

Put it into Practice

These questions have been put together to help you as you extend and apply tonight's Scripture to your life.

Lutheran Confessions

Augsburg Confession, Article XIII: Of the Use of the Sacraments.

1] *Of the Use of the Sacraments* they teach that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God **2]** toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the Sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises, which are offered and set forth through the Sacraments.

3] They therefore condemn those who teach that the Sacraments justify by the outward act, and who do not teach that, in the use of the Sacraments, faith which believes that sins are forgiven, is required.

Smalcald Articles, Part Three, VIII, 11-12 Of Confession.

11] It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments. For God wished to appear even to Moses through the burning bush and spoken Word; and no prophet neither Elijah nor Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments [or spoken Word]. **12]** Neither was John the Baptist conceived without the preceding word of Gabriel, nor did he leap in his mother's womb without the voice of Mary.

13] And Peter says, **2 Pet. 1, 21:** *The prophecy came not by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Without the outward Word, however, they were not holy, much less would the Holy Ghost have moved them to speak when they still were unholy [or profane]; for they were holy, says he, since the Holy Ghost spake through them.

(Bente, F., *Concordia Triglotta*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997).

Ember Days

Today is an ember day! "The material in the Large Catechism originated as sermons by Martin Luther on the basic texts of Christian teaching. Already in the Middle Ages, some regional synods in Germany had called for regular preaching on the "catechism" (usually defined as the Ten Commandment, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer and, sometimes, the Ave Maria). The Ember Days, four time of fasting spread throughout the church year {*The Wednesday, Friday and Saturday after 1st Sunday in Lent, Pentecost, Holy Cross Day(Sep 14), and St. Lucia's Day(Dec 13)*}, were often designated for this purpose. Even before the Reformation, Wittenberg's city church, St. Mary's also seems to have followed this practice. Luther himself preached on various portions of the catechism as early as 1518" (*The Book of Concord*, Kolb, preface to Large Catechism, p.377)

Prayer

Stir up your power, O Lord, we implore You, and come among us, that by Your grace whatever is hindered by our sins may yet be speedily accomplished through Your mercy and satisfaction; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. AMEN

(*Collect for Fourth Sunday in Advent*)

Word of God: John 1:19-28 (on back)

Questions to Ponder in Prayer

- In each of the Gospels, why does the story of Jesus begin with the testimony/witness of John the Baptist? (Mal 3:1, Is 40:3-5)
- Who are these "Jews from Jerusalem" that they send a delegation? (Deut 13:1-5, John 11:47-48) What was the delegation's purpose?
- Why did John require an "investigation?" (Matthew 3:1-12)
- What is the question they ask John? (v.19)
- What does John emphatically state? (Jn 1:8, 3:28, Acts 13:24-25)
- Why does John tell them who he isn't, instead of who he is?
- Why do they ask him is he is Elijah(Mal 4:5) or The Prophet(Dt 18:15-19, Jn 7:40)? What was the expectation? (Note: Mt 17:3) Though John the Baptist was not the resurrected Elijah that they thought, he was the "Elijah" of Mal 4:5 as shown by Lk 1:17, Mt 11:14 and 17:12.
- Finally, they flaunt their "credentials" and force John to speak concerning himself. Who does John claim to be? (see Isaiah 40:3)
- Read Isaiah 40:3-5. How does John fit this prophesy?
- With verse 24f we have a question from the Pharisees (The Sanhedrin was controlled by Sadducees). Why would Pharisees ask the question in verse 26 about the authority for John's baptizing? (Ezek 36:25) What was their real concern(Mt 3:5-10)?
- What do we know about John's baptizing?
 - Who was to be baptized? (Matthew 3:5-7, especially Mt 3:9!)
 - The result of John's baptism? (Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3)
 - Included law(Lk 3:19-20) and Gospel(Lk 3:18)
- Why does John say "I baptize with water, but..." in response to their question? (Note: He is not contrasting water baptism with "Spirit baptism" as some would have you believe.) John continues to highlight the importance of "he who comes." John is just the servant or instrument, but Jesus makes it all possible.
- John is not worthy, but Jesus "stands among you." What does this mean?

