

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

Rt. Rev. James Heiser

Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

Rev. Jeffrey Ahonen

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

Rev. Jerald Dulas

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

Rev. Douglas Handrich (Emeritus)

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Peoria, IL

Rev. Kent Heimbigner

Charity Lutheran Church, Burleson, TX

Rev. Benjamin Henson

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Peoria, IL

Rev. Michael Henson

Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL

Rev. Martin Jackson

Lamb of God Ev. Lutheran Church, Rogers, AR

Rev. Mark Mueller

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Cambridge, MN

Rev. John Rutowicz

St. Boniface Lutheran Church, Niles, MI

Rev. Josiah Scheck

Christ Lutheran Church, Richmond, MO

Rev. Eric Stefanski

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

Rev. Timothy Tolar

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

Rev. Brandon Warr

St. Patrick Lutheran Church, Chipley, FL

Rev. Dcn. Gary Harroun

Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL

Rev. Dcn. Jacob Henson

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

Rev. Dcn. Anthony Oncken

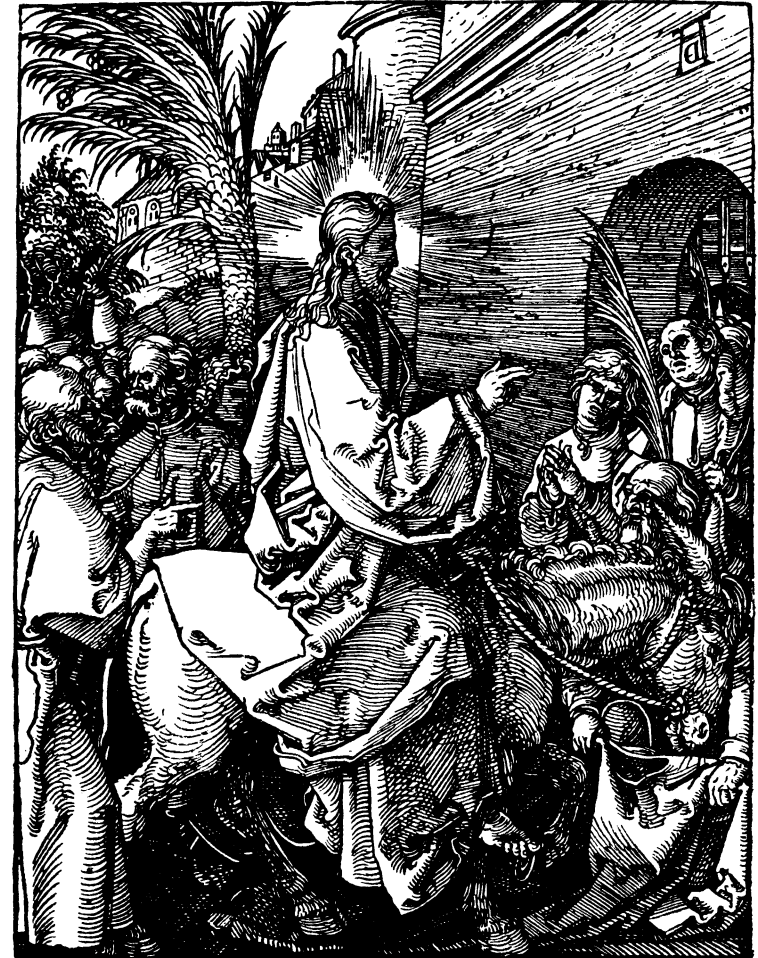
Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

Rev. Dcn. Floyd Smithey

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

Rev. Daniel Mensing

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



APRIL 6–MAY 3, 2025

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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)

April 6	Judica (Lent 5)	ASBH 24
April 13	Palmarum	ASBH 25
April 17 (T)	Maundy Thursday	ASBH 26
April 18 (F)	Good Friday	ASBH 27
April 19 (S)	Holy Saturday/ Philipp Melancthon, Confessor	ASBH 28 ASBH 85
April 20	The Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord	ASBH 29
April 25 (F)	St. Mark, Evangelist	ASBH 86
April 27	Quasimodogeniti (Easter 1)	ASBH 30
	2025 SYNOD AND COLLOQUIUM OF THE ELDONA	
May 1 (R)	St. Philip and St. James, Apostles	ASBH 85
May 2 (F)	St. Athanasius, Bishop, Confessor, Doctor	ASBH 88

St. Ignatius Lutheran Theological Seminary classes continue

Spring 2025 Quarter begins until Monday, **March 10**. Classes for the Winter Quarter are:

E000—Greek (3 hrs.)

