

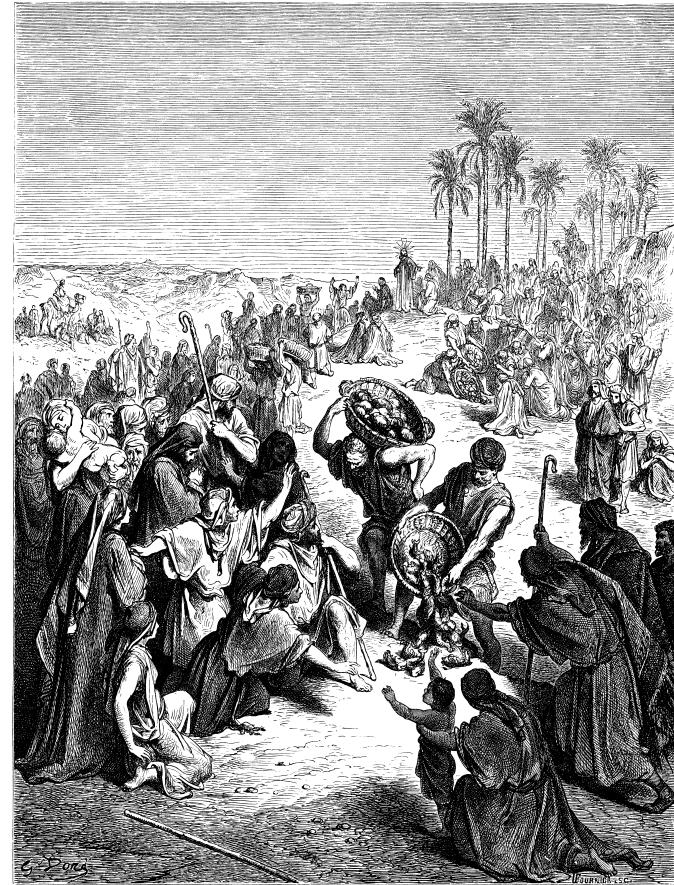
SATURDAY, AUGUST 31: 1 KIN. 14:1-31 10TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

Thus far this week we have addressed the troublesome reigns of King Solomon and King Jeroboam. Today's focus shifts to the first leader of the southern kingdom: King Rehoboam. Rehoboam's father was Solomon, who had during his own reign introduced the idol worship of Molech, who was the god of the Ammonites. Our text also mentions that Rehoboam's mother was an Ammonite, so there's little doubt that this parental influence played a major role in the life of the young boy. As a result, when Rehoboam became king, he introduced even more idolatry into the land of Judah. The consequences would not only be spiritual, but material as well, as God withdrew His protecting hand from Judah: "It happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything. He also took away all the gold shields which Solomon had made."

Much wickedness and terrible consequences were therefore spawned because of the careless and idolatrous upbringing of Rehoboam. So often we hear of parents who live their lives as they please, not taking stock of the great influence they have on their children, for good or for evil. God grant us the care and discernment to always watch our words and actions that influence those around us.

We pray: Oh, blest the parents who give heed unto their children's foremost need and weary not of care or cost! May none to them and heav'n be lost! (TLH 625:3)

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



AUGUST 5–AUGUST 31, 2019

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The Calendar

<i>August 4</i>	<i>Trinity 7</i>
<i>August 11</i>	<i>Trinity 8</i>
<i>August 18</i>	<i>Trinity 9</i>
<i>August 24 (Sa)</i>	<i>St. Bartholomew, Apostle</i>
<i>August 25</i>	<i>Trinity 10</i>

FROM THE BISHOP

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

As I write these words to you, I am in the midst of my summer visitation of several parishes of the diocese. It is a busy time, but it is heartening to see the way in which the Lord sustains His faithful servants of the Word and faithful congregations throughout our diocese. While we are often quite conscious of the difficulties with which we must contend, the Word is still proclaimed in its truth and purity and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution. Adult and junior catechumens continue to be taught the faith, and Pastor Rydecki's edition of the *Small Catechism* is proving to be very helpful in this important work.

