

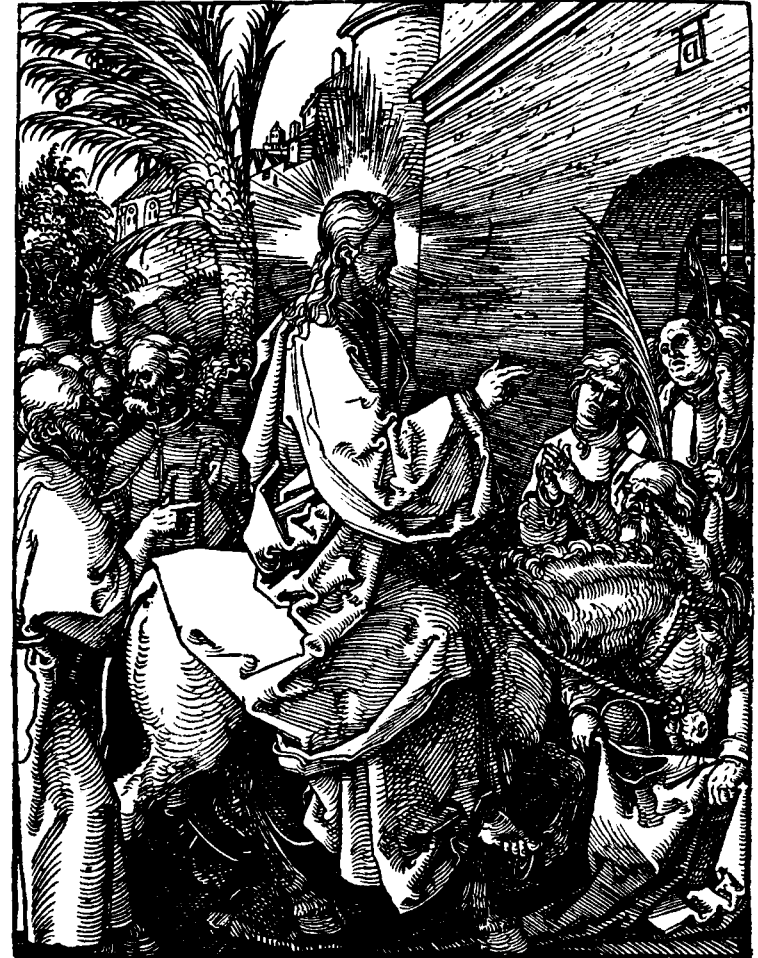
SATURDAY, MARCH 30: MATTHEW 27:57-66 HOLY SATURDAY

In the beginning, when God had finished creating all things, He rested. On Holy Saturday, after Christ had accomplished all things according to the Scriptures to accomplish our Redemption and to bring about the New Creation, He rested in the grave. Today, let us take the time to meditate quietly in true faith over what we have seen and heard from the Scriptures this Lenten season, as we wait for the celebration of Christ's glorious resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday.

Being made contrite over our sins from the demonstration of God's wrath and displeasure on Calvary's hill, let us always take heart and be encouraged from the image of our Savior, who manifested the great love which God has for us that He would send His Son to save us. As St. John writes in his first epistle, "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. ... And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:14, 16)

Collect: O God, who didst enlighten this most holy night with the glory of the Lord's resurrection, preserve in all Thy people the spirit of adoption which Thou hast given, so that, renewed in body and soul, they may perform unto Thee a pure service; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM (DÜRER, CA. 1509-11)

MARCH 4-30, 2024

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The Calendar

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

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

March 3	Oculi (Lent 3)	ASBH 22
March 10	Laetare (Lent 4)	ASBH 23
March 17	Judica (Lent 5)/St. Patrick	ASBH 24/82
(Note: the Hymn number for St. Patrick has changed; it is #81 in the Supplement)		
March 19 (T)	Festival of St. Joseph	ASBH 83
March 24	Palmarum	ASBH 25
March 28 (R)	Maundy Thursday	ASBH 26
March 29 (F)	Good Friday	ASBH 27
March 30 (S)	Holy Saturday	ASBH 28
March 31	Easter—The feast of the Resurrection of our Lord	ASBH 29

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.)

