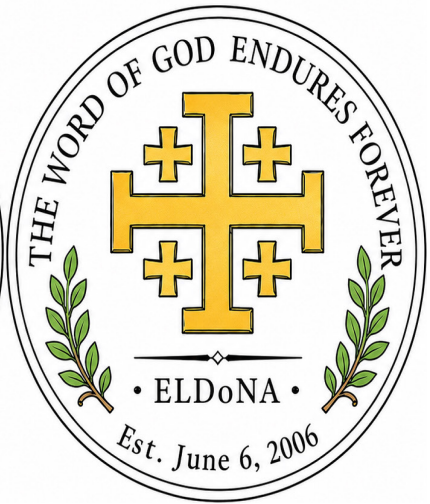
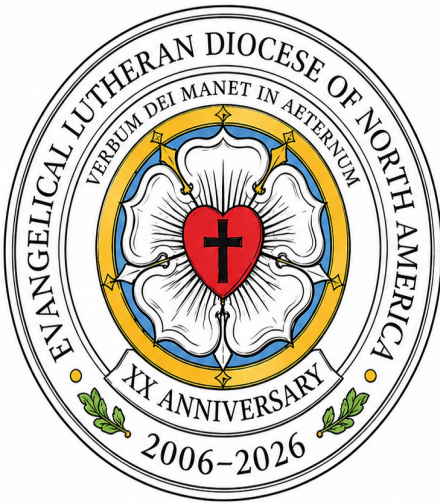


# THE LUTHERAN HERALD



MAY 31–JULY 4, 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.**

May 31	Feast of the Holy Trinity	ASBH 38
	<b>2026 Synod and Colloquium of the ELDoNA</b>	
June 2 (T)	Vespers	
June 3 (W)	Matins & Vespers	
June 4 (R)	Matins & Vespers	
June 5 (F)	St. Boniface, Bishop & Martyr	ASBH 89
June 6 (S)	<b>Salem Lutheran Church 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary</b> Matins @ 11 A.M.; Vespers @ 5 P.M.	
June 7	Trinity 1/ELDoNA 20 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	ASBH 39
June 14	Trinity 2	ASBH 40
	<b>JUNE 15 IS THE FIRST DAY OF SUMMER QUARTER</b>	
June 15 (M)	David Henkel, Pastor and Confessor	ASBH 90
June 21	Trinity 3	ASBH 41
June 24 (W)	Nativity of St. John the Baptist	ASBH 91
June 25 (R)	Presentation of the Augsburg Confession	ASBH 92
June 28	Trinity 4	ASBH 42
June 29 (M)	Sts. Peter & Paul, Apostles	ASBH 93
July 2 (R)	The Visitation	ASBH 94

## **St. Ignatius Lutheran Seminary**

The Spring quarter concluded on May 29; Summer intensives begin June 15. (Intensives will run Monday–Friday, 2 hours per day.) The classes offered for the Summer intensives are as follows:

Summer: (10 hours)

P003—Liturgics Practicum II (1 hr.)	June 15–19
H005—Renaissance (2 hrs.)	June 22–July 3
E007—Galatians (2 hrs.)	July 6–17
S006—Eschatology (1 hr.)	July 20–24
E009—Greek Readings 4 (1 hr.)	July 27–31
S007—Office of the Ministry & Ecclesiology (3 hrs.)	August 10–28

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

## 2026 Synod and Colloquium Schedule

### SYNOD

#### Tuesday, June 2

5:30–6 P.M. Vespers (Dulas/Oncken)

#### Wednesday, June 3

9–9:45 Matins and Opening of Synod (M. Henson/B. Henson)

9:45–11:00 Episcopal Address

11:15–noon Secretary's roll call and reading of the 2025 minutes;  
*The Lutheran Herald*

noon–1 P.M. Lunch

1:15–2:00 Treasurer's report and Business meeting

2:00–2:30 St. Ignatius Seminary

2:45–3:45 ASBH, Psalter, Church Order, Missal, etc.

3:45–4:45 Miscellaneous Synodical Topics

5–5:45 Vespers (Jacob Henson/Stefanski)

### COLLOQUIUM

#### Thursday, June 4

9–9:30 Matins (Jackson/Rutowicz)

9:30–10:45 Heimbigner—"The Relation of the Office of the Holy Ministry to the Administration of Holy Absolution in the Augsburg Confession, etc."

10:45–noon Dulas—"The Influence of the Deutsche Messe on the Lutheran Liturgies that Followed"

1–2:30 Jackson—"The Hearing/Preaching of Faith"

2:45–4:30 Stefanski—"Is Bodily Healing a Part or Product of Christ's Atonement?"

5–5:45 Vespers (Handrich/Oncken)

#### Friday, June 5

9–9:30 Matins (Scheck/Jacob Henson)

9:30–10:45 Heiser—"The Bowels of the Saints Refreshed: Aegidius Hunnius on Vocation, Pastoral Authority, and Evangelical Reconciliation"

10:45–noon Scheck—"The Sound of Divine Silence—Concerning So-Called 'Doctrinal Adiophora' and 'Pious Opinions' (part 1)"

1:00–2:00 Scheck—"The Sound of Divine Silence...." (part 2)

2:00–3:00 Rutavičius—"Cornelius Honius and the Genealogy of the Reformed Rejection of the Real Presence in the Eucharist"

3:15–4:45 B. Henson—"The Quincentennial of the 1526 Wittenberg Enchirydion"

5:15–5:45 Confessional Service (ASBH)

6:30 Divine Service at Salem (Rutowicz/Heiser/Oncken)

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## Trinity Sunday

### ARTICLE I.

Our Churches, with common consent, do teach, that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence and concerning the Three Persons, is true and to be believed without any doubting; that is to say, there is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet that there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are co-eternal, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. And the term “person” they use as the fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.