In a little over a year, a new seminary class will begin; our first seminarian for the next class, Benjamin Henson, recently moved to Texas. For those men who are interested in attending the seminary, it is time to start making plans for next year.

I have been in touch with pastors who want to know more about the ELDoNA because they seek a faithful fellowship. It is heartening to see that there continue to be pastors and the congregations which the Lord has entrusted to their care taking a stand for the truth.

The pastors continue to work together to prepare the monthly devotions for *The Lutheran Herald* and these devotions are now reaching a steadily growing number of readers inside and outside of our diocese. Pastor Carver is working on the next diocesan video; with the tremendous work he did on the Justification documentary, I am very excited to see the progress with the next project. Pastor Sullivan's "Ask the Pastor" video series on YouTube also continues to provide a very valuable service to the Church.

Yours in Christ, Bishop Heiser

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30: 1 KINGS 13:1-34 10TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

At the beginning of our text, a man sent from God came to King Jeroboam to make a specific and bold prophecy: "Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.' And he gave a sign the same day, saying, 'This is the sign which the LORD has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out.'" When the king sought to arrest him, his hand shriveled up—and the altar broke into ashes just as the man had prophesied. Out of fear, Jeroboam begged for deliverance: "Please entreat the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me."

But even though restoration of the hand was granted, there was no repentance. Jeroboam and his successors would continue to worship the golden calves they had made by their own hands. Such is the same danger with us today. When circumstances overwhelm us, or when we get caught up in our own sin, it is easy to reach out to God for mercy and forgiveness without fully coming to grips with the real problem behind our situation. The brokenness of our world and the severity of our sin can never be taken lightly, lest we become like King Jeroboam who sought the quick and easy fix.

We pray: Fight the good fight with all thy might; Christ is thy Strength and Christ thy Right. Lay hold on life, and it shall be thy joy and crown eternally. (TLH 447:1)

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29: 1 KIN. 12:1-33 10TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

As the first leader of the new Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam sought to solidify control over his people. With Jerusalem located in the Southern Kingdom, Jeroboam had to provide an attractive substitute. To make it convenient, he set up two locations for worship at Bethel and Dan. Additionally, he had golden calves made for worship. He also appointed priests from outside the tribe of Levi, and changed the month of the Feast of Tabernacles. Jeroboam thought nothing of turning his back on God's ordinances. He was simply "modifying" worship to fit the "modern" situation.

Many are guilty of the same sin today. Many individuals and church bodies do not respect God's commands. Creation is no longer thought to be "restricted" to six calendar days. Closed Communion is believed to be an ancient and unloving practice. Even "sin" has become a relative term. Any time we tamper with God's Word, we're guilty of the same sin as Jeroboam. May we never fall into the temptation to change what God has ordained, or try to justify such action for the sake of peace or progress. Rather, may we let the unchanging Word of God have its way with us, that not only we may remain fast in the faith, but pass on to succeeding generations the unaltered truth of God.

We pray: O God, who declares Thine almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity, mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace that we, running the way of Thy commandments, many obtain Thy gracious promises and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Seventh Sunday after Trinity

Article XXVI.

It has been the general persuasion, not of the people alone, but also of such as teach in the churches, that making Distinction of Meats, and like traditions of men, are works profitable to merit grace, and able to make satisfactions for sins. And that the world so thought, appears from this, that new ceremonies, new orders, new holydays, and new fastings were daily instituted, and the teachers in the churches did exact these works as a service necessary to merit grace, and did greatly terrify men's consciences, if they should omit any of these things. From this persuasion concerning traditions, much detriment has resulted in the Church.

First, the doctrine of grace and of the righteousness of faith has been obscured by it, which is the chief part of the Gospel, and ought to stand out, as the most prominent in the Church, that the merit of Christ may be well known, and that faith, which believes that sins are forgiven for Christ's sake may be exalted far above works. Wherefore Paul also lays the greatest stress on this article, putting aside the law and human traditions, in order to show that the righteousness of the Christian is another than such works, to wit, the faith which believes that sins are freely forgiven for Christ's sake. But this doctrine of Paul has been almost wholly smothered by traditions, which have produced an opinion that, by making distinctions in meats and like services, we must merit grace and righteousness. In treating of repentance, there was no mention made of faith; all that was done was to set forth those works of satisfaction, and in these all repentance seemed to consist.

