

2026 SYNOD AND COLLOQUIUM OF THE ELDoNA—As has been our custom, we will be at Salem Lutheran Church, beginning with Vespers on **Tuesday, June 2nd**, and concluding on **Sunday, June 7th**. The diocese will celebrate its 20th anniversary in the Divine Service on June 7th. The diocese will also join in Salem's celebration of its 140th anniversary with two services on Saturday, June 6th. All clergy of the diocese are urged to send Deacon Oncken all reports, papers, etc. prior to Quasimodogeniti.

2026 DIOCESAN FAMILY CAMP—Charity-Burleson is graciously hosting this year's family camp. The family camp will immediately follow the Synod, beginning Monday morning, **June 8th**, and continuing through Wednesday, **June 10th**. Please contact Pr. Heimbigner directly for more details.

AUGUSTANA SERVICE BOOK AND HYMNAL UPDATE—In keeping with the determinations of last year's synod, all hymns have now been updated. (Liturgical corrections were made over the past two synods.) The ASBH is now undergoing final editorial work and will soon be ready to send to the printers. We will update with final delivery dates, etc. as more information becomes available.

REMAINING HUMAN: ANTHROPOLOGY IN AN AGE OF ORACLES is Bishop Heiser's new book addressing one of the defining questions of our time: *What is man?* In an age marked by artificial intelligence, technocracy, cultural fragmentation, and civilizational fragility, this work offers a clear and pastoral Christian response grounded in Scripture and the Book of Concord. The book argues that the crisis before us is not merely technological, but anthropological: unless we recover the truth about man as God's creature—embodied, relational, fallen in Adam, and restored only in Christ—we will not rightly navigate the pressures of the age. *Remaining Human* is written as a compass, not a compendium: a guide for Christians seeking to remain faithful, thoughtful, and truly human in an increasingly dehumanizing world. 220 pages • ISBN 979-8253304891 • \$14.95

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



APRIL 6–MAY 2, 2026

**A PUBLICATION OF
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA**

The Calendar

The Lutheran Hymnal (1941): TLH; 2022 Supplement: ASBH

(Monday: M; Tuesday: T; Wednesday: W; Thursday: R; Friday: F; Saturday: S)

Please note that hymn numbers for Festival Days reflect the enumeration of drafts of ASBH supplied at the most recent synods.

April 5	Feast of the Resurrection	ASBH 29
April 12	Quasimodogeniti (Easter 1)	ASBH 30

APRIL 13 CLASSES RESUME FOR SPRING QUARTER OF ST. IGNATIUS

April 19	Misericordias Domini (Easter 2)	ASBH 31
	Philipp Melancthon, Confessor	ASBH 85

April 25 (S) *St. Mark, Evangelist* ASBH 86

April 26	Jubilate (Easter 3)	ASBH 32
May 1 (F)	<i>St. Philip and St. James, Apostles</i>	ASBH 85
May 2 (S)	<i>St. Athanasius, Bishop, Confessor, Doctor</i>	ASBH 88

St. Ignatius Lutheran Seminary

Spring Quarter begins March 9; the Holy Week—Easter Break continues through April 12. May 29 will be the last day of the Spring Quarter. The classes offered in the Spring Quarter are as follows:

E009—Greek Readings 3 (1 hr.)

S005—Creation and Redemption (3 hrs.)

H004—Reformation (3 hrs.)

E004—Isaiah (3 hrs.)

St. Ignatius currently has two students, Duncan Geldenhuys (Australia) and Jonathan Teo Zin Han (Singapore).

SATURDAY, MAY 2: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:5–14

ST. ATHANASIUS

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

How could the mission of such ordinary men, bearing such a simple message, even survive, much less succeed? They had no sword, no prestige, no armed legions. They battled a fanatical and entrenched Jewish establishment and a worldwide enthroned paganism. And they went to war with nothing but the doctrine of the cross; an object of indignant horror, of unbounded scorn and ridicule.

But they also came with the mighty backing of God Himself, who promised that not even the “gates of hell” would prevail against His Church. And so, all the temples, all the gods and goddesses, even civilizations themselves, couldn’t outlast the Kingdom of God.

And so, what could it have been other than the “transcendent power of God,” which worked with them, in them, and through them. Yes, the vessels were earthen and fragile, but a divine treasure was inside. And by the riches of that treasure, their God-given mission triumphed.

