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Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX
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Sts. Peter & Paul L. C., Simpsonville, SC; All Saints Lutheran Mission, Myrtle Beach, SC; St. Michael & All Angels Lutheran Mission, Martinez, GA

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Rev. Daniel Mensing

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Good Shepherd L.C., Rogers, AR

Rev. Mark Mueller

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Rev. Josiah Scheck

Christ Lutheran Church, Richmond, MO

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Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Harrison, AR; Emmanuel Lutheran Mission, Conway, AR; Lamb of God Lutheran Mission, Rogers, AR

Rev. Joshua Sullivan

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Rev. Timothy Tolar

St. Luke Lutheran Church, Kenai, AK
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Rev. Brandon Warr

St. Patrick Lutheran Church, Chipley, FL

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Medellin, Colombia

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



OCTOBER 5–31, 2020

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NORTH AMERICA**

The Calendar

October 4	Trinity 17	TLH 524
October 11	Trinity 18	Luther's <i>Te Deum</i>
October 18	Trinity 19/St. Luke, Evangelist	TLH 251
October 25	Trinity 20	TLH 343
October 28 (W)	St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles	
October 31 (S)	The Festival of the Reformation	TLH 262

Seminary Schedule

The classes which are being offered this quarter are Greek (3 hrs.), taught by Pr. Stefanski; Prolegomena (2 hrs.), taught by Bishop Heiser; O.T. Survey (1 hr.) taught by Deacon Oncken; Classical Antiquity (1 hr.) taught by Bishop Heiser; and Liturgics 1 (3 hrs.), taught by Deacon Oncken. These classes establish the foundation of further studies in the four branches of theological study. Classes are taught Tuesday through Friday morning, with Matins each morning. The Fall Quarter ends on November 13.

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.

Doctrine and Practice

The Introit

#6

“The Introit is the beginning of the Church Service proper. It sounds the key-note of the day. Its purpose is to make known to the congregation the chief thought for the particular Sunday or festival day, and to call upon the people to unite in spirit in that particular thought. ...

“The thought announced in the Introit is reechoed throughout the service. It is repeated in the Collect, the Epistle, the Gradual, the Gospel, the sermon and the prayers. It creates a golden thread of thought which runs through the entire service, and serves the purpose of giving it unity.

“The Introit has been used by the Christian Church from very early times, although the first specific mention of it is in the days of Celestine, who died in 432 A.D. Originally an entire Psalm was sung by the people, during which the clergy entered the chancel and took their places before the altar. Celestine ordered that on every Sunday and feast day an appropriate Psalm, called *Introitus*, be sung antiphonally by a double choir.

“Even in so early a day as that, one finds a growing tendency to shorten the church service, for in the days of St. Gregory, the Psalm was reduced to certain Psalm verses. Since the eleventh century, only a single Psalm verse has been sung, together with its proper Antiphon and the Gloria Patri. The series that we use today dates back at least to the year 575 A.D.

“The reformers were anxious to retain the old Introits of the Church Year, and directed that they be chanted by the pastor and choir.”

—F.R. Webber, *Studies in the Liturgy*, 1938, p. 27-28

Doctrine and Practice

Vestments

#3

“In the beginning we must again make the preliminary statement that we do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. ... And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments and other like things.”

—Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. XXIV:1

“The continued use of vestments in the Church of the Augsburg Confession is important for at least two reasons: First, vestments are used as ensigns of the office of the holy ministry. These liturgical garments cover the man, reminding the congregation that their pastor speaks to them not simply as a fellow Christian, but as ‘a called and ordained servant of the Word.’ The vestments are the clothes of a servant. ... Secondly, vestments are a visual reminder of the continuity of the church’s worship throughout history. Grisbrooke writes, ‘An essential element in the nature of Christian worship is its witness to the unchanging and abiding value and power of God’s mighty works in Christ, and it follows that the vestments should reflect the continuity of Christian worship, rather than the discontinuities which at times have afflicted it.’ The use of the historic vestments signals our linkage with the church catholic in confession and life. Thus in the Evangelical Lutheran Church vestments are not merely aesthetic decorations, but are symbols of the historic continuity of our church with prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors of all times and places.”