They condemn all heresies which have sprung up against this article, as the Manichaeans who assumed two principles [gods], one Good, the other Evil; also the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and all such. They condemn also the Samosatenes, old and new, who contending that there is but one Person, sophistically and impiously argue that the Word and the Holy Ghost are not distinct Persons, but that “Word” signifies a spoken word, and “Spirit” [Ghost] signifies motion created in things.

—The Augsburg Confession

*The selections from the Book of Concord for the Sundays of the Church Year are from H. E. Jacobs’ translation of the Book of Concord, and are taken from the table of suggested lessons for Sundays and Festivals of the Church. (The table of appropriate lessons was originally found in Pipping’s Christliches Concordienbuch [Leipzig, 1734].)*

Parents may be afraid to teach their children about the Holy Trinity, saying it is “too difficult” or “too confusing”. It is true that the nature of the Holy Trinity is too difficult, not only for children, but for even the wisest of men. And still Scripture commands: “teach them diligently to your children,” and talk about them all day. Deuteronomy says, “The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” and even children easily see the tension between this passage and those in the Gospels which teach that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each God.

How does one teach children about the Holy Trinity? Begin with Baptism: Jesus commanded, “...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). There are three Persons, each equally necessary for Baptism, and yet He says, not “names” (plural), but “in the name” (singular), to show the three are One.

Then teach the creeds. The Apostles’ and the Nicene both have one article devoted to each Person, in order to confess each One’s proper role in our salvation. Especially, expose children to the Athanasian Creed, so that they will learn by repetition: “the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.”

**Collect:** Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast given unto us, Thy servants, grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech Thee that Thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities; who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

This is the Aaronic Benediction—so named because it was Aaron, as the first high priest, whose office it was to speak this blessing over the people. The same blessing is used at the conclusion of the Divine Service every Sunday. The last verse is a promise: “So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.” Therefore, every Sunday, God puts His name on His people and gives them peace.

The three-fold repetition of the name “the LORD” is a foreshadowing of Baptism. One is baptized into the “name,” singular, “of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”—three Persons, one divine Name, which is the LORD. As the Athanasian Creed says, “the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.” In the context of the Divine Service, the Aaronic Benediction calls the saints back to their Baptism, reminds them that they belong to the Triune God, and that He blesses, keeps, and comforts them.

The Old Testament is not “outdated”; we worship the same God that Moses and Aaron preached, who is Triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And He does not change, therefore neither does His Benediction.

**Collect:** Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast given unto us, Thy servants, grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech Thee that Thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities; who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

The seraphim's triple-cry of "Holy, holy, holy!" should remind us of the Holy Trinity. There are three who are holy—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—but the three are one Holy God. The Athanasian Creed confesses, "The whole three Persons are coeternal together and coequal, so that in all things... the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped." These last three days have shown how the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is taught even in the Old Testament. If this were not so, then we would have one god of the Old Testament and a different god of the New. But this is impossible, because the Christ says, "these [the Scriptures] are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

Someone may ask: "how do you get the entire doctrine of the Trinity just from three 'holys'?" There are many things in the Old Testament which were not fully understood or fully revealed until the Christ's Advent. We do not really care whether Isaiah understood everything that he saw. The point is, now that the Christ has come and explained the Scriptures, we get to see the Christ and the Trinity in places that were once unclear, but now have been revealed in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Collect:** Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast given unto us, Thy servants, grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech Thee that Thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities; who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Divine Trinity is one by unity of substance. But the Persons are three, as distinguished by name and by work. In this passage our Lord Jesus Christ identifies Himself (the Son) as the one “sent” from the Father. Then, He identifies the Spirit as He who “proceeds” from Father and Son. The Father’s work is to send the Son; the Son’s work is to become flesh and die for our sins; the Spirit’s work is to testify of the Son. This is not speculation; it is how Scripture speaks. We know from Scripture that there is one God (Deut. 6:4). But Scripture also reveals three distinct Persons, who are all called “God” and who have distinct roles regarding our salvation. As we say in the Athanasian Creed: “So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.”

The Triune God has revealed Himself to us in this way for the sake of our salvation. For the Son did not come into the world for His own glory, but out of perfect obedience to the Father. The Father sent Him out of love for us. The Spirit testifies of the Son so that we, sinners, may know it and believe in Him.

**Collect:** Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast given unto us, Thy servants, grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech Thee that Thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities; who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

This is also the appointed Gospel for All Saints' Day. It is appropriate here, not just because today is the festival of St. Boniface, but because St. Boniface was the instrument of the Triune God to make more saints through the preaching of the Gospel. For “saint”—a “holy one” or one whom Jesus calls “blessed” in today’s text—means one justified by faith in Christ.

Boniface was a monk, an archbishop, and an early missionary into Germany, for which reason he has been named the patron saint of Germany. He was martyred on this day in AD 754. He is known for chopping down the pagan “sacred oak” of Jupiter and building a church with its wood, graphically depicting the triumph of the Christian Gospel over pagan superstition.

What is meaningful about St. Boniface is not a list of miracles, but that he preached the Gospel of Christ to those without it. It is through the preaching of such men that God makes believers out of unbelievers, Christians out of pagans, and saints out of sinners. Christ’s Beatitudes (or “blessings”) are not a to-do list; they are a *description* of the saints of God. All who believe the Gospel of Christ, which St. Boniface preached and which the true Church preaches, are saints and are blessed.

**Collect:** O God, who dost guide Thy Church through the faithful ministrations of Thy servants, grant that Thy ministers, like St. Boniface, stand steadfast against those who would work iniquity; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Because there is one God, the Trinity is one in purpose and in message. The term, “charismaticism” refers to the belief that the Holy Spirit comes directly to individuals without God’s Word and emphasizes miraculous powers “out of the blue”, as it were. St. Paul disproves charismaticism by saying, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). But another problem with charismaticism is that it falsely separates the Persons of the Divine Trinity. Jesus explains the work of the Holy Spirit thus: “He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak,” and “He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13–14). In other words, the Holy Spirit will not teach something that is not already taught in Scripture. If He did, there would be two messages, not one, and thus two—or even three—gods.

