

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 3: 2 SAMUEL 6:1-23 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

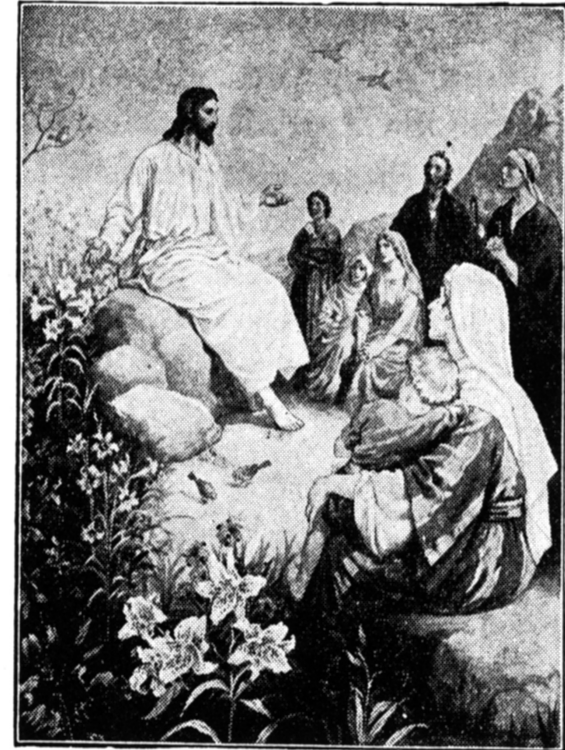
“David was afraid of the Lord that day; and he said, ‘How can the ark of the Lord come to me?’”

For all the honor David wished to afford the Ark of the Covenant, and all the praise he wanted to bring before the Lord, David simply failed. David did not heed the Word of the Lord. God had given specific instructions as to how the Ark of the Covenant was to be moved. It wasn’t the job of just any old Israelite to move the ark, much less upon a cart. Moving the Ark of the Covenant was the duty given to the Levites, specifically those of the family of Kohath (see Exodus 25:12-14). It’s no wonder that David was afraid when he saw Uzzah die after he touched the Ark of the Covenant.

We just as easily become lackadaisical concerning Sunday morning worship. We can turn our attention inward and begin thinking about what we are for God, rather than listening to what God has done for us. Fortunately, God doesn’t strike us dead when our thoughts begin to wander. Yet, the mercy God shows us in not doing so should not be seen as a lack of concern on God’s part about our sinful desires. His wrath is quite real and was doled out, not on us, but on His Only-begotten Son. Sin is deadly serious. Thankfully, God has touched us with His mercy for Jesus’ sake.

We pray: O almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us to perfectly 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 leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

# THE LUTHERAN HERALD



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## ***The Calendar***

<i>July 2 (Tu)</i>	<i>The Visitation</i>
<i>July 7</i>	<i>Trinity 3</i>
<i>July 14</i>	<i>Trinity 4</i>
<i>July 21</i>	<i>Trinity 5</i>
<i>July 25 (Th)</i>	<i>St. James the Elder, Apostle</i>
<i>July 28</i>	<i>Trinity 6</i>
<i>July 29 (M)</i>	<i>St. Olaf, Martyr</i>

### **FROM THE BISHOP**

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

**A**s noted several months ago, our diocese recognized fellowship with the Confessional Lutheran Church in Colombia. Recently, Pr. Rydecki and I travelled to Medellin so that I could officiate at the Pastor Marin's wedding, and so that we could sign a Recognition of Fellowship. Pr. Rydecki's translation assistance was a tremendous help. Here are several pictures from that trip.



## **FRIDAY, AUGUST 2: 2 SAMUEL 5:1-25 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

The day of David assuming the kingship over Israel had come. He would not rule as Saul did. David would inquire of the Lord concerning his duties as king. Assaults would come upon the land of Israel, and David, who found favor in the eyes of God, sought the Lord as to how to deal with the Philistines.

God is gracious toward those whom He calls. His grace is literally showered upon His own in Holy Baptism, where water connected to His Word washes you. In Holy Baptism you are marked as God's child as the sign of the Cross is made over both head and heart. In a sense, another mark is placed upon you at the same time. Satan put a bullseye on your back, and assaults you every day.

That is why God draws you to church week after week. He speaks Law and Gospel, repentance and forgiveness, to you. He tells you of conflict you will face in this world, and how He has already overcome the devil and this fallen world through His death on the Cross. Even though we may not see victory over the "Philistines" who battles us in this world, we have assurance of final victory. God's promise that those who believe in Jesus for forgiveness of their sins have the victory. As Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25).

We pray: Confirm, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, Thine unworthy servants in Thy grace that in the hour of dither the adversary may not prevail against us, but that we may be found worthy of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

After all that Saul had done to David, David mourns the death of Saul, and also death of Saul's sons. David shows deep respect for "the Lord's anointed," for David understood what St. Paul would write centuries later: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God" (Romans 13:1).

It is difficult, yes impossible, for us to understand this idea that all the powers that be are there because God put them there. We see despots and the atrocities they carry out and begin to wonder, "How can this be?" But Isaiah reminds us: "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,' says the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). And St. Paul tells us: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). People are often left slack-jawed as they ponder, "Why does God let evil things happen in this world?"

