

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5: PRO. 14:21-31 18<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

These proverbs well summarize this week's readings, speaking to a life that is led (or not) by the understanding that we have life only as we remain attached to Christ, the Vine, and that being so attached manifests itself in the exercise of very specific wisdom.

The "fear of the Lord," again, is not a terror that runs away from Him, but the desire never to be separated from Him and His favor, so that when we sin, we run to Him to confess our transgression. In the "strong confidence" of His absolution for Jesus' sake, we run to our Father, rather than cutting ourselves off from Him. Such fear is, indeed, "a fountain of life" and "a place of refuge" for us. Thus, Christians (according to the New Man, not the flesh) love the Law of the Lord, even when we fail in what He instructs us, because it shows us our continuing need.

We are warned by this reading, then, to be like Him who saved us, not despising the poor or allowing our flesh to devise wickedness so that we are unprofitable (cf. Matthew 25:14-30, Ephesians 6:5-9). Instead, we remember that we and our neighbors have the same Maker, the same Redeemer, and we confess our trust in Him most highly by confessing the intent of His mercy as being for them as much as for us, perhaps thus adding them to the King's honor (v. 28).

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

# THE LUTHERAN HERALD



SEPTEMBER 2—OCTOBER 5, 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)

September 1	Trinity 14	ASBH 52
September 8	Trinity 15	ASBH 53
September 15	Trinity 16	ASBH 54
September 18 (W)	Wednesday in Ember Week	
September 20 (F)	Friday in Ember Week	
September 21 (S)	Saturday in Ember Week/St. Matthew	
September 22	Trinity 17	ASBH 55
September 29	Trinity 18/St. Michael and All Angels	ASBH 56

### *Episcopal Visitations in September*

Bishop Heiser will be conducting many of his annual visitations this month, including:

September 12–13	Pr. Scheck, Christ Lutheran (Richmond, MO)
September 18	Pr. Mueller, Redeemer Lutheran (Cambridge, MN)
September 19	Dcn. Henson, Apologia Lutheran (Deer Park, WI)
September 20	Pr. Ahonen, Pure Blessing Lutheran (Brandon, WI) —Includes installation of Pr. Ahonen at Pure Blessing Lutheran
September 21–22	Pr. Henson, Cross of Christ Lutheran (Peoria, IL) Pr. Rutowicz, St. Boniface (Niles, MI)
September 25	Pr. Henson, Dcn. Harroun, Trinity Lutheran (Herrin, IL)
September 27	Pr. Stefanski, Holy Trinity Lutheran (Harrison, AR) Pr. Jackson, Lamb of God Lutheran (Rogers, AR)

### *St. Ignatius Lutheran Theological Seminary resumes classes*

Classes for the Fall 2024 Quarter begin on Monday, September 9. The classes offered this quarter are:

- E000—Greek (3 hrs.)
- S000—Prolegomena (2 hrs.)
- H000—O.T. Survey (1 hr.)
- H001—Classical Antiquity (1 hr.)
- P000—Liturgics 1 (3 hrs.)

St. Ignatius begins the new triennium of classes with two students, Duncan Geldenhuys (Australia) and Jonathan Teo Zin Han (Singapore).

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4: JAMES 3:13–18

18<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

As Michaelmas might lead us to wonder at God's wisdom in surrounding us with a host of beings to serve and protect us whom we cannot see, our natural concern for ourselves tends toward "wisdom" that is demonic. We have legitimate bodily needs, so the devil triggers our fallen flesh that has trouble trusting God to provide. The devil attempts to lead the New Man away from faith through our earthly concerns. "Envy and self-seeking" are accompanied by "confusion," as much as by "every evil thing." Wisdom that seeks self-interest by its own works finds, instead, that the best interests of the self are not actually served. While the earthly things that are gained might boast and lie against the truth successfully for a while, they ultimately leave us with nothing but the knowledge of their loss and of how much more we could have had—and held forever—in the Lord.

True wisdom seeks what is pure, because such is peaceable: it neither puts us at odds with God, nor is clamored for by the world so that we should be robbed of it. Such wisdom is like the mind of Christ shown to us in Philippians 2:5–11, setting aside any concern with rights and privileges, ready to yield service to any who are in need. Being not hypocritical play-acting, but the fleshing out of the true realization that only by God's mercy we live, God thereby brings righteous fruit to maturity.