Collect: O God, who didst give Saint Athanasius as a faithful teacher of the saving truth in a time of great trial, grant to Thy people zeal for Thy Word and faithful teachers for Thy Church, that they may stand steadfast against all error; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The word “cornerstone” in today’s text can mean two different things. First, it could mean the actual “stone in the corner.” The cornerstone was the first stone laid on top of the foundation and gave every other stone direction and location. That makes it a very special stone, because it not only gives alignment, but joins two walls together and is therefore vital to the structure’s stability.

Another way the Greek can be translated is “capstone”. The capstone is the top piece in a structure that ties the various elements together. The simplest example is that of an arch. As a boy growing up in St. Louis, I saw the Gateway Arch under construction. It was built from both sides at the same time. Then finally, the capstone was lowered into place and the ‘Gateway to the West’ became a full arch. It wasn’t complete, it wasn’t strong, until the tiniest component was in place: the capstone.

Either picture, whether it be a corner or a cap, gives an accurate description of what Jesus does for His Church. The piece that looks small and insignificant is the most important one of them all. The Church is not complete, nor is it even begun, without Jesus Christ. He supports and directs His Church, and also binds it all together.

Collect: O Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life: Grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that following His steps we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord Easter Sunday

Chapter IX.

Of the Descent of Christ to Hell.

There has also been a controversy among some theologians, who have subscribed to the Augsburg Confession concerning the following article: When, and in what manner, the Lord Christ, according to our simple Christian faith, descended to hell, whether this was done before or after His death? Also, whether it occurred according to the soul alone, or according to the divinity alone, or in body and soul, spiritually and bodily? Also, whether this article belongs to the passion or to the glorious victory and triumph of Christ?

But since this article ... cannot be comprehended by the senses or by the reason, but must be grasped alone by faith, it is our unanimous advice that there should be no disputation concerning it, but that it should be believed and taught only in the simplest manner; according as Dr. Luther of blessed memory, in his sermon at Torgau in the year 1533, has, in a very Christian manner, explained this article, separated from it all useless, unnecessary questions, and admonished all godly Christians to Christian simplicity of faith.

For it is sufficient that we know that Christ descended to hell, destroyed hell for all believers, and delivered them from the power of death and of the devil, from eternal condemnation [and even] from the jaws of hell. But how this occurred, we should reserve until the other world, where not only this point, but also still others, will be revealed which we here simply believe and cannot comprehend with our blind reason.

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!”

And right there, we have the very best news that any human being could ever hear! Christ is risen! The angels speak the good news to the women who have come expecting to place spices with a deceased body. The point is not to be missed that the angels quote Jesus’ own words back to these women. Good sermons do that: they do not simply preach the pious opinions of men (or angels!), but rather, they put us in mind of the Word of the Lord.

Hearing this good news, the women go to tell the Apostles, the “sent ones” of the Lord. Those men chosen for this task mostly do not believe it (Peter at least goes to see). We are to believe these words, and not be surprised if others do not. We must speak these words anyway. The wages of sin is death. Death had to let go of the One who paid for our sin. The resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come is ours because Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia.

Collect: Almighty God, who, through Thine Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Beginning at verse 8, Peter charges all believers to live in harmony with one another. On the surface, this may seem unnecessary. Why wouldn’t Christians exhibit such a quality, especially with their fellow brothers and sisters in the faith? Those of us who have spent much time in church meetings have seen how disharmony can sometimes sadly play out. Well-meaning intentions are taken the wrong way, and before you know it there is little harmony evident.

Satan likes nothing more than to work inside the church doors. That is why Peter goes on to quote Psalm 34 to indicate the seriousness of living the sanctified life: “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” God not only watches over us, but He watches us. Faith without works is dead, and it turns the face of God against us. Let us instead live God-pleasing lives, that God’s face may continue to shine upon us and give us His peace.

Collect: Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness, grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s Religion that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; 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 true Church exists where God's Word is faithfully proclaimed and His Sacraments rightly given. In this, she becomes the new Jerusalem. Isaiah says of her: "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her; rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; that you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom, that you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory." Indeed, we delight in the nourishment found in God's Means of Grace, and we are glad to hear these words on Sunday morning, "Let us go to the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1).