—*Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*,
Concordia Publishing House, p. 222–223

FROM THE BISHOP

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

The new three-year term of St. Ignatius Lutheran Theological Seminary began with a Vespers at Salem Lutheran Church on Sunday, September 6. Pr. Bernet from Discipleship Lutheran Church (Mineral Wells, TX) and Dr. Heimbigner from Charity Lutheran Church (Burleson, TX) were able to join us for the Vespers.



As I now write to you, we are at the end of the fourth week of the quarter. We have three American students (Ben and Jacob Henson and John Heiser) and one student in Russia (Roman Turenko). Classes are meeting “in person” for our American students; Mr. Turenko joins us by video. The members of Salem are very support-

ive of the seminarians; and the seminary being set in the midst of the congregation helps shape the whole process of formation. And, in the midst of this ‘memorable’ year, it is a joy to be able to focus on the labors of the Church, teaching the Word.

Yours in Christ, Bp. Heiser



Lesson from the Book of Concord

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31: 2 COR. 5:1–21 20TH S. A. TRINITY

The Third Commandment.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

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

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

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

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

This week we have focused on the right reading and interpretation of Scripture. It must be said that the focus of all Scripture is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and that the goal of all Scripture is that sinners receive eternal life by believing in Him. St. Paul writes, “If One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” This is one of those “Gospel-in-a-nutshell” passages, which expresses the whole Gospel of salvation through faith in the Christ. Christ died for all, therefore in Him all died. Christ rose for all, therefore in Him all rose from the dead. To be “in Him” means to believe and be baptized. Those who are baptized have a heavenly dwelling place prepared for them with God.

To be saved, one must believe this Gospel and be baptized into it. But one cannot believe what he does not know, therefore God put His Word into writing and charged its preaching to certain men so that all men would hear it and, hearing, believe it. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” That “word of reconciliation” is the Gospel of the Christ, which is the focal point of all Scripture.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“If our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ... who do not believe.” If Scripture interprets itself, then it is—taken properly as a whole—completely clear, being given for man’s understanding. When men misinterpret Scripture, Scripture is not to blame, but man who is blinded by sin.

The clarity of Scripture is expressed thus: “the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7). The blindness of man is expressed thus: “Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Romans 1:21). So man cannot rightly interpret Scripture if he remains in the darkness of sin; he must be enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

Johann Gerhard writes, “The light of the Holy Spirit is required for the salutary interpretation of the divine utterances... We should not think that we should await from the Holy Spirit an immediate illumination from on high before we go on to reading, meditating on, and carefully examining Scripture. Rather, we must pray for and obtain that light of the Holy Spirit in and through Scripture” (Johann Gerhard, *On the Legitimate Interpretation of Holy Scripture*, 57).

We are not surprised when unbelievers fail to understand our Christian Faith. We are called simply to confess the Scriptures to them and trust in the Holy Spirit’s power through that Word to enlighten their hearts, also.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Faith trusts in the promises of God’s Word. The Holy Ghost gives us this faith, and He gives us the humility that goes with it. Faith says to the Lord, “Thy will be done...” False teachers encourage Christians to think faith is about manipulating God into doing what they want. Confusion is sown about hope and prayer so that people are taught to seek their own wills. Some believe that if they just wait and hope long enough, or recruit enough people to pray for something, then that is how they get what they want from God.

True faith does the works that are prepared for us by the Lord. Sometimes that work is a grand event like those recorded in the Scriptures, other times the work is simple acts of daily compassion and patience according to the Commandments. Still other times the work is to suffer and endure while still doing the right thing. But in all such cases the focus is on God’s will, not the will of our flesh.

However, faith also works to conform our will to His. Hope clings to the promise of forgiveness and life in Christ. Faith empowers us to obey God’s righteousness, because in His will and works the truth of our Lord Jesus is proclaimed. The faithful men and women of the Old Testament served and suffered while looking forward to the power of the Savior’s atonement. Now, in the New Testament Church we have the great joy of that promise fulfilled in our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ!