As with all matters involving our lives as Christians in this fallen world, we are called upon to "walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7) even with regards to evil rulers in this world. We "walk by faith" knowing that the Lord is truly in charge, in spite of what we may see, while at the same time not turning a blind eye to the needs of our neighbor whom God has called us to serve.

We pray: O Lord, we beseech Thee to mercifully hear the prayers of Thy Church that we may enjoy Thy peace all the days of our lives; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27). God does this to reveal His supreme power. Gideon was the least member of the weakest clan in the tribe of Manasseh (Judges 6:15), yet God chose him out of all the Israelites to defeat the Midianites. Now the host of Midian was countless, "as numerous as locusts," but Gideon went against them with a mere three hundred men. When they went to meet the enemy, not one of those three hundred even drew his sword, for "they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands." But God revealed His power by utterly destroying the Midianites before Gideon and his three hundred men. But there is a better example, still.

What could be weaker than a dying man? By God's power Gideon defeated a locust-like army with three hundred unarmed men, but it was a far greater miracle when the Lord Jesus Christ defeated sin and death by dying. By becoming the weakest man on earth, the Lord Jesus Christ defeated our greatest enemy and promises us eternal life through faith in Him. Gideon was a lesson for Israel to point forward to the work of the Christ.

We pray: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love, make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

**TUESDAY, JULY 2: JUDGES 13:1–25 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

Today, the Church celebrates the feast of the Visitation—the day when Mary, being now pregnant with the Christ Child by the power of the Holy Spirit, visited the elderly Elizabeth, who also carried John the Baptist in her womb. The miraculous conceptions of both John and the Christ are prefigured by the conception and birth of the judge Samson.

Samson was not born of a virgin, and neither was John the Baptist. Therefore, in all the history of the world, only the Christ was born of a virgin, so that we would know Him as the Son of God. But Samson's birth was still a miraculous one; his mother was barren and, although she conceived by her husband in the usual manner, it was God who opened her womb so that Samson would be a miraculous gift from God. This same Samson would later deliver the Israelites out of the hands of the unbelieving Philistines.

Samson's birth points forward to both the Christ and the Baptist, His prophet. Samson and John the Baptist were conceived in the same way: by the ordinary union of husband and wife, but requiring a special act of God to open the womb. Samson is also the small miracle which points to the greater. The Christ has no earthly father, but only God the Father. Just as Samson delivered the Israelites from the Philistines, Christ delivered His Church from sin and Satan, and both men did so by dying.

We pray: Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, unto Thy servants the gift of Thy heavenly grace, that, as the Son of the Virgin Mary hath made us partakers of salvation, we may daily grow in grace; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 31: 1 SAMUEL 31:1-13 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

King Saul's reign came to a humiliating end. He was wounded in battle. Yet, as bad a king as Saul had become, his armorbearer would not take the life of the Lord's anointed. Like David, who had twice spared the life of Saul because Saul was the Lord's anointed, the armorbearer refused the order to take King Saul's life. Thus Saul commits suicide out of fear for what the Philistines might do to him.

Contrast Saul, who had abandoned the faith, with Stephen who was martyred. Saul was only interested in himself, right to the end. Stephen was only interested in confessing the truth of Christ, even to the point of death by stoning. But there is a commonality between the death of Saul and that of Stephen. We see in both how the godless deal with others. The abject hatred shown by the godless makes known their true father. As Jesus spoke of the godless Pharisees: "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (John 8:44).

We as followers of Jesus do well to heed His words: "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you" (John 15:18). Our lives depend on Him both now, and in eternity. We need not look for martyrdom, nor ought we fear it. Our Lord knows best how to save us, for that is who He is--our Savior.

We pray: O God, defend us, Thy humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies and preserve us in faith; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.



Early in his reign King Saul would take direction from the Lord. The Word of the Lord through the prophet Samuel was Saul's guide. But just like Saul's and our first parents, Saul began to follow his inner voice rather than the Word of the Lord. So the Lord turned a deaf ear to Saul when he saw the Philistine army and imminent doom. His inner voice could bring him no answers.

So Saul looked every "witch" way he could to find answers. He turned even farther away from God by turning to the medium at En Dor. Saul took the name of God in vain by turning to witchcraft, by turning to the very practice he had earlier condemned. From there on it was all down hill.

Turning from God to the ungodly is the plague that has befallen mankind. We are so easily enticed away from the voice of God to the many and various voices that would entice us away from listening to Him. We can persuade ourselves there are countless good reasons to skip church on Sunday morning. "I need to catch up on my sleep." "We have visitors at our home." "My child has a ball game that can't be missed." The list is endless. Sadly, the more one misses church, the easier it becomes. It's all down hill from there. The farther you remove yourself from God, the louder those other voices become.

There is a remedy for all this that Saul didn't employ. It is repentance.

We pray: Hear, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the prayer of Thy suppliants and spare those who confess their sins unto Thee that Thou mayest bestow on us pardon and peace; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

In Deuteronomy, the Lord had commanded the Israelites not to intermarry with the nations of Canaan (Deuteronomy 7:2-4), yet Samson chooses to marry a Philistine woman and this thing "was of the Lord—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines." Samson's parents are understandably concerned, but God had ordained this thing as part of His plan to free the Israelites.