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

Truly, as St. John says, there is no greater joy for a parent—including those our Confessions properly call ‘spiritual fathers’—than to hear that even when they are not personally overseeing them, their children walk in the truth!

In the Large Catechism, under the Fourth Commandment, Luther writes of the latter that “those who wish to be called Christians, are under obligation in the sight of God to hold as worthy of double honor, such as attend to the welfare of their souls, so as to manifest kindness and favors towards them, and to provide for them; for this purpose God will grant sufficient means. But here everyone resists and opposes, filled with fear that his body might perish” (Henkel translation). St. John is writing to Gaius, though, who gave such honor and support, matching perfectly the spirit of those who had brought God’s Word to the congregation, as they kept themselves from receiving the support of the ungodly and allowing any to think their message might be compromised.

This is a picture of Christ’s Church functioning properly—in spite of the fact that John will have to write in the next verses about those who would subvert it! It is a congregation in which pastor and people live for one another’s blessing and aren’t afraid that blessing one another will leave anyone lacking. As John prays for continued blessings there, we recall the beauty of the doctrinal unity our Lord prayed for in John 17 (cf. Psalm 133).

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

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

### I. Of Sin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Do you want to be made well?” That sounds like a silly question. Who wouldn’t want to be made well, especially if he had been unwell for 38 years! But our Lord is wise, and He was asking the man to think and be honest. It is the same idea when He asks us to repent of our sins. God knows our hearts and minds. He doesn’t ask questions because He is trying to get unknown information from us. He is asking us to tell the truth, and to think about the question *and* the answer.

God confronts us with the question, “Do you repent of your sins?” Our selfish hearts would think that is a silly question as it answers, “I don’t want to be condemned, but the Law keeps getting in the way and telling me I’m guilty.” The sick man didn’t quite understand our Lord’s question, and our corrupted hearts definitely do not understand His question. But by His grace He helps us anyway. As He healed the man according to His own divine grace and power, He also gives us His Spirit and creates in us a new heart. That new heart understands the question and faithfully says, “I, a poor miserable sinner, do confess all my sins and iniquities.” But it doesn’t stop there. Like He told the man to “Take up your bed and walk,” He tells us to walk in His commandments, lest a worse thing come upon us.

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

By “choose life,” in verse 19, Moses doesn’t bid unbelievers to “choose Christ” and “give their hearts to Jesus.” He pleads with God’s people to continue as His. Moses recounts (Deuteronomy 29–30) the mighty deeds of deliverance the Lord has worked for His people and asks whether they wish to remain spiritually alive and under His blessing, or will foolishly choose death by actions disowning Him. He even words it in terms of setting good and evil before them, so they think back to the serpent’s temptation to Adam and Eve: will they once again succumb, or will their lives be a rejoicing in their God’s gracious treaty with them?

As when he descended from Mt. Sinai, and again as Joshua will do later (Joshua 24:1–28), Moses makes it clear that the Lord is not simply ‘a god’, nor even simply ‘God’, but “your God”—the only true God, to be sure, but more, the true God who has made you His own by His deliverance! Will you love Him for what He has done for you and shown to you, so that you continue to receive His blessings, just as He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or would you rather perish? Jesus makes it clear in John 3:16–18 that God’s provision in Him is that no one is forced to perish, but can be grafted into His eternally-living people simply through His gift of faith in God the Son.

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

The Lord requires His people “to walk in all His ways,” but salvation remains “by grace alone”! Along with this requirement (literally, just ‘asking’, but by a superior), coming only after deliverance from Egypt and renewal of the promise to Abraham, the proper view actually requires more than reduction to works-righteousness provides. We are helped to this understanding by the word “and”. (It begins verse 13 being italicized in the New King James Version, indicating that it doesn’t appear in the Hebrew manuscript, just as it doesn’t before “to walk in all His ways.”) This indicates that the rest of verse 12, and again all of verse 13, entails the fleshing out of the phrase “to fear the Lord your God.” (The latter “and” that appears in the Septuagint doesn’t contradict this.)