6:30 PM "Learn by Heart"

Through simple repetition those present will inwardly digest...

Hymn "**Word Supreme, Before Creation**" ASBH #72 insert
Holy Baptism, Questions 1 & 2
1 Peter 3:21

7:00 PM "Catechesis"

- + Opening Verses
"O Lord, open my lips..." p.224
- + Ascription of Praise
"Praise to you, O Christ.
King who comes to save us." p.225

Reading

St. John 1:19-28 (back)

Hymn

"**Word Supreme, Before Creation**" insert
(Augustana #72, St. John – Dec 27)

Catechesis on... (back)

St. John 1:19-28
Liturgy
Catechism

--prayer based on reading

- + Responsive Prayer for Catechesis
(insert)

Ten Commandments
Lord's Prayer
Apostles' Creed
Psalm 100
Collect of the Day
Prayers based on the text
The Collect for "The Children of the Church"
Benedicamus
Benediction

Catechesis on St. John 1:19-28

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”²⁰ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”²¹ And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”²² Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?”²³ He said: “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the LORD,’” as the prophet Isaiah said.”²⁴ Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees.²⁵ And they asked him, saying, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”²⁶ John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know.²⁷ “It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.”²⁸ These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. (NKJV)

Does God work immediately or mediately?

In this question the word “immediately” does not refer to a quick period of time, but to the lack of a medium, agent or instrument. In other words if God works immediately, he works directly with you. He would speak to you directly. If God works mediately, then he works through means. That is, God might speak to you by means of his word.

The book of Hebrews (1:1a) begins, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets....” In the past God often did work immediately, speaking directly to the Prophets. In order that the hearers might know that God had indeed spoken with these holy men, God provided signs and miracles to prove their authenticity(Ex 4:1f). As another proof, the words of the prophet must be tested to see if they come true(Dt. 18:21-22).

Whenever the Son of God came in the flesh, this Jesus spoke and taught and interacted directly with those around him. Jesus, God in the flesh, did work immediately with the people and His Apostles. Jesus also produced signs and miracles that showed that He was not only sent by God, but He was God come in the flesh (John 20:30). The greatest of his signs was His

resurrection from the dead—positive proof that Jesus’ sacrifice was acceptable to God(Romans 1:4).

In these last days...mediately

The book of Hebrews(1:2) continues, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

After Jesus’ resurrection and before His ascension, Jesus directed his chosen Apostles to continue His work(Mt 28:18-20).

By means of Prophets, Apostles, and Pastors

Two points need to be stressed. First of all, our risen Lord, who defeated death, does not promise to work immediately with us, but desires to continue His work mediately, through His Apostles, placing them on the same level as the Prophets of old, and confirming their words with signs and miracles(Heb 2:4). See Luke 10:16, John 20:21-23, Ephesians 2:19-20,

The Holy Spirit calls Pastors to preach and teach and administer the sacraments taught by the Apostles and Prophets (Acts 20:28, 2 Cor 5:20).

Christ is Present in this Ministry

The second point is that Jesus Christ declares that He is working through these appointed means to create and strengthen faith. The Son of God continues to speak to us in these last days through the instrumentality of His Word and Sacraments. So that this Gospel might be preached and administered, God has instituted the pastoral office(AC V) as his instrument.

John the Baptist told the crowd, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie” (John 1:26-27). By his own power, John could only apply water, but with Christ’s working mediately through him, John’s baptism forgave sins(Mark 1:4) Similarly, the Pastor confesses his own unworthiness and Christ’s mediation with the words.

“...As a called and ordained servant of the Word I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Catechesis on St. John 1:19-28



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