To marry a Philistine was socially—and religiously—problematic, but consider the circumstances of the bride-to-be, for we find in her a lesson concerning the Christ and His Church. Samson chose a bride "from the uncircumcised Philistines," that is, from among the unbelievers. If the woman remained with her own people, she would grow old and die in her unbelief. If she marries Samson, however, she would be marrying into the Israelite faith. She may still choose to not believe, but God is offering her the chance to repent and believe through Samson. Likewise, Jesus Christ created His own bride, the Church, by calling sinful men and women out of their unbelief to be united to Him in faith. There is nothing good in us that makes God want to save us, but His grace is obvious because He calls us out of our unbelief and makes us holy by uniting us to Himself in Baptism. Samson was offering this woman a chance to be saved by bringing her into the Israelite faith. Christ saves us by uniting us to Himself in spite of our sin.

We pray: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love, make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

**THURSDAY, JULY 4: JUDGES 15:1–20 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

King Solomon writes, “Jealousy is a husband’s fury; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance” (Proverbs 6:34). The hottest outbreak of Samson’s wrath comes when his wife is given away to another man. He had chosen her out of the unbelieving Philistines and offered her a place in the Israelite faith, yet the Philistines acted unfaithfully and his wife was taken away. Therefore, Samson burns their crops, slaughters their men, and, when they come to arrest him, kills another thousand of them with a donkey’s jawbone.

Jealousy for one’s wife is a terrifying force, but, if directed in accordance with God’s Word, a very righteous force. God calls Himself jealous, saying, “You shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exodus 34:14). God has called His Church out of the unbelieving world, united her to Himself, sanctified her through Baptism, and feeds her with His own body and blood. Therefore, He protects her with a husband’s jealousy. Anyone who threatens the well-being of God’s Church—whether individuals, nations, or the devil himself—will face the jealous wrath of God with which He protects those who are His own.

Those who are baptized need not fear anything in this life. God protects His saints, and heaven and earth will pass away before He allows His Church to be taken away from Him.

We pray: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love, make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

**MONDAY, JULY 29: 1 SAMUEL 26:1-25 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

There is a Christ-like humility in David. Though David was chosen by God and anointed by Samuel as the king of Israel, he remained humble in his dealing with Saul. Even though Saul sought to harm David, David realized his kingship was given him by God, as was the kingship of Saul. David spared the life of Saul for the end of Saul’s reign, and the time for David to assume the role of King of Israel was up to God.

David understood something concerning King Saul that would have deeper implications centuries later: “But David said to Abishai, ‘Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?’” On the night our Lord was betrayed He was handed over to those who would stretch out their hands against the Lord’s Anointed. The Scribes and Pharisees would encourage the crowd of Jews to hand Jesus over to the Roman soldiers. On behalf of the Jews, the Roman soldiers had scourged and beaten Jesus, and crucified Him. As a result, some 70 years later Jerusalem would pay the price as the city was destroyed.

But there is also a bit of irony to David’s words, “for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?” The irony is that by God’s grace and for Jesus’ sake we are “guiltless”. “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10).

We pray: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, a steadfast faith in Jesus Christ and cheerful hope in Thy mercy. Amen.

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

### The Fifth Commandment

#### Thou shalt not kill.

We have not completed the discussion of both spiritual and temporal government, that is, divine and paternal authority and obedience. But here we go forth from our own house to our neighbor's, to learn how we should live with respect to one another, everyone for himself toward his neighbor. Therefore God and government are not included in this commandment, nor the power which they have to kill. For God has delegated His authority to governments to punish evil-doers instead of parents, who aforetime (as we read in Moses) were required to bring their children to judgment and sentence them to death. Therefore this prohibition pertains to individuals and not to government.

This commandment is now easy enough, and is often treated, because we hear it annually in the Gospel of St. Matthew (5:21sq.), where Christ Himself explains and sums it up—namely, that we must not kill, either with hand, heart, mouth, signs, gestures, help or counsel. Therefore it is forbidden to everyone to be angry, except those (as we said) who are in the place of God, that is, parents and government. For it is proper for God, and for everyone who stands in His stead, to be angry, to reprove and punish, even on account of those who transgress this and the other commandments.

But the cause and need of this commandment is that God well knows that the world is evil, and that this life has much unhappiness; therefore He has placed this and the other commandments between the good and the wicked. As now there are many temptations against all the commandments, so the temptation in respect to this is that we must live among many people who do us wrong, that we have cause to be hostile to them.

As when your neighbor sees that you have better possessions from property, and more happiness from God, than he, he is offended, envies you, and speaks no good of you.

Thus by the devil's incitement you will have many enemies who cannot bear to see you have any good, either bodily or spiritual. When we see them it is natural for our hearts in their turn to rage and bleed and take vengeance. Thus there arise cursing and blows, from which follow finally misery and murder. Therefore God like a kind father anticipates, interposes and wishes to have all quarrels settled, that no misfortune come of them, nor one destroy another. And in fine He would hereby defend, liberate and keep in peace everyone against all the crime and violence of everyone else; and has, as it were, placed this commandment as a wall, fortress and refuge about our neighbor, that we do him no bodily harm or injury.