At present, the Synod will begin with the Monday Vespers; **Colloquium will be Thursday, April 18**. (There is a possibility that any remaining synodical work not concluded on Wednesday, April 17 would be addressed on Friday morning.)

(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.)

FRIDAY, MARCH 29: JOHN 18:1—19:42

GOOD FRIDAY

The image of Jesus hanging upon the cross is an image of the Law and Gospel. According to the Law, seeing the sinless Son of God bearing your sins and mine is a demonstration of God's wrath against sin. But this image is also a picture of the Gospel! This image shows how the Father sent forth His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins, "and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

St. John writes in his first epistle, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:10-11). In the Lenten season we have seen Him betrayed, denied, accused, chastised, and crucified for us, all out of love. The love of God is seen in the cross of Christ.

Out of love toward God, who first loved us, we ought to cling to Him with our whole heart and gladly devote our lives to His service. We know from the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that He is an ever-faithful God, who has brought spiritual deliverance to this world of sinners. Because of His love from the cross, the Law of love also teaches us that we ought to willingly commit our lives to His keeping and rely upon Him in every need.

Collect: Almighty God, we beseech Thee graciously to behold this Thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

On Maundy Thursday we celebrate the institution of the Lord's Supper, in which Christ Jesus gives us His true Body and Blood in, with, and under the bread and wine. The mediator of the Old Covenant was Moses, who, while the Scripture credits him with being faithful, was a sinner like all of us. The mediator of the New Covenant is our Lord Jesus Christ, who is superior to Moses in every way. He is the sinless incarnate Son of God.

The Old Covenant was ratified by the blood of animals, but the New Covenant is ratified by the blood of the Son of God. The Sacrament is not the mere symbol of the sacrifice for sins. This cup of the New Covenant is filled with the divine blood that was shed on the cross.

The Old Covenant emphasized the need for God's people to keep the Commandments. The blessing of the New Covenant is grace, righteousness, and eternal life based on the work of Christ the Mediator, accepted by faith. It is only His work that makes us alive in Him. He feeds us with His holy Feast, He washes us in Baptism, and He makes us part of His Body, the Church, because He is the Lamb who alone is worthy to accomplish these things!

Collect: O Lord God, who hast left unto us in a wonderful Sacrament a memorial of Thy Passion, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so use this Sacrament of Thy Body and Blood that the fruits of Thy redemption may continually be manifest in us; Thou who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord Oculi Sunday

Article II.

Also they [the Lutheran pastors] teach, that since the Fall of Adam, all men begotten according to nature, are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through baptism and the Holy Ghost.

They condemn the Pelagians and others, who deny that the vice of origin is sin, and who, to obscure the glory of Christ's merit and benefits, argue that man can be justified before God by his own strength and reason. —The Augsburg Confession

Article II.

Of Original Sin.

The second article, Of Original Sin, the adversaries [the Roman Catholic theologians] approve, but in such a way, that they, nevertheless, censure the definition of Original Sin, which we incidentally gave. Here at the very threshold, his Imperial Majesty will discover that the writers of the Confutation [the Romanist response to the Augsburg Confession] were deficient not only in judgment, but also in candor. For whereas we, with a simple mind, desired, in passing, to recount those things which Original Sin embraces, these men, by framing an invidious interpretation, artfully distort a proposition that has in it nothing which of itself is wrong. Thus they say: "To be without the fear of God, to be without faith, is actual guilt"; and therefore they deny that it is original guilt.

—The Apology of the Augsburg Confession

(The *Augsburg Confession* was written in 1530, the *Roman Confutation* responded to the Confession in 1530, and then the *Lutheran Apology* (Defense) was written in 1531.)

The giant Goliath was tremendously strong. He was almost ten feet tall and the weight of his armor alone could have damaged a normal man. Yet David was able to overcome him, take away his armor, and rescue the people of Israel from the Philistine threat. In this song, David confesses that it was God who delivered him from death on this and many other occasions throughout his life. He does not take any of the glory for himself. He puts all of his trust in God and humbly cries out to the Lord for deliverance.

