

**SATURDAY, DEC. 1: 1 JOHN 4:1-8**

**27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

Chapter four opens with a powerful confession of the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. It emphasizes that it is not possible to be a Christian and deny the humanity of Jesus, for God has indeed come down from heaven and become man. John does not mince words or try to be politically correct, but simply calls the devil “the devil,” and heresy “heresy.”

In the Church and among Christians there is no room for anything that resembles anti-Christ in the slightest. The world will flock to and promote false prophets and false gospels, which are no Gospel because they do not know Christ. Truth and error cannot coexist for they are diametrically opposed. You cannot be children of the Light and dwell in utter darkness; you cannot be of God and of the world.

John reminds us that while we must always test the spirits for their source, we must do this in the spirit of Christ’s love for sinners. We must be unyielding in confessing the Truth, but must not be abusive or unloving. God is love, purposeful love that will do what must be done to redeem the sinner, that will do what must be done to defeat sin, death, and hell.

We pray: Lord Jesus, through Your Means of Grace keep us always focused on You as our Teacher and Redeemer. Enlighten and embolden us through Your Word and Sacraments to boldly confess You and Your Gospel before the dying world; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

# THE LUTHERAN HERALD



**NOVEMBER 5–DECEMBER 1, 2018**

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NORTH AMERICA**

## *The Calendar*

November 4	Trinity 23/Festival of All Saints
November 11	Trinity 25
November 18	Trinity 26
November 25	Trinity 27
November 30 (F)	St. Andrew, Apostle

### ***Justification Made Clear—The Reformation 500 Years Later***

Pastor Carver's superb documentary on the doctrine of Justification is now available on YouTube (DVDs will also be sent to every pastor of the diocese). To watch the nine chapters of the documentary, simply search YouTube for "Justification Made Clear" and you should find the channel of the same name.

### ***New Mission Started in Augusta, Georgia***

Pastor Dulas and the saints of Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Luth. Church in Simpsonville, South Carolina are starting a new mission in Augusta, Georgia beginning September 30, and every other Sunday following, at 3 p.m. The mission will be meeting in a classroom of a local Presbyterian church:

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
4303 Wheeler Road  
Martinez, GA 30907

For more information, please contact Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church at 864-412-6330.

### ***Ongoing Support needed for the Diocese***

Please help support the ELDoNA's in meeting its ongoing budgeted expenses. Checks may be sent to ELDoNA through its treasurer:

Pastor Michael Henson  
Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church  
1000 North Park Ave.  
Herrin, IL 62948

(Please make checks payable to ELDoNA. Gifts to the seminary should designate "St. Ignatius Ev. Lutheran Seminary" in the note line on the check.)

**FRIDAY, NOV. 30: 1 JOHN 3:19-24**

**27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

Today's meditation calls us to focus on Jesus Christ, and only Jesus Christ, in all things. John explains that the command of God is that we believe in the name of Jesus Christ, and thus love one another. This echoes the words our Lord spoke to the lawyer in Matthew 22:34-40 who asked Jesus which is the greatest commandment. John, like Jesus, answers this question by pointing to faith. Faith that turns to and clings to Jesus Christ before and above all else produces fruits of faith that manifest themselves in love which serves the neighbor.

This total dependence on God and His faithfulness to His promise of grace invariably produces love for the neighbor, especially toward those of the house of God, for no one ever hates his own flesh—and we Christians are all of one body: the body of Christ (the Church). You cannot hate another Christian without ending up also hating Christ who dwells in all Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit. John is telling us that trusting fully in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Redeemer leads to loving our neighbor as Christ loved us, as naturally as standing in the rain leads to being wet.

We pray: Dear Lord, strengthen our faith in You through Your holy Means of Grace, that we might become more fully Your true disciples, always reflecting Your holy light in this darkened world. Amen.

John speaks here in very pastoral language when he addresses his audience as beloved, but admits we are not yet what we are to be, and assures us that through our hope (faith) in Christ and His grace we shall be what He intends when He again appears in glory.