—The Large Catechism, Part I, §180–185

FRIDAY, JULY 5: JUDGES 16:4–31    2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

How are we to remember Samson: as a fool or as a saint? Scripture does not pull any punches; Samson was a sinner, enticed to sin by a deceitful and unfaithful woman, and he received the due consequences of his actions when he lost his eyes.

But man is not saved by his wisdom; man is saved by grace through faith. It is clear from the text that, in the end, Samson still had faith. Therefore what is written in Ezekiel 33 applies to him: “If [the wicked man] turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, . . . none of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live” (Ezekiel 33:14, 16). Samson was a sinner and a fool, just like each of us. But Samson believed and trusted in the Word of the Lord, therefore his sins are not charged against him, but his faith is counted as righteousness. Samson is a saint not because he was wise or pious, but because he had faith in the Word of God.

Scripture does not record the sins of Samson so that we may mock him. Scripture records them to teach us not to trust in our own wisdom. We are just as foolish and sinful as he, or worse. All who trust in the Christ for forgiveness, as Samson did, are counted as righteous before God and their sins are forgotten by Him.

We pray: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love, make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

The miraculous birth of Samson pointed forward to the even more blessed birth of the Christ. Samuel also points forward to the Lord Christ by his miraculous birth. Samuel, once again, is not virgin-born. He was conceived by God's special design and blessing through the marital union of his father and mother. Thus, only the Christ has been born of a virgin.

What distinguishes Samuel's birth from that of Samson is the dialogue between his mother, Hannah, and the priest, Eli. This interaction is paralleled in the dialogue between Mary and the angel, Gabriel, for both Eli and Gabriel are messengers of the Lord to the two women, by office. Whereas Hannah says, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant..." Mary says, "He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant" (Luke 1:48). Whereas Hannah says to Eli, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight," Mary says to Gabriel, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

God proclaims His gospel through messengers. Eli spoke the blessing on Hannah, Gabriel announced the Christ to Mary, and now the ministers of the Word offer Christ to God's saints by Word and Sacrament. Those who receive Jesus Christ from the hands of God's appointed messengers are no more than unworthy servants. Through faith, they obediently receive the grace which God offers in Christ, just like Hannah and Mary.

We pray: O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love, make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Even after Saul has sought to murder David—and murdered those who stood between the current and future kings, even throwing his spear at his own son—David spares Saul's life.

David spares Saul's life and then is troubled in his heart because he has harmed Saul's garments in doing so! Saul is still, after all, "my master, the Lord's anointed," and David feels that even this has gone too far. He restrains his companions, keeping them from killing Saul, and then leaves the cave and confesses to Saul what he has done, as well as what he could have done. As St. Paul gave his admonition in Romans 13 concerning the Christian's relationship to those in authority in the state while being under the rule of a particularly vicious and anti-Christian ruler, David teaches us to recognize where all authority comes from. As Jesus says to Pilate, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11).

Like Jonathan's standing against his father's wishes in 1 Samuel 19, this does not mean that we are not to seek wisdom and righteous conduct in rulers—and, within our context, to work and vote accordingly. Rather, it means that we are to receive those whom God places in authority through His chosen means (whether election or legitimate line of succession in a monarchy) as those whom God would have us pray for, advise when appropriate, and even remove if they stand against what is to govern their rule and service, whether in Church or in State.

We pray: O Lord, give us hearts that receive all things—even trials and suffering—not as the world intends, but as You intend, that we may trust in You for strength and glorify You always. Amen.

There was one part of what Doeg said that was not true, and that was the most important part: Ahimelech did not pray for the Lord to make David victorious over Saul!

The giving of the bread and of the sword were legitimately done, as David was still considered a leader of Israel's army, and David had spared Saul's reputation by not telling Ahimelech of Saul's hatred. Ahimelech's answer to Saul's accusation of conspiring with his enemy shows that Ahimelech neither knew of the enmity, nor could now understand it: "Who among all your servants is as faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, who goes at your bidding, and is honorable in your house?"

Saul's only answer—killing Ahimelech and all Ahitub's house—confirmed the fact that it was Saul who sought to do evil. Further, it shows that David's words to Ahimelech were designed to keep the priests from turning against the anointed of the Lord who was now in office, Saul. Revolt would have dishonored the anointed who waited through whatever the Lord willed until He would make David king without taking the kingship by force. As with the battle against Goliath, this battle must belong to the Lord and not to David's flesh.

When David hears of these events from Abiathar, he takes responsibility for the evil done by Doeg and vows to protect Abiathar, just as he had vowed to be kind to the descendants of Jonathan. Clearly, the sin was Doeg's, but faith confesses everything that lacks perfection to be sin and seeks restitution—not as necessary to receive grace, but as showing the understanding of grace that has been received.

We pray: Grant us, O Lord, to act as those who treasure Your grace to us through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

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

### ARTICLE XII. Of Repentance.

In the twelfth article they [the Romanists] approve of the first part, in which we set forth that, to those who have fallen since baptism, the remission of sins can be imparted at whatever time, and as often as they are converted. ...

Let any one of the adversaries come forth and tell us when the remission of sins takes place. O good God, what darkness there is! They doubt whether it be in attrition or in contrition that remission of sins occurs. And if it occur on account of contrition, what need is there of absolution, what does the power of the keys effect, if sin have been already remitted? Here indeed they also labor much more, and wickedly detract from the power of the keys. ... For if the power of the keys do not console us before God, what then will pacify the conscience?