But Isaiah also inserts a troubling saying—that we also "mourn" for the Church. The Church has been under attack since the Lord first set her into existence. She suffers from persecution without, and from troubles within. She has been scourged visibly and verbally, and yet she still remains. Jesus promises that not even the gates of hell will prevail over her. Let us both defend and extend our havens of heaven here on earth, that we and many others may be fed with the medicine of immortality.

Collect: Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness, grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Religion that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

"And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures."

Our Lord appears to His disciples on the day of His resurrection. He puts them in mind of all that He had said to them previously, emphasizing that He is the fulfillment of all that is written in "the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms," which is to say, all that is written about Him in the Old Testament, which was their whole Bible at the time.

Then comes the words of our devotion: "And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." We learn two very important things from this: 1. The Old Testament is all about Christ. Whenever it does not seem that way, we are reading it wrong. 2. The ability to see Christ throughout the Old Testament is a spiritual aptitude. Christ had to open their minds (and ours) to comprehend the Scriptures. Plenty of people can read the Old Testament and not see Jesus being proclaimed. Be not like them. As you read the Old Testament, ask the right question: how is this text pointing me forward to the holy life, the innocent death, and the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ? It is there, and Christ will open your understanding so that you can see it.

Collect: Almighty God, who, through Thine Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’”

They had followed the Lord for several years. They had grieved His death; and they had rejoiced in His resurrection as He appeared to them on that first Easter evening. Marvelous as that truly is, what does one do once one knows this? Peter decided to go back to work as a fisherman. Others joined him. Might as well.

They catch nothing all night. That happens sometimes. A man on the shore tells them to throw their net over the right side of the boat. All of a sudden they catch so many fish they cannot haul it in. That has happened before, too... once. John instantly knows: “It is the Lord.” John deduces; Peter acts. He puts his outer garment back on and plunges into the sea.

Our Lord provides daily bread for them. But more to the point, it says “This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.” Why three times? For the same reason we come back to church every Sunday: because of our weakness. We need repetition to strengthen our faith in the resurrection of Christ and the eternal life that is ours because of it.

Collect: Almighty God, who, through Thine Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Two groups of people were fasting, and for very different reasons. The Jews had been commanded by God to fast only on the Day of Atonement, but the Pharisees added more days, with some of them fasting twice a week! John the Baptist’s disciples were fasting, for John had recently been put in prison by Herod (Mark 1:14). Since Jesus’ disciples were the only ones not fasting, He was questioned about it. Jesus replies there was no need to fast, for the Bridegroom (He Himself) was still with them. This builds on what John the Baptist had recently said: “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:28-30)

Therefore, it will only be appropriate for Jesus’ disciples to fast when the Bridegroom has been taken from them. With God incarnate now present, He becomes the source of all focus and worship. All that was before was mere preparation, and therefore no longer serves its purpose. Jesus is to be the heart and soul of all that we do.

Collect: Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness, grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s Religion that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

God communicated directly with several well-known Old Testament figures, such as Adam, Noah, Moses and Elijah. But perhaps none of these encounters were as dramatic as God speaking out of a whirlwind to Job. Surely this must have intimidated Job greatly, as he feared what God would say and do. The monologue which follows justifies Job's fear, as God declares that Job is in no position to debate with Him. "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know!"

But note God isn't 'throwing His weight around' to bully Job into submission. Rather, He is changing Job's perspective, as He often must do with us. Our sinful nature easily falls into the trap of elevating the self and degrading God. Therefore, the Law must do its difficult job of turning our upside-down view into right-side up. Only then can we cry out with a humble heart "Lord, have mercy."

Collect: Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness, grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Religion that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

"You seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen."

The women approach the tomb in this, St. Matthew's, account of that first Easter morning. As we read earlier this week in St. Luke's account, they were coming to pay traditional respects to the dead, and instead heard the angelic message of Christ's resurrection. Pay attention to the tenses of the verbs! "*Was* crucified." "*Is* risen." The crucifixion of our Lord was of absolute importance, of course. "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). By His death on the cross, our sins are atoned for.

But that is finished now! We commemorate that wonderful saving event especially with crucifixes, but we do not imagine that our Lord's sacrifice is ongoing. He *was* crucified. He *is* risen! And that will forever be the continual, ongoing state of affairs. We pray to, and are loved by, a risen and ever-living Savior. For the sake of His resurrection we look forward to our own, and to the eternal blessings that await us at His right hand in the life of the world to come.