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Faith also teaches us to have humility while receiving correction and discipline. Our fleshly nature writhes and thrashes when we are chastened. Even when the chastening is clearly from the Lord, our sinful minds spin with vain thoughts about justifying ourselves and attacking the means through which God is correcting us. But humbleness that comes from the Spirit of God makes us remember the truth of Hebrews 12. “No chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

We should remember that the pain of deserved chastisement also trains us to be stronger when bearing the crosses of suffering for the name of Jesus Christ. If we give in to the pride that resents correction, we are also in danger of being weak and self-willed in the face of persecution and martyrdom for confessing Christ. Humility compels us to remember that we are sinners who deserved God’s just punishments. Faith enables us to repent and rejoice in the inheritance of forgiveness and abundant life through our Lord’s innocent suffering and death! As St. Peter says, “For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God” (1 Peter 2:20).

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

To believe in Jesus means to believe that He is God, the Son of God, and to trust in His merit for the forgiveness of sins. We confess in the Athanasian Creed that “our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man,” and that this “is necessary to everlasting salvation.” This is the confession of St. Peter and the confession on which the Christ will build His Church. But many of the Jews did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They believed that He was a man, certainly, maybe even a prophet. But, unless they believed also that He is God, the Son of God, in whose name is forgiveness of sins, they cannot be saved.

There are those today who say that to confess Jesus as a man is enough. Such people observe that Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and even atheists recognize there was a man named Jesus, who taught men to love their neighbor and to honor God. They then ridicule the Christian Church for condemning these other religions which, so they think, confess Jesus with us. But it is not enough to believe that Jesus was merely a man; one must believe in Jesus as the Lord. The confession that saves and on which the Church is built is that the Lord Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field.” Who is the man who sold everything for that treasure? Who is the merchant who sold all he had for the pearl of great price? Is it the Christian, who gladly sacrifices all his earthly goods for the sake of the Gospel? Although every Christian is called to this very thing, this is not the true interpretation of the parable, because we cannot purchase the kingdom of heaven, though we exchange our very soul.

Instead, we should understand the man as the Christ, and the treasure as the Church. Christ really did exchange all He had to the Father to purchase His Church; He “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant” (Philippians 2:7). As for the Church—that she is a treasure of great worth—Psalm 45 says of her, “the King will greatly desire your beauty” (v. 11). It does not matter that the Church on earth is made up of sinners, as though this would tarnish her value. Christ has miraculously made her both holy and beautiful by cleansing her in His own blood, through Baptism. “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her... that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25, 27).

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The promise of Jesus Christ was consistent “yesterday” throughout the Old Testament. God taught His people of Israel to hear, obey, walk, and love according to the discipline and hope that He established in the Church during the former days. Today He continues to teach us the discipleship of observing all that He commands with the Word and Sacraments in the Church. The faithful catholic Church will continue forever because it is established in God our Savior!

Three times this chapter of Hebrews mentions “those who rule over you.” The writer reminds us that teachers and leaders are established by the Lord in the good order of the Church. These men are designated as instruments of the Lord, imperfect as they may be, for the sake of teaching and profiting those who learn and follow. The Old Testament reminds us often that the leaders and heroes of the faith were sinful, but they are still used to teach righteousness. Whether yesterday, or today, they are put to work by the Lord so that Jesus Christ can be made known to all who have humility and faith.

In the good order of the Church we are not just serving men, we are serving the Lord Jesus Himself! That is why we are told not to bring grief to His servants. If He would have us love our enemies, how much more should we love those who are called to lead by Christ’s command? Brotherly love continues when we remember, serve, and rejoice in the order of our Lord’s holy Church.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8: JAMES 1:1-15 17TH S. AFTER TRINITY

St. James teaches us that our own desires lead us into temptation and death. In the beginning Eve and Adam had outside assistance from Satan, but ever since the fall our own flesh has been sufficiently able to tempt us.

