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affiliated congregations and missions**

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Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

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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; St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC, Ormond Beach, FL

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**Rev. Martin Jackson**

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Faith Lutheran Church, Tualatin, OR

**Rev. Mark Mueller**

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Christ Lutheran Church, Richmond, MO

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**Rev. Brandon Warr**

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# THE LUTHERAN HERALD



PARABLE OF THE SOWER (DÜRER, 1503)

**FEBRUARY 4–MARCH 2, 2024**

**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)

February 4	Sexagesima	ASBH 17
February 9 (F)	Festival of St. Cyril of Alexandria	ASBH 78 (in this Herald)
February 11	Quinquagesima	ASBH 18
February 14	Ash Wednesday (D.S.)	ASBH 19
February 18	Invocavit (Lent 1)/	ASBH 20
	Martin Luther, Confessor and Doctor	ASBH 79 (in this Herald)
February 25	Reminiscere (Lent 2)	ASBH 21

### 2024 Synod and Colloquium

The synod and colloquium will be one week later than usual (liturgically-speaking) on account of this year's eclipse, which has made it impossible to schedule anything in Texas while eclipse-related tourism is going on.

The synod and colloquium will begin with **Vespers** on **Monday, April 15**, and is presently scheduled to conclude with **Matins** on **Friday, April 19** (Festival of Philip Melancthon, Confessor). Approximately one day will be given to the Colloquium; the majority of our time will be devoted to work on the *Augustana Service Book and Hymnal* and other diocesan matters (including St. Ignatius Seminary). Clergy will be contacted soon regarding preaching opportunities, etc. for the synod. (Draft copies of the draft will be sent to all clergy prior to the synod.)

(When making **hotel arrangements**, please be aware that the hotel across the street from the **Super 8**, which has been a Comfort Inn & Suites—among other things over the years—is now freshly remodeled as a **Fairfield Inn. Super 8, La Quinta, Holiday Inn**, and **Fairfield Inn** are generally the preferred hotels in Hillsboro.)

### Update on the *Augustana Service Book and Hymnal* (2024)

Work continues on all aspects of the Church Order project as preparation continues on the draft hymnal for consideration at the 2024 Synod.

Approximately eight hymns are still needed to complete the list of Office Hymns. Two proposed office hymns were added:

78. "O Splendor of God's Glory Bright" TLH #550 (public domain)

79. "O God, May We 'Ere Pure Retain" Ohio #203

SATURDAY, MARCH 2: ACTS 5:34–42

REMINISCERE

Gamaliel was a respected teacher in his day. The council agreed that if the apostles' teachings were no big deal, they would certainly amount to nothing. Maybe all of this Jesus stuff would go away, and life for the religious leaders of that day could return to normal. In order to 'help' the apostles' teachings amount to nothing, they had apostles beaten.

What may be difficult for us to fathom was the fact the apostles rejoiced at being beaten. And, as we read, the apostles didn't stop preaching about Jesus. They preached in Jerusalem, and this preaching would spread to all nations, just as Jesus said. Even though they were beaten, the apostles rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." Over the centuries countless martyrs have suffered for the sake of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. How were they able to suffer all, even death, rather than deny Jesus? The answer is simple: By the grace of God. Our entire life as Christians is wrapped up in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

His grace is also demonstrated vividly through His institution of the Apostolic Ministry. Ordinary men are called by God and given the task of preaching and administering the sacraments. The pastor is a pastor purely out of God's grace. Thus, we pray for our pastors that God would graciously lead them so that they may, in turn, teach us in the name of Jesus.

Collect: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength: Keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” Such excitement is understandable, but Jesus knows the reasoning behind their excitement. It would appear that the joy of the seventy was in “...the demons are subject to us,” and not the part about “...in Your name.”

Christians are simultaneously sinner and saint. Easily forgotten is that everything involving the sinful life is of the sinner’s own doing. More easily forgotten is that every aspect of saintly life is due to our gracious God. That is why God desires to bring us back into His presence on a frequent basis. Left to ourselves, we forget both aspects of our lives as sinner and saint. Once forgotten, we are left without hope of salvation. He returns us to His presence to bring to our remembrance who we are without Him, and who we are because of Him.