Collect: Almighty God, who, through Thine Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him, ‘Rabboni!’ (which is to say, Teacher).”

Mary Magdalene is weeping near the grave of Jesus. In Luke 8, we learn that Jesus had cast seven demons out of her. Her life must have been miserable before that. By casting those demons out, Jesus gave her her life back. Jesus indeed came that we “may have life, and have it to the full.” He gave this to Mary, and suffice it to say, she was fully devoted to Him. Now, He has been crucified. Her grief must have been overwhelming. All she had left was His body, to which she wanted to pay one last act of devotion. And now she does not even have that.

Speaking to angels, she sees only her grief. Speaking even to Jesus, it is the same, until He calls her name. In knowing that she was recognized, she was able to recognize Him. This is a big part of the joy we have at Easter: not just what we know, but that Jesus knows us! He is risen, and lives, and hears our prayers, and forgives our sins, and loves us, and gives us eternal life! God grant that Mary’s Rabboni (supreme teacher) would ever be our Rabboni as well, that in the life of the world to come all our sadness will also be turned to a joy we will never lose.

Collect: Almighty God, who, through Thine Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; 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 Word of God is preached, accepted or believed, and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be wanting. And let no one think that he shall have peace; but he must risk whatever he has upon earth—possessions, honor, house and estate, wife and child, body and life. That hurts indeed our flesh and the old Adam. For the test is to be steadfast and to suffer with patience whatever afflictions befall us, and to yield whatever is taken from us.

Therefore there is just as much need, as in everything else, that we pray without ceasing: “Dear Father, Thy will be done, not the will of the devil and of our enemies, nor of anything that would persecute and destroy Thy holy Word, or hinder Thy kingdom; and grant that we may bear with patience and may overcome in whatever it be our lot to suffer on account of this Thy will, so that our poor flesh may not yield or fall away from weakness or indolence.”

In these three petitions we find expressed in the simplest manner the need which pertains to God Himself, yet all for our sakes. For whatever we pray concerns only us, namely, as we have said, that the will of God, which must be done without us, may also be done in us. For as His name must be hallowed and His kingdom come without our prayer, so also His will must be done and succeed, although the devil with all his adherents raise a tumult and rage in fury, and undertake to utterly exterminate the Gospel. But for our own sake we must pray that, even against their fury, His will be also done without hindrance in us, that they may accomplish nothing, and we remain firm against all violence and persecution, and submit to the will of God.

Such prayer must indeed be our protection and defense now, to repel and overcome all that the devil, pope, bishops, tyrants and heretics can do against our Gospel. Let them rage all together and attempt their utmost, and deliberate and resolve how they may destroy and exterminate us, that their will and counsel may prevail. One or two Christians with this petition alone shall be our wall against them, upon which they shall dash themselves to pieces. This consolation and confidence we have, that the will and purpose of the devil and of all our enemies must fail and come to naught, however proud, secure and powerful they know themselves to be. For if their will were not broken and frustrated, the kingdom of God could not abide upon the earth or His name be hallowed.

—The Large Catechism, the Lord’s Prayer

Lesson from the Book of Concord

Jubilate Sunday

The Third Petition. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Thus far we have prayed that God's name be honored by us, and that His kingdom prevail among us; in which two points is comprehended all that pertains to the honor of God and to our salvation, that we come into the ownership of God and all His possessions. But the great need is, that we cling firmly to them, and do not suffer ourselves to be torn therefrom. For as in a good government it is not only necessary that there be those who build and govern well, but also those who make defense, afford protection and maintain it in security; so here also, although we have prayed for the things of the greatest need, viz. for the Gospel, faith and the Holy Ghost, that He may govern and redeem us from the power of the devil, we must also pray that His will be done. For if we are to abide therein, there will be wonderful encounters, so that, on account of them, we must suffer many thrusts and blows from everything that ventures to oppose and prevent the fulfillment of the two petitions that precede.