In today’s text, the Holy Spirit sends St. Paul a vision that he should preach in Macedonia. The Holy Spirit could have taught the Macedonians Himself through similar visions. But He doesn’t. He teaches the Macedonians through the preaching of St. Paul. For the Christ had called St. Paul to this work, and the Holy Spirit will not oppose what the Son has commanded. Rather, because there is one God, the Trinity is one in purpose.

Collect: Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast given unto us, Thy servants, grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech Thee that Thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities; who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## The First Sunday after Trinity

### ARTICLE XXIV.

Falsely are our churches accused of Abolishing the Mass; for the Mass is retained on our part, and celebrated with the highest reverence. All the usual ceremonies are also preserved, save that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added to teach the people. For ceremonies are needed to this end alone, that the unlearned be taught. And not only has Paul commanded to use in the Church a language understood by the people [1 Cor. 14: 2, 9], but it has also be so ordained by man's law.

The people are accustomed to partake of the Sacrament together, if any be fit for it, and this also increases the reverence and devotion of public worship. For none are admitted except they be first proved. The people are also advised concerning the dignity and use of the Sacrament, how great consolation it brings anxious consciences, that they may learn to believe God, and to expect and ask of Him all that is good. This worship pleases God; such use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God. It does not, therefore, appear that the Mass is more devoutly celebrated among our adversaries, than among us.

But it is evident that for a long time, it has been the public and most grievous complaint of all good men, that Masses have been basely profaned and applied to purposes of lucre. For it is unknown how far this abuse obtains in all the churches, by what manner of men Masses are said only for fees or stipends, and how many celebrate them contrary to the Canons. But Paul severely threatens those who deal unworthily with the Eucharist, when he says [1 Cor. 11:27]: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." When, therefore, our priests were admonished concerning this sin, Private Masses were discontinued among us, as scarcely any Private Masses were celebrated except for lucre's sake.

Neither were the bishops ignorant of these abuses, and if they had corrected them in time, there would now be less dissension. Heretofore, by their own negligence, they suffered many corruptions to creep into the Church. Now, when it is too late, they begin to complain of the troubles of the Church, seeing that this disturbance has been occasioned simply by those abuses, which were so manifest that they could be borne no longer. Great dissensions have arisen concerning the Mass, concerning the Sacrament. Perhaps the world is being punished for such long-continued profanations of the Mass, as have been tolerated in the churches for so many centuries, by the very men who were both able and in duty bound to correct them. For, in the Ten Commandments, it is written (Exodus 20), "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." But since the world began, nothing that God ever ordained seems to have been so abused for filthy lucre as the Mass.

There was also added the opinion which infinitely increased Private Masses, namely, that Christ, by His passion, had made satisfaction for original sin, and instituted the

Mass wherein an offering should be made for daily sins, venial and mortal. From this has arisen the common opinion that the Mass taketh away the sins of the living and the dead, by the outward act. Then they began to dispute whether one Mass said for many were worth as much as special Masses for individuals, and this brought forth that infinite multitude of Masses. Concerning these opinions our teachers have given warning, that they depart from the Holy Scriptures and diminish the glory of the passion of Christ. For Christ's passion was an oblation and satisfaction, not for original guilt only, but also for all sins, as it is written to the Hebrews (10:10), "We are sanctified through the offering of Jesus Christ, once for all." Also, 10:14: "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Scripture also teaches that we are justified before God through faith in Christ, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. Now if the Mass take away the sins of the living and the dead by the outward act, justification comes of the work of Masses, and not of faith, which Scripture does not allow.

But Christ commands us [Luke 22:19]: "This do in remembrance of Me"; therefore the Mass was instituted that the faith of those who use the Sacrament should remember what benefit it receives through Christ, and cheer and comfort the anxious conscience. For, to remember Christ, is to remember His benefits, and to realize that they are truly offered unto us. Nor is it enough only to remember the history, for this the Jew and the ungodly also can remember. Wherefore the Mass is to be used to this end, that there the Sacrament [Communion] may be administered to them that have need of consolation; as Ambrose says: "Because I always sin, I am always bound to take the medicine."

Now, forasmuch as the Mass is such a giving of the Sacrament, we hold one communion every holyday, and also other days, when any desire the Sacrament it is given to such as ask for it. And this custom is not new in the Church; for the Fathers before Gregory make no mention of any private Mass, but of the common Mass they speak very much. Chrysostom says that the priest stands daily at the altar, inviting some to the Communion and keeping back others. And it appears from the ancient Canons, that someone celebrated the Mass from whom all the other presbyters and deacons receive the Body of the Lord, for thus the words of the Nicene Canon says: "Let the deacons, according to their order, receive the Holy Communion after the presbyters, from the bishop or from a presbyter." And Paul [1 Cor. 11:33] commands concerning the Communion: "Tarry for one another," so that there may be a common participation.

Forasmuch, therefore, as the Mass with us has the example of the Church taken from the Scripture and the Fathers, we are confident that it cannot be disapproved, especially since the public ceremonies are retained for the most part, like those hitherto in use; only the number of Masses differs, which, because of very great and manifest abuses, doubtless might be profitably reduced. For in olden times, even in churches most frequented, the Mass was not celebrated every day, as the Tripartite History (Book 9, chapt. 33) testifies: "Again in Alexandria, every Wednesday and Friday, the Scriptures are read, and the doctors expound them, and all things are done, except only the celebration of the Eucharist."