To fear Him rightly is not to run away from Him (‘servile fear’), but to walk in all His ways because you love Him (‘filial fear,’ the way good children look up to loving parents), and therefore seek to serve Him completely. In other words (v. 13), you keep and treasure and do the commandments and statutes delivered to His people, recognizing that they are “for your good.” In short, it is to live as though you believe that what He commands—or even allows you to suffer—is in your best interest every bit as much as whatever He does to help and deliver you. It’s how one saved by grace alone lives.

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

God supplies everything we need. He even provides for the needs of the evil and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). “Sparse” and “abundant” are relative ideas. What is “barely enough” for one person can be “super abundant” for another. The Lord’s wisdom calls on us to be honest and thoughtful about such things. What are our priorities? Do we really understand the needs of our neighbors (and enemies)? Do we actually care about the needs of the Church and her servants?

Our Lord gives us commands, examples, and ideas throughout His Word, and these are meant to teach us. Such things guide us as a parent guides his child. We hope our children mature to better understanding and greater works; our Father certainly desires the same for us as His children! If we hoard our resources for ourselves, then our heart is often turned in on itself. If we only worry about things for the body and this earthly life, then that means we have failed to understand better things about the treasures of heaven and the kingdom of our Lord. Just as our Lord uses all His gifts—physical and spiritual—to teach us about His eternal kingdom and life in Christ Jesus, we should use our resources to teach others. We need to teach and help our households, but we also need to help our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, and our enemies. And we are called to do so with our words *and* our acts.

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

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4: I TIM. 1:12–17 14<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

Through faith, St. Paul is aware and honest of his past sins and the grace of God. He does not explain away his mistakes. He accepts the fact that he committed horrible sins that affected others. He also understood that God's grace toward him was not just about him, but it would also affect others! As Paul had blasphemed and persecuted the faithful, he would in turn be made to humbly serve as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Christ. The Lord brought good blessings in spite of his former sins.

Our Lord does not save us from our sin and guilt just so we can go and do whatever we want. By His grace, through faith worked in us by His Holy Spirit, we are forgiven; but by faith we are also made to be His servants! Everlasting life is a life of praise and service to our God, and it begins in this life. All that we have, all that we are, can be used to proclaim His truth. Just as our Lord healed the sick and infirm, as He forgives our horrible sins, and as He uses even our frailty, such things are to help us grow and teach others to trust in the One who has saved us!

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

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30: JOHN 15:1–17 18<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

The Lord's uniqueness—in not only being eternal, omniscient, and omnipotent (Isaiah 46:9–10), but the Pardoner and Subduer of the sins of those trusting in Him (Micah 7:18–19)—requires very specific language. Since fallen human thinking is so unlike His (Isaiah 55:8), time has so impoverished our languages that it has become more difficult to convey how He is and what He says.

Fallen reasoning assumes, when reading John 15:14, “If I obey Jesus, I will be His friend; my works will save me.” When St. Paul labors so intensely to make sure we don't reason this way, it's because he understands what Jesus' perfect use of language—and the whole context He sets up with His Vine and branches illustration, as well as what He says next!—really conveys: if we have been made His friends through faith in His atoning work, we will do whatever He has set in order for us to do (cf. Ephesians 2:10). St. John's Greek shows Jesus using a 'present general' condition, which expresses a principle, not a challenge or task: “My friends do whatever I bid them to do.”

We are not equals in this relationship. Jesus sets in order how we are to live, but we are also not those commanded by a slave driver, whose plans and purposes are hidden from us. Rather, we are given the exalted title of 'friends' by Jesus—indeed, of children and heirs of the Father, those doing His will!

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Negative.**

*Contrary Doctrine which is Rejected.*

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

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome

The Gospel of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ is not just about saying nice things and having 'good feels'. It is the power of God. It is the reality of His grace, fulfilled in human events. People are quick to send "thoughts and prayers" on social media, but if there is some action that needs to be done, many of those same people will say, "Leave me alone; I'm taking care of me and mine..."