For no one believes how the devil opposes and exerts all his powers against them, and cannot suffer that anyone teach or believe aright. And it hurts him beyond measure to suffer his lies and abominations, that have been honored under the most specious pretexts of the divine Name, to be exposed, and that he be disgraced, and besides be driven out of the heart, and suffer such a breach to be made in his kingdom. Therefore, with all his power and might he chafes and rages as a fierce enemy, and marshals all his subjects, and enlists the world and our own flesh as his allies. For our flesh is in itself indolent and inclined to evil, even though we have accepted and believe the Word of God. The world, too, is perverse and wicked; this he incites against us in various ways, and kindles and adds fuel, that he may hinder and drive us back, cause us to fall and again bring us under his power. That is all his will, mind and thought, for which he strives day and night, and never rests a moment, but employs all arts, malicious devices, ways and means which he can invent.

We therefore who would be Christians must surely reckon upon having the devil with all his angels, together with the world, as our enemies, who will bring every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where

SATURDAY, APRIL 11: MATTHEW 28:16–20

EASTERTIDE

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”

Jesus has told the Eleven to meet up with Him. There should be Twelve. We have no confidence in the number. They are to meet Him on a mountain. Good things happen on mountains, but this one is in Galilee, “of the Gentiles.” We have no confidence in this mountain. The disciples are overjoyed, “but some doubted.” We cannot even have confidence in the Apostles' confidence. It does not even say which ones doubted! They are all suspects!

And then Jesus speaks these words: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” When all else fails, Jesus holds; Jesus, and the things that flow from Him. These include the charge to make disciples. This is done by Jesus' Baptism and Jesus' Teaching. The things of the Lord stand, even when all else is to be doubted.

Christ is risen! And it remains true, even when doubted. Clinging to these, we have also His promise: I am with you all days; every day. This day, the Lord is with you according to the faith that His Spirit works in you. In tomorrow's day, He will be with you still. We go through life clinging to the risen Christ, His Baptism, His teaching, confident that He is with us, now and forever.

Collect: Almighty God, who, through Thine Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech Thee, that, as Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord

Quasimodogeniti Sunday

Article V.

That we may obtain this faith, the Office 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 worketh faith where and when it pleaseth God in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justified those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ's sake.

They condemn the Anabaptists and others, who think that the Holy Ghost cometh to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.

Article XXV.

Confession in our churches is not abolished; for it is not usual to give the Body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved. And the people are most carefully taught concerning the faith and assurance of absolution, about which, before this time, there was profound silence. Our people are taught that they should highly prize the absolution, as being the voice of God, and pronounced by His command. The power of the Keys is commended, and we show what great consolation it brings to anxious consciences; that God requires faith to believe such absolution as a voice sounding from Heaven, and that such faith in Christ truly obtains and receives the forgiveness of sins.

Aforetime, satisfactions were immoderately extolled; of faith and the merit of Christ, and the righteousness of faith, no mention was made; wherefore, on this point, our churches are by no means to be blamed. For this even our adversaries must needs concede to us, that the doctrine concerning repentance has been most diligently treated and laid open by our teachers.

But of Confession, they teach, that an enumeration of sins is not necessary, and that consciences be not burdened with anxiety to enumerate all sins, for it is impossible to recount all sins, as the Psalm testifies [19:13]: "Who can understand his errors?" Also Jeremiah [17:9]: "The heart is deceitful, who can know it?" But if no sins were forgiven, except those that are recounted, consciences could never find peace; for very many sins they neither see, nor can remember.

—The Augsburg Confession

SATURDAY, APRIL 25: EPHESIANS 4:7–13

ST. MARK

When the Apostle Paul says, "But to each one of us grace was given," he is not referring to saving grace. Saving grace is God's unmerited action toward us to save us, which is alike toward all believers. The grace he speaks of here is an unmerited gift or charisma that can differ among believers.

Our Lord descended from heaven in order to take on our human flesh and make atonement for the sin of the whole world. Having completed His work of setting us captives free, He ascended on high. The gifts which He had purchased and received, He determined that they were to be given out to us. We not only received the saving grace of forgiveness, life, and salvation, but also other graces (wisdom, love, giving, etc.). Our Lord also gave His Church the gift of the pastoral office (including prophets, apostles, missionaries, and pastors). The Evangelist, St. Mark, for whom we give thanks today, was one of those gifts.

This brings us back to the end of verse 7, "...according to the measure of Christ's gift." St. Paul wants us to know that "Christ's gift" comes to each one of us through these offices of the Word and Sacrament in order to build up Christ's Church. We who have received saving grace then receive gifts of grace.