—The Augsburg Confession

The name of the Lord, *Yahweh/Jehovah*, stresses His eternal being, His lack of contingency or dependence upon anyone else, so that what He promises is certain to come to pass. In commissioning Ezekiel, He addresses the prophet by the same name that God the Son would choose to be known by in His work of saving us: Son of Man. Ezekiel was to speak to the people absolutely, without fear of them, even though they were haughty and rebellious. He was to speak the Lord's words to them, "whether they hear or whether they refuse," because only God's own Word could restore the exiled nation and set them on their feet within their own land.

The Lord demonstrates this in Ezekiel himself, first telling him to stand on his feet and then causing him to do so through the Holy Spirit's entering him by His Word. Only His Word can give us the fulfillment of all He commands, so Ezekiel must receive, be emboldened by, and then give that Spirit through this Word. We confess, "We should and must, therefore, constantly maintain that God will not confer with us frail beings, unless through his external word and sacraments... all that is boasted of, independent of such word and sacraments, in reference to the Spirit, is criminal" (Smalcald Articles III: VIII).

**Collect:** O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Neither the rich, nor the poor, is to be greedy or haughty, and certainly not one who has what St. Timothy has: the gift of godliness. Godliness gives the greatest of gain eternally and, if one is content with that, great gain for this life, as well. What could be greater gain in this life than knowing that such things as we are given by God are things which we have no need to store up and fret over, but things richly given by God for us to enjoy? We can carry no more of it out of this life than we carried into it, so rather than letting it snare us or pierce us with its arrows of foolish and harmful lust, we do with it what is best: sharing that enjoyment with others, so that they may also enjoy the goodness of the living God.

At the heart of such godly and contented living is, of course, the remembrance that godliness is not what the flesh thinks it is. Rather, it is that divine mystery spoken of earlier by St. Paul (1 Timothy 3:16): that which confesses that God the Son appeared in the flesh, and was testified to by the Father in His Baptism, Transfiguration, and Resurrection. In hearing and confessing Christ crucified we “lay hold on eternal life.”

Collect: O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed; 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 delight of the Lord must be our delight: the exercise of lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness. These things He has given us in Christ, recreating us by them so that giving them is now *our* nature. While our flesh still wars against them, wanting whatever it desires, the new creation that we are in Christ Jesus desires to be like our Father in Heaven, loving as He has loved us.

The Law thus becomes a checkpoint for us, a ‘rule’ or ‘guide’ in the intended sense of those words: not so much a ‘telling us what to do’, as the new man already knows, but a measuring rod by which we see where our flesh is not conforming to the image of God. He has blessed us with various things, physical and spiritual, and here Jeremiah relates the words from the Lord that allow us to evaluate correctly how we are receiving these blessings, where our glorying and rejoicing is focused.

As those who have been begun by the Spirit, and will be completed by Him, the Gospel turns our glorying toward what endures: knowing Him whose wisdom is above all and whose riches are never diminished, but may freely be shared with all, knowing that He will continue to rule wisely and to provide for us forever.

**Collect:** O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

THURSDAY, JUNE 11: MATTHEW 10:26–33 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY

I once heard a noted preacher use the first verse of our reading as an excuse to rake a group of pastors over the coals for a heinous sin they had given absolutely no evidence of committing. Considering that in the verse before this reading Jesus is teaching His disciples about those who will unjustly speak evil of them, just as they speak evil of Him, one had to wonder whether that preacher had considered the context of either the reading or his hearers at all. This is, instead, a word of comfort from Jesus, that the truth about you will be revealed: that His blood has covered all your sins, so that the grace by which you now appear as perfect to your Father in Heaven is even now transforming you, so that you are conformed to His image!

Obviously, you are to look at your life to see whether it is truly confessing Jesus before men, but when you see lack, you are to recall that it is not by their own might that the sparrows are lifted into the sky. Rather, your Father, who has all the hairs of your head numbered, is He who provides them the sky, the strength, and the skill to fly. Certainly, His grace shall embolden you to live to His glory!

**Collect:** O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Those we love most are not worthy to be loved more than the Lord. He who has given us all things—including our loved ones!—and still takes care of us (and them) is to be treasured above every treasure He has provided. Our view of our loved ones, as of all the Lord's blessings that we enjoy—and of our enemies and the things that plague and vex us!—is always to be through the lens of God's will and Word, and of Christ's mission to save us by His atoning for our sins.

If one was to receive a prophet simply because he was appointed by the Lord to speak for Him, and to receive the apostles in the same way, so we are to receive all those who are righteous through faith in Christ, regardless of what their worldly status might be. The confession of the truth about Jesus through word and deed makes all consideration of appearance, power, fame, or wealth inconsequential. While we might otherwise not even know one another, those who know that their true and only life is through faith in Christ are bound together as neither blood nor legal paperwork can match: the almighty God has made us His own children and heirs together through the blood and testament of His Son!

**Collect:** O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed; 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 doesn't tell this parable because a rich man is trusting in his riches, but because a man sought what he believed was being unjustly withheld from him. We don't know whether the man's case was valid, but we know that it so concerned him that it took priority for him over what Jesus was teaching. For this reason, instead of truly honoring Jesus by taking to heart what He said, he sought to exalt Jesus' status as a rabbi by drawing Him into settling a dispute. This is a crasser example of the error Martha made when she not only worried herself about her hosting duties, but wished Jesus to scold her sister for not helping her. Jesus, instead, made it clear that Mary's honoring Him by listening would not be taken away from her. Here, He makes it clear that the man's failure to listen was costing him a greater treasure.

Martha loved Jesus because she trusted in what she had already heard from Him; but love's proper expression was to hear more. This man was so driven by covetousness that he assumed Jesus would love the authority of being made judge. If he had been listening, the peace of having an eternal inheritance would have honored Jesus through a heart filled with love for his brother.