False teachers make it sound like our Savior only went around preaching, "I love you guys; don't feel guilty and go play nice, you awesome kids." But if we actually read the Scriptures, we see that the Lord teaches us to "Repent..." and "Seek the kingdom of God." Through everything He did, He showed us what the fruit of that teaching looks like. He was humble. He understood His vocation and He served according to it. He sacrificed and suffered for the sake of what was true and right.

St. Paul's apostolic work among the Thessalonian believers did likewise. By the power of God's Holy Spirit, he and his fellow ministers not only taught the truth, they also worked according to it. The saints of the Church there also learned and did these things that bore fruit. And it gave witness to God's Word and work, glorifying Him in the Gospel of Christ Jesus crucified!

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

As St. Paul was afflicted and persecuted, others were preaching Christ in selfishness and pretense. This is horrible. But it is very much like what the priests and other false teachers did to our Lord Jesus Christ. As our Savior was mocked, rejected, and greatly afflicted, they stirred up the people in the pretense of serving God and His temple. The story of our Lord's true, faithful Church is not all fluffy sentiments and navel-gazing self improvement. It is about understanding the truth by the power of His Word and Spirit, and about doing the work—which sometimes feels hard and horrible—that He calls us to do so others can see and hear the truth as well.

Furthermore, St. Paul says he rejoices in the midst of these circumstances! We understand from the broader context of God's Word, no one should rejoice that evil men are causing affliction or being pretentious. We do not rejoice in evil (see 1 Cor. 13:6). However, we do rejoice in tribulations, because our gracious Lord works great blessings through them! "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope." (Rom. 5:1-4)

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

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

### Chapter V. Of the Law and the Gospel.

#### Statement of the Controversy.

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

#### Affirmative.

##### *Pure Doctrine of God's Word.*

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

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

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

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

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

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



**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28: ISAIAH 1:10-17 17<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

The appointed pericope for today is one of judgment brought on the people by their hardness of heart and unfaithfulness in worship. New Moon Festivals were celebrated on the first day of each month. Special sacrifices and feasts were part of the observance, along with the regular daily sacrifices, various holy rites, tithes, etc. Appointed feasts included the annual high holy feasts, such as Passover, Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and Feast of Booths. These are instituted holy things of God that the sinful hypocrisy of the people turned into abominations in their Lord's eyes.

We are foolish to think we cannot slip into the same sad situation with a disregard for the preciousness of our holy rites, activities, and the Christian duties we are called to partake and rejoice in. The sincerity of the worshiper, not the number of his religious activities, is most important. We must not forget this reality. This section of Isaiah is followed by a gracious offer to forgive if the sinner will only acknowledge the dire need for unmerited mercy, and face their stark inability to ever do enough to justify themselves or atone for their sin. This text serves as a holy reminder for us. We are to meditate on our sinfulness and great need for a gracious Redeemer who delivers us from ourselves, as well as our need to fall before Him, with a broken spirit and humble heart in true and faithful worship of heart and soul accompanying our actions.

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

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7: MARK 1:40-45 14<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

Our Lord Jesus gave the cleansed leper clear instructions. He gave Him commands that were fair and reasonable. But this man, in spite of God's grace toward him, chose to do what seemed right in his own eyes, spoke when and how he shouldn't have, and failed to do as the Lord told him.

God still accomplished His will and blessings for people in the situation, but it demonstrates again the difference between the good that could be worked through us versus the good that is worked in spite of our sinful frailty and failure. This week's Collect prays that God would mercifully help us to be conformed to His will and make us able to do profitable good works. We should not be indifferent about our failure to obey His teachings, and we most certainly should not justify our disobedience, thinking that things will work out anyway. Such carelessness is toxic and faith-destroying. Instead, we should heartily repent of our weakness, continuing to pray and seek His help. We who are baptized into Christ Jesus are sanctified and cleansed by His sacrifice on the cross, and He causes this to bear fruit as we faithfully love Him and keep His commandments by the power of His Holy Spirit.