Satan is a more intimidating threat against God's people than Goliath ever was. His strength is his ability to deceive and kill, as he did in the Garden of Eden. No ordinary man can overcome him. But Jesus is no ordinary man. He is true God, and is infinitely stronger than Satan. It was He who saved David from Goliath and it is He who overcomes Satan and rescues us from the dominion of death. When we are terrified by "waves of death" or "floods of ungodliness," we ought to imitate David and put our trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, who saves us from sin, death, and Satan.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Our Lord's parents had celebrated Passover in the city of Jerusalem every year, as we are told from the story of when He was twelve years old (Luke 2:41-42). The feast would have been important throughout His life, but this year was particularly significant because the shadow that was the image of the Passover lamb would be fulfilled by the Body of Christ.

Jesus no doubt had been looking forward to this night since He was a boy: "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." Everything in Christ's life, His incarnation, baptism, and ministry, had been leading up to the events of this week. "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me" (Hebrews 10:5). Christ instituted the Sacrament of His own Body and Blood to teach His disciples that He was the sacrifice that was prefigured in the Passover meal.

Today, we have this testament confirmed to us each week in the Lord's Supper. Every time it is celebrated, we are given that same true Body and Blood which was sacrificed for the sins of the world, and we are reminded of the fact that thousands of years of prophecy and promise have indeed been fulfilled. Every time we come to the Lord's altar, we should hear the same words to us: "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Supper with you," knowing that Christ had our Redemption in mind that night, as well.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds are continually afflicted, may mercifully be relieved by the Passion of Thine Only-begotten Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

When some people think of a Messiah, they think of one who will fight for them, one who will defend them, and one who will reign for a long time on His throne. But the truth is that to be our Messiah, Christ had to die. The way of life, the way to defeat the devil, and the victory over death could only be accomplished through death. Just as a seed cannot grow into a strong tree unless it breaks down and germinates in the ground, so our redemption and glorification could not be accomplished unless Christ suffered, died, and was buried according to the Scriptures.

Is it any wonder that Christ expects the same of His people, to lose their lives in this world for His sake, in order to gain them in the world to come? People today think that Christianity implies a simple and easy life, that we receive free forgiveness and eternal life, and that we do not need to suffer in this world. While we do receive the blessings of the Gospel freely for Christ's sake through faith, the cost of discipleship is high.

If we are disciples, we should be willing to follow our Master into all things, including persecution and death. But no matter how dark this world becomes, we know that we have the true Light to guide us on our way—the Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of God's people Israel.

Collect: Almighty and Everlasting God, grant us grace so to contemplate the Passion of our Lord, that we may find therein forgiveness for our sins; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“Girding up your loins” is what men did in ancient times to prepare for battle. Their long garments tended to get in the way, so they would tuck them into their belt and secure them. Then they could fight without the danger of tripping and stumbling.

As Christians, we are engaged in spiritual warfare every day. Christ has delivered His people from the kingdom of the devil, but the devil has not given up. If we do not faithfully cling to our Lord for holiness and defense, the Enemy and his wicked spirits will endeavor to take us back under his power.

St. Peter instructs us to gird up the loins of our minds, that is, to be ready for spiritual battle. He tells us to control ourselves, so that our sinful desires do not get in the way and cause us to fall from the faith. If we are perfectly holy, just as God is perfectly holy, then Satan will have no way to attack us. But we know that we are not holy in all of our conduct. We sin daily.

Our own holiness cannot defend us. Instead, we must rely on Christ, whose perfect holiness is ours through faith. We gird up the loins of our minds when we repent of our sins and rest our hope fully upon the grace that is found in Jesus Christ. He is the only One who can keep us safe in the battle ahead.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Right before the fall of Jericho, Joshua had warned the Israelites not to take anything for themselves from the plunder. The gold and silver were to be consecrated to the Lord, but everything else was accursed and to be destroyed. Achan knowingly disobeyed and sinned against God's Commandments by taking some of the plunder. So, God abandoned the people of Israel in battle, just as He had threatened.