Moreover, the power of the keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which is the true voice of the Gospel. Thus we also comprise absolution, when we speak of faith, because "faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. 10:17). For when the Gospel is heard, and the absolution is heard, the conscience is encouraged, and receives consolation. And because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly remit sins before God, according to Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth Me." Wherefore the voice of the one absolving must be believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven. And absolution properly can be called a sacrament of repentance, as also the more learned scholastic theologians speak. ... Thus faith is conceived and strengthened through absolution, through the hearing of the Gospel, through the use of the sacraments, so that it may not succumb while it struggles with the terrors of sin and death. This theory of repentance is plain and clear, and increases the worth of the power of the keys and of the sacraments and illumines the benefit of Christ, and teaches us to avail ourselves of Christ as Mediator and Propitiator.

—The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, §1, 5, 7, 39–41, 42–43

**MONDAY, JULY 8: 1 SAMUEL 2:1-21 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

There is a clear contrast displayed between Eli's sons and Hannah's son within this text. Eli's sons, Phinehas and Hophni, were unfaithful in their service, while Samuel "grew in stature, and in favor both with the Lord and men." Eli's sons cared only about themselves and had no desire to do better, especially not toward God. Samuel's service was carried out in faith. God generates this same faith-filled service in His own children by delivering His gifts of Word and Sacrament through His Divine Service. Yet, sinful flesh ever brings us to think, speak, and act selfishly.

Although speaking about not bringing a brother to stumble by having a dispute over food, St. Paul reminds believers about service that is done in (or outside of) faith. He was inspired to write: "Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin." (Romans 14:23)

Thanks be to God that His Word and Sacraments keep us focused on the proper object of faith—Christ Jesus and His fully atoning merits for the forgiveness of sins!

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**THURSDAY, JULY 25: 1 SAMUEL 20:1-42 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

"If there is iniquity in me [toward Saul], kill me yourself." How powerful and how daring these words of David! How truly they should be echoed by every Christian!

Luther writes: "As St. Augustine says of himself, 'I may err, but I shall not become a heretic.' Reason: heretics not only err, but do not want to be corrected; they defend their error as though it were right, and fight against the recognized truth and their own conscience... But St. Augustine willingly confesses his error, and lets it be pointed out to him, so he cannot be a heretic even though he has erred. All the other saints do the same and gladly consign their hay, straw, and wood to the fire so that they may remain on the foundation of salvation." (On the Councils and the Church, Luther's Works, vol. 41, p. 50)

If we have error, if our conduct contradicts what we claim (even rightly) to be our faith, better that it be pointed out to us so that we may repent, than that we be left to flounder and perhaps depart from the Lord entirely. David, Augustine, and Luther confess that they would rather be treated like the Christians at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:27-31) and rightly receive sickness and even death, judging themselves, lest they be condemned with the world.

David's boldness emboldens Jonathan to demand of Saul, "Why should [David] be killed? What has he done?" While a dear friend defends David, these same words later come from Pilate's mouth.

We pray: Lord Jesus, grant us to suffer all correction to keep us in the true faith, confessing always that You alone are our holiness. Amen.



**WEDNESDAY, JULY 24: 1 SAMUEL 19:1-24 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

For all of Saul's turning against the Lord, his children show keen insight in applying the Ten Commandments.

Jonathan manifests a true understanding of the 4th Commandment: more than obedience it indicates "weighing parents down with glory." Jonathan contradicts Saul so that he would not become guilty of murdering (5th Commandment) God's anointed (1st Commandment) successor to the throne (4th again). As king—God's servant who bears the sword (cf. Romans 13)—Saul might have a valid, lawful reason for killing, but the killing of David was both without merit and contrary to God's express will that David should eventually be king (9th and 10th Commandments). Jonathan not only seeks to honor his father by preventing such evil, but even speaks well of David (8th Commandment) to cool Saul's murderous intent.

We also see Michal deceiving the soldiers Saul sent, to uncover those who are intent on murder (5th Commandment) so that her father might have the opportunity to turn from his evil plan (4th Commandment), much like the testing of Saul that Jonathan and David conceive in tomorrow's reading. Such resistance is also like the violation of Pharaoh's law by Moses' mother when she set him afloat and entrusted him to the Lord (1st Commandment, to "fear, love, and trust in God"), instead of simply allowing him to be slain.

We pray: O God, who has prepared for them that love You such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward You that we, loving You above all things, may obtain Your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**TUESDAY, JULY 9: 1 SAMUEL 3:1-21 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

"And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation."

It's easy to look around at this fallen, sinful world and witness the unbelief—a culture of degradation that wants to dictate that it is virtuous to conduct the very sin that God's Word speaks against. Yet, stop and think; you, the children of God, actually have the Word of the LORD in the midst of such degradation! Imagine if you didn't?

Yes, we Christians still have our own sin that adds to the sinful world, but thanks to the right dividing of God's Word of Law and Gospel He brings us to realize our sin, repent of it, trust in the fully atoning merits of Christ, and desire to do better. Unbelievers in the world think they are free, when, in actuality, they are imprisoned by a flesh (and will) that are bound.