Temptation must come. In the Large Catechism, concerning the Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Dr. Luther reminds us that "it cannot be otherwise." If we are Christ's, the devil will attack us, and our nature--corrupted with the fruit of his lies--will always be working against the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews reminded us that chastisement is a blessing for building us up in Christ, and now James is making the point that trials and testing are also a joy. False teachers lead people to think that the Church is about being comfortable, rich, and having our wishes answered by a god that loves to pander to our proud wills. The Word of God tells us clearly that the opposite is true. Life in Christ involves suffering and sacrifice. It involves being humble and submitting to His will. It involves testing and correction. It is not easy, but God also promises to give help and wisdom according to His Spirit! And by His gifts and His will, we are made to stand firm as our faith clings to Jesus Christ and His cross for our joy and prosperity in the true faith.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27: LUKE 13:18-35 20TH S. AFTER TRINITY

Scripture interprets itself. The clear passages explain the more confusing ones. This is why faithful Christians must believe and confess all of God's Word. So also, Christ gives parables, which are intentionally unclear, to test the faith of His listeners: to those who believe He will also give the interpretation, that those who do not believe may be convicted.

When Christ tells the parable of the mustard seed, He preaches about Himself. He is the seed, for He is called the Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15), the Seed of Abraham (Genesis 21:12), and the Seed of David (2 Samuel 7:12). By His death and burial in the ground, He established the Christian Church, which is a holy gathering place for all the believers of the earth—symbolized by the birds of the air. He explains Himself thus: "They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God."

Likewise, the leaven describes salvation through the Christ. St. Paul writes, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). A mere word entering a man through the ear seems insignificant, but, just as a little leaven leavens three measures of dough, the Word of the Christ, when it enters the ear, raises the entire man to new life.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“Without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.”

Scripture interprets Scripture, because there is no higher authority than the Word of God which can tell us what it means. If there are passages of Scripture which seem confusing, one should seek the right understanding in the rest of Scripture. The same thing is going on with the Lord Jesus’ parables: both the parables and their interpretation are the Word of God. When the Lord Jesus first tells the parable of the sower, the disciples are as confused as everyone else, but they seek understanding from the Word of God incarnate and ask. The multitudes, however, did not ask; they were content to have only half of God’s Word—and that the less clear part.

Faithfulness to the Word of God means knowing and obeying all of Scripture. All the heresies of history have resulted from hearing only parts of Scripture and discarding others. “The articles of faith accepted in their proper and literal sense are not inconsistent with each other. Human reason, however, imagines for itself contradictions, and this is the source of all heresies” (Johann Gerhard, *On the Legitimate Interpretation of Holy Scripture*, 164). The true Christian distinguishes the clearer parts of Scripture from the less clear, the poetic parts from the historic parts, etc., but takes all of it together as the perfect Word of God.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” St. James had this taught to him by the Lord. Our Savior preached this very lesson in His sermon on the mount in Matthew’s Gospel. Our Lord Jesus preached a catechetical sermon that showed the Ten Commandments were far, far more difficult to keep than man often supposed. If we even think a thought that stumbles, we are guilty of breaking the whole Commandment.

God teaches this lesson in His Word so we may understand that we are completely incapable of keeping the whole Law! As St. James makes the point that outward appearances and worldly wealth are not consistent with inward faith and righteousness, we are also reminded that outward appearances of keeping the Law do not accurately indicate that God has been obeyed inwardly. In other words, we are tempted to partiality when judging appearances, but the Lord discerns the heart and faith of man.

Instead, Christ teaches us to love according to the whole counsel of His commands. We are to love all people in word and deed, with faith and works. We are to love according to the righteousness of God, not according to wealth or illusions of piety. By faith we remember that all have broken the Law, including us, and so we also love all according to the forgiving grace of Jesus Christ. The proud need to be corrected in the Lord’s discipline, but those who are humble and repentant are exalted in the Gospel of forgiveness!

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10: JAMES 2:14-26 17TH S. AFTER TRINITY

The Augsburg Confession, article 6, clearly teaches what St. James is saying in our reading: our churches teach "... it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but not that we should rely on those works to merit justification before God." People continue to be confused about this point, so the Church continues to teach it.

We make distinctions about words and ideas for the sake of teaching, but it is possible for us to take the distinctions too far. If we try to impose our human reasoning on His holy things, we can cause dangerous confusion. St. James was called to clarify the truth about faith and works because man's reason thought faith and works could be separated. Our churches and faithful pastors endeavor to teach as St. James did. We do not want to say too much, or too little; we want to confess the truth according to God's Word and Spirit!