Secondly, these traditions have obscured the commandments of God; because traditions were placed far above the commandment of God. Christianity was thought to consist wholly in the observance of certain holydays, fasts and vestures. These observances had won for themselves the exalted title of being the spiritual life and the perfect life. Meanwhile the commandments of God, according to each one's calling, were without honor, namely, that the father brought up his family, that the mother bore children, that the Prince governed the Commonwealth,—these were accounted works that were worldly and imperfect, and far below those glittering observances. And this error greatly tormented devout consciences, which grieved that they were bound by an imperfect state of life, as in marriage, in the office of magistrate, or in other civil ministrations; on the other hand, they admired the monks and such like, and falsely imagined that the observances of such men were more acceptable to God. ...

Wherefore our teachers must not be looked upon as having taken up this matter rashly, or from hatred of the bishops, as some falsely suspect. There was great need to warn the churches of these errors, which had arisen from misunderstanding the traditions.

—The Augsburg Confession, §1–11, 18–19

MONDAY, AUGUST 5: 1 CHRON. 16:1-43 7TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

King David's psalms are tremendous treasures that have been passed down through the ages. They give us a glimpse of the historic worship of God's people, and they provide a valuable guide for conducting worship in our own time.

One important factor in the psalms is that they teach. They place the history of God's mercy and the enduring hope that His Spirit creates in faith on the lips of the Church. By divine inspiration He gives more than passing feelings or shallow sentiments; He gives His people a clear confession of flesh-and-blood events that bear witness to His benevolent work and will.

Even though time has passed and our cultural context is very different, the Church has no need to change these principles of worship. Our songs and prayers ought to confess His mercy and declare our hope that is born of fear, love, and trust, because we are still part of the one, catholic Church, which continues to worship the one true God. We sing a new song that is focused on the fulfillment of His Old Testament promises in Jesus Christ crucified, but the principles of our faithful worship are still the same because we still confess that His mercy endures forever!

We pray: O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28: 1 KIN. 11:1-43 10TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

Solomon was supposed to be wise. In fact, he was supposed to be the wisest person who ever lived. But sin is such a powerful force that even the wisest can be led astray. What we know is the right thing to do can become ignored. Sin can, and does, blind even the wisest individual.

From the very beginning, God had established marriage as the union of one man and one woman. In addition, God had forbidden marriage between the Israelites and those who dwelt in pagan lands (Exodus 34), for they will pollute the marriage with false doctrine. Solomon violated both of these precepts. It's hard to believe that a man who wrote "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" could do such a spiritual "about face."

There is much to learn from this sad account, for we learn that anyone can fall from the faith. When we drift from hearing God's Word, or we hear but do not heed, we can fall into the same pit as Solomon. Scripture does not tell us whether Solomon ended up in heaven or hell, so we are left to wonder whether he repented or not. But the warning to us is the same: hold fast to God's Word and heed His Commandments.

We pray: Rise, my soul, to watch and pray, from thy sleep awaken; be not by the evil day unawares o'ertaken. For the Foe, well we know, oft his harvest reapeth while the Christian sleepeth. (TLH 446:1)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 27: 1 KINGS 10:1-29 10TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

Although the identity of the Queen of Sheba cannot be determined with certainty, there are certainly lessons we can glean from today's reading. Upon hearing of Solomon's legendary wisdom, the queen came to see for herself. After questioning him at length, she found there was no question too difficult for him to answer. In addition, she was impressed with his overabundant wealth. The queen was truly overwhelmed by what she heard and saw: "Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness."

Note the queen points out the wisdom of Solomon--and wisdom is far more than answering difficult questions or solving riddles. It's much more than knowing what is right and what is wrong. Being wise is the opposite of being foolish. And in Scripture, the "fool" is the one who says there is no God. That makes the wise man one who does know God. And if Solomon indeed shared wisdom with the Queen of Sheba, he could do no better than to share his knowledge of God. Such is also the case of each and every believer. We know the God who first knew us, and we're privileged to share that wisdom with a world that is foolish in God's sight.