This text reveals the LORD sustaining His Word throughout the time of Samuel. And because you have His Word with you today, He clearly has continued to keep it sustained. We Christians are brought to know that our only freedom is through faith in the Mercy Seat of Christ! Thanks be to God for bringing about the faithful preaching His Word and administration of His Sacraments!

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Israelites placed their faith in the physical presence of the Ark of the Covenant, believing in it to bring them victory over the Philistines. God, however, never made such a promise regarding the Ark, and He is not manipulated by man in any way!

The Mercy Seat pointed forward to the coming Messiah (the coming Christ), the One who would merit full forgiveness of sins, and all who have faith in His merits have exactly what is promised through Him, namely, forgiveness, life, and salvation! Through faith deliverance from sin, the devil, death, and damnation is guaranteed. The Israelites had their deliverance, but they perverted God's Word, and thus perverted their faith into a superstitious, lucky charm sort of deliverance from their hardships in life.

This is similar to the disciples when they were in the boat out in the water and a storm arose. They awaken Jesus to ask, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And He replies, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" Faith does not come from the imaginations of men. Faith is a gift, created from and continually based upon God's Word of truth! Deliverance from all that can assail you comes through God's gift of faith in the merits of Christ!

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Oh, the difference between glory being grasped by an earthly king and the glory shared by the King of Heaven and Earth!

To the flesh, Saul's displeasure at David's acclaim seems reasonable. First, David's body count grows because war is his whole job; second, David's victories should be counted as the king's. The singing of the women plays on Saul's insecurities, triggering the thought that, since David had been anointed as Saul's successor, he might simply rise up and take the kingship. (How different from Jonathan, who considered himself one spirit with David, thinking that if God chose David to rule and not Jonathan, "the will of God is always best"! Cf. TLH #517.)

What does the King of Kings and Lord of Lords say concerning the works of those who confess Him to be The Anointed (that is, the Christ)? "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (John 14:12). St. John repeatedly calls the miracles of Jesus "signs." They display in temporal reality what the eternal reality is. We see a Christ who casts demons out of the bodily possessed and restores bodies destroyed by sin: the paralyzed, the leprous, the dead. Those who follow by baptizing and teaching, though, will remove those born dead in trespasses from the grasp of sin, death, and Satan.

We pray: We thank you, O Lord, for the greater works being done: giving the eternal life of body and soul through the forgiveness of sins, all redounding to Your glory, because only in You are such works given, and as always, You graciously credit us with what You have earned and what You continue to do. Amen.

All Goliath wanted was a “fair fight”—as anyone might desire. Yet, any normal-sized man in normal armor engaging Goliath would be like a car having a “fair fight” with a tank. David knew that his own strength would never be enough to match up to Goliath’s, so he set aside Saul’s armor and trusted that the battle belonged to the Lord.

Fallen humanity thinks a fair fight might be had with the devil. Many even think that they win without defeating him, but merely by doing better than their neighbors. However, if even the previously sinless Adam and Eve could not defeat the newly-fallen angel, how would anyone today, born in Adam’s corrupt image, fight a devil with thousands of years’ experience in deceiving humans? As with David and Goliath, the battle must belong to the Lord.

So it is that the Descendant of David, whom David calls both “Son” and “Lord” in Psalm 110 (cf. Mark 12:35-37), must lay “hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan” (Revelation 12:9, 20:2). David stays out of the grasp and swinging sword of Goliath so that the Lord may win the battle through him. David’s Son and Lord, though, is willing to let the serpent’s fangs pierce His heel, so that He may crush the serpent’s head.

We pray: Our battle belongs entirely to You, O Triune God, willing it before the world’s foundation, setting the life and death of Christ to be righteousness acceptable in place of our sin, and causing us to trust in His atonement through the Holy Spirit’s use of the Gospel; we thank you for giving us the victory. Amen.

When God causes the statue of the false god Dagon to be prostrate (fallen face down and eventually broken) before the Ark of the Covenant—and similarly when Elijah mocks the foolishness of the prophets who trusted in the false god Baal because their prayers went up to nothing (1 Kings 18:20-40)—a bit of a “Ha ha, take that” cockiness can arise within the children of God. It must be remembered, however, that the one true triune God is a jealous God, who commands that there be no other gods before Him!

What about our own flesh, then, that carries out an endless breaking of the first Commandment on a daily basis? In our flesh nothing good dwells. Being brought to our knees (or lower) is never a comfortable position for prideful flesh.

As it was with the Philistines, so it is for everyone; the Judgement Seat of God’s Law is impossible to escape. The only place for believers to boast is the same place of which all can flee for refuge: the Mercy Seat, who is Christ Jesus! Thanks be to God that His Law mercifully strikes us down with the purpose of raising us up through faith alone in His Gospel (the fully atoning merits of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen)!

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Luther says that God sometimes pulls away from His children to the point that they will think He has abandoned them. He does this to (1) keep His people from putting trust in themselves, (2) give an example to others, to shake the self confident and comfort those who are afraid, and (3) teach His saints where they should seek true peace.