At the outset of the Divine Service we hear God’s name: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” We are led by the Holy Ghost to repent of our sins, and Christ bestows on us His forgiveness. Absolved of our sins, we sing praises to our Lord. We hear His Word. We pray to Him. We receive His Body and Blood, which will “strengthen and preserve you in the true faith unto life everlasting.” All of this is God’s service to you, so that you can “rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

Collect: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength: Keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

A total of 79 hymns for the general section of the hymnal have been type-set for the draft hymnal. The following hymns have been added to the draft in the past month:

“Oh, that I Had a Thousand Voices”	TLH #30 (public domain)
Oh, Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly”	TLH #96 (public domain)
“Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty”	TLH #1 (public domain)
“Praise God the Lord, Ye Sons of Men”	TLH #105 (public domain)
“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”	TLH #39 (public domain)
“Rejoice, Rejoice, this Happy Morn”	TLH #79 (public domain)
“Say, with What Salutations?”	Ohio #18
“The Happy Christmas Comes Once More”	Ohio #34
“The Lord hath Helped Me Hitherto”	TLH #33 (public domain)
“The Lord, My God, Be Praised”	TLH #38 (public domain)
“The New Church Year Again is Come”	Ohio #15
“The Newborn Child This Early Morn”	Ohio #46
“The Old Year Now Hath Passed Away”	Ohio #45
“The Star Proclaims the King Is Here”	TLH #131 (public domain)
“This Day at Thy Creating Word”	TLH #12 (public domain)
“’Tis Good, Lord, to Be Here”	TLH #135 (public domain)
“To God the Anthem Raising”	TLH #112 (public domain)
“To Shepherds as They Watched by Night”	TLH #103 (public domain)
“We Sing, Immanuel, Thy Praise”	TLH #108 (public domain)
“We Thank Thee, Jesus! Dearest Friend”	Ohio #96
“When O’er My Sins I Sorrow”	ELHB (1893) #87
“Why, Herod, Unrelenting Foe!”	Ohio #53
“Within the Father’s House”	TLH #133 (public domain)
“Ye Lands, to the Lord Make a Jubilant Noise”	TLH #44 (public domain)

The count of office and general hymns selected now stands at 180. Many more hymns are in the process of being prepared for inclusion in the draft.

### Eclipse Party at Salem

Any clergy or laity interested in observing the eclipse on April 8 is invited to join us at Salem (we are making arrangements for those who wish to RV or camp at the Church—contact Bp. Heiser [bishopheiser@me.com] if you are interested. Astronomy magazine rated Hillsboro as the 7<sup>th</sup> best place in the world to observe the upcoming eclipse.

### This Year’s Observance of the Festival of the Annunciation

Since the regular date for the festival (March 25) falls within Holy Week, this year the Festival of the Annunciation is observed on the Monday after the Octave of the Resurrection (i.e., Monday, April 8).

Festival of St. Cyril of Alexandria  
78. O Splendor of God's Glory Bright

Splendor paternae gloriae  
St. Ambrose, †397  
Tr., composite, 1904

O Heilige Dreifaltigkeit  
Nikolaus Herman, 1560

1. O Splen - dor of God's glo - ry bright,  
2. Come, ver - y Sun of truth and love,  
3. Like - wise to Thee our pray'rs as - cend,  
4. Teach us to work with all our might;

Who bring - est forth the light from Light;  
Come in Thy ra - diance from a - bove  
Fa - ther of glo - ry with - out end,  
Beat back the de - vil's threat - 'ning spite;

O Light of light, light's Foun - tain - spring;  
And shed the Ho - ly Spir - it's ray  
Fa - ther of sav - ing grace, for pow'r  
Turn all to good that seems most ill;

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29: JOHN 12:20–26

REMINISCERE

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Scripture doesn’t tell us whether or not they actually got to see Jesus. While it is also important to note that they were “Greeks,” what is more important are the words Jesus speaks to Andrew and Philip. John’s Gospel isn’t so much interested in the fact these were Gentiles as he is interested in recording for his readers what Jesus had to say to Andrew and Philip, which may have been in earshot of these Greeks. “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.”

To really “see Jesus” is to really hear why He came into this world. He came to die for the sins of the world. For these Greeks to really “see Jesus,” they needed to hear Him. There, on the cross, they would see the fullness of who Jesus is. He is true God in the flesh, come to rescue His people.

The words, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus,” are often found in pulpits, sacristies, and vestries. These words serve to remind the pastor of his duty: Show the people Jesus! Through the Word of God preached into their ears, the pastor is to show the people Jesus on the cross. They preach Christ crucified for the sins of the world, thereby showing people the need for repentance and God’s loving forgiveness. Repentance and forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake is not a popular message, but it is the only way to “see Jesus.”