S002—Lutheran Confessions 2 (3 hrs.)

H001—Apostolic Church and Early Church to Nicea (3 hrs.)

Classes will run from **March 10–April 11**, and then will take a three week break for Holy Week, Easter Week, and Synod & Colloquium. Classes will resume **May 5** and continue until **June 6**. (June 6 is also the 139th anniversary of Salem Lutheran Church and the 19th anniversary of the establishment of the ELDoNA.)

St. Ignatius currently has two students, Duncan Geldenhuys (Australia) and Jonathan Teo Zin Han (Singapore).

SATURDAY, MAY 3: GALATIANS 3:23-29 QUASIMODOGENITI

We do well to remember that the faith we have is a gift from God. St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Ephesians that God, “even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:5).

The Law functioned as a “tutor,” as guardian of sorts, for the people of the Old Testament, to keep them looking for the Christ who was to come, and through whom they have the forgiveness of sins. God’s gift to the people of the Old Testament was faith in Jesus. Now that Jesus has come, “we are no longer under a tutor.” However, God still uses the Law to show us our sins and our need for forgiveness through the same faith in Jesus Christ that He gave to the people of the Old Testament.

While God’s people of the Old Testament could be distinguished from Gentile people, now the making of such distinctions has ceased, for Christ has come. People with faith in Christ are just that, in Christ, and one with Him. Yet, while they are one in Christ, which cannot be seen, what can still be seen is Jew and Greek, slave and free, male, and female. We can thank God for making us unique individuals, and yet one in Christ through faith.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord’s Resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation; 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.

"I believed and therefore I spoke..." These words are befitting of St. Athanasius, who we remember on this day. At the time of St. Athanasius there was a heretic, Arius, who denied that Jesus was really God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Like Sts. Philip and James from yesterday's devotions, and the Prophets who had come before them, St. Athanasius believed Jesus was true God and of the same substance as the Father and the Holy Spirit. He believed that Jesus was God, and at the same time a real human being. Because he believed, he spoke against the false teachings of Arius. As a result of St. Athanasius' staunch support of the truth about Jesus, his enemies worked to have St. Athanasius sent into exile. This happened five times.

We have much to learn from St. Athanasius; most notably the faithfulness of God throughout St. Athanasius' life. St. Athanasius suffered much as the result of confessing the truth about Jesus. The same can be said of Christians today. We suffer at the hands of the devil, the world, and even our own sinful flesh. Yet, God remains faithful and holds fast to us, especially when we endure suffering for His name's sake. He knows that left to ourselves we most certainly would perish eternally. But we can rest assured God will not allow that to happen.

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

In keeping with our traditional schedule, the 2025 Synod and Colloquium will take place at Salem Lutheran Church (Malone, Texas) **the week of April 28–May 1.**

Synod will open with Vespers on **Monday evening**; it will conclude with the Divine Service on Thursday evening. (Please note that the Divine Service and congregational dinner will be on **Thursday** this year, not Wednesday.)

In addition to regular synod business on Tuesday, there will be a review of all ASBH hymnody on Tuesday afternoon and through much of Wednesday.

