

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28: 1 JOHN 4:1–8 27<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

Simply admitting Jesus lived is not the “confession that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.” Teaching us to “test the spirits,” Luther identifies the spirit of Antichrist working in John’s day: “The Jews deny constantly that Christ came in the flesh, and Cerinthus kept denying that Christ existed before Mary. If He came into the flesh, it follows that He existed before the flesh. He who denies that He came into the flesh denies that He is God and man. Accordingly, he is not of God but is of the devil.” Further detailing Antichrist’s teaching, Luther continues, “Nor is the spirit of the pope of a better sort. For the pope confesses the statement that Christ came in the flesh, but he denies its fruits. But this is the same as saying that Christ did not come in the flesh. For Christ’s coming in the flesh did not take place in order that He might be made man for His own sake; it took place in order that He might save us.” (Luther’s Works, CPH, vol. 30, p. 285)

Once again, we see the standard: whoever denies that Jesus is true God, born of the Virgin Mary to fulfill all righteousness so it could be credited to us, and to die on the cross to atone for our sins so they would not be credited to us, is in league with the Antichrist. The world loves such preachers and false Christians, because neither know what true love is: God’s love for us in Christ Jesus.

Prayer: O Triune God, beyond all bounds, yet dwelling within us, grant that we always take comfort in Your being greater than this world’s false prince. Though all despise and forsake us, You remain with us ever, strong to save, by grace alone. Amen.

# THE LUTHERAN HERALD



NOVEMBER 1–28, 2020

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## *The Calendar*

November 1	Trinity 21/All Saints' Day	TLH 373/TLH 465
November 8	Trinity 25	TLH 522
November 15	Trinity 26	TLH 36
November 22	Trinity 27	TLH 67

### *Seminary Schedule*

The Fall quarter of seminary instruction is quickly coming to its conclusion: the last day of classes is Friday, November 13. The students and faculty will then have a two week break before the beginning of the Winter quarter on Tuesday, December 1. During the Winter quarter, four classes will be offered: Greek, Hermeneutics, Lutheran Confessions 1, and Liturgics Practicum 1. Classes are taught Tuesday through Friday morning, with Matins each morning.

### *Support for the Diocese and Seminary*

The start of seminary classes has us all mindful of the ongoing expenses of the seminary. There is also a need for support of the diocesan general fund, as the focused visitation schedule has support running a little behind expenses at this point. If you would be willing to help meet these ongoing needs, support for ELDoNA (either general fund, or seminary) can be sent care of the diocesan treasurer, Pastor Michael Henson, c/o Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church 1000 North Park Ave. Herrin, IL 62948.

As the Fall quarter quickly nears its completion, we wish to express our thanks to the members of Salem who have provided lunches for us throughout the quarter. It makes a tremendous difference to have this time for conversation after class, and to be able to enjoy a meal together. Thank you!

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27: 1 JOHN 3:19-24      27<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

Certainly, we have trouble comprehending yesterday's words about how we don't sin, even though we do sin. We know what we see in our lives more thoroughly than we understand the Gospel! The Holy Spirit, therefore, comforts us through John: "if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." That is, "You see that your flesh has led you to thoughts, words, or deeds condemned by the Law, and if you dwelt in these, they would condemn you... but the Holy Spirit keeps you desiring forgiveness and trusting that Jesus atoned for your sins with the sins of the whole world, so tell your heart, 'God knows better' and sees Jesus' obedience in place of your sin, crediting you with having kept His commandments for Jesus' sake."

St. Paul looks at his own conduct (see Romans 5-7, especially 6:1-3, 11-15; 7:7-9, 14-20, 23-25), and concludes by faith and against sight: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," because, by definition, through faith we "do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit," because "what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son" (Romans 8:1, 3)! Seeing flesh still rebelling against God's commandments, John cites God's most important desire: "that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ," as He who believes in Him is not condemned, "by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him."

Prayer: Grant, dear Father, that the comforting of our heart by Your grace would lead us to rejoice by being conformed to Your will in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Amen.

“Lawlessness” is the rejection of the Law and, therefore, of the Lawgiver (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 8). You who have been baptized into Christ and trust Him as the One who takes away your sin are not “lawless”, though. You are not “abiding in” sin, but Christ’s seed—the Word of God (Mark 4:14, 1 Peter 1:23)—remains in you to destroy the works of the devil, freeing you from the sin your flesh would embrace. St. Paul also writes about this “Mystery of Godliness” (1 Timothy 3:16): godliness is not gained by your behavior, but is to be expressed by it, being produced entirely through Him who was manifested to take away our sins and in connection with whom there is no sin.