God does not remain when man continues in unrepentant sin. The Holy Spirit does not dwell with those who purposely break God's Commandments. If we refuse to repent when the Law reveals our sin, then God will withdraw from us, and allow us to be overcome once again by the devil.

But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). After Achan's sin had been purged from the Israelite camp, then God returned and gave them victory over their enemies. Through Confession and Absolution, the Holy Spirit purges us of our sins and sanctifies us, so that He might come and dwell within us. When the Triune God makes His home with us (John 14:23 and 1 Cor. 6:19), then neither man nor devil can do anything to harm us.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

How would we treat a loved one who we know was going to die soon? More than that, how would we treat the Son of God who had blessed us with His company, teaching us as we sat by His feet, knowing that He was about to die for our sins? Mary's sacrifice of costly oil, her action of anointing Jesus' feet, and—still further—using her own hair to wipe them, demonstrates a wonderful act of devotion and love to her Savior.

But this act was lost on Judas, who cared more for the oil that was spent than for the Lord's blood which was poured out for him. It was seemingly lost on the people of Jerusalem as well, because, while they glorified Him on Palm Sunday with their cries of "Hosanna to the Son of David," their cries, within only a few days, turned into "Crucify Him!"

Outward pomp and show always attract crowds. But true faith isn't always demonstrated this way. It is in the simple, more personal ways we choose to behave in which our faith is seen (perhaps not in the eyes of the world, but certainly in the eyes of God). During this Holy Week, may our hearts and minds be focused on the true cost of our Redemption. And may we, through faith, be willing to sacrifice what is dear to us to our loving Savior.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who amid so many adversities do fail through our own infirmities, may be restored through the Passion and Intercession of Thine Only-begotten Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord Palmarum (Palm) Sunday

Article III.

Also they [the Lutherans] teach, that the Word, that is, the Son of God, did take man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are Two Natures, the divine and the human, inseparably conjoined in one Person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but for all actual sins of men. He also descended into hell, and truly rose again the third day; afterward He ascended into Heaven, that He might sit on the right hand of the Father, and forever reign, and have dominion over all creatures, and sanctify them that believe in Him, by sending the Holy Ghost into their hearts, to rule, comfort and quicken them, and to defend them against the devil and the power of sin. The same Christ shall openly come again to judge the quick and the dead, etc., according to the Apostles' Creed.

—The Augsburg Confession

THURSDAY, MARCH 7: I THESSALONIANS 2:1-8 OCULI

The preaching of the Gospel comes with much conflict. This is not the fault of the Gospel, nor is it the fault of those who preach the Gospel. The conflict comes about because of the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature, which do not want to give up their power over us.

Pastors, who have been entrusted with the preaching of the Gospel, must be prepared for the conflict. The enemies of the Church are looking for any opportunity to accuse them of wrongdoing. For the sake of the Gospel, pastors ought to avoid any appearance of pleasing men, being covetous for personal gain, or seeking their own glory. They ought to be disciplined and blameless in their theological conflicts with false teachers, lest their faults become an excuse for others to reproach the Gospel.

While ministers of the Word are called to be fighters toward the enemies of the Church, they are called to be like nursing mothers toward those inside the Church. They feed the children of God with the pure milk of the Word, gently correcting them with the Law and comforting them with the Gospel.

Whether they are defending us from false doctrine or nourishing us with the Word and Sacraments, they dare not claim any of the glory for themselves. All glory goes to Christ who works through them to defend and provide for His Church.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

St. Paul sets a high standard for those in the Office of the Ministry. But don't these qualifications apply to all Christians? It is not as though a layman is allowed to be a greedy, drunken polygamist, but a pastor is not. All believers in Christ should lead lives of reverence, temperance, and faithfulness.