The Colloquium will begin **late Wednesday** and continue **through Thursday**. This year's papers and presenters are as follows:

Pastor Warr "Review and Evaluation of the Translation of the 1580 Dresden *Concordia* published by Smalcald Press"

Pastor Rutowicz "Exorcism, Adiaphora, and the Confessional Importance of Liturgical Rites"

Pastor Heimbigner "From Nicaea (325) to Constantinople (381)"

Pastor Stefanski "'Ο Οὔσιος τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Ὁ Οὔσιος τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου: The Essential Question of 'Being'"

Deacon Oncken "Christology for the Young: The Nicene Creed and Catechesis"

Bishop Heiser "*The Liturgy or Book of Forms* (1843) in the Antebellum America"

Colloquium presentations are scheduled to be streamed live on the diocesan Facebook page.

Guests are welcome to attend; please contact Bishop Heiser at bishopheiser@me.com.

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

THURSDAY, MAY 1: EPHESIANS 2:19-22 STS. PHILIP & JAMES

Today the Church honors Sts. Philip and James. What makes them so special? They, along with the other Apostles and Prophets, form the very foundation of the Church with "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." As with any building, there needs to be a solid foundation upon which it is built. When Christ builds His Church He starts with Himself as the perfect "cornerstone." The rest of the foundation is comprised of His Apostles—who received the Word of God directly from Christ—along with the Prophets, who "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

What can the Church learn from Sts. Philip and James? To be true to Christ, His Church must be true to His Word. There are many preachers today who claim to get a word or a vision from God. They insist that what they proclaim is true, even when it is found to be contrary to God's Word.

So how are you to know what to believe? A helpful tool to understanding the Christian faith is Luther's Small Catechism. In the Small Catechism you are taken through the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism, Confession, and the Lord's Supper, in order for you to understand the basics of the Christian faith.

Collect: O Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life: Grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that following His steps we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life; 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.

“Love one another fervently with a pure heart...” With these words Peter has given us a rather tall order. How can we, who bear the impurity of sin, love with pure hearts? The fact we recognize our sin is the beginning. “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). The answer for how to “love one another fervently with a pure heart” is shown in God’s love and forgiveness.

Through Holy Baptism we become members of Christ and He gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is at work in us every day to bring us to repentance, asking God to forgive us for Jesus’ sake. Then, the same Holy Spirit works in us the desire to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, our neighbors, and our enemies. When we fail, He leads us back to repent of our sins.

This cycle continues until we draw our last breath and wither away. While this may sound morbid, we must remember that, because we are connected to Christ, our last breath is connected to His last breath on the Cross: “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46). Because we are in Christ, we are committed to our Father and are assured of our place with Him in eternity.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord’s Resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation; 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.

Jesus is glorified in the departure of Judas to betray Him! All He has said and done is coming to the completion that glorifies His Father, even above His obedience to the Commandments. He will make that active obedience to the will of God applicable to all of us by paying our debt with His suffering and death—His passive obedience to God’s will.

As Jesus says, “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’” (Luke 17:10). His active obedience couldn’t stand in place of our disobedient lives to save us, but must be accompanied by this additional work: passively suffering all we deserved for our sin. Rather than seeking to balance our disobedience with His obedience, He suffers and dies so that His obedience doesn’t merely make things level out, but is a mountain of righteousness that can be credited to each of us through faith.

We are to pray the Third Petition of the ‘Our Father’ with a Christlike mind. That is, we pray not simply that we may do God’s will, but that the will of His enemies—including our own flesh!—may be thwarted and that He would “enable us to bear with patience and to overcome all that must be endured, so that our miserable flesh may not through weakness or sloth yield or turn back” (Large Catechism; Henkel translation).

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved ever more, 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.

Jesus ended yesterday's reading by saying His disciples would not immediately be following Him to death and to Heaven, but would show they were His disciples through love toward one another. Paul adds some 'flesh' to those words today.

St. Paul speaks of this service to Christ as a two-way street. What Paul suffers, he is willing to suffer for the benefit of those he serves in Christ. And those he writes have shown the same love to him by praying for him in his trials and giving thanks in his deliverance. In the suffering of such trials, both he and his hearers are to learn the comfort that is in Christ and, in turn, to comfort one another with that comfort. When sentenced to death, we know that we have the only true God, the One who raises the dead and will continue to do so. Those who partake of such suffering and such consolation are then able to comfort one another with the Word of God that has sustained them through their temptations and afflictions.