**Collect:** O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed; 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

## The Second Sunday after Trinity

### ARTICLE XIII.

Of the Use of the Sacraments, they [the Lutheran theologians] 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 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.

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

—The Augsburg Confession

“Those who rule over you” are part of God’s good plan and creation. Adam was established as head, teacher, and ‘pastor’ over Eve and the family-to-come, even before they fell into sin. Our Lord blesses us with order and relationships in vocation as a way of protecting us and helping us to grow.

St. Peter and the other Apostles affirm that we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). But they also teach that we must obey men in order to obey God! “Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh...” (1 Peter 2:17-18). St. Peter’s epistle continues from there to teach how we should fulfill our various vocations in a way that follows our Lord’s example of humility in faithfulness to the Father in heaven.

Hebrews emphasizes this same message. The fellowship of God’s faithful people does not despise order and correction; it embraces it as the work that He prepares for us so that we may serve and grow as His holy family. Faithful pastors and confessors like David Henkel lead according to the Word of God, not according to their own desire for headship and control. Such faithfulness sees and honors God, even as we bear the crosses of fulfilling our callings among all men.

**Collect:** O Lord, hear our prayers to Thee on this day of David Henkel, Thy Confessor and Pastor, that as Thou didst lead him to render faithful service to Thee, Thou wouldst lead us to faithfully confess our hope in Thy salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

When Jesus performed the first miracle of His public ministry, changing simple water into the best of wine, He signaled His fulfillment of this prophecy of Isaiah. He had come to His people to make them able to be a part of His everlasting feast, to take away the rebuke of His nation, and to bring the people of all nations out from under the veil of darkness to live without the fear and sorrow of death.

The restoration of Judah to its capital city of Jerusalem and to the Temple after the Exile would not be as glorious as what is depicted here in Isaiah 25. This was to teach them (and us; see 1 Corinthians 10:11) that restoration was but a small foretaste of the Messianic Era. The coming of the Christ at Bethlehem, completed with His death and resurrection at Jerusalem, along with the following age and the eternal result, would restore not only Judah (along with Benjamin and Levi), but the children of Adam that would receive it. Jesus' provision for the wedding feast at Cana set the stage for His miracles of restoring life and health, and for His being heard and received by the crassest of sinners, so that they repented unto forgiveness and life. It rightly gave Martha the understanding that through His work Lazarus would rise from the dead on the Last Day (John 11:24), that in Jesus, death would be swallowed up forever.

**Collect:** O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love: Make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17: MATTHEW 5:33–37 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY

The Small Catechism teaches us what God’s command not to murder means: that “we should fear and love God that we may not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.” Similarly, in the Old Testament laws concerning oaths, every lesser form of swearing falsely is condemned and, more, the very idea of making oaths when they’re not required is excluded. The Jewish ‘experts in the Law’ tried to twist what God had commanded into varying levels of obligation, depending on the form of the oath or the things sworn (cf. Matthew 23:16–22). However, Jesus says such additions to our speech spring from the devil. As the devil did in tempting Jesus, such oaths seek to guarantee our truthfulness by promising things that aren’t ours to promise (Matthew 4:1–11; cf. Leviticus 5:4–5).

The Law was added because of transgressions (Galatians 3:19); it was verbalized to show where actions had not been in accord with faith, and would point out future unfaithfulness so that we would repent. Even secular laws are increased because of transgression, and that includes perjury, so that we will be called upon to take oaths in important matters. This is not forbidden us (cf. Hebrews 6:16–17), but we are to speak the truth simply and plainly so that we would otherwise be trusted without an oath, speaking every word as unto the Lord Himself.

**Collect:** O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love: Make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Faithful use of statuary and paintings must direct our thoughts to the true God, never taking His glory and praise. When the Lord, who will not give His glory to another, glorifies His Christ, He makes it obvious that the Messiah is Himself the Lord—that He must be as St. John will declare Him: the One who was in the beginning, who was with God, and who was God. The Lord, who will not give His glory to another, sets His Christ as His treaty with His people, Israel, and as a Light to the Gentiles, opening the eyes of those who were spiritually blind and bringing them out of the prison of sin and death. The Messiah does the things that only God can do, and receives credit for what only the true God can be given praise.

Isaiah is, thus, the backdrop for St. John's Gospel every bit as much as for St. Matthew's. While Matthew directly quotes Isaiah more often, John often presents a narrative that ties back to the prophet (as we saw Tuesday regarding the wedding at Cana). Isaiah 42 is very much the understanding Jesus presents throughout John: that He is doing nothing simply because, as God, He *can*, but it is all as One who subjects Himself to the Father in all things, so that He might save us who by nature have refused His lordship.

**Collect:** O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love: Make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Wolves are beautiful, but their natural activity is not to produce wool for us, but to kill the sheep that do. Plants that produce only thorns and thistles exist to bring pain to humans and livestock, a result of Adam's sin (Genesis 3:17–18). Pruning thorn bushes will never produce figs and grapes; it's simply not within their nature.

Adam was created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26), meaning “there were embodied in man such wisdom and righteousness as apprehended God, and in which God was reflected, i.e., to man there were given the gifts of the knowledge of God, the fear of God, confidence in God, and the like” (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, II:18). Adam's fruit (righteous works) would be perfect and abundant. When he sinned, that image was lost. Yet, for those who trust in Christ's atonement for sin, God's likeness is being restored (Ephesians 5:9, Colossians 3:10; Apology II:19–20), as each believer is “a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Jesus warns us away from those who minimize this re-creation through faith in Him. No matter how showy their works, apart from faith such works are empty, the unhealthy fruit of a bad tree. Christ alone makes us a good tree, one who loves that the Law prunes away dead works and tells us what the works of our re-created nature are, so that we, through faith in Jesus' merit alone, continue to bear good fruit!