The very idea of faithful works is that we confess the truth and wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ with all that we do, with clear words and proper acts. But the will of God establishes what we should do and what the results will be. We are called to confess according to our vocations and according to the situation. Sometimes we speak and give reason for the hope we have in Christ (1 Peter 3:15), other times we are called to clothe and feed someone because of God's love. However, it is only His grace in Jesus that saves us and makes us righteous!

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the devil and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

7. Thus Christ calls to Himself all sinners, and promises them rest, and He is anxious that all men should come to Him and permit Him to help them. To them He offers Himself in His Word, and wishes them to hear it, and not to stop their ears or despise the Word. He promises besides the power and efficiency of the Holy Ghost, and divine assistance for perseverance and eternal salvation.

8. Therefore we should judge concerning this our election to eternal life neither from reason nor from the Law of God, which would lead either into a dissipated, dissolute epicurean life, or into despair, and would excite in the heart of men pernicious thoughts (and such thoughts cannot be effectually guarded against as long as they follow their own reason), so that they think to themselves: "If God has elected me to salvation, I cannot be condemned, although I do whatever I will." And again: "If I am not elected to eternal life, it matters not what good I do; for my efforts are nevertheless all in vain."

9. But the true judgment concerning predestination must be learned alone from the Holy Gospel concerning Christ, in which it is clearly testified that "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all," and that "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (Rom. 11:32; Ez. 18:23; 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2).

10. To him, therefore, who is really concerned about the revealed will of God, and proceeds according to the order which St. Paul has observed in the Epistle to the Romans, who first directs men to repentance, knowledge of sins, to faith in Christ, to divine obedience, before he speaks of the mystery of the eternal election of God, this doctrine [concerning God's predestination] is useful and consolatory.

11. That, however, "many are called, few are chosen," does not mean that God is unwilling that all should be saved, but the reason is that they either do not at all hear God's Word, but wilfully despise it, close their ears and harden their hearts, and in this manner foreclose the ordinary way to the Holy Ghost, so that He cannot effect His work in them, or, when it is heard, they consider it of no account, and do not heed it. For this [that they perish] not God or His election, but their wickedness is responsible (2 Pet. 2:1 sqq.; Luke 11:49, 52; Heb. 12:25 sq.).

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome, §1–12

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

Chapter XI.

OF GOD'S ETERNAL FOREKNOWLEDGE AND ELECTION.

Concerning this article no public dissension has occurred among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession. But since it is a consolatory article, if treated properly, and by this means the introduction in the future of a controversy likely to cause offense may be avoided, it is also explained in this writing.

AFFIRMATIVE

The Pure and True Doctrine concerning this Article.

1. First of all, the distinction between foreknowledge and predestination, that is, between God's foreknowledge and His eternal election, ought to be accurately observed.

2. For the foreknowledge of God is nothing else than that God knows all things before they happen, as it is written (Dan. 2:28): "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."

3. This foreknowledge is occupied alike with the godly and the wicked; but it is not the cause of evil or of sin, so that men do what is wrong (which originally arises from the devil and the wicked, perverse will of man); nor the cause of their ruin, for which they themselves are responsible; but only regulates it, and fixes to it a limit how long it should last, and that everything, notwithstanding that in itself it is evil, should serve His elect for their salvation.

4. The predestination or eternal election of God, however, is occupied only with the godly, beloved children of God, and this is a cause of their salvation, which He also provides as well as disposes what belongs thereto. Upon this [predestination of God] our salvation is founded so firmly that the gates of hell cannot overcome it (John 10:28; Matt. 16:18).

5. This is not to be investigated in the secret counsel of God, but to be sought in the Word of God, where it is also revealed.

6. But the Word of God leads us to Christ, who is the Book of Life, in whom all are written and elected that are to be saved, as it is written (Eph. 1:4): "He hath chosen us in Him" [Christ] "before the foundation of the world."

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

Chapter V. Of the Law and the Gospel.

Statement of the Controversy.

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

Affirmative.

Pure Doctrine of God's Word.

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

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

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

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

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

6. But if the Law and the Gospel be contrasted with one another, as Moses himself is called a teacher of the Law, and Christ a preacher of the Gospel, we believe, teach and confess that the Gospel is not a preaching of

repentance or reproof, but properly nothing else than a preaching of consolation, and a joyful message which does not reprove or terrify, but against the terrors of the Law consoles consciences, points alone to the merits of Christ, and again comforts them by the precious preaching of the grace and favor of God, obtained through Christ's merit.