John wrote just two chapters earlier that if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, the truth is not in us, and we call God a liar! Yet, here he teaches us that while our flesh leads us to stumble into sin, this is not allowed to contradict God’s having called us His children and heirs. He has given it to us to confess our sins, and He who is faithful and just also forgives us and cleanses us (1 John 1:7–10). Apart from faith in such absolution for Jesus’ sake, we could not do righteousness, but with our sin forgiven, God shows righteousness as all we do (Matthew 25:31–46), so long as we remain in this repentance and faith—a true comfort as the world speeds toward the Judgment Day!

Prayer: O, Holy Spirit, help us glory only in Christ’s cross, that we may confess and flee from our sins and cling to Holy Absolution, won for us there. Amen.

FROM THE BISHOP

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

As I write to you, the world appears to be living up to its standard “2020 Protocol”: uncertainty and anxiety. Certainly, the eruption of new violence in the midst of a contentious election has only heightened concerns. And the recent martyrdoms in France, with a Mohammedan terrorist murdering a Sacristan and two parishioners in Nice, is a reminder that the troubles which confront us are by no means limited to 2020 alone. The evil of Islam has afflicted the saints for over 1,300 years. It was with good reason that Johann Gerhard referred to Islam as the Antichrist of the East (just as the Pope is the Antichrist of the West).

But there is no cause for despair, for all things unfold as the Word of the Lord declared it would, and the Triune God continues to preserve His little flock. Thus we hear the Word which the Holy Spirit inspired St. Paul to write to the Church in Rome: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:37–39) We know sorrow as we see those things which arise from the spiritual depravity of man and the wicked instigation of the evil one. But our victory in Christ Jesus shall never pass away.

Stand steadfast in the faith, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. “...[F]or now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” (Rom. 13:11)

*Yours in Christ, Bp. Heiser*

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## The Twenty—First Sunday after Trinity

### Article XX.

Our teachers are falsely accused of forbidding Good Works. For their published writings on the Ten Commandments, and others of like import, bear witness that they have taught to good purpose concerning all estates and duties of life, as to what estates of life and what works in every calling be pleasing to God. Concerning these things preachers heretofore taught but little, and urged only childish and needless works, as particular holy days, particular fasts, brotherhoods, pilgrimages, services in honor of saints, the use of rosaries, monasticism, and such like. Since our adversaries have been admonished of these things they are now unlearning them, and do not preach these unprofitable works as heretofore. Besides they begin to mention faith, of which there was heretofore marvellous silence. They teach that we are justified not by works only, but they conjoin faith and works, and say that we are justified by faith and works. This doctrine is more tolerable than the former one, and can afford more consolation than their old doctrine.

Forasmuch, therefore, as the doctrine concerning faith, which ought to be the chief one in the Church, has lain so long unknown, as all must needs grant that there was the deepest silence in their sermons concerning the righteousness of faith, while only the doctrine of works was treated in the churches, our teachers have instructed the churches concerning faith as follows:

First, that our works cannot reconcile God or merit forgiveness of sins, grace and justification, but that we obtain this only by faith, when we believe that we are received into favor for Christ's sake, who alone has been set forth the Mediator and Propitiation [1 Tim. 2:5], in order that the Father may be reconciled through Him. Whoever, therefore, trusts that by works he merits grace, despises the merit and grace of Christ, and seeks a way to God without Christ, by human strength, although Christ said of Himself: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" [John 14:6].

This doctrine concerning faith is everywhere treated by Paul [Eph. 2:8]: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works," etc.

And lest anyone should craftily say that a new interpretation of Paul has been devised by us, this entire matter is supported by the testimonies of the Fathers. For Augustine, in many volumes, defends grace and the righteousness of faith, over against the merits of works. And Ambrose, in his *De Vocatione*

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25: 1 JOHN 2:18–29 27<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

Adding to the trouble we've already considered—mockers, plus the apostate who appear as if they were the Church and lead many astray—St. John now tells of the Antichrist, and that many like him had already come! He warns briefly, but thoroughly enough for us to recognize them.

What reveals and characterizes the Antichrist, and the antichrists, is that they are deniers of God the Son and His saving work. There are those who, John says, went out from the Church, looking like the Church, but not being the Church. Among these are those who deny that Jesus is God the Son, a distinct Person from God the Father, but of the same Substance. The Athanasian Creed was traditionally confessed on all major festivals of the Church Year to prevent us from falling into the ways of these ancient heretics or their modern counterparts who so blatantly deny the deity of Christ.