Collect: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength: Keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

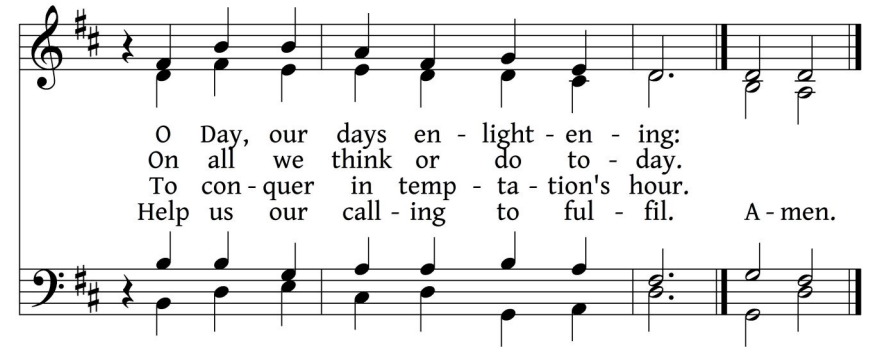
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28: 2 SAMUEL 12:1-14 REMINISCERE

In today's reading, "You are the man!" isn't followed by Nathan patting David on the back. It's not like the colloquial praise of recent generations. Nathan, rather, recounts all that the Lord had done for David, and all that David had done to transgress against the Lord by committing adultery with Uriah's wife and making sure Uriah would be killed.

Nathan's words brought David back to reality: "I have sinned against the Lord." David's words are also our words. No truer words are spoken than when a person is confronted with his sins and confesses, "I have sinned against the Lord." These words are ever on the lips of the Christian, for they show the reality of the Christian's life. We lament with St. Paul, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24).

This is the side of Christianity that many Christians would rather disregard. While many who regard themselves as being Christian may find David's actions reprehensible, some will turn a blind eye to their own sins. They long for a God who will accept them without the need for repentance. Sadly, there are times we may find ourselves counted among them. Yet, our faithful God graciously leads His people, again and again, to repent of their sins and to trust in His mercy, with the result that they may "live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness."

Collect: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength: Keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.



5. Direct and govern heart and mind,  
With body chaste and disciplined;  
Let faith her eager fires renew  
And hate the false and love the true.

6. On Christ, the true Bread, let us feed,  
Let Him to us be drink indeed,  
And let us taste with joyfulness  
The Holy Spirit's plenteousness.

7. Oh, joyful be the livelong day,  
Our thoughts as pure as morning ray,  
Our faith like noonday's glowing height,  
Our souls undimmed by shades of night.

8. The dawn begins to speed her way,  
Let the true Dawn Himself display,  
The Son with God the Father One,  
And God the Father in the Son.

Δ 9. All praise to God the Father be,  
All praise, eternal Son, to Thee,  
Whom with the Spirit we adore  
Forever and forevermore.

## 79. O God, May We E'er Pure Retain

Herr Gott, erhalt uns für und für  
Ludwig Helmbold, 1594  
Tr., Matthias Loy, 1880

Herr Jesu Christ, mein's  
"Hymnodus Sacer"  
Leipzig, 1625

1. O God, may we e'er pure re - tain  
2. That we Thy ho - ly Law may know  
3. That we may on our Fa - ther call,  
4. That if one fall, he rise a - gain,

The cat - e - chis - mal doc - trine plain,  
And mourn our sin and all its woe,  
Who can and will give help to all,  
And hast - en par - don to ob - tain,

As Lu - ther taught the heav'n - ly truth  
And yet be - lieve in Fa - ther, Son,  
And, washed with wat - er by the Word,  
Re - ceive the Sac - ra - ment in faith,

At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prayed a lengthy prayer of which today's reading is a part. Solomon was granted wisdom by God, which was far beyond the wisdom of any man. An integral part of that wisdom was knowing just who God is. To know God, the true God, is to know He is a God of mercy.

Solomon's wisdom was also knowing that a person's heart is most vile. As Jesus said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Mt. 15:19). So Solomon prayed for the time "when each one knows the plague of his own heart." Left to one's self, a person will not fully come to the realization of just how vile he is before God. To know the truth of this "plague" is a gift from God that leads a person to true wisdom, which is repentance and seeking the mercy of God.

Solomon, in his wisdom, also prayed for the Gentiles. Thousands of years ago Solomon prayed for you. Solomon prayed for those who will "come from a far," because "they will hear." They will hear of this most merciful God. By God's grace you, too, hear of the "plague" in your own hearts. You, too, have been called by God to repent. You, too, can be counted among those who fear, love, and trust in God above all things through faith in Jesus Christ.