In faith we trust in the active and passive obedience of Christ as the merit that obtains for us before God's throne—that the Father in Heaven is our Father by grace through such faith, accounting us righteous and hearing our prayers. We have every reason to remain fixed on this comforting Word and to pray for one another, building one another up and blessing the Triune God!

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved ever more, 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.

Sometimes we forget who Jesus really is; we forget that Jesus is God in the flesh. He is truly God and also truly man. Jesus is like us in every way except for sin. It is His humanity that can be lost on us when we pray to Him. After all, we are praying to God when we pray to Jesus, and yet, we are also praying to a man; a man who understands our humanity. While Scripture is silent about much of Jesus' youth, what we do know is that He grew up. He faced all the challenges of growing up, just like the rest of us.

The comfort we can draw from this is knowing that God in Christ knows what it is to be human. He knows our struggles with sin. He knows that we will fail. He knows our failures, and He took them to the Cross.

The "Good News" is that, in spite of all your failures, He doesn't fail you. God gives you these words to comfort you, "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us."

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord's Resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation; 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.

“Hallowed be Thy name...” These words from the Lord’s Prayer are not to be taken lightly. Today’s reading from Ezekiel makes that abundantly clear. God will not have His name profaned. God’s name was profaned when Judah’s King Jehoiakim cut and burned the scroll containing His Word. As a result of such unfaithfulness, the people were exiled to Babylon.

But God did not stop loving His people. He took action to restore His name before the face of the nations. Their time in Babylon would serve to lead His people to repent of their sins. Then God restored them back to the land He had promised them. The nations would see that the mighty God of Israel is also the God who keeps His promises.

God continues to take action in the lives of His people today. We profane His name and fail Him every time we sin. Yet, He does not fail us. The Holy Spirit bears down on our consciences with the knowledge of our sins and leads us to repent. God does as He promises, “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.”

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord’s Resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation; 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.

God’s “swearing by Himself” superabundantly shows “the immutability of His counsel.” For Him not to keep His promise, He would not just have to change His mind, but to stop being Himself and become someone else—which His very name declares impossible!

The oath formula, demonstrated by God in making this promise to Abraham in Genesis 15, was that one should be so destroyed as to be split in two, so that the one you failed to keep your promise to could walk between the parts of your body. Every time you read “As I live,” says the Lord...” it is a shorthand way of referring to that Genesis 15 procedure. It is a unilateral declaration by God, saying, “If I’m unable to do this, I will cease to be.”

Understanding that, along with the meaning of God’s name, “I am that I am,” truly is our consolation. It is our “anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,” so that nothing can ever rob us of what He holds securely for us! Taking the words of Exodus 3:14 in their basic sense, the declaration of God’s very name is that He is self-existent, self-perpetuating, and absolutely not contingent or dependent upon any but Himself. It means that He who has been from eternity will continue for eternity with no modification of His powers or His will. No one can make Him change or turn Him aside!

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved ever more, 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.

In Romans 9:3, Paul speaks like Moses: “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for [the sake of] my brethren.” Even while knowing they could not substitute themselves for the people—that only the Christ could do so—both give voice to God’s own desire. They speak from knowledge of their own sinful thoughts, words, and actions; they have no claim of personal merit on which to base their salvation. Each reasons that it makes no sense for him to be able to be saved and his brethren lost, because each reasons his own heart the worst of them all (1 Timothy 1:15; Luke 18:14).

Moses and Paul voice a desire that is as close as a sinner can get to the fervency with which our Lord has desired to save us. He, being perfectly holy, would nonetheless take upon Himself this very role and burden, being made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21) and suffering the abandonment we deserve so that such an end may be taken from us.

Thus, Moses points forward to Jesus, and Paul points backward to Him. Moses hears from the voice of Yahweh the proclamation that He will only do justice, not punishing Moses for the sins of the people. Either each one will bear the punishment due, or he will confess the Messiah as the bearer of the punishment of all, the only maker of peace between God and men.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved ever more, 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.