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

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

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

Negative.

Contrary Doctrine which is Rejected.

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

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome

Children learn by imitation. They learn to speak by hearing the sounds their parents made, then attempting to say the same. As children grow, they learn how to behave from their parents as well, observing them and imitating their behavior and attitudes.

This is how Christians learn the Word of God in the Divine Service. We hear God's Word and we speak it back to Him in confession, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. He opens our lips and brings forth His praise. We hear the Law and speak it in confession of sins, just as we hear the Gospel and console ourselves with it when our conscience is terrified.

St. John writes to Gaius, "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God." Christians are sons of God because they believe in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. Like earthly children, we are to imitate the good our Father in heaven does. Since the Father is invisible and unseen, we imitate the good we see our elder brother Jesus do in the Gospels. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). So we imitate Christ and His Apostles, as well as the saints, following their faith and good works according to our calling (AC XXI.1).

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Love one another. It sounds so simple, doesn't it? Then why does John have to reiterate this command again? Because while "love one another" is simple, it isn't easy. All Christians live with the sinful flesh and the inborn desire to sin. The flesh is selfish and self-serving. The sin that dwells in us does all it can to thwart our love for one another. The flesh tries to distract us from loving others with its lusts, its desires, and its concern only for itself. We need the continuous reminder to love one another.

How do we love one another? "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments." Each of the Ten Commandments show us what love for our neighbor is. We love others by helping them in every bodily need. We love our spouses by being chaste and giving our heart only to them. We love one another by helping others retain their property and income. We love one another by defending them and speaking well of them. We love one another by being content with what God has given us and helping others appreciate what God has given them. Within the Ten Commandments there are countless ways to love one another. When we transgress the law of love, we are to confess our sins and receive His forgiveness, then return to our vocations with renewed love for those around us.

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

This wisdom from above is a very difficult thing for us. The devil and our flesh are very good at tempting us to the wickedness and hypocrisy about which St. James warns us. We bless God, but we also curse our brothers and sisters. We take the righteous wisdom that the Lord teaches us and our vain hearts try to use it to exalt ourselves over others. It is not surprising when people of the world do this. But it happens in the midst of the Church, and this is a tragic thing.

Our self-seeking hearts are already inclined to twist God's righteousness, but false teachers make it worse. Too often we are encouraged to think that others are "pawns" to be manipulated, rather than seen as brothers and sisters with whom we ought to communicate. But as powerful of a temptation as this is, James shows us the more powerful grace of God's Word that can help us!

This serious sin is common to all people. But our Lord Jesus Christ overcomes it as much as He has conquered all our transgressions. Apart from His Spirit and the strength that flows only from His Word and Sacraments, we have no hope of overcoming this wickedness that comes so easily from our wicked tongues. But He makes us able to repent, and He calls us back to peace, gentleness, humility, and self-control time and time again. It is a constant struggle, but our Lord Jesus is patient and all-powerful.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13: JAMES 4:1-5:6 18TH S. AFTER TRINITY

If we are humble in the Spirit of God these words from St. James should stir our hearts! We are all sinners, so we have all done or thought things that can be judged under his admonitions. But if our heart and mind say, “I had good reason for seeking my own will...,” then we are in a dangerous situation. Such attitudes destroy fellowship.

Our Lord does not teach us to be prideful toward one another. Jesus walked in humility to teach us what real fellowship looks like. If we seek our own will and treat our brothers and sisters with contempt or spite, then our hearts are resisting the Holy Spirit and we give occasion for relations to be damaged. Our Lord doesn't want us to condone sin or ignore wickedness, but we are to address problems according to His will, not according to our own efforts to manipulate the situation. As James wrote in chapter 3, “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

This is why our Lord teaches us to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” True humility according to God's Spirit teaches us to see others as Christ sees us. He shows us grace as He teaches us, corrects us, helps us, and forgives us. He would have us do likewise to others. That is how fellowship is helped and built up in Him.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22: 1 JOHN 5:10-21 19TH S. AFTER TRINITY

What does it mean when John writes, “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin.” After all, who is without sin, as the Apostle writes in 1 John 1:8, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” Do believers sin or not sin?