Collect: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength: Keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.



The man had a son who was “possessed by a spirit.” But two people received healing that day. Being possessed by a demon was a most terrible thing for this child to endure. This child needed help, but much to the dismay of this father the disciples were unable to do anything for his son. However, the father of the possessed child does not stop seeking out help for his son. But was it really the father “seeking”, or actually a matter of Jesus drawing this man closer to Himself? Jesus, true God, knows all. Jesus knows that the possessed child needs help, as does the child’s father. What the child’s father does not realize is what he needs. It wasn’t until Jesus confronted the man’s unbelief that the man began to realize he, too, needed Jesus’ help. “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

We may have faith, we may believe, yet, sometimes we don’t. We are both saints and sinners. The saint in us believes, yet the sinner within wishes to draw us away from Christ. The sinner wants nothing to do with Christ. Jesus uses the troubles of life to draw Christians closer to Himself so we can truly say, “I believe; Lord have mercy!” Out of His mercy, Jesus healed the child. But He also mercifully healed the man. Jesus helped the man overcome his unbelief, as He does with all His people.

Collect: O God, who seest that of ourselves we have no strength: Keep us both outwardly and inwardly, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.



## Lesson from the Book of Concord Sexagesima Sunday

### Article VII.

Also, they [the Lutherans] teach, that One holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. As Paul says: “One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,” etc. [Eph. 4:5, 6]

### Article VIII.

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 the Sacraments, which are 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.

They condemn the Donatists, and such like, who denied it to be lawful to use the ministry of evil men in the Church, and who thought the ministry of evil men to be unprofitable and of none effect.

—The Augsburg Confession

### XII.

#### Of the Church.

We do not acknowledge them [the Roman Catholics] as the Church, and they are not; we also will not listen to those things which, under the name of Church, they either enjoin or forbid. For, thank God, today a child seven years old knows what the Church is, viz. saints, believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd. For the children repeat: “I believe in one holy Christian Church.” This holiness does not consist in an alb, a tonsure, a long gown and other of their ceremonies devised by them beyond Holy Scripture, but consists in the Word of God and true faith.

—The Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article XII  
The Book of Concord

## Lesson from the Book of Concord Reminiscere Sunday

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

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

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

—The Smalcald Articles, Part III



When athletes, pop stars, and teenage actors quickly make a fortune, another group inevitably materializes: all those who increase around them to eat up their wealth (v. 11). The entourage typically disappears when the money does: all was vanity, with no lasting fruit from their labors. Even those with sustained wealth discover, though, that the goods, friends, and honors end with their last breath: because of sin, even our own flesh cannot continue as it is, but must be renewed in the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51–53). The gifts of God must therefore be enjoyed in a way that recognizes Him and His desire to give the greater gift of eternal life. That life is clearly not of our own earning, but by the forgiveness of our sins for the sake of God the Son.

Judas sought wealth by betraying the One who would give Him heavenly riches, and was replaced among the witnesses by one who could be content with obscurity among men, so long as he was confessed before the Father (Matthew 10:32–33). Matthias seems overshadowed by Jesus' calling of Saul of Tarsus, but this was no slight against Matthias or the Eleven. Our Lord made it obvious that the Israel of the New Testament was not an outward replication of the tribes of Israel, but a Kingdom that would permeate all the nations of the earth.

Collect: Almighty God, who by Thy Son Jesus Christ didst give to Thy holy Apostles many excellent gifts, and commandest them earnestly to feed Thy flock: Make, we beseech Thee, all pastors diligently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Gospel for this week—the Parable of the Sower—sets the theme which we hear in today's lesson, as well. Isaiah wrote, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary." As we hear these prophetic words, we think first and foremost of the Word Incarnate, for the scriptural account of His every word and deed are aptly described by St. John, "... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." And St. Paul wrote to the Romans, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (15:4)

The Word of the Lord accomplishes that for which He sends it, and in those whom the Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith, the Lord sustains against all adversity. In the words of Isaiah 50, "Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord And rely upon his God." It is the Lord who delivers from death and sustains us in life, and He does so through His Word.

Collect: O Lord God, Who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do: Mercifully grant that by Thy power we may be defended against all adversity; 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 go about the vocations which the Lord has given to us in this world, we would do well to remember that the outcome of our duties is not under our control. The Lord declared to Adam, “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.” (Gen. 3:17-18) The Lord gave him his vocation, but the effects of sin meant that sorrow and toil would accompany his labors.

