

Lutheran Confessions

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration XI. Eternal Election, 34-41

34] However, **that many are called and few chosen is not** owing to the fact that the call of God,

which is made through the Word, had the meaning **as though God said: “Outwardly, through the Word, I indeed call to My kingdom all of you to whom I give My Word; however, in My heart I do not mean this with respect to all, but only with respect to a few;** for it is My will that the greatest part of those whom I call through the Word shall not be enlightened nor converted, but be and remain damned, although through the Word, in the call, I declare Myself to them otherwise.” 35] For this would be to assign contradictory wills to God. . . . 37] For this reason also **Christ causes the promise of the Gospel not only to be offered in general, but He seals it through the Sacraments which He attaches as seals of the promise, and thereby confirms it [the certainty of the promise of the Gospel] to every believer in particular.**

38] On this account, as the *Augsburg Confession* in Art. 11 says, we also retain **private absolution**, and teach that **it is God’s command that we believe such absolution, and should regard it as sure that, when we believe the word of absolution, we are as truly reconciled to God** as though we had heard a voice from heaven, as the *Apology* explains this article. This consolation would be entirely taken from us if we were not to infer the will of God towards us from the call which is made through the Word and through the Sacraments.

39] There would also be overthrown and taken from us the foundation that the Holy Ghost wishes certainly to be present with the Word preached, heard, considered, and to be efficacious and operate through it. **Therefore the meaning is not at all the one referred to above. . . .**

40] Moreover, even as God has ordained in His [eternal] counsel that the Holy Ghost should call, enlighten, and convert the elect through the Word, and that He will justify and save all those who by true faith receive Christ, so He also determined in His counsel that He will harden, reprobate, and condemn those who are called through the Word, if they reject the Word and resist the Holy Ghost, who wishes to be efficacious and to work in them through the Word and persevere therein. **And in this manner many are called, but few are chosen.**

41] For few receive the Word and follow it; the greatest number despise the Word, and will not come to the wedding, Matt. 22, 3ff. **The cause for this contempt for the Word is not God’s foreknowledge [or predestination], but the perverse will of man, which rejects or perverts the means and instrument of the Holy Ghost, which God offers him through the call, and resists the Holy Ghost, who wishes to be efficacious, and works through the Word,** as Christ says: *How often would I have gathered you together, and ye would not!* Mt. 23, 37.

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

Put it into Practice

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

Prayer

O Lord, we implore You favorably to hear the prayers of Your people that we, who are justly punished for our offenses, may be mercifully delivered by Your goodness, for the glory of Your name; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Savior, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **AMEN** (*Collect for Septuagesima*)

Word of God: St. Matthew 20:1-16 (on back)

Questions to Ponder in Prayer

With the beginning of the Pre-Lenten season(gesimas) the readings reveal a mission focus of getting out the evangel and bringing in the new converts.

1. What is the kingdom of heaven? (Matt 3:2, “Thy Kingdom Come”)
2. How is the story of the vineyard owner similar to the way that God works in His church? (Psalm 103:13, Gen 32:10, Matthew 18:17, 19:29)
3. Although this landowner has a foreman, how involved is the owner?
4. Who does all the work in the vineyard?
5. The first group hired has worked out an agreement. What was it?
6. Do the next four groups have an agreement?
7. At the third hour, the men were standing around doing nothing. At the eleventh hour, the men respond, “Because no one has hired us.” Is that true? Whose fault is it?
8. Who “found” the ones hired last? What does that say about the landowner?
9. Whenever we get to payment day, there are only two kinds of workers. What are the two kinds? (Mt 25:31-46)
10. When this first group grumbles, why are they concerned about equality/justice(v.12)? (Exodus 16:6-8)
11. Why are these hired first told “Take your pay and go?” With the phrase “the last will be first and the first shall be last,” the first groups is shown to have been what? Luther: “This is a man who works in the church for what he can get out of the church. He has what he worked for—and nothing more.”
12. In Matthew 19:27, Peter had asked, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” How does this parable of Jesus answer that question?

6:30 PM “Learn by Heart”

Through simple repetition those present will inwardly digest...

Hymn “**O God, May We E’er Pure Retain**” ASBH #80

Office of the Keys, question 1-3
1 Timothy 2:3-4

7:00 PM “Catechesis”

+ Opening Verses

“O Lord, open my lips...” p.224

+ Ascription of Praise

“Praise to you, O Christ.