In the middle section of this pericope John points out the fact that one who is in Christ and has Christ in them cannot continue in sin, for it is a state contrary to their new nature as a member of the body of Christ. Though we see sin in ourselves we can rejoice that as we struggle with being sinner and saint in this life we have the imperishable seed of God's Word abiding in us through grace by faith.

In verse 11 John points us to Christ and His new commandment, recorded in John 13:34, that will make us manifest to the world as His disciples through our Christian love for one another. He concludes this text by once again pointing out that we are to be as God's faithful children have always been: righteous. This joyous reality is contrasted with the sad reality that the world and the children of the world are evil, and thus do the unrighteous works of the devil.

We pray: Lord of light, create in us a love of You and Your Word, nourishing us through Your holy Means of Grace that we may through them be made Your true disciples, reflecting Your light now and forever. Amen.

## Lesson from the Book of Concord The Twenty—Third Sunday after Trinity

### ARTICLE XVI.

Of Civil Affairs, they teach, that lawful civil ordinances are good works of God, and that it is right for Christians to bear civil office, to sit as judges, to determine matters by the Imperial and other existing laws, to award just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to make oath when required by the magistrates, to marry, to be given in marriage.

They condemn the Anabaptists who forbid these civil offices to Christians. They condemn also those who do not place the perfection of the Gospel in the fear of God and in faith, but in forsaking civil offices; for the Gospel teaches an eternal righteousness of the heart. Meanwhile, it does not destroy the State or the family, but especially requires their preservation as ordinances of God, and in such ordinances the exercise of charity. Therefore, Christians are necessarily bound to obey their own magistrates and laws, save only when commanded to sin, for then they ought to obey God rather than men [Acts 5:29].

—The Augsburg Confession

### ARTICLE IV. Of the Gospel

We will now return to the Gospel, which not merely in one way gives us counsel and aid against sin; for God is superabundantly rich in His grace. First, through the spoken Word by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world; which is the peculiar office of the Gospel. Secondly, through baptism. Thirdly, through the holy sacrament of the altar. Fourthly, through the power of the keys, and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, Matt. 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered together," etc.

The Smalcald Articles, Part III

St. Paul reminds us in today's lesson that, when we Christians gather together around Word and Sacrament, we are God's temple. His Spirit dwells among us. This is a tremendous blessing, but it also comes with a warning. "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him."

How were the Corinthians defiling God's temple? They pitted one minister against another and broke their church up into factions as each group rallied behind its favorite preacher, boasting of him as if he were in competition with the rest.

How foolish! The ministers are nothing but the instruments "through whom you believed." They work together, as teammates, as fellow workers of God, each doing the specific work God has given him. And if they are faithful ministers, then they do not preach themselves at all, but Christ Jesus as the only foundation of the Church.

There is a warning here for ministers, too. They must build on the foundation of Christ with worthy materials—with coherent teaching, with sound doctrine and a godly life. If they do, they will have a reward from God. If they prove less than faithful, then God Himself will be their judge.

In either case, the flock does well to think beyond the minister and to give thanks for the Gospel itself. For in the Gospel, God has given us all things already, even the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Instead of looking at the man who preaches, focus on the Gospel, and be zealous to preserve the unity within God's holy temple!

We pray: Lord God, You graciously provide Your Church with ministers. Grant them to speak Your words and help us to hear the voice of our Good Shepherd whenever they speak; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

In the Gospel we come to know true joy, and through this grace filled joy we can live a holy life and be assured of salvation, even though we are still far from perfect. John's epistle points to the core of Christianity, saying that either we exhibit the sound doctrine, obedience, and love that characterizes all Christians, or else we fail to be true Christians.

The Apostle does not leave any room for middle ground or partial confession of Christ since the leaven of lies can eventually leaven the whole, for you are either Christ's disciple or you are not. Thus, anyone who deviates from the Word of God presented in holy Scripture and Christ's Sacraments deviates from Christ and the Christian life, becoming an anti-Christ in the process. In our text John warns against listening to or following such apostates (anti-Christ), for such leads to one's own destruction, and can lead others around them to a similar fate.