More pernicious, though, are those antichrists who are not so blatant, outwardly confessing Jesus to be true God, but confounding His work. These tempt us to look to something other than His atonement for the world's sins as our salvation—whether directing our faith to our experience of His blessings or miraculous power, to our feelings of holiness or closeness to Him and the Church, or seeking assurance of our election through our works or service. The great Antichrist who enthrones himself over God, though, demands our faith to be in our works (or those of the saints) as supplementing Jesus' payment for our salvation. He demands allegiance to himself, and condemns salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ alone (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4, 7–10).

Prayer: O Holy Spirit, sanctify and keep us in the true faith, transforming us by and conforming us to Your holy Word! Amen.

Scripture uses the word “faith” in two distinct, but related, ways: 1) that which believes and 2) that which is believed. Where we look for help in every need is our real ‘god’ (Large Catechism, 1st Commandment), so our faith must be in the right faith, to be helped and saved—in the one true God’s grace in Christ alone!

St. Jude exhorts us “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” Thereby, the Holy Spirit calls us to hold in its purity that which must be believed, to keep pure the teaching of God’s Word, lest we ultimately deny our Lord Jesus Christ, the only way to the Father (John 14:6). As with Peter’s exhortation yesterday, Jude considers those turning God’s grace into lewdness. As St. Paul does in 1 Corinthians 10, Jude shows us those who were to live by God’s grace in the expectation of the coming of Christ, and how they so often failed. His day’s temptations of which he warns us are so prevalent also in our world today: “these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries... grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.” Such we must not combat with the flesh, but, following Michael’s example, commend their breaking and hindering to God’s own will and work (Lord’s Prayer, Third Petition), looking always toward His mercy, that we might be built “up on [our] most holy faith,” “the faith which was once for all handed down by the saints.”

Prayer: Lord, grant us such a thankful desire to strive together in carrying forth Your mission that we always be returned to the means through which You bring us Your grace in Christ. Amen.

*Gentium*, and elsewhere, teaches to like effect. For in his *De Vocatione Gentium* he says as follows: “Redemption by the Blood of Christ would become of little value, neither would the preeminence of man’s works be superseded by the mercy of God, if justification, which is wrought through grace, were due to the merits going before, so as to be, not the free gift of a donor, but the reward due to a laborer.”

But, although this doctrine is despised by the inexperienced, nevertheless, God-fearing and anxious consciences find by experience that it brings the greatest consolation, because consciences cannot be pacified through any works, but only by faith, when they are sure that, for Christ’s sake, they have a gracious God. As Paul teaches [Rom. 5:11]: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” This whole doctrine is to be referred to that conflict of the terrified conscience; neither can it be understood apart from that conflict. Therefore inexperienced and profane men judge ill concerning this matter, who dream that Christian righteousness is nothing but the civil righteousness of natural reason.

Heretofore consciences were plagued with the doctrine of works, nor did they hear any consolation from the Gospel. Some persons were driven by conscience into the desert, into monasteries, hoping there to merit grace by a monastic life. Some also devised other works whereby to merit grace and make satisfaction for sins. There was very great need to treat of and renew this doctrine of faith in Christ, to the end that anxious consciences should not be without consolation, but that they might know that grace and forgiveness of sins and justification are apprehended by faith in Christ.

Men are also admonished that here the term “faith” doth not signify merely the knowledge of the history, such as in the ungodly and in the devil, but signifieth a faith which believes, not merely the history, but also the effect of the history—namely, this article of the forgiveness of sins, to wit, that we have grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins, through Christ.

Now he that knoweth that he has a Father reconciled to him through Christ, since he truly knows God, knows also that God careth for him, and calls upon God; in a word, he is not without God, as the heathen. For devils and the ungodly are not able to believe this article of the forgiveness of sins. Hence, they hate God as an enemy; call not upon Him; and expect no good from Him. Augustine also admonishes his readers concerning the word “faith,” and teaches that the term “faith” is accepted in the Scriptures, not for knowledge such as in the ungodly, but for confidence which consoles and encourages the terrified mind.

Furthermore, it is taught on our part, that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God.

—The Augsburg Confession, §1–27

In the Collect for the Day for the Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity Sunday the Church prays that the Lord would keep His household free from all adversities. In the first chapter of the Epistle of the Blessed Apostle St. Paul to the Church at Ephesus he repeats one word over and again: inheritance. We are in the household of the Lord. We share in an inheritance with all the members of the holy and apostolic Church. Our citizenship is in Heaven.