Lesson from the Book of Concord Quasimodogeniti Sunday

Article V.

That we may obtain this faith, the Office of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who worketh faith where and when it pleaseth God in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justified those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ’s sake.

They condemn the Anabaptists and others, who think that the Holy Ghost cometh to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.

Article XXV.

Confession in our churches is not abolished; for it is not usual to give the Body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved. And the people are most carefully taught concerning the faith and assurance of absolution, about which, before this time, there was profound silence. Our people are taught that they should highly prize the absolution, as being the voice of God, and pronounced by His command. The power of the Keys is commended, and we show what great consolation it brings to anxious consciences; that God requires faith to believe such absolution as a voice sounding from Heaven, and that such faith in Christ truly obtains and receives the forgiveness of sins.

Aforetime, satisfactions were immoderately extolled; of faith and the merit of Christ, and the righteousness of faith, no mention was made; wherefore, on this point, our churches are by no means to be blamed. For this even our adversaries must needs concede to us, that the doctrine concerning repentance has been most diligently treated and laid open by our teachers.

But of Confession, they teach, that an enumeration of sins is not necessary, and that consciences be not burdened with anxiety to enumerate all sins, for it is impossible to recount all sins, as the Psalm testifies [19:13]: “Who can understand his errors?” Also Jeremiah [17:9]: “The heart is deceitful, who can know it?” But if no sins were forgiven, except those that are recounted, consciences could never find peace; for very many sins they neither see, nor can remember.

—The Augsburg Confession

The commission in Matthew builds on that which was given in John 20 when the Lord breathed upon His apostles and entrusted to them the office of the keys. St. Matthew carefully records that these words were spoken to “the eleven” so that the Church would not be confused concerning who bore the responsibility to baptize and to teach. The office of the keys—the responsibility to loose the sins of the penitent and bind the sins of the impenitent—is inextricably bound up with the responsibility to teach and baptize.

The Lord establishes the ministry and calls men to that office. It is not an office subject to being redefined according to the whim of men or the changing circumstances of the world. Rather, it is the continuation of the apostolic ministry, now bound to particular places and times, with the unchanging responsibility to preach the Word of God in its truth and purity and to administer the Sacraments according to Christ’s institution.

Collect.

Almighty God, Who, through Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; 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 is a striking change in language in this passage in many Bible translations: they can’t seem to decide whether to use the word ‘covenant’ or the word ‘testament’. In the Greek of the New Testament the same word is used throughout. It is a word that could mean any sort of formal agreement, whether a contract or a treaty, or what we see in verses 16 and 17, a last will and testament. The majority of Bible translators and commentators today—even Lutheran ones—were educated using the terminology of ‘covenants’ meaning *bilateral* agreements, and they often keep using it even when they’ve been shown a better path. However, there is a more precise way to understand what God’s Word says.

Since the true God is Lord and King, a fitting (and fittingly neutral) meaning would be ‘treaty’, with the understanding that the victorious King acts *unilaterally* and sets all the terms of our ‘surrender’. Yet, since He is a perfect and merciful Lord, He does so graciously, as one making a will and leaving us an inheritance: something we didn’t earn, but that is given purely by grace. Even when the Lord is telling us how we will live (e.g., the Decalogue in Exodus 20) and expects us to respond by conforming in word and deed, it is because He has first brought us under His lordship and protection (Exodus 20:2), forgiving our sins through the shed blood of the Christ.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved ever more, 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.

Bible translators using the word ‘terror’ in verse 11 (instead of the word ‘fear’) seem to be looking backward to “the judgment seat” in verse 10, as if without “the love of Christ” in verse 14. Thus, they depict this as servile fear, rather than filial—slavish terror making one run away from a Master’s harsh punishment, rather than the fear of alienating a loving Father that would lead a beloved child to run to Him, confess transgression, and ask for mercy.