Because ministers of the Word speak on Christ's behalf, it is especially important for them to lead godly lives. False doctrine is taught by deeds as well as words. When people see a pastor engaging in a public sin, they might assume that God doesn't mind that sin, or even approves of it. This gives the devil an opportunity to attack and scatter the sheep. If a man wants to protect the house of God from the devil, he must prove faithful in guarding his own house from sin.

The wife of a pastor has also been placed in a special position. Although she does not act in the stead of Christ, her behavior does reflect upon her husband. If she leads an ungodly life, it redounds to the shame of her husband, and therefore, of Christ.

Since our pastors and their wives have sinful natures like all Christians, we ought to pray for them, that the Holy Spirit would protect them against temptation. And if they do fall into sin, we ought to patiently bear with them in love and forgiveness, just as Christ has forgiven us.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Although the word "persuasion" sometimes has the negative connotation of deceptive convincing, it doesn't here! When St. Paul says, "we persuade men," it is a description of the task which all who occupy the pastoral office are to undertake. Men of God study the Word of God so that we might persuade men. We use the Law of God to convince people that they have sinned, and falling short of that Law, there is the "terror" and threat of God's punishment. We use the Gospel to persuade men to trust in the promise of the forgiveness of sins, purchased by Christ and freely offered because of God's graciousness.

Though there were false teachers who were insinuating that St. Paul and St. Timothy were not to be trusted, the Corinthian congregation should have known better. They had been founded by St. Paul, who had persuaded them of the truth of God's Word. St. Paul had unflaggingly preached to them about Jesus "who died for them and rose again."

St. Paul would not defend himself, only to say that "the love of Christ compels us." The Gospel is founded on the vicarious atonement truth "that if One died for all, then all died." With Christ's love in them, they reached out to persuade the Corinthians to believe in Christ, escape the coming "terror of the Lord," and "no longer live for themselves."

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The first covenant was of the Law, and it required full obedience to receive the benefits and not the curses. Exodus 19:5 states, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people.” Then the Ten Commandments follow in Exodus 20. Hebrews 8:7-8 says, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah’ [Jeremiah 31:31]”.

The second covenant was a testament, for which Christ’s death put the stipulations of the new testament into effect! Christ is our Mediator and Substitute! The Son of God willingly accepted the obligation to keep the first covenant of the Law and to bear the punishment which that Law demanded.

His keeping of the Law gives us righteousness. Romans 5:19, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.” The shedding of His blood in death is counted as the fulfillment of our punishment. Galatians 3:13, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us...” In the Lord’s Supper He gives us that salvation, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood” (1 Corinthians 11:25).

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

The same virtues that were required of pastors and their wives in yesterday’s reading are here required of all Christians. St. Paul connects these virtues directly to sound doctrine. Doctrine and practice cannot be separated. We are obligated to behave in a way which fits what we believe. True faith should produce reverence, temperance, love, patience, chastity, obedience, integrity, and all other virtues.

Modern churches have largely abandoned sound doctrine, so it should not surprise us that our society lacks these kinds of virtues. Older men are not temperate, older women are not reverent, young women are not chaste homemakers, young men are not sober-minded, and employees are not obedient. When sound doctrine is not guarded and preserved, the house cannot be expected to remain swept and tidy. Vice, disorder, and a multitude of evil spirits will inevitably take over.

The world tries to use our lives as a foothold to attack the truth of God’s Word. By producing virtues in us, the Holy Spirit is protecting the Word of God from blasphemy. When our enemies have nothing evil to say about us, then it becomes clearer to all that our doctrine is true and good.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of Thy majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord

Laetare Sunday

The Fourth Petition.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Here we are mindful of the poor breadbasket, namely, of our body and the necessities of the temporal life. It is a brief and simple word, but it is also very broad and comprehensive. For if you speak of, and pray for, daily bread, you pray for everything that is necessary in order to have and enjoy the same, and also against everything which interferes with it. Therefore you must enlarge your thoughts and extend them afar, not only to the oven or the flour-barrel, but to the distant field and the entire land, which bears and brings to us daily bread and every sort of sustenance. For if God did not cause it to grow, and bless and preserve it in the field, we could never take bread from the oven or have any to set upon the table.