Lamb of Our Salvation.” p.225

Reading

St. Matthew 20:1-16 (back)

Hymn

“**O God, May We E’er Pure Retain**”
(Augustana Service #80, insert)

Catechesis on... (back)

St. Matthew 20:1-16

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. Matthew 20:1-16

¹ “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² “Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ “And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ “and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. ⁵ “Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. ⁶ “And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ ⁷ “They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’ ⁸ “So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them *their* wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ ⁹ “And when those came who *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. ¹⁰ “But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. ¹¹ “And when they had received *it*, they complained against the landowner, ¹² “saying, ‘These last *men* have worked *only* one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ ¹³ “But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’ ¹⁴ ‘Take *what is* yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man *the same* as to you. ¹⁵ ‘Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ ¹⁶ “So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.” (NKJV)

Good Works of Believers

1. Done according to the God’s Will, Law, Ten Commandments
 - not obedience to man’s law (Mt 15:9)
 - not a good intention
 - even our cross must not be self-imposed (1 Pet 3:7)
 - come from our God-given vocation.
2. Flow from a willing spirit, from the love of God (which thus requires that the person be a Christian).
Romans 13:10, “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

Works of the Law (“Good” Works of the Heathen)

Although the good works of the heathen comply with the external requirements of the Law, they are not done with the right motivation, but are at best simply the natural motives of the law written on the heart (Rom 2:15), to elicit fame, to avoid punishment, or at worst to earn eternal life.

1 Corinthians 10:20, “Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.”

Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

Galatians 3:2b,5-7, “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ... Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it by the works of the law*, or by the hearing of faith?— ⁶ just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” ⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham....

Reward of Grace

God rewards the good works of believers, both spiritually and temporally. However, should there be a claim of a reward by right, that person would be excluded from the Kingdom.

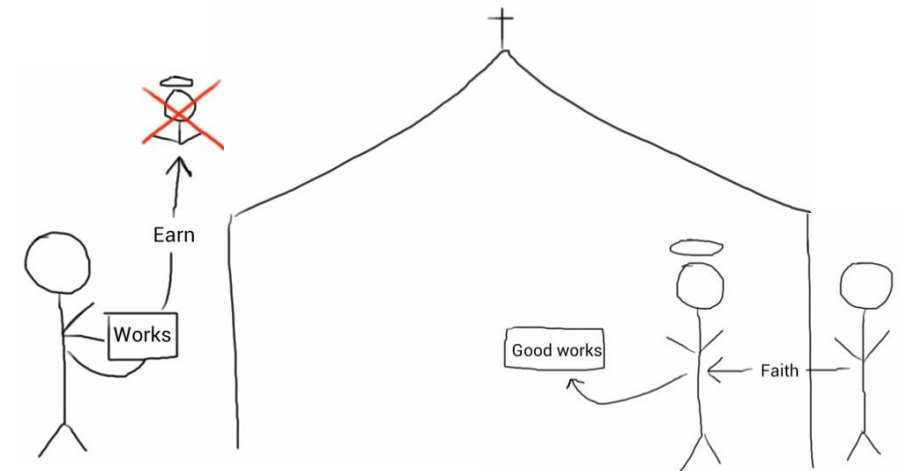
1 Corinthians 3:8, “Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.”

1 Timothy 4:8, “For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”

Galatians 3:10, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse”

Why? “We are not fit of ourselves (2 Cor 3:5), but it is God who works in us both to will and to do the things pleasing to him (Phil 2:13) ‘If thou didst receive it, why doest thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?’ (1 Cor 4:7).” Chemnitz

Catechesis On St. Matthew 20:1-16



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Office of the Keys, 1 & 2

“For since private absolution originates in the **Office of the Keys**, it should not be despised [neglected], but greatly and highly esteemed [of the greatest worth], as [also] all other offices of the Christian Church” (Smalcald Articles III, VIII, 2).

Pastoral Office, the Ministry, Divine Gift to the Church

“That we may obtain this faith, **the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments** was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake” (AC V, 1-2).

Acts 20:28, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which **the Holy Spirit has made you overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Ephesians 4:8,11, “Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave **gifts to men**.... And He{Christ} Himself gave ...**some (to be) pastors and teachers**....

Pastoral Office(of the Keys) is entrusted to Reliable Men

“Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should **publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments** unless he be regularly called” (AC XIV).

“In addition to this, it is necessary to acknowledge that **the keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church**, as many most clear and firm arguments testify. For Christ, speaking concerning the keys adds, Matt. 18, 19: If two or three of you shall agree on earth, etc. Therefore **he grants the keys principally and immediately to the Church**, just as also for this reason **the Church has principally the right of calling**. [For just as the promise of the Gospel belongs certainly and immediately to the entire Church, so the keys belong immediately to the entire Church, because the keys are nothing else than **the office whereby this promise is communicated to every one who desires it**, just as it is actually manifest that **the Church has the power to ordain ministers of the Church**. And Christ speaks in these words: Whatsoever ye shall bind, etc., and indicates to whom He has given the keys, namely, to the Church: Where two or three are gathered together in My name. Likewise Christ gives supreme and final jurisdiction to the Church, when He says: Tell it unto the Church.]... (Treatise, 24).

2 Timothy 2:2, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, **commit these to faithful men** who will be able to teach others also.”