We were brought into this Church—into this inheritance—through the washing of regeneration. We were baptized into the holy catholic Church and made co-heirs with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He won for us a place in the Kingdom of Heaven by obeying the Law of God perfectly, which we were unable to do, and by offering up His life as a ransom on our behalf on the tree of the holy cross. He shed His blood for us so that we might be called His family through the faith created in us by the Holy Ghost working through the means of grace.

In this holy, apostolic, and catholic Church our Lord richly and daily forgives our sins, guards us from all adversities, and keeps us in continual godliness. This is the inheritance that He gives us, purely out of His great love and mercy for us. Let us daily give Him thanks and praise for making us a part of the household of faith, the holy catholic Church.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection She may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Today's reading tells us about those who don't listen to the words of yesterday's Epistle and Gospel. They sleep like the foolish virgins, but they mumble and grumble in their sleep: they don't just think they are 'good enough' for the kingdom of 'whatever god there may or may not be,' but that they are, in fact, superior to Christians. The believers, they think, are waiting for something that will never come, something that they believe is just nonsense. After all, everything is just how it has been: nothing has changed yet, so nothing will change ever; Jesus hasn't come back, so He's not going to come back.

St. Peter handles such objections easily. God is not sluggish about keeping His promise or fulfilling His warning; He is unwilling to judge the world until He has shown His mercy completely, bringing the full number of His elect into the Kingdom! In this way, Peter says, He would stir up our minds that have been made pure in God's eyes by the blood of Christ to show this understanding in our lives. Since the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night to those who sleep, we are to be seen looking forward to that Day, growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. Some twist the Word of grace, Peter says, using it as a license to sin. Instead, we look forward with sober joy, focused on and proclaiming in our words and actions that we and any who stand in that Day will do so by grace alone, for the sake of the Crucified Christ alone.

Prayer: Lord of Harvest, let there be joy and strength to work for Thee, till the nations far and near see Thy light and learn Thy fear. Amen. (TLH #507:6)

# 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

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3: EPHESIANS 2:1-22 21<sup>ST</sup> S. A. TRINITY

Yesterday, we heard that we have an inheritance in Heaven. Today, St. Paul tells us just how glorious that inheritance is, for before we were made children of the Lord God, we were dead in our sins and trespasses. Sin had so infected us that we were dead. Only the Lord God through the work of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ could make us alive so that we might enjoy the Kingdom of Heaven as our home and inheritance.

Lest we think that we were able to do anything to bring ourselves out of death, St. Paul writes that we have nothing in which we can boast of ourselves. We are brought into life out of death only by grace. It is only an undeserved gift which we cannot buy or for which we can do enough works. It is given to us purely out of our Lord's love and compassion for us. It is simply by grace. There is nothing in us that merits this grace. What we possessed only brought us death, and the Lord God's enmity.

We were at enmity with the Lord God on account of our sins, but our Lord Jesus Christ took the enmity against us into His own body on the holy cross. He took the wrath of the Lord God that we deserved and offered up His life as a ransom for us. He died so that we might have life and have it eternally. He died so that we might have a home and inheritance in Heaven.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection She may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4: EPHESIANS 4:7-21 21<sup>ST</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

In order to secure our inheritance and bring us into His household of the Church, our Lord Jesus descended from Heaven to fulfill the Law of God perfectly on our behalf and offer up His life as a ransom for ours on the tree of the holy cross. Having completed all things necessary for the atonement of the whole world, our Lord Jesus ascended into Heaven and took His place at the right hand of God the Father, where He intercedes for us until the Last Day.

The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son to keep us in this Church—to keep us in continual godliness—until our Lord Christ’s return. The Holy Ghost works through means. The Church has been sent apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers, in order that we might no longer be children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. The Holy Ghost establishes the Church—establishes us in the one, true faith—by giving us ministers who preach the Word of God in its truth and purity, and administer the Sacraments according to Christ’s institution.

It is through the faithful use of the means of grace that we are kept in the pure doctrine of the Word of God. For we are no longer like the Gentiles who walk in the futility of their own minds, whose understanding is full of darkness, and live a life alienated from the Lord God. Our Lord keeps us from all adversities that would drive us away from Him.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection She may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21: 2 PETER 2:1-22 26<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

This entire text is condemning in no uncertain terms those who preach and practice heterodoxy (heresy blended with orthodoxy) among God’s elect. Understanding this one fact is critical to properly reading and inwardly digesting this holy inspired Scripture. The apostle is earnestly warning all believers to watch diligently for this compromising of God’s holy doctrine, and he is calling to repentance those who are guilty of knowingly promoting this abominable hypocrisy.