The answer is that the believer does not willfully sin. Those who are born of God, regenerated by faith in Christ, who have the Holy Spirit and love God and their neighbor, do not intentionally choose to sin. Living in faith toward God and love toward neighbor, we busy ourselves with good works. We live in the new obedience of faith. When we do this we keep ourselves from willful sins and the wicked one doesn't touch us.

Yet we see sin in our flesh. We see concupiscence--the inborn desire to sin--in our flesh. St. Paul complains of this inborn sin in Romans 7:18 when he says, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells.” The inborn sin remains in us though we are regenerated by faith. It taints our new obedience so that although we have the desire to fulfill God's law, we never do it perfectly. When the flesh tempts us to sin, we should cut off the temptation immediately so we do not sin willfully and grieve the Holy Ghost in us.

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21: 1 JOHN 5:1-3 19TH S. AFTER TRINITY

St. John continues to teach us faith and love. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, that He is our Advocate and the propitiation for the sins of the world, that one is born of God. Faith regenerates us. Faith in Christ rebirths us as sons of God. John wrote in his Gospel, “as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12). Faith in Christ makes us new men and women since we are justified by faith alone.

This faith, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, creates new hearts in us, with new movements and motivations. This is why John can say that God’s commandments aren’t burdensome. Believing the Gospel, living according to God’s Law in the Ten Commandments becomes our joy. We delight in the Law of the Lord and look for ways to love God and our neighbors. Melancthon writes in the Apology, “Therefore, when we have been justified by faith, and regenerated, we begin to fear God, to pray to him, to expect from him aid, to give thanks and praise him, and to obey him in afflictions. We begin also to love our neighbors.” (Ap. Ch. III.4) God’s commandments aren’t burdensome because faith regenerates us. As children of God, justified and fully forgiven, we begin to keep His commandments in love.

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14: JAMES 5:12-20 18TH S. A. TRINITY

The focus of the Church is the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ crucified. People forget this sometimes. They focus on personalities, entertainment, activities, institutions, works, fights, spectacles, etc. But our Lord teaches us that we are to focus on His Word, His commands, and His Gospel. All the other things must serve the focus of the Gospel, not replace it.

The work of helping and comforting those who have various needs is an important part of our vocation as Christ’s people, but when we do it we should remember the words of St. James. Our prayers and our works should be guided by the Lord’s will, and His will is to save souls from the death of their sins. Sometimes the sick will get better, other times they will not. Sometimes suffering will pass, sometimes it will get worse. In all things our words and deeds should be focused on the “yes” and “no” of God’s teachings.

However, we all know this is easier said than done. Thanks be to God for His Spirit, which gives us faith and strength to do things according to His will. Even more than that, we also give Him thanks for the forgiveness that He shows toward us when we fail to stay focused on His Word and will.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Satan encouraged Eve to do what was right in her own eyes. Women have been fighting against that impulse ever since. (Men have copious problems too, but for the moment we are considering Peter's counsel for the ladies.) Now the devil twists Peter's teaching so women are led to think that manipulation is a virtue. False teachers encourage a different sort of outward adornment, where women are taught to influence men and husbands through the appearance of service, but inwardly their wills are set on accomplishing their own ends.

Peter teaches the Lord's holy wisdom. Wives are to serve Christ faithfully with a gentle and quiet spirit. All Christians are called to obey the Lord in humility, not seeking our own honor or our own wants. Faithful wives can teach and confess without a word by sincerely obeying God's good order in marriage and family. When things are according to our Lord's order it is truly a beautiful situation, and it is an environment that is very helpful for faithful prayers, grace, and love!

Let us guard against the devil's teachings that outwardly pose as good spiritual counsel. Peter's words are clear. Satan continues to attack wives, encouraging them to pride, but Christ gives His people the power of His Word and Spirit. By this divine help we are made able to tell the Serpent to depart as Jesus Christ, the great Bridegroom, empowers faithful women to stand fast in gentle, quiet service to the Lord and their families!