1 Corinthians 4:1, “Let a man so consider us, as **servants of Christ and stewards** of the mysteries of God.”

The Work of The Ministry: Preaching the Word

“However, as to the declaration: Upon this rock I will build My Church, certainly the Church has not been built upon the authority of man, **but upon the ministry of the confession which Peter made**, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He accordingly addresses him as a **minister**: Upon this rock, i.e., **upon this ministry**. [Therefore he addresses him as a minister of this office in which this confession and doctrine is to be in operation and says: Upon this rock, i.e., **this preaching and ministry**.]

26] Furthermore, **the ministry of the New Testament** is not bound to places and persons as the Levitical ministry, but it is dispersed throughout the whole world, and is there **where God gives His gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers**; neither does **this ministry** avail on account of the authority of any person, but on account of the Word given by Christ” (Treatise, 25-26).

Ephesians 4:11-13, “And He{*Christ*} Himself gave

some to be apostles,

some prophets,

some evangelists,

and some pastors and teachers, 12

for the equipping of the saints,

for the work of ministry,

for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13

till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (NKJV)

A Fourth Sacrament? Kind of

“But if ordination be understood as applying to **the ministry of the Word**, we are not unwilling to call ordination a sacrament. For the **ministry of the Word has God’s command and glorious promises**, Rom. 1, 16: The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Likewise, Is. 55, 11: So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please. 12] If ordination be understood in this way, neither will we refuse to call the imposition of hands a sacrament. For **the Church has the command to appoint ministers**, which should be most pleasing to us, because **we know that God approves this ministry, and is present in the ministry [that God will preach and work through men and those who have been chosen by men]**. 13] And it is of advantage, so far as can be done, to adorn the ministry of the Word with every kind of praise against fanatical men, who dream that the Holy Ghost is given not through the Word, but because of certain preparations of their own, if they sit unoccupied and silent in obscure places, waiting for illumination, as the Enthusiasts formerly taught, and the Anabaptists now teach (Ap XIII, 11-13).

1 Timothy 3:1, “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires **the position of a bishop**, he desires **a noble task**..”

Office of the Keys, 3

The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops

In the Confession and in the Apology⁹ we have set forth in general terms what we have to say about ecclesiastical power.

⁶⁰ The Gospel requires of **those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, exercise jurisdiction**, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent. ⁶¹ By the confession of all, even our adversaries, it is evident that **this power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters,¹ or bishops.** ⁶² Accordingly Jerome teaches clearly that in the apostolic letters all who preside over the churches are both bishops and presbyters. He quotes from Titus, “This is why I left you in Crete, that you might appoint presbyters in every town,” and points out that these words are followed by, “A bishop must be married only once” (Titus 1:5-7). Again, Peter and John call themselves presbyters. And Jerome observes: “One man was chosen over the rest to prevent schism, lest several persons, by gathering separate followings around themselves, rend the church of Christ. For in Alexandria, from the time of Mark the Evangelist to the time of Bishops Heracles and Dionysius, the presbyters always chose one of their number, set him in a higher place, and called him bishop. Moreover, in the same way in which an army might select a commander for itself, the deacons may choose from their number one who is known to be active and name him archdeacon. For, apart from ordination, what does a bishop do that a presbyter does not do?”

⁶³ Jerome therefore teaches that **the distinction between the grades of bishop and presbyter (or pastor) is by human authority.** The fact itself bears witness to this, for the power is the same, as I have already stated. ⁶⁴ Afterwards one thing made a distinction between bishops and pastors, and this was ordination, for it was decided that one bishop should ordain the ministers in a number of churches. ⁶⁵ But since the distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right, it is manifest that **ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine right.** ⁶⁶ Consequently, when the regular bishops become enemies of the Gospel and are unwilling to administer ordination, **the churches retain the right to ordain for themselves.** ⁶⁷ **For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers.**

This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says, “When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men” (Eph. 4:8, 11, 12). He enumerates pastors and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and he adds that they are given for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ. Where the true church is, therefore, the right of electing and ordaining ministers must of necessity also be. **So in an emergency even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another.** It is like the example which Augustine relates of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the other (a catechumen), and the latter, after his Baptism, absolved the former. ⁶⁸ Here the words of Christ apply which testify that the keys were given to the church and not merely to certain individuals: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

⁶⁹ Finally, this is confirmed by the declaration of Peter, “You are a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9). These words apply to the true church which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of electing and ordaining ministers. ⁷⁰ **The most common custom of the church also bears witness to this, for there was a time when the people elected pastors and bishops. Afterwards a bishop, either of that church or of a neighboring church, was brought in to confirm the election with the laying on of hands; nor was ordination anything more than such confirmation.**

From the “Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope,” paragraphs 59-70

Apology, XIII,

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⁹ Augsburg Confession, Art. XXVIII; Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. XXVIII.

¹ Cf. 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1.