False teaching and behavior is widespread in Christianity today, masquerading under the popular guises of tolerance, progressiveness, compassion, etc., as it cunningly draws many ever closer to eternal darkness and damnation. This concern about the horrible dangers of hypocrisy is not unique to this epistle or this apostle either, for the Gospel of Saint Matthew is filled with impassioned warnings and judgments against hypocrisy throughout, spoken by Christ Himself.

Our text points to the reality that false prophets and teachers are not always raving heretics or pagans; they are subtle, crafty, pleasant people who claim to be part of the Church while slipping deadly poison into her life-giving, life-sustaining Means of Grace. This is likely the reason there is such stark warning throughout Scripture regarding hypocrisy and heterodoxy, for it is supple and shrewd, just like its father, the great deceiver and serpent of the Garden, who also tempted Jesus in the wilderness.

Prayer: Almighty God, grant that the tremendous gift of faith You have bestowed purely by grace may be ever strengthened in us by Your holy Means of Grace and daily repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

In this second epistle of the apostle, the introduction to his audience leaves no doubt about from whence their discipleship comes. The first two verses make it clear that the precious life-giving faith of all believers comes as a gift from their Lord and Redeemer purely by grace. Then verse nine points us back through the preceding list of Christian attributes and activities to verses one and two from whence our ability to accomplish anything worthy comes. “For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.” All that the believer needs for salvation and the sanctified life is what he has already received through faith and the Word. Throughout this text the Apostle Peter reminds you that Christ by “His divine power has granted” that “you may become partakers of the divine nature” and through that divine nature you are justified before God and able to pursue the sanctified life.

Presented in each verse of today’s text is the blessed confession of Jesus Christ and Him crucified for sins, and that His disciples, justified by grace through faith, may strive to live their sanctified life of discipleship to the fullest.

Prayer: Almighty God, grant that the tremendous gift of faith You have bestowed purely by grace may be ever strengthened in us by Your holy Means of Grace and daily repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Just like any family, and because we are poor, miserable sinners, we as the family of God can get on each other’s nerves. We are tempted to be filled with bitterness, wrath, anger, and the desire to speak evil of one another. There should not proceed out of our mouths any corrupt word, but only what is necessary for the edification of each other. We are not to tear each other down, but we are to build each other up. We are to bear with one another’s sins and transgressions. This comes from understanding that the person next to us is also filled with sin like us.

St. Paul tells the Ephesians that they should be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another just as the Lord God forgave them on account of the Lord Jesus Christ and His works and merits. This is on Whom our focus should be. It should be on the Lord Jesus and what He has done for us in order to make us a family of the Lord God.

When everyone understands that all of us need the correcting words of the Law, that all of us need to be reminded daily that we are poor, miserable sinners, it is easier to forgive as we have been forgiven. Certainly, there are times when some individual may need further encouragement in this fact. He should be treated with the same patience that our Lord has for us, with the intent to bring him back into the household of faith.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection She may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sin kills. We are conceived and born in sin. Therefore, we are conceived and born in death. Those who remain in impenitent sin are trapped in darkness. This is why the flesh needs to hear over and over again that it is corrupted by sin. It needs to be called out of death and darkness. It needs to be made aware that its existence is one of death and darkness.

Only on account of the works of our Lord Jesus can we be called out of darkness and death. He says to our sinful flesh, "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead." In this past Sunday's Gospel, the nobleman's son was sick to the point of death. Our Lord Jesus proclaimed, "Go your way; your son lives," and it was so. He speaks the same to us through His called and ordained ministers who exclaim to our flesh, "Christ will give you light." They call us out of darkness and death into light and life through the proclamation of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.

He has fulfilled perfectly that which we have broken, and continue to break. He has entered into the dark tomb by way of His death on the cross to restore to us life and light. Therefore, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but expose them through confession to the minister, and he will bring you into the light of forgiveness in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection She may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

In this final text for our meditations from Saint Peter's first epistle we see a contrast presented. On the one hand we hear about what is to be avoided by Christians, for we are told none of us should suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a meddler. Instead, disciples of Christ should only suffer for doing good and for pursuing the will of God in daily life. In fact, Christians should glory in any suffering that comes upon them because of the name of Jesus Christ and their being true disciples of His.

