feels jealousy for His Church, because He has united Himself to her, hence verse 7: “What great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us?” God’s saints rejoice in His jealousy because it means He is close to them and He protects them from those who would harm them.

Collect: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succor, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19: LUKE 10:38–42 15<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

Mary’s and Martha’s actions demonstrate the Law and the Gospel. Martha wants to show her love for the Lord by serving Him and His disciples. This proceeds from the Law, which demands perfect works. Mary, on the other hand, hears the Word of the Lord as He gives it. This proceeds from the Gospel, which promises salvation through faith, not by works of the Law. Martha’s serving was not “wrong”, just as the Law is not “wrong”. But the Law cannot save, and no matter how hard we try, we will never achieve the perfection which the Law demands. The Christ does not rebuke Martha for sin, but instead says with compassion, “you are worried and troubled about many things.” Then, He offers her comfort: “One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part”—namely, to listen to the Word of the Lord.

Christians are commanded to keep the Law because the Law is good. But the Law cannot save. The more we think we can keep the Law to achieve our righteousness, the more the Law condemns us. True peace is only found in hearing the Word of the Gospel, which promises salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from merit by the Law. At times, we must be like Martha, because God has given us work to do. But at all times we must be like Mary—hearing and believing the Gospel of forgiveness.

Collect: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succor, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.