We pray: Rise, Thou Light of Gentile nations, Jesus, bright and Morning Star; let Thy Word, the gladsome tidings, ring out loudly near and far, bringing freedom to the captives, peace and comfort to the slave, that the heathen, free from bondage, may proclaim Thy pow'r to save. (TLH 498:1)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 6: 2 SAMUEL 7:1-29 7TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

King David's desire to build a house for the Lord was noble, but misdirected. God sent the prophet Nathan to him to tell him that God had not commanded David to build a house for Him. Then He reminded David, "I took you from the sheepfold... to be ruler over My people, over Israel. And I have been with you... and made you a great name... I will set up your seed after you... he shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father and he shall be My son." These words of God brought David to remember that of himself he was nothing, but because of God's promise and mercy he had all things.

So, too, you and I need to be reminded that of ourselves we are nothing, but because of God's promises and mercy we have all things. Dr. Luther says in the explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith... He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ."

Thanks be to God that this is most certainly true.

We pray: O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7: 2 SAM. 12:1-23 7TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

The prophet Nathan comes to David with strong words of condemnation for his sins of adultery and murder. These strong words of God brought David to repentance. He said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” At his confession Nathan gave David absolution from God, and David was forgiven.

Each time we come to the Divine Service or Private Confession we too are reminded that we are every bit as sinful as King David! We cry out “I have sinned against the Lord!” And, lest we think too highly of ourselves, we must remember that the sins we need to confess are sins of thought, word, and deed. We too have much to confess.

With our confession comes the Absolution by the Pastor: “Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

To this we respond, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of Thy people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

We pray: O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY, AUGUST 26: 1 KINGS 9:1-28 10TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

In the first few verses of today’s text God makes a conditional promise, or two-way covenant, with Solomon: “Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever...” If Solomon would be faithful to God’s throne in heaven, then God would protect the lineage of Solomon in Israel. But the reverse is also binding. If Solomon is not faithful, God will withdraw His protecting hand. And because of the prominence of her temple, all who pass by would witness her destruction—and be reminded of the penalty of rejecting God.

This was a critical time in Solomon’s reign. His building programs had been completed, and it would be tempting to become lax. The same is true in our lives. It’s much easier to lean on God when times are challenging and the path is difficult. But when life is clipping along and we find ourselves on a long run of seemingly endless routine, we can easily become spiritually complacent and forget all that God has done and continues to do for us. Let us then be always spiritually diligent, and forever praise our God from whom all our blessings flow.

We pray: Great is the Lord, our God, and let His praise be great; He makes His churches His abode, His most delightful seat. (TLH 636:1)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 24: 1 KINGS 7:1-12 9TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

After building the Temple, Solomon used the next 13 years to build his own palace complex. Some buildings were used as a court for making royal judgments, granting audiences, and conducting the business of a worldwide theocracy. Others were used as a residence for himself, his wife, and his family/officials.

King Solomon served both as the head-father of the nation of Israel and as the biological father to his children. Although he was not a priest, he was also a spiritual father, who governed and guided by the Word of God. Psalm 127, which is attributed to Solomon, speaks figuratively of the biological family saying, “Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it... Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward.”

Parents “should consider that they are under obligations of obedience to God; and that, first of all, they should earnestly and faithfully discharge their office, not only to support and provide for the bodily necessities of their children, servants, subjects, etc., but, most of all, to train them to the honor and praise of God... If that were done, God would also richly bless us and give us grace to train men by whom land and people might be improved, and likewise well-educated citizens, chaste and domestic wives, who afterwards would rear godly children and servants. (Large Catechism, Ten Commandments, 168, 175)

The Church’s Husband gave Himself up to make His Bride holy. Jesus speaks to His Church with the Word, cleanses her with holy Baptism, and feeds her with His Body and Blood for forgiveness.