We read in Ecclesiastes 11, “In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; For you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good.” Day by day, our vocations instruct us of our dependence on the Lord; how much greater, then, our awareness that that which is most needful—our salvation—is solely the work of the Lord, and we are those who simply freely receive this great blessing from the Lord. We do not know the outcome of our sowing, but the Lord’s sowing accomplishes that for which He has sent His Word. The Lord has sown His Word in us, and we rejoice in the hope which we have in our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Collect: O Lord God, Who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do: Mercifully grant that by Thy power we may be defended against all adversity; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

“Therefore...Therefore” (v. 12, 14) indicates that we are to “take heed,” based on the examples in the history of God’s people (v. 1-11), concerning where and how we stand. If we do not run from idolatry, we very well might not stand, but fall.

St. Paul declares that what tempts the Corinthians and us ought to be understood and rejected both as contrary to God’s will and to our own self-interest. We are certainly no less responsible for the stumbling of our flesh than the unbeliever is for living entirely in devotion to it! We can rejoice in our not being subject to any temptation not common to man by repenting of our failures. Even more, we know this: God is faithful. God wants you not to sin, and He provides the way to escape from those temptations, a way to be able to bear up under them.

Thanks be to God that you live in the liturgical reality of 1 Corinthians 10:16-11:33, because what St. Paul next makes clear is precisely that “fleeing from idolatry” means seeking refuge in the body and blood of Jesus. Therein is the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, even the proclamation of His death by which we stand!

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

Daniel would confess his faith without unnecessarily offending the pagan ruler. Quietly living out the true faith while serving the king until such time as a bolder and more open confession was necessary or more likely to be heard (cf. 1 Peter 3:1–3, Ephesians 6:5–8) was not unfaithfulness, but good stewardship of God's Word. For us who may have an unbelieving boss or customers, or who serve in a secular government or its armed forces, Daniel shows how we "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17), remembering that when these conflict we "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Three things were mandated for acceptance in the king's employ. Learning the ways and 'wisdom' of their captors was not a violation of God's Law any more than it would be for us today, so long as all such learning were kept subject to the true revealed wisdom of God's Word. Even having their names translated into the Babylonian tongue—complete with stripping the honor to Yahweh with which their parents had named them and giving it to Babylonian idols—could be tolerated. Names are given by another and don't necessarily reflect your own values. However, these pagan names would actually end up magnifying the confession of God's people! Eating from the king's table, though, would participate in things sacrificed to idols, so Daniel tactfully refuses, and the Lord miraculously confirms his testimony to the chief eunuch!

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

In today's lesson we hear of our Lord's first sending forth of the twelve. The twelve would only be away from the Lord for a brief time, and there are a number of differences between the way in which they were to provision for this journey, in contrast to the Lord's instructions on the night when He was betrayed. (See Luke 22:35–36.) Also, they were specifically only sent to the lost sheep of Israel, whereas in the future they would be sent to all nations. However, the most important thing is unchanging: They were to proclaim the Word which the Lord sent them to proclaim.

Not all would receive the Word and the Lord told them how they were to respond to those who rejected the Gospel: "And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" The sowers sowed the Word according to the commandment of the Lord.

As there were those who rejected the teaching of the apostles, so it will be to the end of the world. But for all who believe, it is on account of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Collect: O Lord God, Who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do: Mercifully grant that by Thy power we may be defended against all adversity; 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 lesson presents the example of the Lord's saints in the Old Testament as models of those in whom the sowing of the Word had been fruitful. Whatever their particular circumstances in life according to their vocations, and whatever the nature of the suffering which they endured from an unbelieving world, the same assessment is presented concerning them all: They were those “of whom the world was not worthy.”

The world holds all faithful confessors in absolute contempt. At best, those who are of the world look with pity on the saints, but far more often than not, the people of the world do not hesitate to afflict God's people.

But as we consider today's lesson, one further detail stands out. For all the blessed constancy in faith which the Lord worked in the hearts of those saints of old, still there were blessings reserved for the Church in the days following our Lord's resurrection: to know the Name of God Incarnate and to confess our hope in Christ Jesus, who is risen from the dead and who has ascended to the right hand of the Father where He intercedes for His Church until the day when He returns in glory.