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

St. John teaches us to take sin seriously. "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin." Christians fight the sinful flesh's desires, the world's wicked influence, and the devil's fiery darts. We should do all we can to avoid sin. Jesus says in Matthew 5:29-30 to pluck out and cut off the temptation. We avoid sin by recognizing the devil's fiery darts and immediately removing them from our heart. We cut off temptation with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yet there are times we fall to temptation. When we do sin, St. John would not have us despair. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is the atoning sacrifice for all the world's sins. If we sin we're not to let the sin rule in our conscience, imagining that it's too big, grievous, or vile to be forgiven. Nor are we to let the sin continue to rule in our body and mind, so that we treasure it, hold hands with it, and use it as an excuse to keep sinning. John points us to Christ, the Advocate who died for our sins and who promises to forgive our sins when we repent and flee to Him for mercy. Thus we take sin seriously, working each day to avoid it. But when we sin, we flee to Christ and take His promise seriously as well.

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19: 1 JOHN 1:1-10 19TH S. AFTER TRINITY

John writes so that our joy may be full. This joy consists in the promise of eternal life that God has revealed through Christ. We have joy because we have fellowship with the Father and the Son through faith in the Apostles' doctrine. Being in fellowship with the Father means that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." No one can take this joy from us.

But it is forfeited by walking in darkness. If we return to our former sins, or say that we have no sin in us, we deceive ourselves and the truth isn't in us. The truth is that we sin each day because we have sin in our flesh. If we don't cut off the indwelling sin when it tempts us, we sin. Instead of minimizing and rationalizing our sins and the sin in our flesh, we are to confess our sins. God promises, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Walking in the light means confessing our sins and believing God's promise of forgiveness and cleansing. Each time we confess our sins to God we hear the words of Jesus from Matthew 9:2, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." That joy motivates us to love God and serve our neighbor, and abstain from sin.

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16: 1 PETER 3:15-22 18TH S. AFTER TRINITY

Our hope is in Jesus Christ, who conquered death and perfectly manifested love, meekness, power, and authority. When we tell others what we believe, or try to help them with the counsel of God's Word, we are called to do so according to our Savior's example. Our Lord was never rude or puffed up. He was patient and kind, even when He rebuked wicked men who moved against Him. We are to do likewise in whatever ways are appropriate to our vocations.

In our age there is so much temptation to be spiteful and condescending. People spew forth words about what they want and what they think, and it is very easy to get drawn into the fires and battles that come from the overabundance of vain talking. God's Word and Spirit teach us to do otherwise, as we have seen throughout this week's readings. Our words are to be clear and faithfully focused. Our speech and our works are to serve the kingdom of God and His righteousness that comes from Christ crucified. Those who reject Christ's truth ought to be taught and admonished, but our Lord will do so through us according to His will and grace, not because of our own heavy-handed efforts. Our hope is in Christ and His righteousness, not in compelling others one way or the other. We mourn when sinners are prisoners of their own vanity, but we rejoice when He brings a soul to repentance and new life. But either way, our hope is firm in our Savior, Jesus Christ!

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17: 1 PETER 5:1-5 18TH S. AFTER TRINITY

None of us has reason to be prideful, especially those of us who serve to shepherd the Lord's flock. We are all sinners who are called to use the resources and abilities that we have in service to God's Church and the proclamation of His Word. The devil is eager to tempt all people to abuse their vocations. If we have any sort of authority, the Enemy would have us twist it and use it selfishly. If we are called to serve others, he would have us resent those who we are supposed to help. And the devil is especially eager to sow his seeds in the midst of the Lord's Church.

St. Peter reminds us that we have one Lord, the Chief Shepherd, who cares for us even as He wields all divine authority and power. Called and ordained servants of the Word have no right to rule in ways that Christ Himself does not rule. Our Lord exemplifies humility and grace.

We should all pray for one another in the family of faith, but especially remember to pray and help those who are called to serve as shepherds for the flock of God. The devil attacks our pastors aggressively, and constantly. We struggle and we sin, but by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we repent and endeavor to serve faithfully. May our Lord help us all to be truly steadfast as His flock.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

Article IV.

Also they teach, that men cannot be Justified before God by their own strength, merits or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, hath made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.

—Augsburg Confession