Christians are greatly comforted with the assurance that they can avoid this because they know the Truth (Christ and His Gospel) which is theirs through the pure proclamation of the Gospel and the right administration of His Sacraments.

We pray: Heavenly Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit working Your will through Your Word and Sacrament ministry among us, may we see the path of grace so mercifully laid before us through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Jude is a very short epistle focused on the abundant grace in Christ which allows the recipient to live the righteous life called for in all God's faithful followers throughout the Old and New Testament.

The opening two verses and the closing two verses point to Jesus Christ only as the source of all righteous and holy things, in this life and the life to come with the blessed Resurrection. The verses contained between these two bookends present the life of the Christian disciple, and the sinful traits to be avoided by all who are blessed to be made the sanctified of God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

This grace delivers the gift of righteousness (sanctification by grace) that enables fallen men to walk as God's faithful children. Ongoing sanctification is made possible only by remaining in the Means of Grace. The Holy Spirit's power working through His holy Means of Grace in the disciple (who is sinner and saint simultaneously) is the only thing that keeps the Christian in this grace-filled walk.

We pray: O most gracious and merciful Lord, by clinging only to You and Your Word shall we be found to have faith and thus persevere unto glory through grace. We thank You Lord for calling us out of sin and death to deliver us into righteousness and life through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.

"What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" the rich man asked Jesus. It was a "law" question. So Jesus gave him a "law" answer. "Keep the commandments!" Simple, right? The man thought he had done that already. It was too easy. There must be something more he can do.

Jesus' answer is striking: Give up everything you have and follow Me! Then you will have treasure in heaven! Monasteries came into existence because of these words. For centuries monks have taken vows of poverty, abandoning their families, giving away their possessions in order to earn heaven, thinking they were obeying Jesus' advice in today's lesson.

The problem is, the monks never gave away enough. They held onto the same thing that the rich man refused to abandon: the desire to save themselves by doing something good. That's the first thing that has to go if a person wants to inherit eternal life, which God gives away freely through faith in Christ, apart from our good deeds.

Jesus does call on His followers to let go of everything. That may not mean actually parting with everything. But it does mean being ready to give up whatever comes between you and Him: wealth, property, reputation, friends, family, even your own self. But in giving up everything on earth, we gain far more, even great rewards in heaven. As Paul reminded us in yesterday's lesson, "All things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

We pray: Father in heaven, guard us by Your Spirit from clinging to anything in this world that would keep us away from Christ our Savior. Amen.

Don't invite your friends or family to supper! That's what Jesus told the Pharisees with whom He was dining on the Sabbath. He didn't mean it as a permanent prohibition. He meant it as a lesson.

We all like to receive something in return for the nice things we do. We like to receive gifts from those to whom we give gifts. We like to be repaid, even if it's only with a thank-you card or with recognition or appreciation. And sometimes our sinful flesh gets the better of us, so that we fail to do good to those who aren't likely to reciprocate. We fail to do good to those we deem unworthy of our service. Or we become angry when we don't receive the recognition we think we deserve.

But Jesus teaches us in today's lesson to do good to others who cannot repay us in any way, to give gifts without any hope of being repaid in this life. He urges us to be content with no earthly rewards at all, waiting patiently to be rewarded on the Last Day.

That takes faith—faith that the promised rewards will be there waiting for us in the next life. All we have now is the promise of Christ: the promise of the Father's favor, freely given for Christ's sake; the promise that He will freely give us a seat at the table with Him in the kingdom of heaven; the promise that God sees and will reward in the next life all the good that His children do in this life.