Yet, verse 14 assures us that the latter case is intended in this “fear of the Lord.” As a Christian and servant of the Word that brings us the peace and reconciliation that God establishes with us in Christ, Paul confesses love for Christ that is fed by Christ’s love for him, and he bids us do likewise. Christ so loved us as to die for all, and we who are brought to faith in Him are to see ourselves as having also died. In faith we no longer live our own selfish lives, but the life He has given us to “live under Him in His kingdom and to serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness” (Small Catechism, Apostles’ Creed, 2nd Article). This love shown in the extremes Jesus went to for our salvation now constrains us, bringing us to do what may seem similarly crazy to others, because we know that having that love is absolutely necessary for all.

Collect: We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people, that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved ever more, 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 Lord sends for His servants to proclaim His Word: “... He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers”. But a common, threefold work is given to all those whom the Lord so calls: (1) For the perfecting of the saints, (2) for the work of the ministry, (3) for the edifying of the body of Christ. The Lord’s servants carry out all of their God-given labors for the edification of the Lord’s saints, in order that Christ’s Church would be sustained, nourished, and strengthened as the Lord so wills.

To each of the Lord’s servants a particular role is given. To-day, we remember one whom the Lord called to be an Evangelist. Such scant details as are recorded concerning the life of St. Mark offer little for the biographer’s consideration—which is the point. Mark, like all servants of the Word, was a man under authority, fulfilling the calling which the Lord extended to him.

The days of the apostles, prophets and evangelists are fulfilled, but the Scriptures which the Lord utilized them to give to His Church will form the content of all the preaching and teaching of the called and ordained servants of the Lord until the Christ returns in glory.

Collect.

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

The angel of the Lord had no word for the soldiers who guarded the tomb, and their reaction at the sight of the angel—“the keepers did shake, and became as dead men”—is what happens when an angel *does not* begin with the words, “Fear not.”

For the soldiers, the appearance of the angel of the Lord was pure Law: his arrival was an anticipation of the judgment. The flesh has no answer to the Lord’s judgment. They became as dead men, for they were not at peace with God.

For the women, there is a two-fold word of peace. First, the women are delivered from any dread at the appearance of an angel: “Fear not ye...” Second, the angel proclaims the Christ’s victory: “... for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” As an angel once announced the birth of the Christ, now the angel of the Lord announces His resurrection. There is consolation for the women, and for all the Church, beginning with this angelic proclamation.

Collect.

Almighty God, Who, through Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; 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 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

Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard and anointed the feet of our Lord Jesus. This brought indignation from some of the disciples of our Lord, specifically Judas Iscariot. The Evangelist tells us that Judas was not indignant because he cared about the poor, as he claimed, but because he was a thief and stole from the moneybox which had been entrusted to him.

In the heart of Judas greed had replaced faith in the Christ. Judas exchanged worldly mammon for the gifts of heaven. Our Lord rebukes him for this. The preaching of the Law produces two responses: either it leads to repentance, or it leads to rejection of the one preaching the Law. Judas, filled with greed and not faith, responded in the second way. He went to the chief priests and agreed to betray our Lord for thirty pieces of silver. This would lead to his eternal destruction.

The response of Judas Iscariot is contrasted with the response of the crowds and the Greeks who wished to see our Lord Jesus. Judas rejected our Lord, and ultimately despaired to his eternal ruin because he had not the faith that looks to the Lord for forgiveness. The crowds and the Greeks saw our Lord for who He is: the Son of David, come to redeem mankind. Now that people recognized Him as the Messiah, it was time for the Son of Man to be glorified by offering up His life as a ransom for all.

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.

On this later occasion, St. John tells us that seven of the apostles were gathered. Quite pointedly, St. Peter and his old fishing partners, James and John the sons of Zebedee, were gathered together when St. Peter declared he would go fishing, a notion to which the rest assented.

It is rare when the Lord repeats a sign, but when He does so we would do well to note the circumstances. This was the second miraculous catch of fish, and yet this time Peter does not beg the Lord to depart on account of Peter's sinfulness; rather, he cannot wait long enough for the boat to come to shore, but instead dives into the water.