**Collect:** O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love: Make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Isaiah describes Christians as “those who wait on the Lord.” Waiting is hard. The man who can wait shows profound self-control. Whether he waits for something he wants, waits before speaking, or waits before making rash plans, even the world recognizes him as having great strength of character. This is a form of that virtue called “temperance”, which St. Paul praises, saying, “Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things” (1 Cor. 9:25). Consider the skilled athletes of our own time: it took years of patient training to get where they are, and they fasted from many bodily pleasures that would have interfered with their goals. And they do it, says St. Paul, “to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (1 Cor. 9:25). For the Christian, to “wait on the Lord” is both a virtue and a skill, and it requires faith, prayer, and the power of the Holy Ghost. But the Christian who has learned to wait possesses a strong faith indeed.

The Christian waits for something far more certain than the athlete. The athlete waits and trains for a prize, but he does not know what calamity may happen and, because of an accident, he may lose to someone weaker. But the Christian waits for a promise: “they shall mount up with wings like eagles.” That is, they shall be glorified with their Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Collect:** O Lord, who never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love: Make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; 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

## The Third Sunday after Trinity

### ARTICLE XII. Of Repentance.

In the twelfth article they [the Romanists] approve of the first part, in which we set forth that, to those who have fallen since baptism, the remission of sins can be imparted at whatever time, and as often as they are converted. ...

Let any one of the adversaries come forth and tell us when the remission of sins takes place. O good God, what darkness there is! They doubt whether it be in attrition or in contrition that remission of sins occurs. And if it occur on account of contrition, what need is there of absolution, what does the power of the keys effect, if sin have been already remitted? Here indeed they also labor much more, and wickedly detract from the power of the keys. ... For if the power of the keys do not console us before God, what then will pacify the conscience?

Moreover, the power of the keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which is the true voice of the Gospel. Thus we also comprise absolution, when we speak of faith, because “faith cometh by hearing” (Rom. 10:17). For when the Gospel is heard, and the absolution is heard, the conscience is encouraged, and receives consolation. And because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly remit sins before God, according to Luke 10:16: “He that heareth you heareth Me.” Wherefore the voice of the one absolving must be believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven. And absolution properly can be called a sacrament of repentance, as also the more learned scholastic theologians speak. ... Thus faith is conceived and strengthened through absolution, through the hearing of the Gospel, through the use of the sacraments, so that it may not succumb while it struggles with the terrors of sin and death. This theory of repentance is plain and clear, and increases the worth of the power of the keys and of the sacraments and illumines the benefit of Christ, and teaches us to avail ourselves of Christ as Mediator and Propitiator.

—The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, §1, 5, 7, 39–41, 42–43

The “Prodigal Son”. Here we have the familiar name of the familiar parable. But what exactly is a “Prodigal” son? The word ‘prodigal’ isn’t one that people normally use. Most often the word is just associated with this parable, without thought of what it actually means. The word ‘prodigal’ simply means to recklessly spend money, which the younger of the two most certainly did. But was that the only thing about which he was reckless?

We do well to remember that the young man had just received his inheritance, and then he left after a few days. Not only was he reckless with his money, he just left his family behind. What we, as sinners, fail to understand is that when we sin, we are looking for something more than what we already have. We recklessly leave behind our Heavenly Father and venture off in the hopes of finding something more, only to later find out that “something more” was really nothing. It is at that point the Holy Spirit reminds us of our gracious Heavenly Father. He brings us to the point of desperation so that He might turn us away from that which would lure us from our Heavenly Father. The Spirit of God leads us back to Him and the forgiveness of our sins, which He gives to us for Jesus’ sake.

**Collect:** O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.” The Greek word translated “little children” is “paidion”, which means a young child or infant. We might say these were infants and toddlers. Sadly, many Christian parents today fail to heed Jesus’ command—“Let the little children (infants and toddlers) come to Me”—by not baptizing their little children. Their reasoning is that what is essential to being baptized is a person’s ability to make a personal confession of faith. However, what is lost with this reasoning is one simple fact: faith is God’s gift. The faith you have is the result of God at work in you. Faith is given by God, with the result that a person is then able to make his or her confession of faith. “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

St. Paul reminds us of the benefit of Holy Baptism: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4). What better place could any parent want their infant to be than in Christ?

Collect: O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Earlier in this chapter we are told that Zacharias and Elizabeth “were both well advanced in years” (v. 6). But in a time that God would prescribe, He would answer Zacharias’ prayer for a child. Just as God had blessed Abraham and Sarah with a child in their old age, Zacharias and Elizabeth would also be blessed with a child. As the angel Gabriel told Mary about Elizabeth, “For with God nothing will be impossible” (v. 37).

It would also appear that Zacharias had later learned his lesson. He didn’t believe the message of Gabriel, and as a result was rendered mute. But he did remember Gabriel’s instruction to name the baby ‘John’. The name ‘John’ comes from the Hebrew, meaning “God is gracious.” Indeed, God was gracious to Zacharias and Elizabeth, but through John God was also gracious to the Jews, in that John was the forerunner of Jesus and preached repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name. While calling people to repentance may not seem very appealing on the surface, the voice of God through His called and ordained servants is truly the voice of a gracious God. It is because God is gracious that He calls people to faithful repentance.

**Collect:** O Lord God, Heavenly Father, who, through Thy servant John the Baptist, didst bear witness that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world and that all who believe in Him shall inherit eternal life: We humbly pray Thee to enlighten us by Thy Holy Spirit that we may at all times find comfort and joy in this witness, continue steadfast in the true faith, and at last with all believers attain unto eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 25: GALATIANS 2:16–21 PRESENTATION OF THE U.A.C.**

“Salvation unto us has come By God’s free grace and favor. Good works could not avert our doom; They help and save us never. Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone, Who did for all the world atone; He is our one Redeemer.” This first stanza of Paul Speratus’ hymn puts to song St. Paul’s teaching about justification, the foundational doctrine around which the Augsburg Confession was written. (There are nine more stanzas, which you are encouraged to take time to read, or maybe even sing.)