We pray: We thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for the blessing of body and soul. Amen.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8: 2 SAM. 15:1-15 7TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

In the verses before our reading King David had forgiven Absalom and welcomed him home. But Absalom again dishonored his father and began the process of trying to make himself king. Absalom was clearly in violation of the Fourth Commandment. He did not honor his father and he soon met an untimely death.

We live in a world where the Fourth Commandment takes quite a beating. Parents are disobeyed. Laws are ignored. Government officials are despised and disrespected. The Church and God’s Word are held in contempt. Sometimes we wonder why things are going so badly. This is not new. It started in the Garden of Eden. It continued throughout the Old Testament. It came to a culmination when Christ was crucified, and it continues on today. This world considers authority to be bad.

Dr. Luther’s explanation of the Fourth Commandment says, “We should fear and love God, that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.” As baptized Christians you and I know we are to keep the Commandment, but we are sinners. We want to obey, but we don’t. Like the man in Mark 9:24 we too cry out and say, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.” To our cry Jesus says, “Go, your sins are forgiven; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” And we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

We pray: O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 9: 2 SAMUEL 16:5-23 7TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

“It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day.”

David knew that there were bigger problems with which he had to deal than the curses and mockery of men. A kingdom and people needed to be served, and the Word of God needed to be obeyed.

Sometimes we deserve to be cursed and condemned by others for our evils. Other times we may be mocked only because of our obedience to God’s will. In either case, God’s righteousness should be served. If we deserve the open condemnation, then we should repent in faith. If we do not deserve the curses of self-important mockers, then we ought to remember our Lord’s teaching and example. Foolish men thought they had it all figured out as they threw insults at Him and committed treachery against Him while He remained silent. But these evil things were made to work together for good according to God’s will.

The Devil teaches this world to seek harsh revenge on account of curses or mockery. He urges people to think that they are all as kings and lords, and that they have the right to punish those who harm their pride. But our Lord Jesus, the true King and Son of David, teaches us that we are to love our enemies, and if we must punish evil according to our vocations, it is for the sake of His righteousness, not our own sense of indignation.

We pray: O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 23: 1 KINGS 8:1-66 9TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

At the dedicatory feast of tabernacles King Solomon offered up blessings and prayers to the LORD. He asked that God would hear the prayers of all who call upon His name toward this temple and give blessings to His people Israel.

The prayers were not self-congratulatory and boastful before God regarding the completed temple. Solomon knew quite well that “there is no one who does not sin.” Therefore, he spoke quite frankly about the future need for forgiveness regarding the inevitable sins of God’s people. This temple was built that men might call upon the name of the Lord and receive the desired and sought-after forgiveness. “When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and when they turn back to You and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication to You in this temple, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to their fathers” (1 Chronicles 8:33-34).

We, too, are in constant need of forgiveness. “...Although we have and believe the Word of God, and do and submit to His will, and are supported by His gifts and blessings, nevertheless we are not without sin. For we still stumble daily and transgress because we live in the world among men who do us much harm and give us cause for impatience, anger, revenge, etc. Besides, we have Satan at our back, who sets upon us on every side... so that it is not possible always to stand firm in such a persistent conflict.” (Large Catechism, Lord’s Prayer, 86-87)

We pray: O Lord, forgive us our sins and incline our hearts to You, to walk in all Your ways, and to keep Your commandments. Amen.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 22: 2 CHRON. 3:1-17 9TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

In Genesis 22:2 God tested Abraham by telling him, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” Abraham trusted in God and did not withhold his only son from God. Although God had previously said, “...for in Isaac your seed shall be called” (Genesis 21:12), Abraham concluded “that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Hebrews 11:18-19).

When Solomon began to build the house of the LORD, he laid the foundation at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah. It is the same place where faithful Abraham had begun to offer up his only son, but the LORD provided a male lamb as a substitute. The place is called “The LORD will provide” (Genesis 22:14). Years later, the only-begotten Son, the Lamb of God, was offered up on a hill outside of Jerusalem for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus was our atoning substitute so that through faith in Him we receive a resurrection from the dead and eternal life.

Today, our risen and ascended Lord sends out pastors and teachers to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that we are built on the foundation of His only-begotten Son. St. Paul says, “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

We pray: “O Lord, thank You for providing for me now and always. Amen.”