If Peter had been conscious of his sin years before, how much more so now, when he had three times denied our Lord when He was betrayed? But Peter trusts that the Gospel is life and salvation for him, as well, and the man who once feared drowning when he walked upon the waves did not hesitate to dive into the deep and come to Jesus.

The consolation which is ours in Christ is greater than any dread over our sin or fear of death. The Christian comes to his Lord in the peace of sins forgiven, and a hope which no one may take away.

Collect.

Almighty God, Who, through Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; 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 Jesus stood in their midst, He repeated that which which had been said by the angels to the women, and by the Lord to the disciples on the road: "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me."

The Lord had repeatedly instructed the disciples concerning His coming death and resurrection, which would take place in accordance with that which the Word of God had promised would take place. The disciples were flesh and blood—just like us—and their sin-darkened reason had to be overcome by the Word. Even the testimony of their eyes was barely believed, until the Lord again recalled to them the same Gospel through which we are comforted and consoled.

We, too, are slow to believe and quick to doubt. But the Word of God is sure and certain, and by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit through that Word, we believe.

Collect.

Almighty God, Who, through Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

A voice from heaven identifies the Lord Jesus as the Messiah three times during His earthly ministry. At His baptism in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist, the voice from heaven declares Jesus to be His beloved, Only-begotten Son. The second time was on the mount of Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah were speaking with our Lord Jesus about His upcoming crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Again, the voice from heaven declared the Lord Jesus to be His beloved, Only-begotten Son, sent to do His will of redeeming mankind from their sins.

Today, we hear the third time. Our Lord is telling His disciples, and those gathered around, about His upcoming crucifixion and death. By His death He defeats the devil, death, and sin, once and for all. His sacrifice atones for the sins of the whole world. This death on the tree of the cross will draw all men to the Christ, the One anointed by the heavenly Father to come and redeem mankind. The voice from heaven declares that His name would be glorified in the death of the Lord Jesus.

The heavenly Father is indeed glorified by the death of Jesus because He has fulfilled His will. By His death mankind will be drawn to repent of their sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus, so that they might have life everlasting with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and glorify His holy name.

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.

On account of his public chastisement by the Lord Jesus, Judas Iscariot allows Satan to enter into his heart. Faith in the Christ has been replaced with greed and hatred for the Lord. In his rebellious state he goes to the chief priests and scribes and agrees with them to betray the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. From this time forth he sought an opportunity to betray the Lord apart from the crowds, in secret.

The Lord Jesus, fully aware that He will be betrayed and that He will be delivered up into the hands of sinful man, makes preparations of His own. He sends St. Peter and St. John to prepare a place for them to eat the Passover meal. At this Passover meal—which is eaten after twilight, so technically it is Friday—our Lord Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, where the bread and wine which the disciples ate and drank are the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus. He will offer up His Body and shed His Blood on the cross by the end of this Friday. He will win forgiveness, life, and salvation for all those who believe on Him. And they will receive these gifts when they eat and drink His Body and Blood in, with, and under the bread and wine, for the remission of their sins.

The betrayal of Judas Iscariot will lead to our Lord's triumph over death and the grave, so that all those who believe on Him will live with Him forever.

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.

The angels said to the women at the tomb, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." The women repeated the message to the apostles, which specifically recalled our Lord's words concerning that which was to come to pass. But when they did as they were instructed, repeated these words to the apostles, "... their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

When our Lord then spoke to the Emmaus road disciples, all these men related of the word given by the women was "...they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive." Therefore the Lord said to them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" The testimony of Moses and the Prophets, as well as the Lord's own words, proclaimed to them the Gospel—and the unchanging witness of God's Word shall proclaim the death and resurrection of the Christ to the end of the world.

Collect.

Almighty God, Who, through Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; 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 Easter Sunday

Chapter IX.

Of the Descent of Christ to Hell.