We pray: Heavenly Father, grant us a firm faith to trust in Your promises, and give us opportunities to do good to all people, hoping to please You above all, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Today's text can be divided into two sections, the first (verses 1-9) addressing how different God's ways are from the way of man, and the second (verses 10-18) presenting how the Lord desires us to prepare for His glorious return. Apart from the clear Word of God presented in Scripture we have little hope of understanding God's will. But if we submit our God-given intellect to God's will, presented throughout His divinely inspired Scriptures, we can understand a great deal of what our Lord has accomplished for us, desires for us, and promises for us.

The Lord virtually destroyed fallen humanity in the flood where a mere eight souls escaped, and He will bring final judgment upon sinful mankind in His fiery return. However, those who by grace through faith are Christ's disciples will be shielded from the flames of judgment by the holy waters of Baptism and Christ's robe of righteousness, bestowed by this Sacrament. This gracious bestowal of righteousness by grace is what also allows these faithful to grow in the "grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," found in His holy Means of Grace, and thus live lives of holiness and godliness as we ought.

We pray: Almighty God, all that exists in heaven and earth is from Your gracious hand. Give us grace that we may always see this through faith, and thus live our lives ruled by Your merciful will and Word; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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

## ARTICLE XVII.

Also they teach, that, at the Consummation of the World, Christ shall appear for judgment, and shall raise up all the dead; He shall give to the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but ungodly men and the devils He shall condemn to be tormented without end.

They condemn the Anabaptists who think that there will be an end to the punishments of condemned men and devils. They condemn also others, who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions that, before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed (exterminated).

—The Augsburg Confession

THURSDAY, NOV. 8: MARK 13:1-37    23<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY

We've been hearing this week about the rewards that await us in heaven if we remain faithful here on earth. Is it hard to wait for those rewards? Do you want some assurance that the Last Day is surely drawing near? Jesus gives us those assurances in today's lesson. He gives us signs that continually point to His coming at the end of the age.

The signs are everywhere. Signs in nature. Signs in society. Signs in the Church. To the unbeliever they all make it seem as if the world is spinning out of control. But to the believer they all cry out, "Christ is coming! Watch!"

Instead of viewing natural disasters as signs of God's apathy or of God's malice toward us, let us view them as part of His grand design to bring sinners to repentance before He comes in final judgment. Instead of viewing the decay of society as something to fear, let us view it as a cause to give thanks for the truth and love that remain in the Christian Church. Instead of viewing the persecution of Christians and the false doctrine within the Church as failures of the Gospel, let us view them as reasons to hope for the safety and the perfection of the life that awaits us.

The signs we see being fulfilled all around us are harbingers of Christ's faithfulness. Nearly everything He foretold leading up to the end of the age has already come to pass—evidence that our rewards, too, are soon to be revealed; evidence that Jesus' word will never pass away.

We pray: O Lord, as we see the signs of Your coming unfolding around us, keep us both from carnal security and from despair. Comfort us with Your faithful promises and come quickly to save us! Amen.

St. Paul grieved for his countrymen, the Jews, because of their general rejection of the Gospel. But it was more than just the grief a person feels for lost relatives. There was special reason to grieve over Israel's unbelief. God had favored them over every other nation. He had given them every advantage, every opportunity to recognize and receive the Christ when He came. He gave multiple "second" chances to repent and receive Him even after their initial refusal. Instead, they ramped up their persecution of the other Christians.

But Paul reminds us that God did not elect sinners to salvation because of their biological descent or because of their own goodness or worthiness. He elected us according to His mercy. He elected us in Christ. Those who will not look to Christ for salvation have no claim to God's kingdom based on their ancestry, even if their ancestry is tied to Abraham.

Is God being unfair to Israel by condemning the unbelievers among them? Not at all. He is not to blame for their rejection. On the contrary, His faithfulness and His patience toward them demonstrate that the unbelievers have only themselves to blame, just as His grace and mercy in converting so many of the heathen demonstrate that they have only God to thank for their salvation. Indeed, His patience toward all men leads some men to repentance, even as St. Paul himself would have been lost if God had not dealt with him patiently. And we have the assurance that even those who will remain in unbelief serve God's gracious purposes toward His elect believers.