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10: 2 SAM. 18:1-13 7TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

God’s kingdom is characterized by righteousness, not by punishment and violence. Satan would have people believe that God is a mean, bloodthirsty tyrant. However: “‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live’” (Ezekiel 33:11).

The Lord was not bloodthirsty toward Adam and Eve after the Serpent led them into rebellion. Death came to them, and us, through their choices and actions. God was patient and worked to help them, cover them, and deliver them from Satan. He does the same for all of us who have been brought to faith by His Spirit. Our life and redemption are His goal; punishment and death are consequences that He gives because of justice and righteousness, which work together for a greater good.

Sometimes leaders, like King Davd, are needed to go forth and bear the sword, other times they are needed to stay back from the battle and show their followers how to be patient and discerning. Sometimes people must be punished under the sword, other times they may be pardoned for the sake of achieving an end that is better for many. In all cases, we must seek the Lord’s will and righteousness, and try to serve His kingdom so that life and salvation may be proclaimed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We pray: O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Article 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 that a monastic vow is on an equality with baptism. This is blasphemy against God.

Article XV. Of Human Traditions

The declaration of the Papists that human traditions serve for the remission of sins, or merit salvation, is altogether unchristian and condemned, as Christ says (Matt. 15:9): “In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” And Titus 1:14: “That turn from the truth.” Also their declaration that it is a mortal sin if one do not observe these statutes, is not right.

These are the articles on which I must stand; and if God so will I shall stand even to my death. And I do not know how to change or to concede anything in them. If anyone else will concede anything, he will do it at the expense of his conscience.

Lastly, the Pope’s bundle of impostures still remains, concerning foolish and childish articles, as the dedication of churches, the baptism of bells, the baptism of the altar-stone, with its godfathers to pray and offer gifts. Such baptism is administered to the reproach and mockery of holy baptism, and should not be tolerated. Afterwards, concerning the consecration of wax tapers, palm-branches, cakes, spices, oats, etc., which nevertheless cannot be called consecrations, but are nothing but mockery and fraud. There are infinite other such deceptions, which we commit to their god, and which may be adored by them, until they are weary of them. We will not be confused by them.

—The Smalcald Articles, Part III

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21: 1 KIN. 5:1-18 9TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

God had given King David a promise, “Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name.” Solomon, David’s son, trusted in that promise saying, “I propose to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to my father David.” It is a wonderful thing when believers act, trusting in the Lord’s promises.

St. Paul in Acts 17:24-25 explains that “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.” The Triune God is not restricted to the boundary of a structure. He does not have any need for a residence. Furthermore—unlike the Greek gods who supposedly created man to do work for them—the one true God does not need the service or worship of men.

Solomon intended to build a house for the name of the LORD so that God’s people might benefit! The name of God is the revelation of who God is, and what He has done for us. The Father sent His beloved Son to accomplish our salvation through His suffering and death on our behalf. The name of the Lord is given to men so that we might call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks. “And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Joel 2).

We pray: O Father in heaven, trusting in Your promise to make me Your child in holy Baptism, let me hold to Your Word and lead a holy life according to it. Amen.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 20: 1 KINGS 4:22-34 9TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

Through the wise reign of King Solomon the people of Judah and Israel were governed quietly and peaceably so that they ate, drank, and were happy, to paraphrase 1 Kings 4:20. Verse 24 says, “For he [Solomon] had dominion over all the region ... and he had peace on every side all around him.”

Through our baptism into Christ, believers have been brought into Christ’s kingdom. Jesus is our King, and we are His subjects. Jesus has defeated sin, death and the devil. We need fear no adversary. We trust that all things have been placed under His feet. After His death and resurrection, He came proclaiming to us peace. We believe that our God richly and daily provides us with all that we need to support this body and life. We also believe that He daily and richly forgives all of our sins and the sins of all believers.

The conclusion to the Lord’s Prayer speaks of God’s all-encompassing dominion, saying, “for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.” Solomon’s father, King David, expressed a similar confidence that God is able to do everything which He has promised, saying in 1 Chronicles 29:10-11, “Blessed be Thou, LORD God of Israel our Father, forever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as head above all.”