The doctrine of justification is the central teaching from which the Augsburg Confession flows. All that we as Lutherans believe, teach, and confess comes forth from the doctrine of justification by faith because every Christian doctrine flows from Christ, for it is in Him that we are justified.

The Augsburg Confession was presented by a number of German rulers and representatives of many free-cities in Germany to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Bound by consciences that were captive to God’s Word, these men did not waver in confessing the truth that we are justified freely by God’s grace for Jesus’ sake.

**Collect:** Almighty God, who, through the preaching of Thy servants, the blessed Reformers, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine forth: Grant, we beseech Thee, that, knowing its saving power, we may faithfully guard and defend it against all enemies, and joyfully proclaim it, to the salvation of souls and the glory of Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

What exactly is Jesus talking about when He says, “Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it”? How is it that “everyone is pressing into” the kingdom of God? Would “everyone” include unbelievers as well as believers? Jesus helps us to understand this in Matthew 11:12, “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has been treated violently, and violent men take it by force.” The unbelievers are “pressing” with violence. They are like Satan himself, tirelessly wreaking havoc on Christians.

But what about believers? If faith is God’s work alone, how does a person “press” into the kingdom of God? We do well to remember who is really doing the pressing. God even uses the violence of unbelievers that we face as Christians to draw us to Himself. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). Through thick and thin, God is at work “pressing” us into the kingdom. This “pressing” sometimes hurts, but the pain we feel pales in comparison to the pain our Lord endured to secure our place in heaven.

**Collect:** O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal; 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 are of your father the devil...” As some would say, “Them’s fightin’ words.” Jesus’ words would hardly be classified as friendly. And yet, they are! Jesus makes it abundantly clear that you are either with Him and His Father, or you are against Him and His Father, just as the devil is against God. You either believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, thereby having salvation, or you don’t. There is no middle ground when it comes to faith in Jesus.

So what is it that still makes these words friendly? Jesus’ words serve as a warning, a loud and clear warning, to the church leaders of that time. If they did not confess their sin of following the devil, they would most certainly face God’s condemnation. Such warnings from Jesus do not come from hate, but from love. “Say to them: ‘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. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’” (Ezekiel 33:11).

God’s desire is for people to repent and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. That is why Jesus told His disciples just prior to His ascension to preach “repentance and remission of sins” (Luke 24:47). God’s call to repent is out of His love for mankind.

**Collect:** O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

# Lesson from the Book of Concord The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

## THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

Thou shalt not bear false witness.

Thus you see, in short, it is forbidden to speak any evil of our neighbor, and yet the civil government, preachers, father and mother are excepted, that this commandment may be so understood that evil be not unreproved. Just therefore as, according to the Fifth Commandment, no one is to be injured in body, and yet the executioner is excepted, who, by virtue of his office, does his neighbor no good, but only evil and harm, and nevertheless does not sin against God's commandment, because God has, on His own account instituted that office; for He has reserved punishment for His own good pleasure, as He has threatened in the First Commandment,—just so also, although no one has a right in his own person to judge and condemn another, yet if they to whose office it belongs refuse to do it, they sin as well as he who should do so without such office. For here necessity requires one to speak of the evil, to make accusation, to investigate and testify; and it is not different from the case of a physician who is sometimes compelled to handle and examine a patient in parts otherwise not to be examined. Just so governments, father and mother, brothers and sisters, and other good friends, are under obligation to each other to reprove evil wherever it is needful and profitable.

—The Large Catechism, §274–275

**MONDAY, JUNE 29: MATTHEW 16:13–20    STS. PETER AND PAUL**

Neither St. Peter nor St. Paul can be accused of what Jesus called in yesterday's Gospel the "blind leading the blind" (Luke 6:39). Their teaching was founded upon a clear and accurate vision of who Jesus was. Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. And in his second epistle he wrote, "we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). Paul, likewise, saw firsthand Jesus' glory on the road to Damascus and taught everywhere he went that Jesus is the Christ.

But, as Jesus says in today's text, flesh and blood did not reveal this to them. It was not by their own wisdom that they recognized the Person of Christ, or by their own strength that they confessed Him before the world. Remember that Peter was once a denier and Paul an unbeliever and persecutor. Yet God the Father had mercy upon them, revealed to them His Son, created faith in them, and forgave them their sins. Moreover, He perfectly trained them to be like Christ their Teacher, leading others to the truth as they had been led and using the Office of the Keys to forgive as they had been forgiven.

**Collect:** O Almighty God, who by Thy Son Jesus Christ didst give to Thy holy Apostles many excellent gifts, and commandedst them earnestly to feed Thy flock: Make, we beseech Thee, all Pastors diligently to preach Thy holy Word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

On Sunday we heard, “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37). Jesus teaches us that if someone sins against us, we should not hold it against him or seek to harm him. Instead, we ought to forgive and love him, even when, and especially when, he does not deserve it.

If God does not want us to judge others for their sins against us, then how much less should we judge others for things that are not even sins! This is what St. Paul teaches in today’s text. He is talking about *adiaphora*, that is, things that are not commanded or forbidden by God’s Word. Yet, even though these outward customs of themselves have nothing to do with sin or faith, they often become sources of bickering and fighting within the Church.

Whether our neighbor sins against us, or simply does something differently than we would do it, Christ’s command is the same, “Condemn not.” And the reason is the same: because Christ died for us and our neighbor. If Christ laid down his life out of love for us, then we certainly ought to be willing to lay down our own pride and opinions out of love for our neighbor. We are to appeal to others according to God’s Word and will. If they reject Him, then His Word declares the consequences of their sin.