We pray: Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your mercy and grace to us in Christ Jesus. Strengthen us by Word and Sacrament that we may ever cling in faith to Christ our Savior. Amen.

St. Peter goes to great lengths to describe the depravity of false teachers. Some preach a license to sin so that men can do as they please and follow their wicked lusts because they think God will not punish. Others preach for financial gain, following in the way of Balaam. They scratch the itchy ears of their hearers, telling them whatever they want to hear. Their hearers reward them for their servitude with wealth, possessions, and honor. No matter what motivates them, each one is the same, bringing destructive heresies which in some way deny the Lord.

God will punish false teachers. It doesn't always appear that way, but Scripture has foretold their doom and given us examples. Rebellious angels were cast into Hell, chained in darkness. The entire ancient world was drown in the flood. Sodom and Gomorrah was burned to ash. This is what awaits the unrighteous and unbelieving world.

Consider Noah, a preacher of righteousness. Consider righteous Lot, who was oppressed by Sodom's wickedness. These men were righteous by faith in God's promise. Faith is the only way God declares any sinner righteous. God will judge the world for its unbelief. But all who believe will be rescued like Noah and Lot, and escape the wrath of God upon the impenitent.

Take care to whom you listen. Hear only those who preach the righteousness of faith. All else leads to destruction. But the true Gospel leads to life everlasting.

We pray: O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Thy Holy Spirit that, being ever mindful of the end of all things and the day of Thy just judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with Thee forever hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.



Christ has made us partakers in the divine nature, not through mystical and unexplainable experiences but through faith in the “exceedingly great and precious promises” of the Gospel. This participation in the divine nature is how we escape “the corruption of the world through lust.” That this happens by faith is clear, since the same Peter said in Acts 15:9 that God purifies hearts by faith.

To this faith we are to add virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Faith does these good works because faith is an active and living thing. The one who does not pursue these things is short-sighted and has forgotten that his heart was cleansed from sin by faith. Faith without works is dead. Faith that does not pursue and produce good works is not a living faith.

This is why Peter tells us to be even more diligent to make our calling and election sure. What does this mean? We confess in Article XX of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession:

“Do good works that you may persevere in your calling, that you do not fall away again, grow cold and may not lose the gifts of your calling, which were given you before, and not on account of works that follow, and which now are retained by faith; for faith does not remain in those who lose the Holy Ghost, who reject repentance, just as we have said above that faith exists in repentance.”

We pray: O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Thy Holy Spirit that, being ever mindful of the end of all things and the day of Thy just judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with Thee forever hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Our lessons this week have brought us full circle, from the preacher to the preacher, and yet it’s never about the preacher himself. It’s about the office of preaching that he carries out in God’s name.

Israel had plenty of preachers. The whole nation was called by the prophets, and then by the Gospel itself when Christ arrived. But few were chosen for eternal life, because they stubbornly resisted the Holy Spirit and didn’t believe the word that was preached to them. Most of the Gentiles also resisted the word of faith, of course, but those who believed only believed after first hearing the word of faith. Not all who are called are chosen. But all of the chosen must be called.

This was all part of God’s decree of election, that He would save people by bringing them to call upon the name of Christ. In other words, He would save them by faith in Christ. And it was also part of God’s decree to bring people to such saving faith by means of the preaching about faith, that is, the preaching about Christ. Of course, there is no preaching without a preacher, so God designed the preaching office for this very purpose, that preachers might be sent out into the world to proclaim the Gospel of peace. In this Gospel God the Holy Spirit is always powerfully working to bring sinners to faith and to preserve believers in the one true faith, that we may confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus and believe in our hearts that God has raised Him from the dead.

We pray: O God, we thank You for sending Christ our Savior and for sending out men to preach Him to us, that we, too, may call upon Your name and be saved. Amen.