We pray: “Now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20-21)

MONDAY, AUGUST 12: 2 SAM. 19:1-23 8TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

“So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people. For the people heard it said that day, ‘The king is grieved for his son’.”

The armies of King David had been victorious, but David’s rebellious son Absalom had been killed. And the king was grieved. Is it any wonder? Many of us have sons, and some of them are rebellious. Still, we hope they will come around, we certainly do not wish death on them, and we too would be grieved if they were slain.

Yet David had a vocation from God. He was to be King of Israel, and his grief as a father was undermining his vocation. Israel’s victory should be celebrated, not mourned, and that included the celebration of the end of a rebellion. God had given victory to Israel, and preserved David as king. It was his duty to lead the celebration, not to indulge his personal grief. So the king was warned, and repented, and took his place before the victorious nation.

We too have vocations from God, and we too are sometimes tempted to let personal issues get in the way of fulfilling them. As those who are forgiven through faith in the shed blood of Christ, and who would gladly honor our Redeemer King, God grant us (especially when it is emotionally hard!) strength dutifully to fulfill our vocations, to the praise of His Holy Name. Amen.

We pray: “I give You thanks, oh Lord, for the gift of my salvation. Grant me strength, that I may this day faithfully fulfill the vocations You have given me, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.”

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13: 1 CHRON. 21:1-30 8TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

“Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.”

In America today the census is much in the news. But censuses are nothing new. King David decided to have one. But where did that idea come from? The Scriptures are clear: this was nothing less than Satan’s moving of David!

What’s so evil about a census? We do that as a nation, but that’s because, the symbolism of “in God we trust” notwithstanding, ours is a secular nation that cannot even say what “God” it trusts in, let alone do we truly commend our ways to the Triune God of Israel. We even count the people in congregations, and there’s nothing wrong with that either: it’s just good pastoral practice to keep track of who is in attendance, and seek to be of spiritual assistance to those who are missing.

The problem was that Satan tempted David’s heart to trust in numbers, rather than in the Lord God alone. God would take care of Israel; David should not have needed to count heads to be confident of the Lord’s provision. We, too, must repent of the Satanic temptation to trust in numbers rather than trusting in the Lord alone to secure our future and the future of the Church (the “New Israel”). And as we, like David, repent, we too shall find a merciful God who forgives us for the sake of “Great David’s greater Son,” Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray: Oh Lord, deliver us from the temptation to look for something to make Your mercies more certain according to our ideas, and grant us rather to trust in You alone, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

MONDAY, AUGUST 19: 1 KINGS 3:16-28 9TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

In one of the Church’s prayers for the civil authorities we pray, “Grant them wisdom and understanding, that under their peaceable governance Thy people may be guarded and directed in righteousness, quietness, and unity.” The Church needs good government to punish evil and reward those who do good. Through the power of the sword our Triune God establishes order and temporal peace so that God’s people are able to gather to receive the Lord’s gifts of Word and sacraments in thankfulness. 1 Kings 3 is an example of Solomon’s God-given wisdom used to administer justice in the temporal sphere.

We also need godly men who have studied and learned of the eternal wisdom of the Holy Scriptures, so that they might show us our sins by the Law, and then preach the promise of forgiveness through the Gospel. Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” In the churchly sphere, St. Paul speaks about this Gospel message of Jesus’ crucifixion as “the wisdom of God!” 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 says, “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

We pray: Eternal Lord, Ruler of all, graciously regard those who have been set in positions of authority among us that they may be guided by your Spirit, be high in purpose, wise in counsel, firm in good resolution, and unwavering in duty, that under them we may be governed quietly and peaceably; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (Lutheran Worship, prayer #122)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 17: 2 CHRON. 1:1-13 8TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

“On that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, ‘Ask! What shall I give you?’”

What a question! Can you imagine? God commanding you to ask, with the promise that whatever you asked for, He would give you? For what would you then ask? Long life? Good looks? Riches? Power?