Collect: O Lord God, Who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do: Mercifully grant that by Thy power we may be defended against all adversity; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Lent's Ember Days encourage our prayer for those engaged in Adam's original work of praise: the harvesting and care of what God provides. Adam's sin made the work more difficult, complicated, and uncertain, so such prayers are a necessary confession of the Creed's First Article and the Our Father's Fourth Petition. We pray for farmers and ranchers, but also for the makers of the tools and products they use, those who deliver, process, and market what they grow (and those who inspect and regulate). We also pray that we would receive our daily bread with such thanksgiving as seeks to bless those whose access to nourishment is made difficult. Thus, in our diocese we remember to set aside offerings to support those who labor in the Kingdom where there may be no pay to sustain them or the people they serve in Christ—those serving missions listed in these pages each month.

When God placed Adam in the garden “to tend and keep it,” the only command Moses mentions sets aside one tree (out of trillions) that Adam might confess a right understanding of his blessed position. Eating from all but one was no more burdensome than resting body and soul on the Sabbath by hearing God's Word. Yet, the tempter leads Eve and her husband to view such acknowledgment of the Giver as if it negated the giving! Likewise, we face this season of penitence because sin leads us to lack in treasuring and caring for the Lord's gifts.

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

On Sunday, we had the Holy Ghost's presentation of these events that best fit the purposes of St. Matthew's writing, and now we have what the Holy Ghost wanted St. Luke to say. In the similarities and differences between them (and that which the Spirit had written by St. Mark), we do not see contradictions or omissions, as some claim. We see a verification of what the Gospels are: the same life of Christ told four times, each one with different emphases, so that we get a more 'three-dimensional' view of the making of our salvation, a better understanding of what Jesus has done.

Here, with a multitude of temptations over 40 days being presented in terms of three that characterize the rest, we find Matthew presenting them in their historical order (as shown by Jesus' ordering Satan to leave and then being served by the angels, Matthew 4:10–11). Luke orders the places: the desert, the mountain, and then that which was to be exalted above all mountains (Isaiah 2:2)—the Temple. Mark summarizes briefly, showing with St. Luke that the temptations continued through this whole period, but also adding that Jesus wasn't in some surreal bubble in the wilderness: there were wild beasts there, as well.

While there's nothing wrong with having a favorite Gospel (or Epistle, Psalm, etc.), this reading helps us see the importance of reading the whole breadth of Scripture to have the whole depth of scriptural teaching—Jesus' defeating sin, death, and devil for us.

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

Today the Church observes the Festival Day of St. Cyril of Alexandria, one of the great fathers of the early Church. Cyril was a bold confessor who served as the Patriarch of Alexandria in the early fifth century. At that time in the life of the Church, the Arian threat was receding, but a new generation of false teachers had arisen who, like the Arians before them, taught incorrectly concerning the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. (The Nestorians radically divided the two natures in a fashion similar to that of the Calvinists.) Cyril was the most prominent confessor of the faithful doctrine at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), and the Council resolved to depose Nestorius for his heresy. (Nestorius had served as Patriarch of Constantinople.) The Nestorians attacked Cyril as a "monster" and attempted to use political power to attack Cyril, forcing him to flee the soldiers of a misguided emperor. However, in the end, the emperor exiled Nestorius to Egypt.

Cyril heeded the word of the Lord: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?" While the false teachers tried to undermine biblical doctrine to make it more appealing to human reason, Cyril and other faithful confessors would not budge, and strove for a clearer confession of the biblical teaching which eschewed such compromises.

Collect: O God, who didst give St. Cyril as a faithful teacher of the saving truth in a time of great trial, grant to Thy people zeal for Thy Word and faithful teachers for Thy Church, that they may stand steadfast against all error, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Prophet Jeremiah was sent by the Lord to proclaim a word which sinful Judah did not want to hear, calling them to repentance. As a faithful servant of the Lord, Jeremiah simply replies, “So be it, Lord.”

When God’s servants proclaim His holy Law, they know that there will be some (maybe many) among their hearers who will become quite upset—even angry—at the one who proclaims that word of judgment. Insofar as that servant of the Lord is faithful to the One who called him, he will be unconcerned for how his hearers regard him. As St. Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth: “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.” (1 Cor. 4:3–4) As the servants of the Lord sow the seed of God’s Word, they know it is the Lord who grants fruitfulness to their endeavors; their only concern is to be faithful in their vocation, repenting of their weakness when they are tempted to say what people *want* to hear, rather than what they *need* to hear.

For the saints, this is a great consolation, for the Lord sends His ministers to faithfully proclaim His Word and to administer His Sacraments, so that the saints will be led in the way of repentance, and healed with the balm of the Means of Grace.