Understand the parable of the fig tree correctly: when everything is looking like it was “before the flood...eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,” reckon that the end could come as quickly as the rain!

“Here’s your sign,” Jesus is saying to all those who wish to predict the day of His return so that they know what the ‘deadline’ is for their repentance. If you think God is pleased with such insincerity as to lay the time of Christ’s return out for you, so that you’ll be sure finally to ‘stop your sinning’ when it’s really absolutely necessary, you might wish to ask all of the thieves to announce to you, as well, on what day and in which hour they intend to rob your house.

Trying to reason out the time of Christ’s return is so utterly misguided that Jesus makes it clear that it will not be given us to know. And still people try. He gives His direct word concerning this point, but thinking that knowing the hour of His return would help you prepare is nonsense. That’s not how repentance works; being pleasing to God isn’t a matter of knowing when He’s looking and then doing something that makes Him happy! Instead, true repentance is always conscious that only being dressed in the blood and righteousness of Christ can shield you from your just condemnation.

We pray: O Holy Spirit, grant us grace in this hour, and always, to flee from our sin and place our confidence solely in the sacrifice of Jesus. Amen.

People want a way out of all suffering. The Christian faith does not provide this. It teaches the proper way to suffer. First, we are to expect suffering in this life, especially suffering for Christ’s sake. Since many expect Christianity to alleviate suffering, their faith withers under the heat of tribulation. “Don’t think it strange,” Peter says, that you undergo trials and crosses. If God’s only-begotten Son suffered in the flesh, all who are sons of God through faith in Christ will suffer in the flesh as well.

Second, “rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings.” Why? Because when Christ returns in glory on the Last Day you will have exceeding joy. Why joy? Because by faith we are sons of God and “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:17). If you are reproached for your confession of the truth of the Gospel or the living hope God has given you (1 Peter 1:3), “blessed are you.”

Third, Peter tells us how we are not to suffer. We are not to suffer as violators of God’s commandments.

Finally commit your body and soul to God in doing good. Have you been wronged? God will vindicate you. Do you suffer? God will remove your cross when it is most beneficial for you. Are you tempted? Consider God’s will for you. May God grant us such faith.

We pray: O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Thy Holy Spirit that, being ever mindful of the end of all things and the day of Thy just judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with Thee forever hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Christ has suffered for you according to the flesh. This is your motivation for striving against sin in your own flesh, for Peter tells you to “arm yourselves also with the same mind” as Christ. During the days of His earthly ministry in the flesh Christ lived for the will of His Father. Those begotten through faith should live for God’s will, rather than their will or the world’s.

Peter gives several examples of sins of the flesh from which you are to abstain: lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelleries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. His list is illustrative, not exhaustive. As Christ sought to do the will of God the Father while in the flesh, so do we. “This is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). God wills your sanctification because fleshly lusts “war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11) to entice and entangle you in sin, so that you become comfortable with sin and eventually forsake repentance and faith.

The world doesn’t understand the new life of faith or the Christian’s desire to strive against sin. The world thinks Christians are odd and prudish. But the world will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and dead. Be serious and watchful in your prayers so that you do not fall into temptation. But remember what the will of your heavenly Father is, and the example of Christ who has suffered in the flesh for you.

We pray: O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Thy Holy Spirit that, being ever mindful of the end of all things and the day of Thy just judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with Thee forever hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

The Sadducees held that there would be no resurrection, so they constructed logic puzzles to demonstrate the brilliance of their philosophy. They refused to see the Creator’s power as able to raise up the dead, or the five books of Moses as requiring this article of doctrine, so they sought to harden and spread their denial.

Jesus goes outside of the framework of their riddle (and stays within the Word) to answer them. “You reject the resurrection and ‘reinterpret’ those places where Scripture specifically teaches of it? Well, you must think that God is the God of the dead, then, and not of the living, since He says he is the God of those who are long dead—if, indeed, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not alive with Him and are not going to rise on the Last Day!”