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

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

### ARTICLE I.

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

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

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

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

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27: JER. 13:15–25      17<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

This is a brutal pericope, filled with righteous judgment meted out on a rebellious flock and shepherds. Judah's willful rebellion, fed and led forward by her rulers, has made exile from the Promised Land inevitable. We know our Lord as long suffering and abundantly merciful, but it is not wise for His people to forget that God does at times speak of judgment that is so righteous and sinners so deserving of it that He will not relent. We never want to hear this type of proclamation from our Lord. Wrath comes due to our foolish testing of His patience, ignoring and resisting His divine inspired Word as Judah and her leaders do in today's appointed meditation text.

Verses twenty two and twenty three echo the prophet proclaiming the sad reality that one who lingers in sin will suffer because of it. Verses twenty four and twenty five change to the voice of God proclaiming His judgment upon the unrepentant. These two verses present a destiny that will come to pass and the sufferer has no choice but to reap the whirlwind they have spun up with their callous disregard and disrespect of God and His will.

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

This pericope points to the grace of God demonstrated through the favorable disposition of the Persian kings toward Israel near the end of its Babylonian captivity. This favor ran through multiple generations of Persian kings for approximately 100 years and led to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. Ezra's words clearly show that he felt both an inner shame before God and an outward humiliation before people for his own sins and the sins of his people who were conscious of their corporate solidarity with their sinful ancestors. Verse seven makes it clear that every individual and all aspects of Israelite society were guilty of a lack of faith and zeal for the God of Creation and the Exodus. It is also made clear that this sad situation has existed for some time and is responsible for the present slavery in Babylon.

In spite of this undeniable guilt, the Lord in verse eight is presented as delivering a tiny group (a remnant who will be faithful) from this grim reality, purely by grace and His merciful love for His chosen. Verse nine makes it clear that the favorable nature of the kings of Persia toward these enslaved Israelites is because of God's action, stimulated by His deep love for those He has graciously chosen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

—The Large Catechism

The Lord God had chosen Israel to be His people. He would do for them what they needed. He would give them food in the wilderness, protect them from the enemies which tried to destroy them in the wilderness, and He would forgive Israel their sins through the sacrifices that they brought before the Lord at the Tabernacle of Meeting while they were in the wilderness. The Lord God took care of all their needs because they were His people, and He was their God.

The same was true when they were established in the land of Canaan. The Lord God still did all those things that He did for them in the wilderness, but now they had a land flowing with milk and honey. They had cities to live in which they did not build. They had vineyards and fields which they did not plant. The Lord provided them with all these things.

We who cling to Him in faith, or as Moses says, “Who hold fast to the Lord your God,” are also His people. He has claimed us through Holy Baptism. He has made us His people so that we also receive from Him all that we need for this body and life. Especially, He provides us faith to receive the spiritual gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. With such a Lord we need not worry about food and clothing, for our Lord promises to supply our needs and daily bread.

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

The second epistle to the Church in Corinth changes the tone of the Apostle toward that congregation. St. Paul expressed retrospective thanksgiving for all that God has given him and the Corinthians in his ministry of reconciliation in the first epistle and chapters 1-7 of this letter. Then he turns to the task which will be the expression and confirmation of the reconciliation between him and this church. To accomplish this, Paul holds up the example of the Macedonian churches, who in their poverty and affliction gave beyond their means—because the grace of God moved them to faithfully give themselves to the Lord and to His Apostle.

These Macedonian Christians are an amazing example to the Corinthian believers, and to the Church in every age, of the dynamic difference that God’s grace makes in the lives and attitudes of His people. When men give themselves, their temporal wealth is sure to follow. The Apostle will not command them, though. He reminds them of what they already know—the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who became poor for the enrichment of men, and so provides them with the pattern and the power for their own giving.

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

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24: HEBREWS 4:9–13 17<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

This epistle directs us toward faith in the grace of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Redeemer. We are pointed to the Father, who rested from His own work as an example of how we are to live in the age of the Church. As God rested from His work of creation, the believer ceases his efforts to gain salvation by his own works, and rests in the completed work of Christ on the cross. The statement “make every effort” found in verse eleven is not to be mistaken as a call to earn one’s salvation by works. It is an exhortation to enter salvation and rest through faith, and thus avoid following Israel’s sad example in the desert.