When Israel trusted in the location of the Ark, God pulled back and allowed the Israelites to be overtaken by the Philistines. The Ark of the Covenant is, eventually, returned to Israel, but the Philistines dare to go up against them again. Notice Israel does not rely on the Ark for protection, yet a fear of the Philistines exists. Having been rightly focused by God, however, the Israelites reveal where trust should be placed. They ask Samuel to cry out to the Lord, that He may save them. Their strength only comes from the Lord.

Amidst our own sinful mistrust God sometimes mercifully pulls back to rightly focus us. Thus, as our cries for mercy go up to the Lord, He brings us to trust in the strength that He alone supplies—the fully atoning merits of Christ Jesus! Only through Him is there sure comfort and true peace!

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; 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 Fifth Sunday after Trinity

### X. Of Ordination and the Call.

If the bishops were true bishops, and would devote themselves to the Church and the Gospel, they might be allowed, for the sake of love and unity, and not from necessity, to ordain and confirm us and our preachers; nevertheless, under the condition that all masks and phantoms of unchristian nature and display be laid aside. Yet because they neither are nor wish to be true bishops, but worldly lords and princes, who will neither preach, nor teach, nor baptize, nor administer the Lord's Supper, nor perform any work or office of the Church, but persecute and condemn those who being called discharge this duty; for their sake the Church ought not to remain without ministers.

Therefore, as the ancient example of the Church and the Fathers teach us, we ourselves will and ought to ordain suitable persons to this office; and (even according to their own laws) they have not the right to forbid or prevent us. For their laws say that those ordained even by heretics should be regarded and remain as ordained, as St. Jerome writes of the Church at Alexandria, that at first was governed in common by the bishops through the priests and preachers.

—The Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article X

King Saul stood out from the people of Israel. He is called a very handsome man. He was taller than everybody else; everyone else only came up to his shoulder. If mankind was to choose a king, King Saul would be the man chosen in most cases. He was everything that mankind desired in a king: someone who stood out from the crowd.

David was the opposite. He was the youngest of eight brothers. His appearance was “ruddy.” But he had “bright eyes.” His eyes were the window to his soul. For his outward appearance hid the beauty of his inward soul. He was a man after the Lord’s own heart. His every inclination was to consider the Lord’s will and, in every situation, he expected the Lord to act on his behalf, caring for him and protecting him.

David is a picture of our Lord Jesus, the Christ. We are told that His outward appearance was nothing special. He was just like any other man. But He was not just a man. He was also God, who came down from Heaven to fulfill the Law perfectly for us, and suffer our punishment on the tree of the holy cross so that we might through faith have forgiveness, life, and salvation. His every inclination was to do the will of His heavenly Father. And it was His will that He should suffer and die for us, so that we might go free. Truly, our Lord Jesus is the One True King who rules over us in His grace and mercy.

We pray: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Oh how soon they forget! The people of Israel had been reminded of who they were to rely upon, about where it was that their strength was found; namely, in the Lord! They grew impatient, yet again, and asked Samuel to establish a king over them. Again this is a serious slight toward the Lord, for He desires that they rely on what He establishes for guidance, namely, Himself.

God had been watching over them. He placed judges over them at His determination. They were His chosen people. He rescued their forefathers from the hands of Egyptian slavery, He supplied their every need, and He was their true King. Their response back to God was, “We want to be like the world.” God, however, doesn’t just work by force, so they got what they wanted. And the king that they asked for would “take” and make the people suffer.

It’s easy for all flesh to be impatient and establish idols, for it is sinful and at enmity with God from conception. Thankfully, God brings the New Man in His believing, baptized children to repent of such idolatry, desiring to amend such a sinful life, and confess Jesus Christ as King of kings—the Mercy Seat to whom all sinners should flee for refuge through faith alone!

We pray: O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; 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 Fourth Sunday after Trinity

### THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

#### **Thou shalt not bear false witness.**

Thus you see, in short, it is forbidden to speak any evil of our neighbor, and yet the civil government, preachers, father and mother are excepted, that this commandment may be so understood that evil be not unreprieved. Just therefore as, according to the Fifth Commandment, no one is to be injured in body, and yet the executioner is excepted, who, by virtue of his office, does his neighbor no good, but only evil and harm, and nevertheless does not sin against God's commandment, because God has, on His own account instituted that office; for He has reserved punishment for His own good pleasure, as He has threatened in the First Commandment,—just so also, although no one has a right in his own person to judge and condemn another, yet if they to whose office it belongs refuse to do it, they sin as well as he who should do so without such office. For here necessity requires one to speak of the evil, to make accusation, to investigate and testify; and it is not different from the case of a physician who is sometimes compelled to handle and examine a patient in parts otherwise not to be examined. Just so governments, father and mother, brothers and sisters, and other good friends, are under obligation to each other to reprove evil wherever it is needful and profitable.

—The Large Catechism, §274–275

FRIDAY, JULY 19: 1 SAMUEL 15:1-35 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Do not spare those who deserve punishment. This is contrary to justice. Many people in our society believe that justice involves getting your way in matters. But justice means that evil is punished and the innocent go free.

Saul is instructed to utterly destroy the Amalekites for their attack upon Israel. He only completes part of the destruction. He left Agag alive and kept the best of the sheep and oxen. Samuel in his rebuke of Saul reminds him of the time when he was first anointed king, how Saul felt unworthy of the position that was granted to him. Now puffed up in his pride, Saul has forsaken the command of the Lord and done what he thought was right in his own eyes.