Collect: O Almighty God, who hast instructed Thy holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of Thy Evangelists: Give us grace, that being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the Truth of Thy holy Gospel; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Old Testament leaders who were false prophets, unfaithful priests, and ungodly kings were not good shepherds for the people of Israel. They were bad shepherds who harmed the sheep and drove them away from their God and the salvation which He desired for them. In today's passage, God threatens punishment for these wicked ones and promises rescue for His scattered people.

On the one hand, God says that He, Himself, will do it. Using the first-person personal pronoun, He says, "I will gather... I will set up shepherds..." On the other hand, God speaks of the coming of "a Branch of righteousness" who will reign and do it. The "Branch" is a designation for the promised Messiah (Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 23:5-6, 33:15-16).

So which is it? Both! Of course, Jesus is the promised Messiah, who is God come in human flesh. When Jesus, our Branch of righteousness, sets everything right, it is God saving us from our sins. Jesus gives us His righteousness and places us in His Church so that we dwell in safety.

In Christ's Church our God provides good shepherds who will attend to the needs of the sheep. Jesus' pastors will serve up heaping portions of God's Word. The baptismal waters will wash away all stains. The Lord Supper will serve as a medicine of immortality.

Collect: O God, who by the humiliation of Thy Son didst raise up the fallen world, grant unto Thy faithful ones perpetual gladness, and those whom Thou hast delivered from the danger of everlasting death do Thou make partakers of eternal joys; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Israel had profaned the Lord's holy name. They bore His covenant, yet lived like the other nations. The Lord does not deny it. He declares it plainly. "Not for your sake do I this... but for my holy name."

That cuts. We prefer to imagine that God is moved by our sincerity, our effort, our devotion. Yet the prophet strips us bare. The rescue of God's people flows from His Name, His promise, His mercy. He acts because He is faithful. Then comes the miracle: "A new heart also will I give you... and I will put my Spirit within you." Not advice. Not moral reform. A new heart. A living Spirit. This is Baptismal language. This is resurrection language. The old heart clings to sin. The new heart fears, loves, and trusts in God. The Spirit does not hover at a distance. He dwells within. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is given to you (Romans 8:11).

Quasimodogeniti means "like newborn babes". New birth does not come from resolve. It comes from water and the Word. The Lord has sprinkled clean water upon you. Your stony heart has been cut out. Christ's own righteousness covers you. And because the gift is His work, the glory is His alone.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord's Resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

Paul does not offer sentiment. He makes a confession. The fullness of God is not scattered across philosophies or hidden in mystical ladders of ascent. It dwells bodily in Jesus Christ. And through faith you are complete in Him.

The old Adam protests. He wants something to add. A spiritual achievement. A hidden insight. A contribution. Paul buries that instinct. You were dead in trespasses. Dead men do not assist in their resurrection. God forgives you in Christ. He blotted out the bond written in ordinances. He nailed it to the cross. The Law’s accusation, with all its holy demands, was fastened to Christ’s flesh. The handwriting that condemned you has been erased in His blood.

Baptism joins you to that death and that triumph. “Buried with him... raised through faith.” Christ disarmed principalities and powers. The devil’s loudest weapon is accusation. But when the debt is paid, his voice collapses.

The Resurrection we celebrate is not distant history. It is your standing before God: complete, forgiven, alive. Stand there. Not in yourself. In Him.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord’s Resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). In Matthew 18, Jesus especially wants us to know about the Father’s care and concern for the “little ones.” Having placed a little child in their midst, Jesus speaks about becoming as humble as a little child so that believers learn to follow Him in simple trust. Jesus condemns the most heinous sin of causing one of these little ones who believe in Him to sin (v.6), and progresses to the less grievous, of only despising or regarding them as unimportant (v.10). The parable of the hundred sheep illustrates the point that the heavenly Father highly regards them and doesn’t want even one of them to perish.