Verses twelve and thirteen provide the holy reasons for giving serious attention to the exhortation of verse eleven. Verse twelve is the key to understanding this epistle: the Word of God is everything, for all that this epistle addresses, from chapter one, verse one, to its conclusion at chapter thirteen, verse twenty five, is based directly on the proclamation “God spoke” (God’s Word). Furthermore, His Word is “living and active”—no dead letter, but a living and active written word, just as the Lord is a living and active God who will judge all on the Last Day.

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

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

It is easy in our daily lives to get caught up in worries. We have work obligations. We have family obligations. There is stress from bills, relationships, and the daily grind of life. On account of this, it is easy for us to neglect the most important thing that we can do on any day and in any situation. That is, to study the Word of God and pray. By these things the Lord God strengthens our faith to trust in Him and look to Him in all our needs.

Martha is an example to us. She was consumed with the things of this life, with the daily grind. She was so concerned about serving and fulfilling her duty as a hostess that she forgot the most important thing: the Word of the Lord God. Her sister, Mary, did not. She knew who was in their home. The Messiah, the Christ, had come into their home. He was there with the very words of life. The One sent by the Lord God was there in their home. Mary chose to sit and hear the words of the Lord Jesus, while Martha was consumed with the things of this world.

Who benefited most? It was Mary, who took the opportunity to be enlightened with the Word of the Lord Jesus. In the midst of our daily lives, which pull us in several different ways, let us take the opportunity daily to hear the Lord’s Word and give Him thanks for preaching salvation in Christ alone into our ears.

Collect: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succor, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Perhaps you have heard that prayer is a conversation with the Lord God. Many people's idea of a conversation is one where they do all the talking. That is not a conversation; it is a lecture. In order to have a conversation with the Lord God, He also needs to be speaking to us. This is why study of the Lord's Word has always been associated with prayer. We hear what the Lord says through His holy Word, and we respond in prayer. Thus, a conversation between us and the Lord God.

Our Lord Jesus, in giving us the Lord's Prayer, established a pattern for this conversation with our God. This prayer is both the Lord God's Word, and our response to Him. We pray to our heavenly Father as dear children to their earthly father. We ask for both spiritual and earthly things. The Lord Jesus sums up the Lord's Prayer by telling His Apostles that at the heart of prayer is forgiveness. We come to our heavenly Father as beggars, beggars unworthy of that for which we pray, on account of our manifold sins and trespasses. But we humbly pray that He would forgive our sins so that we might also learn from His mercy toward us to show mercy toward each other, and forgive the sins of those who have sinned against us.

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

The Epistle of Jude is short, but it is so important to the Church—especially in our time as we grow ever nearer to the Day of Judgment and holy Resurrection. The entire letter warns about the risk of the faithful being drawn away from Christ and into the realm of the devil and sin. This reality is all around us in the multitude of apostate, heterodox churches. Most of us know former believers who have become apostates, abandoning the faith of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Many of those people become the adversaries against whom Jude appeals for to us to contend “for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Though much of this letter is about those who are perishing, it closes with our test appointed for this day. The fire from which we are to snatch others is the fire of God's coming holy judgment. This is to be accomplished through the confession of Christ's mercy and love, which desires and works for the goal of faithful repentance and eternal salvation. We are urged to strive to deliver the erring from their apostate path, but we are also warned to be cautious and avoid being subtly pulled or deceived into their sin.

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

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

### **The Third Commandment.**

*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

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

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

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

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

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12: 2 THE. 3:6–13 15<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

In the Gospel reading from this past Sunday, our Lord Jesus tells the disciples in the Sermon on the Mount that they should not worry about food or clothing. The heavenly Father knows that we have need of these things, and He well provides them. He knows our need even before we ask Him in prayer. Our Lord Jesus points to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. They grow and prosper without the need for worry.

St. Paul in his Second Epistle to the Church at Thessalonica takes this instruction a step further. There is a difference between not worrying and laziness. Some had apparently adopted the notion that idleness was okay. They thought one could just sit back and do nothing, and things would be provided. St. Paul uses the example of his own behavior. When he was with them he worked, and he made the rule that whoever did not work did not eat. The birds of the air are the same. The Lord provides, but they must go out and find the food themselves. Going about one’s daily responsibilities is not worry, it is fulfilling one’s vocation. Obsessing about the acquisition of things is worry, and should be avoided, for the Lord provides all that we need to support this body and life.