To speak briefly, this petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in the world. For on that account alone do we need daily bread. But to our life it is not only necessary that our body have food and covering and other necessities, but also that we live in peace and quiet with those among whom we live and have our intercourse in daily business and conversation and in every manner possible; in short, whatever pertains to the interests of family, of neighbors and of government. For where these things do not prosper as they ought, the necessities of life also must fail, and life cannot be maintained. There is, besides, the greatest need to pray for temporal authority and government, as that by which, most of all, God preserves to us our daily bread and all the comforts of this life. For though we had received of God all good things in abundance, we should not be able to retain any of them, or use them in security and happiness, if He did not give us a permanent and peaceful government. For where there are dissension, strife and war, there the daily bread is already taken away, or at least diminished.

—The Large Catechism, §71–74

THURSDAY, MARCH 21: EXODUS 32:30–34

JUDICA

While Moses was up on Mount Sinai meeting with God and receiving the Ten Commandments, down below the Israelites had made an idol in the shape of a golden calf and worshiped it. As Moses came down from the mountain, God proposed, “Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation” (Exodus 32:10).

As a true and faithful leader for God’s people, Moses shows his love and devotion to his task and does not accept God’s proposal. In response, Moses had held up God’s promise saying, “Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Your own self...” (Ex. 32:13). On the next day, Moses approached the Lord and sought to “make atonement” for their sins. He even offers to be their substitute, saying, “Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”

The Prophet Moses could not make atonement as their mediator. “For there is one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim. 2:5), who is the only Savior, the only high priest, advocate, and intercessor before God (Rom. 8:34)” (Augsburg Confession XXI, 2). Without faith in Christ, each must die for his own sin, as God said in verse 33. But with faith in Christ, “... we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

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

Something 'immutable' is neither capable, nor susceptible, to change. When Almighty God called Abraham to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house, He made him an immutable promise. That promise included the sending of a Savior, so that through Abraham's Seed "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." God continued to reiterate that promise and give more details about its fulfillment to Abraham throughout his life.

According to Deuteronomy 19:15, two witnesses are legally necessary to establish a matter. In order that Abraham and the heirs of the promise might have unswerving hope in God's promise, God swore by Himself. Normally a man calls God as his witness. Knowing that there is not another person who can testify for God, our Lord gave His oath swearing by Himself, since God cannot lie.

What promise is so important that God swears by Himself? It is the promise of the Gospel. "...the patriarchs knew the promise of the Christ, that for His sake God intended to forgive sins. As they understood that the Christ would be the price for our sins, they knew that our works could not pay so high a price. Therefore, they received free mercy and the forgiveness of sins by faith, just as the saints in the New Testament" (Apology IV, 57). God's strong consolation gives a sure and steadfast hope.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The chief priests and the Pharisees wanted to stop people from believing in Jesus. Nevertheless, they could not prevent it, because Jesus performed many signs which strengthened people's faith. His miracles proved that He is true God and that He has power to deliver men from the affliction of sin. Just a few verses before today's reading, Jesus raised Lazarus of Bethany from the dead (John 11:43-44), proving that He has power to raise all men from physical and spiritual death.

Today's reading is an example of divine irony. Instead of impeding Jesus' ministry, the chief priests and Pharisees unintentionally promoted it. They wanted to stop His signs, but their high priest, Caiaphas, articulated one of the greatest signs given to us in the Scriptures: the death of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world.

This sign together with Lazarus' resurrection are two signs which summarize the entire saving work of the Christ. Jesus is our Savior who died for our sin so that we may not perish, and who raises us unto everlasting life. With these two signs He strengthens our faith. We see the cross and remember that He paid for all our transgressions; and we reflect on our baptism, trusting in His promises of the resurrection and new life. Contrary to the desires of wicked men, we are strengthened in believing in Jesus, and made able to ignore all threats that come from the enemies of the Gospel.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

God's providence for the children of Israel was miraculous. In their time of need, He rained down manna from heaven for them to eat in the morning, and quail for them to eat in the evening. The people lacked nothing because God Himself sent them daily bread.