There has also been a controversy among some theologians, who have subscribed to the Augsburg Confession concerning the following article: When, and in what manner, the Lord Christ, according to our simple Christian faith, descended to hell, whether this was done before or after His death? Also, whether it occurred according to the soul alone, or according to the divinity alone, or in body and soul, spiritually and bodily? Also, whether this article belongs to the passion or to the glorious victory and triumph of Christ?

But since this article ... cannot be comprehended by the senses or by the reason, but must be grasped alone by faith, it is our unanimous advice that there should be no disputation concerning it, but that it should be believed and taught only in the simplest manner; according as Dr. Luther of blessed memory, in his sermon at Torgau in the year 1533, has, in a very Christian manner, explained this article, separated from it all useless, unnecessary questions, and admonished all godly Christians to Christian simplicity of faith.

For it is sufficient that we know that Christ descended to hell, destroyed hell for all believers, and delivered them from the power of death and of the devil, from eternal condemnation [and even] from the jaws of hell. But how this occurred, we should reserve until the other world, where not only this point, but also still others, will be revealed which we here simply believe and cannot comprehend with our blind reason.

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome

THURSDAY, APRIL 17: JOHN 13:1-15

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Judas may have betrayed the Lord Jesus for money, but the other disciples are also sinful men. Before the events of this narrative they had been arguing about who was the chief among them (see Luke 22:24). It is our Lord Jesus who sets the example that they should follow. He who is their Teacher and Lord humbles Himself to perform the duties of a servant. This is why St. Peter refuses to be washed at first. His Lord should not be like a servant.

But our Lord humbles Himself not only as a servant to wash feet, but humbles Himself to offer His life as a ransom for all mankind. It is in this meal of His Body and Blood given in bread and wine that we remember and proclaim how He humbled Himself, even unto death, so that we might have through this meal the remission of our sins. We come before the altar and kneel with one another in humble confession that we are poor, miserable sinners; that we need our Lord Jesus to wash and cleanse us from our sins. There is no need for self-glorification at the Lord's Table, for we are all sinners in need of the Lord God's grace and mercy.

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.

The day of our Lord's Passion is a long day. It began the previous evening when He washed His disciples' feet, ate the Pass-over meal with them, and instituted the Lord's Supper. It continued in the Garden of Gethsemane where He prayed to the heavenly Father three times that this cup would pass from Him, if it was His will. Then Judas Iscariot openly betrayed Him with a kiss. A detachment of troops and officers led Him away to Annas and Caiaphas. He endured two sham trials, and also stood before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. He was then sentenced to death by crucifixion.

To Golgotha He was led and nailed to a cross with two malefactors, one on His right and one on His left. He was mocked, spit upon, beaten, scourged, and had a crown of thorns shoved on His head. The mockery and ridicule continued while He was still upon the tree of the cross. All but one of His disciples had deserted Him. He was crucified with nails in His feet and hands. The sky grew dark. And after He willingly gave up His Spirit, He was pierced with a spear by the centurion. He endured all this on that long day to atone for the sins of the whole world, so that all who believe on His name might receive forgiveness for their sins, eternal life, and salvation.

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

The long day of Good Friday is now over for our Lord Jesus. All the suffering and pain that He endured to atone for our sins, all that we deserved which He took upon Himself, is now over. Our Lord rested in the grave. He was buried in a new tomb; the tomb of a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea. His dead body was cared for with much respect. He was wrapped in fine linen and spices. He was laid to rest. His work was over. His work of redemption has been finished. He has fully atoned for the sins of the whole world. Now on that Sabbath He takes His rest from redeeming mankind.

The chief priests and Pharisees feared that He may rise again after three days. That would truly confirm that He was the Messiah sent to redeem mankind from sin. These unbelievers do not want any part of that, and do everything in their power to stop it. They sealed the tomb and set a guard. All these preparations do is further confirm that the Lord Jesus had indeed risen from the dead on the third day, just as He had preached before His crucifixion and death. Our Lord rested this day in the tomb, but He rose again and showed that He has defeated death and the grave forever!

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 Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.