We, like many of the apostles and early disciples, should rejoice that we are so blessed as to suffer for the sake of the name "Christian". Our text opens with a revelation that the disciples of Jesus should never be surprised by fiery trials, for their Lord suffered thusly during His earthly sojourn. It then concludes with the observation that, if judgment begins in God's grace-filled Church, what will be the outcome for those poor wretches who are outside of this grace-filled fellowship? For if those who love God and strive after His will and Word suffer in spite of being righteous through faith, what horrible outcome of judgment must await the ungodly sinner who is unwashed by the cleansing flood of Christ's blood, issued forth from His Word and Sacraments? May God bring such sinners to faith in Christ's Gospel with us!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, multiply Your mercy on us that, with You as our Lord and Redeemer, we may be founded on the solid Rock, and thus pass through things temporal in such a way that we lose not the things eternal. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18: 1 PETER 4:1-7 26<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

The first four verses of chapter four harken back to the Spirit inspired Words of instruction for Christian life detailed in the verses of chapters two and three. We are again called to be sensible and sober-minded for the sake of our prayers, not allowing emotion and the flesh to get the best of us in any circumstance or vocation of life.

We are reminded once again that we are what we are because we have been made holy and sanctified for a life of blessed discipleship that strives to be a perfect copy of our Master and Teacher (in thought and deed). Our Lord has redeemed us from our former lives of fleshly, worldly, antichrist-like intents and behavior. You are righteous because He who redeems you is righteous; you are holy because He who died for your sins is holy. Look, sound, and think like what you, by the grace of God, are through faith! Remember who you are and what you are capable of as a redeemed child of God and disciple of Jesus Christ, purely by grace. This is possible, as said at the beginning of this chapter, because though we are in the flesh, we are not of the flesh. And though we are tempted by the flesh, we are controlled by the will of God and His Word.

Prayer: 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 be found to be faithful to Your Word and will. Amen.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7: EPHESIANS 5:22-33 21<sup>ST</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

This week's lections began by talking about an inheritance. We have an inheritance in Heaven—we have been made citizens of Heaven—on account of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. We have a family—a household—which is called the Church. The appointed readings for this week end with the Blessed Apostle St. Paul telling the Church at Ephesus that this family of Christ and His Church is modeled in the most intimate of families: husband and wife.

Like a husband and wife are two that become one flesh, so too Christ and His Church are united as one. The Church is washed in the blood of the Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ. He cleanses His Bride with His blood; the blood shed on the tree of the holy cross. He feeds the Church with His real and substantial Body and Blood in bread and wine; the Body and Blood which He offered on the cross for His Bride, the Church.

Through these means the Church is united to her Bridegroom. All those born through faith are born of mother Church and enjoy all the gifts that the Bridegroom gives to His Bride. Our Lord Jesus makes of us a household—a family—and gives us the inheritance that He won for us on the tree of the holy cross. He clings to us on account of His love for us, and we cling to Him through faith in His love for us.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection She may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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

## XIV. Of Monastic Vows.

As monastic vows directly conflict with the first chief article, they ought to be absolutely abolished. For it is of them that Christ says (Matt. 24:5, 23 sqq.): “I am Christ,” etc. For he who makes a vow to live in a monastery believes that he will enter upon a mode of life holier than the ordinary Christians, and by his own works wishes to earn heaven not only for himself, but also for others; this is to deny Christ. And they boast from their St. Thomas [i.e., Thomas Aquinas, of the 13<sup>th</sup> century] that a monastic vow is on an equality with baptism. This is blasphemy against God.

—Smalcald Articles, Part III

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17: 1 PETER 1:13-2:10 26<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY

This text presents the stark contrast between Christianity and every other religion/ideology in the world throughout time. The first half of our text explains in detail how this true faith is possible, because you have been “born again” through the grace of God and His abiding Word. It is a simple equation that a child can comprehend: Christianity = God justifies and sanctifies you through grace; every other religion = you must justify and sanctify yourself. The one can deliver all it promises; the other can never deliver what it promises.

These realities are presented with a perfectly unified proclamation of the Old and New Testaments in this first half of the verses appointed for today. Leaving no doubt or confusion that the Elect of God receive this immense honor purely through faith by knowledge of the Logos, while all others bring crushing, terrifying shame upon themselves through unbelief, by the denial of the Logos. Redemption and eternal blessedness really is that simple. This is driven home flawlessly through the use of the Greek word “Logos”, representing both God’s Redeemer in the flesh (in time) and His life giving holy Scripture throughout time.