God's providence for us is also miraculous. Although our daily bread does not fall down from the sky, it does come to us from heaven. It is sent from the hand of the Almighty God who provides for every support and need of our bodies. Whether our bread comes from our garden, from the grocery store, or from charity, it is a heavenly gift from God.

God provides for us a quota of daily bread, but He also provides a sort of 'time quota' for hearing His Word. The children of Israel were commanded to gather the manna for six days, but on the seventh day to rest. The seventh day was reserved for worship. Similarly, God provides for our daily bread in such a way that there is plenty of time for God's Word. Earning a living and attending church are not opposed to one another. God provides a quota for both of these. If we reserve time to hear and study God's Word, there will be sufficient time left for daily bread, as well. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33).

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The called and ordained minister is a sort of waiter for God. His job is to deliver God's Bread of Life to the congregation. At a restaurant, between the kitchen and the table, you don't want your waiter to add something or take something away from your plate. His job is to deliver the food just as the cook prepared it. Similarly, the minister is neither to add or take away from the Word of God.

St. Paul makes it clear that all consolation and comfort comes from the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Our God comforted St. Paul and Timothy during a particularly difficult time, in which they "despaired even of life." Having crumbled under the weight of that "sentence of death," they learned to trust not in themselves, but in God who delivered them. Having received and trusted in that great comfort from God, they now give to us the same comfort from God which they received. St. Paul understood that God's purpose for that trial was so that they could comfort the Corinthians—neither adding to, nor taking away.

More than that, God "will still deliver us." As Luther understood, God still delivers us "when He graciously takes us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven." We have the hope of deliverance and salvation. We are delivered from daily affliction when we will be given a final great deliverance at death.

Collect: O Lord, by the working of the Holy Spirit Thou didst inspire in St. Joseph a quiet obedience to the Word; guide and direct us to emulate such virtue in our life and conversation as shall glorify Thee in faithfulness day and night, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

John Calvin thought that the central doctrine of the Christian faith was the glory of God. He thought that even truths as central to the Reformation as the authority of Scripture and justification by faith alone were rooted in the primacy of the glory of God. In contrast, the Lutheran Reformation taught that justification by grace through faith is the main doctrine of Christianity. "... when it [justification by grace through faith] is properly understood, it illumines and magnifies the honor of Christ and brings to pious consciences the abundant consolation that they need" (Apology IV, 2).

God is glorified when He is known and professed for who He is and what He has done for us. The Son of God reveals to us who God is. Jesus' coming in human flesh reveals the love of God to save sinners. Jesus said to Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). When the hour had come for Jesus to suffer and die, He said, "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You" (John 17:1). Here in John 13, Jesus is at the point of laying down His life for us. God is glorified in Jesus' love for us.

We glorify God when we confess our sins in accordance with the teaching of His Word of Law. We glorify God when we believe in His Son's atonement for forgiveness, and thus are justified by grace through faith.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

There are many people who want to know God. They want God to speak to them, but they do not seek Him in the right way. They think that we are able to send our thoughts and desires up to heaven, and then God will speak to us directly through our psyche.

Jesus teaches that we cannot ascend up into heaven to speak with God. Instead, He has descended down to earth to speak with us: "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven" (John 3:13). God comes down and communicates with us here on earth. Yet even here, He draws us to Himself through means: the Means of Grace. Our Lutheran Confessions remind us: "The Father, however, will draw no one without means; but he has instituted his Word and Sacraments as the ordinary means and instruments, for this purpose" (Solid Declaration XI.76).

God speaks to you through the preaching of your pastor and through the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through these Means, God brings heavenly gifts to you here on earth. When we receive these gifts in faith, we have everlasting life.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Jesus makes a distinction between temporal life and eternal life—between temporal death and eternal death. Temporal life is not true life. Men may live and breathe on this earth, but apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ, they have no real life in them. Men in this state are actually ‘dead,’ because without Christ men are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1).