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

In St. Luke's version of the Beatitudes, he includes a list of "woes." In addition to the blessings the Lord God gives to all those who cling to Him in faith, Jesus also pronounces curses upon those who reject the blessings of the Lord God. Our Lord Jesus preaches the Law to warn those who would remain comfortably in their sins and unbelief. These woes point out who is most susceptible to rejecting the blessings of the Lord God: those who believe they have all they need and do not need anything from Him.

The rich take comfort in their possessions. They make mammon their god. One can serve either the Lord or mammon; he cannot serve both. Those who have plenty to eat often do not realize what it means to be hungry. They forget what need is, and therefore grow selfish. The Lord also warns those who laugh. Who would not rather laugh than cry? But our Lord here is pointing toward humility, for when we know our sins we are driven to sorrow and contrition. Fame is also a trap. When people continually bolster us in our sinfulness, we will never learn to repent.

Therefore, our Lord warns us to not let these things lead us away from the one true Lord. He warns us to not let these things lead us away from repentance and shame over our sins. For in doing so, we become puffed up with pride and reject the blessings that our Lord gives to all those who humble themselves before Him.

Collect: O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succor, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

In the Ember Days, it is right that we reflect on the mercy which the Lord has shown toward us. The writer to the Hebrews teaches the Church that all that which the Lord appointed for the Old Testament tabernacle and temple served to point to the Christ, who is the perfect High Priest and Temple, who obtained eternal redemption. For generations, the temple stood before the eyes of the people, served by the priests, as the place wherein the sacrifices were offered for the sake of the Lord's saints. But now, the everlasting High Priest has come, by whose death atonement is made for all sin. The One who was the hope of Israel is the One who is the salvation of all who are led by the Holy Spirit in the way of repentance and faith to have their hope in Christ Jesus. The eternal Son of God became Man and dwelt among us, that we, through faith in Him, would be made partakers of that eternal redemption.

As the son of the widow of Nain could contribute nothing to his salvation, so we, too, are raised from the death of sin by the work of God through the Word. The Word and Sacraments are those means whereby we are brought to, and sustained in, faith in our great High Priest, Christ Jesus our Lord.

Collect: We beseech Thee, O Lord, that our weakness may be upheld by Thy healing mercy, so that what of itself is falling into ruin may be restored by Thy clemency. Through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.



“Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them.” The people had been foolish, departing the faith to chase after idols. The Lord preserved His remnant, and called the people to repentance. On account of their transgression, the people were rebuked, but the Gospel was proclaimed to all those who would be led to repentance and faith.

There are always the foolish who depart the faith. For those who harden their hearts in their rebellion, it is as St. Peter wrote in his second epistle: “For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’” (2:21-22) Turning aside from the faith is a foolishness which is almost beyond comprehension. However, the Lord promises mercy to all those who repent: “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him.”

The idolatry of the people threatened the whole nation; and yet, still the Lord called His remnant to repentance and steadfastness in the faith, strengthening their faith in the coming Messiah. Now we live in the consolation of knowing that Christ Jesus has made atonement for all sin, so that all who believe in Him have the hope of eternal life. The troubles of the Church and the faithlessness of the multitude sadden us, but do not lead us to despair. The Lord remains our hope and our salvation.

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.

We are all conceived in sin and born as slaves. No one is free from the curse of sin. We are in bondage to sin and death. Since we are in bondage to sin and death, since we are slaves to sin, it matters not whether we are a slave or a free man. For we are already spiritual slaves to sin.

Our freedom is in the Christ. He has taken sin upon Himself, upon the tree of the holy cross, so that He might free us from the bondage of sin and death. Those who cling in faith to the Lord Jesus are free from sin and death. They are no longer slaves. We are free men! It matters not what our earthly condition is, for either we remain a slave spiritually on account of unbelief, or we are spiritually free because of faith. The Son of God sets us free.

Therefore, St. Paul can tell the Church at Corinth to remain in the same calling in which they were called. They have a greater calling than what the world sees in one's vocation. We have been called to be slaves of the Christ. He has bought us with the price of His innocent suffering and death so that we are no longer slaves to sin and death, but are free men in Christ.