It shouldn’t surprise us that our Lord instituted a sacrament which can be applied to children. Acts 2:38-39 commands all men to repent and come to baptism where the Lord has placed the promise of the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. And then, explicitly singling out the little ones, it says, “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Collect: O God, who by the humiliation of Thy Son didst raise up the fallen world, grant unto Thy faithful ones perpetual gladness, and those whom Thou hast delivered from the danger of everlasting death do Thou make partakers of eternal joys; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Prophet Malachi says at the end of his book, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (4:5). Jesus confirms that John the Baptist was “Elijah the prophet” (Matt. 11:14). Of course, John was not literally Elijah having come back from the dead. John came in the spirit of Elijah.

Similarly, here the Prophet Ezekiel speaks of the coming of “My Servant David.” That person is not literally David, but one like him, who will rule over all God’s people. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of that prophecy. Jesus is that “David,” the Prince of peace, who brought blessing after blessing upon God’s people. God’s sheep will be safe from their enemies all around them. Jesus will bring them back from their captivity and the places to which they were exiled. He will feed them so that they are satisfied.

Ezekiel particularly stresses that there will be “one shepherd over them.” Verse 24 explains that by the shepherding work of this one Shepherd, the Lord will be, in truth, the God of His people Israel. Jesus, the New David, has made a covenant of peace with us. The dividing wall of sin has been removed, and we have peace with God.

Collect: O God, who by the humiliation of Thy Son didst raise up the fallen world, grant unto Thy faithful ones perpetual gladness, and those whom Thou hast delivered from the danger of everlasting death do Thou make partakers of eternal joys; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“Being born again... through the word of God, which liveth and abideth.”

Peter does not ground the new birth in emotion. He anchors it in the preached Word. That Word which exposed your sin also gave you Christ. The Word that cut you also healed you.

All flesh is grass. That includes your strength, your resolve, your religious performance. Grass withers. Flowers fade. But the Word of the Lord abideth forever. That Word has been preached unto you.

Quasimodogeniti calls us “newborn babes”. Infants do not feed themselves. They receive. They cry out. They depend. So also, faith clings to the pure milk of the Word. Not novelty. Not speculation. It clings to the apostolic Gospel. From that Word flows love for the brethren. Not sentimentality, but a sincere heart purified by faith. When Christ’s forgiveness fills the conscience, it spills over in patience, mercy, and endurance.

You live because the Word speaks. You remain because the Word abides. The Church stands not by personality or trend, but by what God has said. And what He has said is this: Christ is risen for you.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord’s Resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Naaman wanted spectacle. He wanted a prophet waving his hand, a dramatic cure. Instead, he received a command: wash. The simplicity offended him. The Jordan looked ordinary. The Word attached to it made all the difference. So it is with Baptism. Water by itself is water. But water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's Word delivers what He promises.

Naaman's leprosy did not fade gradually. He went down into the water unclean and rose with flesh like a little child. Quasimodogeniti again. Newborn. Pride nearly robbed him of the gift. The servants spoke wisdom: if the prophet had required something great, would you not have done it? The Gospel wounds our pride because it leaves no room for boasting.

You are cleansed not by impressive effort but by trusting the promise. "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Naaman confessed the Lord as the only true God. Cleansing leads to confession. Mercy leads to worship. The Resurrection life you now live flows from that same humble means: the Word, water, and faith in His promise by the Holy Spirit. Go in peace.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord's Resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Simon Peter had made great boasts about himself. In John 13:37, he told Jesus, "I will lay down my life for Your sake." In Matthew 26:33, he placed himself above the other disciples, saying, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." After Jesus' arrest, when his Master was being examined, Peter flat out denied his association with Jesus three times (John 18:17, 25-27) in order to save his own skin.

Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail (Luke 22:32). After his denial, one look from Jesus brought him to contrition (Luke 22:61-62). The resurrected Jesus singled Peter out to receive the good news of his resurrection (Mark 16:7). With today's conversation, Jesus' words leave Peter with no doubt that he has been absolved and restored by Jesus Himself.

Aiming at Peter's former pride, Jesus' first question about Peter's love includes the words, "more than these." When Jesus asks about his love for a third time, Peter understands and again "grieves" with regret over his past sin. In his answer to Jesus, humble Peter no longer makes comparisons. He cites Jesus' omniscience as more sure than even his own claim of heart-felt affection.

With the three-fold command to feed His sheep, Jesus is pronouncing absolution and reinstating Peter. Jesus entrusts to Peter his dearly beloved believers. Peter is to spiritually nourish them with the Word of God.