Solomon asked for wisdom. What he asked for was not a self gratifying gift, but a gift with which he could serve others. So notice: First, if we would seek personal growth, faithfulness seeks to grow in ways that would enable us to serve others better. Second, whatever talents and skills we have are gifts of the Lord, not cause for boasting in ourselves. Sadly, Solomon eventually strayed far from the faithful wisdom with which God had blessed him.

St. Paul specifically calls Christ “the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). May God fill us all with wisdom, with Christ, that we may be His instruments for serving others. And God grant us the humility never to take His gifts for granted, but rather praise Him for all His good gifts, including chiefly the salvation with which He has blessed us by grace through faith in Christ.

We pray: “Heavenly Father, as I would be faithfully serving You, continually fill me with the wisdom that is in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14: 1 CHRON. 22:1-19 8TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

“Now David said, ‘Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all countries. I will now make preparation for it.’ So David made abundant preparations before his death.”

David had ruled over Israel for forty years. There had been dark moments, the worst of which was his sin with Bathsheba and his subsequent murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite. But when confronted by Nathan the prophet, David confessed: “I have sinned against the Lord.” And immediately Holy Absolution was pronounced. David had drunk deeply of the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God.

The time had come to hand the reins of power on to his son Solomon. More than that, the time had come for David to prepare for his own death. He did not do as many do today, reasoning that “after I’m gone, what will it matter to me?” No, this one who knew God’s mercy wanted the world to know his God, and so he made provision so his son could build the temple.

We too should consider how to make “abundant preparations” for the Gospel ministry to continue after we are gone. We can raise our children in the Faith, perhaps remember our congregation or our seminary in our wills, and other things as well. God grant us to be faithful during this life, and to think of ways to make that faithfulness felt even after we are gone.

We pray: “Heavenly Father, help me honor You with the whole of my temporal life, and also with what I leave behind when You call me home, for the sake of my sin forgiving Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15: 1 CHRON. 28:1-21 8TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

“And David said to his son Solomon, ‘Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God—my God—will be with you’.”

What a wonderful fatherly word from David to his son! Entrusting his son with the building of the temple, David tells him the words above. It’s more than just an order. It’s a vote of spiritual confidence. When he says “be strong,” he tells Solomon that he can be strong, that he can be of good courage, that he can do it.

How does David know this? The same way he had known it in his own life: the Lord had taken a youngest son and made him king. And a slayer of a Philistine giant. And most of all, a repentant and forgiven sinner. That same Lord would be with Solomon. So David admonishes his son: trust the Lord, and get the job done.

We too can pass this confidence on to the next generation; not “self confidence,” but rather “Lord confidence.” Many are the opportunities we have to speak of the mercies God has shown us in Christ Jesus, but no mission field is as assuredly our responsibility as our own children. God grant us to speak to them of the confidence that they too may have in His salvation.

We pray: Gracious heavenly Father, open our mouths to speak, and the ears of our children to hear, of Your many mercies toward them in Christ, that they may have confidence in You. Amen.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 16: 2 CHRON. 29:1-23 8TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

“Then the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it, and brought out all the debris that they found in the temple of the Lord to the court of the house of the Lord.”

Can you imagine? The worship of the Lord had been so neglected under previous kings that the temple of the Lord had been turned into a debris dump! Thanks be to God, He raised up King Hezekiah to be a faithful ruler, and to turn the hearts of His people back to Him. No small part of that was assigning the priests to clean up the temple so it could be returned to its proper and faithful use.

It’s not hard to see parallels to our own situation! Thankfully, the Lord has established in the hearts of many a basic understanding of the Gospel—the good news that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus, who atoned for all our sins by dying on the cross. But debris has also been dumped into the Lord’s house: the debris of pluralism that would extend holy communion to just anybody, or the debris of self-indulgent music that is someone’s preferred style rather than something that substantively sings the faith into our hearts, just to name a couple!

Support your pastor when faithfully he labors to clean out the “debris” of poor practice. He does this for your sake, that your faith in Christ may be faithfully nourished. God have His use of that to preserve us in the one true faith in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting!

We pray: Oh Lord, as You have saved us by grace through faith in Christ, grant us faithfully to clean the debris of sin out of our own lives as well, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.