This Gospel reality is further reinforced in the second half of the text through focusing on Jesus and the New Covenant with reference to the Elect being infants, coupled with Old Testament language of cornerstones, Zion, priesthoods, etc., in reference to Christ’s Church (the Elect gathered around Word and Sacrament) throughout time.

Prayer: Lord may we always cling to You in faith, and be ever ready to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to You, which is our spiritual worship. Amen.

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16: 1 PETER 1:1-12 26<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

The traditional New Testament introduction of this letter beautifully proclaims the Gospel, leaving no doubts about the extremely blessed condition of the recipients. It presents a far-flung audience that covers a large sweeping arc of Roman provinces, stretching from eastern Turkey to western Iraq.

The image of being sprinkled with Christ's blood brings the totality of the Old Testament Covenant into focus while pointing to the grace of God that fulfills all of Holy Scripture (Old and New Testament). This once-for-all atoning sacrifice of Christ is expanded upon in verses three through twelve, utilizing historic Old Covenant Mosaic and Prophetic imagery and language to weave a luxurious tapestry of the here-and-now Messianic New Covenant that encompasses the future and eternity. The one makes promises through Moses and the Prophets, the other one fulfills all promises in the Lamb of God Jesus Christ's incarnation, life, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and pending return. This is all accomplished while confessing a clear Trinitarian formula that creates, strengthens, and fulfills faith, showing grace to God's elect throughout all time.

Prayer: O God, for our redemption You gave Your only begotten Son to the death of the cross and by His glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of the enemy. Grant that all our sin may be drowned through daily repentance and by the power of the Holy Spirit, that day by day we may arise to live before You in righteousness and purity forever. Amen.

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9: MATTHEW 24:29-51 25<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

Jesus had just foretold the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. (This would happen in 70 A.D.) He then spoke of the Abomination of Desolation that would accompany that destruction. With this Desolation would come a time of great tribulation that would be so bad that had it not been cut short by God even the elect (those who live by faith in Christ) would have perished.

Jesus also said He will come again after the tribulation. Then He will send out His angels to gather His elect from all over the world. And we ask: "Lord, when will you come again?" Jesus' answer? He doesn't answer. He doesn't tell us when.

But, He does tell us that there will be certain signs to tell us when the time is right for His coming. Things will be just as they were during the time when Noah was building the ark. People were busy—eating and drinking, partying, marrying—giving no thought to the coming judgment of God, as they are right now. All things necessary for God's judgment and for the salvation of the elect have been fulfilled. Our Lord Jesus can come at any moment, even right now.

Come, Lord Jesus, come!

Prayer: Almighty God, we beseech Thee, show Thy mercy unto Thy humble servants, that we who put no trust in our own merits may not be dealt with after the severity of Thy judgment, but according to Thy mercy, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Sadducees, a religious faction within the Jews, did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. And the Sadducees came to Jesus to ask him a trick question about a woman who was widowed seven times by seven brothers. They asked, in the resurrection whose wife would she be? Jesus answered by saying that in the resurrection there will be no marriage, because we will be like angels in that regard. However, He also went on to state that “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

God did not create us in order to die. He created us to live forever with Him. Satan brought sin and death into the world with His lying and evil ways. “The wages of sin is death.” But, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, . . . and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” Our God is the God of the Living.

He has regenerated us to spiritual life (faith in Christ) in the waters of Holy Baptism. He will raise us to new physical life when His Holy Son comes again and resurrects our bodies to take us with Him in the life of the world to come.

Prayer: Almighty God, we beseech Thee, show Thy mercy unto Thy humble servants, that we who put no trust in our own merits may not be dealt with after the severity of Thy judgment, but according to Thy mercy, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

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

### CHAPTER III, ARTICLE VI.

But they [Romanists] object, that love is preferred to faith and hope. For Paul says (1 Cor. 13:13): “The greatest of these is charity.” Now, it is in accordance with this, that to justify is the greatest and chief virtue. Although Paul, in this passage, properly speaks of love toward one’s neighbor, and indicates that love is the greatest, because it has most fruits. Faith and hope have to do only with God; but love has infinite offices externally towards men. Nevertheless we grant to the adversaries that love towards God and our neighbor is the greatest virtue, because the chief commandment is this: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” (Matt. 22:37). But how will they infer thence that love justifies? The greatest virtue, they say, justifies. By no means. For just as even the greatest or first Law does not justify, so also the greatest virtue of the Law does not justify. But that virtue justifies which apprehends Christ, which communicates to us Christ’s merits, by which we receive grace and peace from God. But this virtue is faith. For as it has been often said, faith is not only knowledge, but much rather to wish to receive or apprehend those things, which are offered in the promise concerning Christ. Moreover this obedience towards God, viz. to wish to receive the offered promise, is no less a divine service, *λατρεία*, than is love. God wishes us to believe Him, and to receive from Him blessings, and this He declares to be true divine service.