Collect: O Lord God, Who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do: Mercifully grant that by Thy power we may be defended against all adversity; 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 disciples argue over which of them would be exalted the most, but Jesus declares single-minded, self-sacrificial service as the way of the only true King! The King who judges all first served all by creating them and placing them in a garden, supplying all their needs. Though they earned their removal from it and ended up having thorns and sweat without bread rather than bread without sweat and thorns, He still preserved them.

He gave His treaty on Mt. Sinai, telling how those whom He had redeemed from bondage would now live to express their understanding of receiving freedom by grace alone. When they broke their promise to live as He said, He sent His prophets again and again to restore them in it. Yet, they despised and killed His servants (Luke 11:43–52), so now He sent His Son to make them truly free (John 8:35–36). He unshackled them from the land (Matthew 27:51, 24:1–2) and the shadows of things to come (Colossians 2:11–17), to be His new Israel (Galatians 6:14–16), spread throughout the world (Acts 1:8).

To judge the people, one must serve them as He has served. A Kingdom bestowed requires showing such favor as has been received: not contemplation of how to win a position, but the confession through service of what has been given, just as the Master became the Servant so that He might be the Giver.

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



## Lesson from the Book of Concord Invocavit Sunday

### Article XXI.

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

—the Augsburg Confession

## Lesson from the Book of Concord Quinquagesima Sunday

### Chapter II, Article IV.

#### [B. What is Justifying Faith?]

The adversaries [Roman Catholics] feign that faith is only a knowledge of history, and, therefore, [they] teach that it can coexist with mortal sin. Hence, they say nothing concerning faith, by which Paul so frequently says that men are justified, because those who are accounted righteous before God do not live in mortal sin. But that faith which justifies, is not merely a knowledge of history, but it is to assent to the promise of God, in which, for Christ's sake, the remission of sins and justification are freely offered. [It is certainty or the certain trust in the heart, when, with my whole heart, I regard the promises of God as certain and true, through which there are offered me, without my merit, the forgiveness of sins, grace and all salvation, through Christ the Mediator.] And, that no one may suppose that it is mere knowledge, we will add further: it is to wish and to receive the offered promise of the remission of sins and of justification. And the distinction between this faith and the righteousness of the Law, can be easily discerned. Faith is the divine service, which receives the benefits offered by God; the righteousness of the Law is the divine service which offers to God our merits. By faith, God wishes Himself so to be honored, that we may receive from Him those things which He promises and offers.

But that faith signifies, not only a knowledge of history, but the faith which assents to the promise, Paul openly testifies, when he says (Rom. 4:16): “Therefore it is of faith, to the end the promise might be sure.” For he judges, that the promise cannot be received, unless by faith. Wherefore, he compares them correlatively, and connects promise and faith. Although it will be easy to decide what faith is, if we consider the Creed, where this article certainly stands: “The forgiveness of sins.” Therefore, it is not enough to believe that Christ was born, suffered, was raised again, unless we add also this article, which is the final cause of the history: “The forgiveness of sins.” To this article, the rest must be referred, viz. that, for Christ's sake, and not for the sake of our merits, forgiveness of sins is given us. For what need would there be, that Christ be given for our sins, if for our sins our merits can give satisfaction?

—Apology of the Augsburg Confession, §48–52

The Gospel according to Saint Matthew (20:20-28) records this exchange taking place with the mother (Salome) of the two disciples. She is pressing the Lord for the presentation of this great prestige upon her sons. Usually the disciples expected too little of Jesus, showing themselves as men of little faith. Here is a woman that actually expects 'too much' from Jesus. It appears that Salome and her sons regard Jesus as royal personage who is about to step out of the obscurity in which He has thus far lived to ascend His glorious throne.

This demonstrates faith in Jesus being the promised Messiah, but as is common for humanity, this faith is misdirected by human reason and logic. Their request is driven by faith and comes from a desire to be fully in the Lord's kingdom, but it is an imperfect faith that does not fully understand the things it seeks.

How often our requests of God must be met with a similar response because of our horrible ignorance regarding spiritual and eternal things. This reality is driven home by Jesus' comparison of the earthly world and its godly order of creation versus the kingdom of God.