The foolishness of God is demonstrated once again to be wiser than all of Man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God stronger than Man’s strength! In the same way, the promise of God is more ‘solid’ than what Man can hold in his hand, and those who would use false philosophical notions to teach any false doctrine concerning our justification and everlasting life are tripped up by God’s Word like the Sadducees were, not only where it is speaking directly to their error, but by all Scripture in general. If their philosophy were correct, neither Abraham nor anyone else in the Old Testament could be declared righteous, but the Bible tells us otherwise (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; Hebrews 11).

We pray: Help us, O Lord, lest anyone cheat us through human tradition, philosophy, and empty deceit; grant us trust solely in Your Word’s pure teaching. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 14: 1 COR. 15:11-50 25<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

St. Paul helps the people in Corinth deal with errors similar to those of the Sadducees: “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body ... flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Some would twist these words to eliminate the very thing established in this chapter: the physical resurrection of the Christian’s body planted in the earth at death. They want a spiritual resurrection only. Anti-Christian philosophical ideas are generally involved in this, such as considering anything physical necessarily evil (a denial of God as Creator of the physical world, which He declared “very good”).

Instead, “natural” and “spiritual” are to be understood as Paul generally uses them (much as “flesh” and “new man”). The “natural body” is the physical/material body as it is either in subjection to (in unbelievers) or under the influence of the desires and outcomes of Man’s fallen state.

For the believer, the resurrection doesn’t change the material of his body, but glorifies it, removing all dishonor and corruption from it by freeing it from what has ailed it—concupiscence (the desire to sin) and the consequences of sin. This is done by completely transferring all control to the spirit (the desires and deeds of which are conformed to the Holy Spirit) and so changing the material body that it responds perfectly to this control. Thus, he terms it “the spiritual body.”

We pray: We thank You, Lord Jesus, that we who could not inherit the Kingdom of God by the deeds of our corrupt natural body have been redeemed by You, so that we may ever look forward to the Day of Resurrection and the joyous perfection in which we will live, body and soul, before You. Amen.

**TUESDAY, NOV. 20: 1 PET. 1:13 - 2:10 26<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

You have been born again, “not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.” The Word of God that accomplishes rebirth is the promise of the Gospel, that you “were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” It was God’s blood because in the incarnation the Word of God assumed our human flesh. It was God’s blood that purchased you from your sin, from death, and the power of the devil. Faith, which God Himself creates within your heart, is how you obey the truth.

That faith then does good works: sincere love of the brethren, love for one another from a pure heart, but also self-control. “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance.” Thoughts must be guarded lest sin entices you. Be vigilant against the influence of the world and the temptations of the devil. Be obedient children, begotten by God through faith in the promise of the Gospel with faith toward God, love toward neighbor, and chastity and self-control towards self. “As He who called you is holy, so also be holy in all your conduct.”

We pray: O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Thy Holy Spirit that, being ever mindful of the end of all things and the day of Thy just judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with Thee forever hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

The Triune God has begotten us to a living hope, which is the certainty of the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. That is the inheritance “incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away.” How has He begotten you? Through faith in the merits and mercy of Jesus Christ.

No one is reborn through their own merits and works, just as no one worked or merited his first birth from his mother’s womb. As you did not contribute to that birth, so you have not contributed to your spiritual rebirth. It is not your work, but the work of God that gives you the heavenly inheritance.

In this knowledge rejoice, especially in suffering. You are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26), even in the midst of various trials and temptations. The crosses which God lays upon you are sent to prove the genuineness of your faith. St. Augustine wrote that preaching molds you like the potter’s vase while the temptation hardens you. The Word of God begets you as sons of God by creating faith in you. Temptation, trial, and cross are the fire in which your faith is proved, exercised, and solidified. In temptation and suffering faith clings to Christ all the more, knowing that His strength is made perfect in our weakness and that with every temptation He will provide a way of escape so that you may bear up under it. May God grant this to us all.