—The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, ¶104–107

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14: HEB. 12:18-29 25<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

“For our God is a consuming fire.”

The God of Mount Sinai was a God who shook the mountain, a God who set the mountain on fire, a God who was a consuming fire. He was a God who consumed anything that was not supposed to be on that mountain at that time. However, the same God who is to be feared is also the God of grace (undeserved pardon).

The Scriptures tell us about the work of our God, the Triune God. His alien work is wrath because of our sin. But His proper work is grace, undeserved pardon that forgives our sin. His work is revealed to us in the Law and the Gospel.

He loves us so much, but He is also rightfully jealous. He does not want us even thinking about worshiping any other god, for our God is a consuming fire. His wrath can consume us. But thanks be to God that His love consumes us in the Gospel of forgiveness, wrought by the obedience of His Son. He saves us for eternal life with Him, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God, for He is our consuming fire, refining us and leading us into the cool waters and quiet pastures of eternity by His Spirit working true faith in us.

Prayer: Almighty God, we beseech Thee, show Thy mercy unto Thy humble servants, that we who put no trust in our own merits may not be dealt with after the severity of Thy judgment, but according to Thy mercy, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11: 1 COR. 15:11-50 25<sup>TH</sup> S. A. TRINITY**

“And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.”

We are God’s little ‘dirt people’. For all of our stirring and striving and pride, we are dust to dust and ashes to ashes. Born in the likeness of the first little dirt man, Adam, we live in a world corrupted by Satan. We are separated from God, the God of the living, by a wide chasm of sin and death.

But, the Second Adam, our Lord Jesus, has come, ascended, and will come again. He is the heavenly Man, sitting at the right hand of God in all power and glory. As Adam was the first earthly man, so now Christ Jesus is the second Adam, the heavenly Man, in whom we hope. And we bear Jesus’ image. We are people of faith, regenerated in the waters of Holy Baptism.

When He comes again, we will be like Him. We will be glorified and made new, more than just dirt and dust. We will be heavenly people.

Prayer: Almighty God, we beseech Thee, show Thy mercy unto Thy humble servants, that we who put no trust in our own merits may not be dealt with after the severity of Thy judgment, but according to Thy mercy, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

I was a first year seminarian when first I heard the word “performative”. I heard a fellow classmate say that “God’s Word is performative.” I was embarrassed to ask him what he meant by that strange word. Later, I asked another classmate what does “God’s Word is performative” mean? And he said to me, “It means that God’s Word does what it says.”

I went home that night and told my wife that God’s Word is “performative”. And I told her what it means. That “performative” Word was life-changing for both of us. God’s Word truly is life-changing, and life-giving. God’s Word is strong and powerful, though it might seem weak and of no effect. It does all of the things that Hebrews 4:12 says, and more.

Though we live as sinners in a sin-filled, corrupted, and fallen world, we can rely on God’s “Performative” Word. God’s Word “does what it says.” It is the only life-giving truth to be found in this world. God’s Word is life-changing and life-giving. And the Word of the Lord endures forever.

Prayer: Almighty God, we beseech Thee, show Thy mercy unto Thy humble servants, that we who put no trust in our own merits may not be dealt with after the severity of Thy judgment, but according to Thy mercy, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“By faith Abraham obeyed . . . by faith he dwelt in the land . . . By faith Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.”

Faith and promises go together. Faith clings to the promise of the One who is true and faithful. And faith in the promises of the One who is true and faithful leads to hope. And we have this hope, this certain hope, because the One in whom we have faith is true and faithful.

And since that One, our God, is our heavenly Father, He gives us heavenly hope; faith, hope, and love. After hope comes love. We do not love God because we are good people, but we love him because of all that He has done for us through His Son.

We wait in faith and hope and love for the coming of our Lord Jesus who will resurrect us to new life and lead us into the heavenly realm that He has promised to us. He is faithful and true to all His promises. The Resurrection is our hope--our certain hope in the love of Christ. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

Prayer: Almighty God, we beseech Thee, show Thy mercy unto Thy humble servants, that we who put no trust in our own merits may not be dealt with after the severity of Thy judgment, but according to Thy mercy, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.