Likewise, temporal death is not true death. At the end of our days, we will follow the course of all men and return to dust. But this death will not be our final end. When we die believing in Jesus, we will not go to eternal death in hell. We will pass into life eternal. “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24).

Since eternal life is true life, let us partake of Him who gives us this life. The life-giving flesh and blood of Jesus Christ are given to us by the Word and Sacrament ministry of His holy Church. In the Lord’s Supper we partake of the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ for our true life.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

There man - y a hap - py day is spent,
Then He the storms of life will calm,
De - spair not in thy sore dis - tress,
Re - lieve their wants, their bur - dens ease,

There Je - sus glad - ly will con - sent
Will bring for ev - 'ry wound a balm,
Lo, Christ is there the bread to bless
Let them to - geth - er dwell in peace

To tar - ry with His bless - ing.
And change to joy thy sor - row.
The frag - ments mul - ti - ply - ing.
And love to one an - oth - er! A - men.

Festival of St. Joseph

83. In House and Home Where Man and Wife

Magnus Brostrup Landstad, 1861

Kommt her zu mir
German, c. 1400



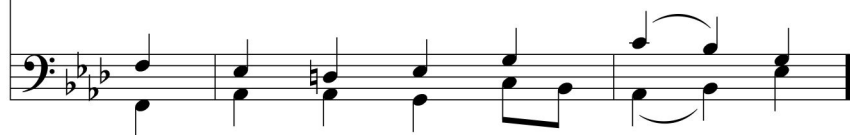
1. In house and home where man and wife
2. If thou hast giv - en Him thine heart,
3. And if thy home be dark and drear,
4. O Lord, we come be - fore Thy face;



To - geth - er lead a god - ly life,
The place of hon - or set a - part
The cruse be emp - ty, hun - ger near,
In ev - 'ry home be - stow Thy grace



By deeds their faith con - fess - ing,
For Him each night and mor - row;
All hope with - in thee dy - ing;
On chil - dren, fa - ther, moth - er;



FRIDAY, MARCH 15: JOHN 6:60-65

LAETARE

Some teachings in the Scriptures are difficult for us to understand. The Scriptures themselves are clear, but our own intellect is clouded by personal opinion. The best remedy for this is good preaching and frequent study in God's Word. Thus St. Paul writes: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

We should also recognize that some things taught in the Scriptures are loftier than our human reason can understand. For example, human reason cannot comprehend how simple water in Holy Baptism saves us, or how Jesus' Body and Blood are truly present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Concerning these 'hard sayings' we should subordinate our human reason to the clear Word of God. Since the Scriptures clearly say, "This is My Body... This is My Blood" (Matt. 26:26-28) and Baptism "now saves us" (1 Pet. 3:21), we should not try to twist the meaning to something which our human reason can comprehend. Rather, we should firmly believe the words of Christ and trust that with God all things are possible. Jesus' words are spirit and they are life. They are profitable for us, not on account of our own understanding, but on account of the salvation offered in them.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Most of us know one or more people who have walked away from the Church. It is troubling when it occurs, because these people once knew and confessed the truth. They loved God's Word, but then something happened which offended them and led them away from Christ's flock.

During such times, human nature often searches for someone or something to blame. We may blame ourselves for neglecting them or for losing our temper in their presence. We may blame our fellow Christians (even our pastor) for their gruffness and lack of tact. We may even blame the Word of God which became a stumbling block to them.

The reading for today reminds us where the true fault for abandoning the faith lies. While we can always do better at loving our fellow Christians, the blame for apostasy falls upon the apostate. Even Jesus, who had no sin and taught the Word of God perfectly, had to deal with disciples who walked away from His teaching.

In sad circumstances like these we should do two things. First, we should pray for our fallen brethren, asking the Holy Spirit to turn their hearts unto repentance. Second, we should continue to treasure the Word of God, because it is our life. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord Judica Sunday

Chapter VI. Of the Third Use of the Law.

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

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

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

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

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

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

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome, Art. VI