Collect: O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully hear our prayers, and, having set us free from the bonds of sin, defend us from all evil; 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 text appointed for today speaks of the great value of humility coupled with words of kindness or admiration, guided by wise observation. God's children are solemnly warned against daring to bring frivolous accusations or charges against another, for such behavior can bring temporal and eternal consequences leading to an unfavorable judgment against the accuser. Such actions can also lead to destroying a man's reputation with untrue words secretly spoken against him, which is a horrible thing that clearly violates the Commandments of God. A good name is one of life's most valuable possessions.

The Lord beautifully uses the author Solomon to present the divinely inspired lesson that wise words delivered with tact, humility, and faith are far more valuable. The text also warns against excessiveness regarding all things, whether it be the delivery of praise or admonishment. Either one delivered over abundantly can create trouble, rather than success.

The verses of our assigned text also present the reality that this sage advice is as valuable when dealing with conflict as it is when handling contentment or peaceful relations. All relations are well served by moderation and discipline, guided by the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of true wisdom.

Collect: Almighty and Everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; 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 the wisdom writings that comprise the book of Proverbs we hear divine guidance for numerous aspects of daily life. We hear about the godly pursuit of faithful living by God's rules and statutes, graciously delivered to His children through the holy Scriptures. In the verses from this book appointed for today, we are introduced to the divine judgment meted out to those who engage in character assassination and creating discord. We are also warned to avoid harming our fellow men in any way exemplified by seven offenses which are an abomination to the Lord.

While there are seven items listed, the literary practice of using sequential numbers to present a list does not mean that these seven are the exhaustive list of offenses the Lord finds abominable. What this does say is that the Lord finds deceitfulness an unacceptable behavior among His chosen, for all the items listed represent some form of deceit. The message divinely delivered through this text is that deceit will be met with severe condemnation from the Lord Almighty's righteous judgment.

Collect: Almighty and Everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

This text is presenting the fact that all good works come through knowing the Word of the Lord by faith and grace. For only through a truly faithful knowing and understanding of God's inspired Scripture can we hope to live a life that is worth living. If you are not living a life of faith by His grace, striving to fulfill the Lord's commands for His Elect, you are living without any true meaning or hope. The world does not hear His Word or do His works because it clings to sin and rebellion. It is only through His gracious gift of the Spirit that we are brought from the world's death to life in His Word and will.

By receiving and inwardly digesting the Word, Jesus Christ is manifested to mankind through His precious Means of Grace, which deliver Him and all He offers for this life, and the eternal one to come. This is what the Lord's divine statements about coming to us and loving Him are presenting. This is as true as His promise that all who love Christ and keep His Word will be loved by Him and the Father; both of whom will make their home with them who know the Lord's Word.

Collect: O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully hear our prayers, and, having set us free from the bonds of sin, defend us from all evil; 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 text appointed for this Ash Wednesday is indeed very fitting for such a solemn day that starts the Church's holy season of repentance known as Lent. Through the prophetic words recorded in Joel we hear our gracious, merciful Lord calling us to repent and turn back to Him so that He might deliver us from sin, death, hell, and the devil.

In chapter two the prophet Joel bids his people see in the horrendous locust swarms devastating the land the inception, or dawn, of God's approaching last visitation and judgment. The divine Word bids men return to the Lord and find deliverance in Him. This prophetic vision, no longer fixed on the present plague, pierces into the future. Joel gives a full-scale depiction of the approaching Day of the Lord, the signs that herald its approach, the standard by which its divine decisions will be made, and the finality of these decisions.

Throughout this prophetic book we are shown that the only way home is by faith, trusting in His grace. The Word calls us to our Lord's precious Means of Grace, which deliver us, strengthen us, guide us, and fulfill the promise of faith delivered purely through His grace.

Collect: Almighty and Everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Faith works through love—no matter how small the legal demand. Saint Paul argues against any submission to the legal requirements of the Old Testament Law if one's goal is winning redemption or salvation. Justification before God comes only through His promised Redeemer and faith in Him through the grace of His Spirit.

Gospel freedom is living by the power and leading of the Spirit. It means struggling against the flesh and its desires. Christ's death to sin becomes a reality in those who belong to Christ through faith. The Apostle drives home the danger of compromising this Gospel reality, as well as his contempt for such compromisers, with his brutal assessment of recommending they "would emasculate themselves" ("cut themselves off") if they are so fond of circumcision as a sign of piety or worthiness before God. Faith trusts in Jesus Christ and His work for the fulfillment of our salvation. All other works and signs must be understood according to His teaching, which shows that some of the old things have passed away, but the fullness of His work is shown in love according to His Word and Spirit!

Collect: Almighty and Everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.