We pray: O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Thy Holy Spirit that, being ever mindful of the end of all things and the day of Thy just judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with Thee forever hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Almost none of the Children of Israel who came out of Egypt entered the Promised Land, because they “did not obey ... because of their unbelief.” Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God—specifically, the message of Christ. Those who were destroyed failed to “follow” or “be persuaded by” the Law and the Gospel.

These two verses explain the rest of today’s reading, even as they explain one another. God uses their wonderful parallelism so we understand even when a Bible translation isn’t perfect. Some translators use the words “obey” and “disobey” indiscriminately, leaving out some very important nuances in the words they’re translating. From the grossly illegitimate importation of “obey” in place of “keep” in Luke 11:28, to its unfortunate use instead of “heed” in Romans 10:16, such translators make Christianity seem like it is all about us and our outward performance of the Law. The word in Romans 10 actually has the nuance of “conform to the hearing of.” For an invitation/promise (like the Gospel) it indicates “to receive (and act upon) with confidence.” For a command, that would indicate “take it seriously and obey it.” The word in today’s reading is related to being convinced and following: they weren’t convinced, or didn’t believe or act as if they were.

We pray: O Holy Spirit, convict and convince us by Your Word that we do not act faithlessly; grant us to see our sin and our need for the rest that can be given only in our perfect Savior, so that we do not harden our hearts, but are ever persuaded by by Your Law and Gospel to flee from our sins to the Throne of Grace, living with confidence in Christ’s atonement. Amen.

Abraham trusted the promise of God and therefore had what he had: the land of promise was his to dwell in! Yet, he sired something greater, so it was dwelt in as if he remained a traveler. Within two generations he and his family would leave that land behind for Egypt so that they might survive a drought. Becoming comfortable there, due to the status of Joseph, they remained out in this new world, amidst its false gods, until a ruler who wouldn't recognize the contributions of this family finally enslaved them.

So it was that the Lord had to deliver the sons of Abraham once again to the land promised them, to live in buildings this time, instead of tents, even though that land could again be taken from them. Through both of these habitations of the land of promise we learn that our permanent dwelling must have a foundation put in place by God alone. The birth of Isaac to this couple who were rightly reckoned “past the age” and “as good as dead” in the eyes of Man teaches the same thing (as did circumcision and the death of the Egyptian firstborn): by the will and power of the Lord alone, not by the potency or wisdom of men, is our eternal dwelling established.

We pray: We thank You, Lord, that those who did not live on earth to see the fulfillment in Christ nonetheless embraced Your promises, confessing the place He would earn as their true home. Through faith in the atonement not yet made they were already justified and declared citizens of the heavenly city—as are we, through the same atonement of Christ—so we thank You for their example of faith, and for teaching us through them what justification truly entails and gives. Amen.

The writer of Hebrews bids you to realize where you are and to what you have been called. A clear view of these things transforms your understanding of what true religion is.

You have not been brought to Mt. Sinai as the seat of your religion. Indeed, the Children of Israel had not first been brought to such, either. In Abraham they had been brought to a promise, to a treaty, to the sacrament of that treaty (circumcision). In Moses they had been brought to a deliverance given them with no merit of their own. Only after this are they brought into the presence of Yahweh at Sinai to understand that the holy God had called them to be His own and to be like Him, with the holy attributes—the holy thoughts, words, and deeds—that are listed in the Decalogue.

Yet, because the atoning sacrifice of God the Son had not yet been made, the people could not endure the holy presence of God. He gave them a land to be the place where He would reign over His people on earth, but it could always be taken from them—as, indeed, it was, more than once—because of their sin. They did not remain mindful of the only remedy for their sin and flee for deliverance again to the grace of God by which alone they had been delivered, to the Christ who would finally make atonement for them.

We pray: Almighty and merciful Triune God, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken—the heavenly Jerusalem—grant us Your grace, that we may always flee from our sins and find refuge in the blood and righteousness of Jesus, that we may serve You acceptably with reverence and godly fear, to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.