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

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

### ARTICLE III.

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

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

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

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

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

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19: HEB. 12:4–11 16<sup>TH</sup> S.A. TRINITY

‘Correction’ is out of favor in our culture and the necessity to discipline behavior is frowned upon. However, the writer to the Hebrews acknowledges that though the knowledge and wisdom of earthly fathers might be lacking, “... we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. ... For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them...” In Church, State, and Home, such correction is vital to our formation, and even though those charged with the responsibility to use correction are flawed, sinful human beings, we still owe them respect because they were trying to fulfill their vocation. Scripture teaches us that if such earthly fathers are worthy of respect, how much more so our heavenly Father, who provides perfect correction? “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ... Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?”

The sinful propensity is to grumble under correction, complaining against the One who is chastening us. The chastening which we experience in this life is for good; if, like Job, we suffer not on account of transgression, but to the glory of God, such chastening is for our strengthening in the faith. We, too, need to hear those words: “You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” Far too often, we surrender to temptation, and grumble under correction. “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Maturing faith recognizes chastening for what it is: that which the Father bestows on those who are His adopted children.

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

On this Ember Day, the words of the Prophet Amos draw us to that hope which looks to the coming of the Day of the Lord. Often, our labors in this fallen world seem as if they are utterly in vain, for the word of the Lord is sown, and yet there so often seems to be no sign of growth, or a coming bountiful harvest. We see the plight of the Church is the growing darkness of these days at the end of the age, and it is easy for the faithful to become dispirited.

The prophecy of the coming Day is our consolation. Just as the Old Testament Church was fortified in the days leading up to the Babylonian captivity with the promise that the temple would be restored, so we, in these dark days, have our consolation in the promise of the coming return of the Christ. Though our eyes behold so much that has fallen into ruin, and the way in which the love of Christ has grown cold in the hearts of so many people who once were Christians, still we have our consolation and peace in the promise of the coming Day of the Lord when our King will make all things new and gather His flock to be with Him forever. "I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them," says the Lord your God." So it will be forever, when our Lord returns in glory.

Collect: We beseech Thee, O Lord, that our weakness may be upheld by Thy healing mercy, so that what of itself is falling into ruin may be restored by Thy clemency. Through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16: JAMES 1:2-12 16<sup>TH</sup> S.A. TRINITY**

St. James wrote, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." Yesterday, we heard once again the account of Jesus raising the son of the widow of Nain. It is not hard for us to imagine the terrible burden which had briefly been laid upon her, and how great her rejoicing no doubt was when Christ Jesus restored her son to her alive!

In our mourning and our rejoicing, we pray that the Lord would increase patience and wisdom within our hearts. These virtues are the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit within us, as we meditate on the consolations extended to us in the Word of God. Therefore we always pray that the Lord would strengthen our faith, whether we know worldly blessings or sorrows, wealth or poverty, for He establishes us in the faith which is given continually to good works, which are the fruit of faith.

Since we have our hope in Christ Jesus, we trust that He will raise us from the dead. Therefore, He is the source of our joy in the midst of trials, for we know that all trials have an end, as we persevere in hope, with the consolation of eternal joy with Christ Jesus, our Lord.

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

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17: HEB. 10:35-39 16<sup>TH</sup> S.A. TRINITY**

As we are saved by grace through faith in Christ, the passage from Hebrews 10 teaches us how important it is that we remain steadfast in that faith. "Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward." There are many who begin in confidence, who allow themselves to be tempted away from the way of life. As our Lord instructs His Church in the parable of the Sower, not all seed comes to maturity: much of that which initially springs up either dies away, or is choked out. Trials and temptations of life are grave dangers to every Christian.

The devil and our sinful flesh want us to be distracted from what really matters. Many people cast away their confidence by being caught up in sins against conscience which, the longer one continues in sin without repentance, the harder it is to return to the way of life. We are given the warning: "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

If you have stumbled on the way, or turned back for a time, it is time to return to that into which you were baptized. Repent of those things which have led you astray, and return to that hope which is ours in Christ Jesus.

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