**Collect:** Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1: MATTHEW 18:15–20 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY A. TRINITY

Often, when someone sins against us, we quietly forgive him and overlook his faults. And ideally he does the same for us. It sometimes happens, however, that our brother sins so grievously that it threatens to harm his salvation or the unity of the Church. In these situations, the answer is not to immediately launch into judgment. Jesus instead outlines a specific procedure which is aimed at helping our sinning brother avoid condemnation.

It is assumed that we have first followed this instruction of Jesus from Sunday's Gospel reading, "Remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye" (Luke 6:42). After repenting of our own sin, then it is appropriate to have a private conversation with our sinning brother. If he persists, then we are to bring in others, not to gossip or hurt his reputation, but to impress upon him the seriousness of the problem. Only if all of this fails does the Church judge the unrepentant sinner, and even then, only in the hope that this will spur him to repent and escape judgment. As St. Paul writes, "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5).

**Collect:** Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

We notice how aware the Virgin Mary and her cousin Elizabeth were of their own unworthiness. Mary referred to her lowly state, and Elizabeth expressed astonishment that she should be visited by the Lord and His mother. Both were filled with profound gratitude for the mercy which God had shown them. We, likewise, should always keep in mind how merciful God has been to us. And this, in turn, should cause us to be merciful toward others.

Pride, on the other hand, leads us to judge others or to hold grudges. Mary sings in the Magnificat about what God does to the proud, “He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.” In their hearts they imagine themselves to be righteous and qualified to remove specks from the eyes of everyone else, but in reality, they are blinded by planks in their own eyes. God says that He will judge them as they have judged others.

But God does not judge those who fear Him and recognize their own sinful lowliness. Instead, His mercy is upon them. As the Magnificat states, He forgives them their sins, exalts them, blesses them, and does great things for them.

**Collect:** Almighty God, who hast dealt wonderfully with Thy handmaiden, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and hast chosen her to be the mother of Thy Son, and hast graciously made known that Thou regardest the poor and the lowly and the despised: Grant us grace in all humility and meekness to receive Thy Word with hearty faith, and so to be made one with Thy dear Son; who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Today's text is the same as the Gospel reading for this past Sunday. Since this text is constantly misused by the world, it is necessary to make a few clarifications about what Jesus is and is not teaching.

First, Jesus does not teach that we earn forgiveness for ourselves by forgiving others. He simply shows the similarity between the two, as He also does in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." The cause and effect is actually the other way around. We are able to forgive others *because* God first forgave us. We are merciful to others *because* God is merciful toward us. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Second, Jesus does not teach that we should *never* point out our neighbor's sin. St. Paul writes, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Eph. 5:11). What Jesus is really teaching is that we should not forget God's mercy toward us and imagine that we are somehow superior to others. When it is necessary to point out someone else's sin, our goal should not be to bring judgment upon them or to exalt ourselves, but rather to rescue them and urge them to join us at the mercy seat of God.

**Collect:** Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Today it is right for those of us who live in the United States of America to give thanks to God for the 250th anniversary of our country. It is truly a great blessing to live in a place where Christians have freedom to worship the true God in peace and safety. We pray that our government will continue to fulfill its divine mandate to reward those who do good and execute judgment on those who do evil (Romans 13:1-5).

According to the laws of Moses, which governed the political nation of Israel, the adulteress in today's reading did deserve to be stoned. Jesus could have justly approved of her execution, as the scribes and Pharisees so desperately desired. Jesus, however, did not come to earth as a political ruler. He came to have mercy and forgive. "I did not come to judge the world but to save the world" (John 12:47).

Realizing that He has spared us the punishment that we deserve and forgiven our sins, we also ought to have mercy upon one another. We should not judge our neighbor, unless judging is part of our God-given vocation as parent, teacher, pastor, or government authority. In these cases, judging is not sinful hypocrisy, but rather, it is a faithful execution of what God has commanded.

**Collect:** Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

## Clergy of the ELDoNA, affiliated congregations and missions

**Rt. Rev. James Heiser**

Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

**Rev. Jeffrey Ahonen**

Good Shepherd L.C., Tony, WI; Apologia Lutheran Mission, Deer Park, WI; Peace L.C., Ironwood, MI; Pure Blessings Lutheran Church, Brandon, WI

**Rev. Jerald Dulas**

Sts. Peter & Paul L. C., Simpsonville, SC; All Saints Lutheran Mission, Myrtle Beach, SC; St. Michael & All Angels Lutheran Mission, Martinez, GA; St. Bartholomew Lutheran Mission, Fort Myers, FL; St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC, Ormond Beach, FL

**Rev. Douglas Handrich (Emeritus)**

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Peoria, IL

**Rev. Kent Heimbigner**

Charity Lutheran Church, Burleson, TX

**Rev. Benjamin Henson**

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Peoria, IL

**Rev. Jacob Henson**

Apologia Lutheran Church, Deer Park, WI

**Rev. Michael Henson**

Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL

**Rev. Martin Jackson**

Lamb of God Ev. Lutheran Church, Rogers, AR

**Rev. Mark Mueller**

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Cambridge, MN

**Rev. John Rutowicz**

St. Boniface Lutheran Church, Niles, MI

**Rev. Josiah Scheck**

Christ Lutheran Church, Richmond, MO

**Rev. Eric Stefanski**

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Harrison, AR; Emmanuel Lutheran Mission, Conway, AR

**Rev. Timothy Tolar**

St. Luke Lutheran Church, Kenai, AK  
Homer Lutheran Mission, Homer, AK

**Rev. Brandon Warr**

St. Patrick Lutheran Church, Chipley, FL

**Rev. Dcn. Gary Harroun**

Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL

**Rev. Dcn. Anthony Oncken**

Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

**Rev. Dcn. Floyd Smithey**

Sts. Peter & Paul Lutheran Church, Simpsonville, SC; St. James Lutheran Mission, Knoxville, TN

**Rev. Daniel Mensing**