Collect: O God, who by the humiliation of Thy Son didst raise up the fallen world, grant unto Thy faithful ones perpetual gladness, and those whom Thou hast delivered from the danger of everlasting death do Thou make partakers of eternal joys; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

When we become familiar with something we often don't stop to think about it. An illustration can reawaken our attention. A sheepfold is a corral where sheep are kept for the night. The shepherd quite obviously enters by the door to retrieve his sheep. The person who seeks to get to the sheep by climbing over the fence has nefarious purposes in mind.

The Church corresponds to the sheepfold as the place where God's people are gathered. The pastor who faithfully preaches Jesus (the door) is a good shepherd of the sheep. Those pastors who seek to reach the sheep but avoid the Gospel of Jesus Christ do not have the sheep's best interests in mind. False teachers are like thieves and robbers.

This illustration can also tell us something about God's sheep, the people gathered around the Word centered in Jesus. The ones who believe in Jesus are like the sheep who know the voice of their shepherd and follow Him. These true believers in Jesus will not follow a Jesus-less preacher. They will only listen to a preacher who rightly divides Law and Gospel. Saving safety is found in a Jesus-preaching shepherd, who comes to give His sheep eternal life.

Collect: O God, who by the humiliation of Thy Son didst raise up the fallen world, grant unto Thy faithful ones perpetual gladness, and those whom Thou hast delivered from the danger of everlasting death do Thou make partakers of eternal joys; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”

Paul refuses abstraction. Baptism is not just a symbol. It is participation. You were buried with Him in it. That burial was not merely poetic. It was decisive. The old man was crucified. The tyranny of sin was broken. Death no longer reigns.

Yet the struggle remains. The flesh protests its execution. It gasps. It resists. But its dominion is ended. Christ died once. He liveth unto God. So reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. “Reckon” does not mean pretend. It means trust what God has declared. When accusation rises, point to the font. When temptation whispers, remember the grave that stands empty.

The Resurrection is not a seasonal ornament. It is your identity: Baptized into His death, raised into His life. Sin no longer owns you; Christ does. And His lordship is mercy.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord's Resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Law was our tutor. It confined. It exposed. It guarded us until Christ came. The Law does not justify. It prepares by condemning. Now that faith has come, you are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ. Not partially. Not ceremonially. You are in reality clothed in Christ. His righteousness wraps you. The Father sees His Son.

In a fractured world, Paul speaks unity: neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female. The distinctions remain in creation, yet before God there is one standing—Christ's. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. Heirs do not *earn* inheritance. They receive it because of the father's will. The promise given to Abraham finds its 'Yes' in Jesus. And you, joined to Him, receive what was sworn long ago.

Quasimodogeniti calls you newborn. Galatians calls you heir. Both are true because Christ is risen. Live as one clothed in Him.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who have celebrated the solemnities of the Lord's Resurrection may, by the help of Thy grace, bring forth the fruits thereof in our life and conversation; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord Misericordias Domini Sunday

Article XIV.

Of Ecclesiastical Order, [the Lutherans] teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called.

Article XV.

Of Rites and Usages in the Church, they teach, that those ought to be observed which may be observed without sin, and which are profitable unto tranquility and good order in the Church, as particular holydays, festivals, and the like.

Nevertheless, concerning such things, let men be admonished that consciences are not to be burdened, as though such observance was necessary to salvation. They are admonished also that human traditions instituted to propitiate God, to merit grace and to make satisfaction for sins, are opposed to the Gospel and the doctrine of faith. Wherefore vows and traditions concerning meats and days, etc., instituted to merit grace and to make satisfaction for sins, are useless and contrary to the Gospel.—The Augsburg Confession

Article IV. Of the Papacy.

That the Pope is not, according to divine law or according to the Word of God, the head of all Christendom (for this name belongs to Jesus Christ solely and alone), but is only the bishop and pastor of the Church at Rome, and of those who voluntarily or through a human creature (that is a political magistrate) attach themselves to him, not to be under him as a lord, but with him as brethren and associates, as Christians; as the ancient councils and the age of St. Cyprian show.

But today none of the bishops venture to address the Pope as brother; but they must call him most gracious lord, even though they be kings or emperors. Such arrogance we neither will, can, nor ought with a good conscience to approve. Let him, however, who will do it, do so without us. —The Smalcald Articles, Part II, .§1–2