Whether or not the animals were good for sacrifices to the Lord was not his decision. They were to be destroyed with the rest as a testimony against anyone who would seek to act against the people of the Lord. In leaving Agag alive, who was the ruler and therefore the one responsible for the people, it is as if Saul let the entire nation go free.

Sin needs to be punished so that we learn how it destroys us. We cannot free ourselves from sin. Our Lord does what Saul did not, he utterly destroyed our enemies by allowing His own body to be put to death on the cross. His sacrifice atones for the sins of the whole world, and justifies all those who cling in faith to this sacrifice.

We pray: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.



**THURSDAY, JULY 18: 1 SAMUEL 13:1-14 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

Saul takes upon himself an authority that has not been given to him. He was charged to be king of the people of Israel. But Samuel had the spiritual authority over the people. Saul, in his impatience and fear of the Philistines, does not wait for the man of God to come and perform his duties, but rather usurps that role for himself. By this he incurs the wrath of God, who will now rip the kingship from him and give it to someone else.

The kingship will be given to David, from whom will come the Messiah, our Lord Jesus. David is described as a man after the Lord's own heart. He desires and does what the Lord desires to be done. He lives his life according to the commands and statutes of the Lord God.

David may be the man that supplants Saul, but this prophecy is really about our Lord Jesus. He is truly a Man after God's own heart, for He is true God, and true man. He does all things according to God's Law and will. He fulfilled the Law of God for all mankind, since we are unable to keep the Law on account of our inborn sin.

Our Lord Jesus is King, and Priest, and Prophet. Therefore, He has authority over both the physical and spiritual realms. He cares for all of creation, but He especially cares for His Church, wherein He nourishes all of us who cling to Him in faith through the means of grace.

We pray: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

**MONDAY, JULY 15: 1 SAMUEL 9:1-27 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

Prophets at first were called Seers. This means that they saw things. But this is not referring to things that they saw with their physical eyes, but things that they saw with their spiritual eyes. They saw the things that were to come to pass. Specifically, they saw the coming of the Messiah in the Lord Jesus, the Christ.

Samuel is called a Seer. He was able to see things that were hidden from the eyes of man. Therefore, Saul seeks out Samuel in order that he might be able to find his father Kish's lost donkeys. All this was set in motion so that when Samuel met Saul he could anoint Saul as "commander over [the Lord's] people Israel." Saul is chosen by the Lord God to save His people from the hand of the Philistines—the enemy of Israel.

In this way, Saul is a figure of the Christ. The Lord Jesus, who was foretold by the Seers of old, was sent by the heavenly Father to redeem the world from her enemies—the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. Our Lord Jesus Christ is anointed king over all things by His blood, shed on the tree of the holy cross. A kingly crown of thorns is placed on His head in His suffering for us. Now that He has died and risen from the dead He has ascended to Heaven and reigns over all things at the right hand of the heavenly Father, showing eternal mercy to all those who cling to Him in faith.

We pray: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

**TUESDAY, JULY 16: 1 SAMUEL 10:1-27 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

The Seer Samuel anoints Saul to be king over Israel. However, when all the tribes are gathered together for the choosing of the king, Saul hides himself from the crowd. At this time Saul only sees his station in life. He is from the lowest family of the lowest tribe in all of Israel. He carries a spirit of humility; a trait that would serve most people well.

Of course, we know that Saul does not remain humble. As soon as he becomes king, he puffs himself up with pride in his high station. He was able to stay humble when he was confronted daily with the low estate of his station in life, when he was daily reminded that he was from the lowest family of the lowest tribe of Israel. But when he achieved a high station, the humility left him.

The same happens to us. When we are confronted daily with our sins we humble ourselves before the Lord, confessing that we are poor, miserable sinners who can find forgiveness in Him alone. But when we ignore our sinfulness, we get puffed up with pride at our attempts to keep the Law, thinking to ourselves that we are not that bad. We begin to rely on our good works, and forget that we are filled with original sin, which we inherited from our first parents.

Let us daily remember that the Old Adam dwells within us, and that he needs to be drowned daily, so that in faith we may arise and cling to the salvation in Christ alone.

We pray: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 17: 1 SAMUEL 12:1-25 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY**

The Prophet Samuel in his address to the people sets forth an example for the newly anointed King Saul to follow. Samuel has not taken anything from the people of Israel. He has cared for the flock of God by being faithful to the pure and true preaching of the Word of God. He has not done it for earthly riches.

In this way, the Prophet Samuel exhibits the same heart has the Lord Jesus Christ, who humbled Himself to be born of the Virgin Mary, so that He might atone for the sins of the whole world and justify all those who cling to Him in faith. He humbled Himself by coming down from His throne in Heaven. He set aside His divinity, so that He might serve us, His people. In this He shows His love for us. He empties Himself, so that we might have every good thing.

Samuel's humility was to serve as an example to King Saul. He was to rule in this manner. He was to care for the people in the same way that their King—the Lord God—had done up to this point. The same spirit should exist in all those placed in positions of authority: pastors, parents, government officials, teachers, etc. They should wield their authority always with concern for those entrusted to their care, so that the people may be instructed in the Christian faith, and through continuing in the Church be brought to their eternal home in Heaven.

We pray: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.