

Clergy of the ELDoNA, affiliated congregations and missions, and sister churches

Rt. Rev. James Heiser

Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

Rev. Jeffrey Ahonen

Good Shepherd L.C., Tony, WI; Alpha & Omega Lutheran Mission, Winter, WI; Apologia Lutheran Mission, Deer Park, WI; Peace L.C., Ironwood, MI

Rev. Ernest Bernet

Discipleship L. C., Mineral Wells, TX

Rev. David Carver

St. Paul L. C., Taylorsville, NC

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

Rev. Douglas Handrich

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Peoria, IL

Rev. Kent Heimbigner

Charity Lutheran Church, Burleson, TX

Rev. Michael Henson

Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL; Memphis Lutheran Mission, Lakeland, TN

Rev. Daniel Mensing

Faith Lutheran Church, Beaverton, OR

Rev. Randy Moll

Good Shepherd L.C., Rogers, AR

Rev. Mark Mueller

Redeemer L. C., Cambridge, MN

Rev. John Rutowicz

St. Boniface Lutheran Church, Niles, MI

Rev. Paul Rydecki

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Las Cruces, NM; Sts. Peter & Paul Lutheran Mission, Silver City, NM

Rev. Josiah Scheck

Christ Lutheran Church, Richmond, MO

Rev. Eric Stefanski

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

Rev. Joshua Sullivan

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Ker-ville, TX; Faith Lutheran Mission, Leander, TX

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. Martin Jackson

Good Shepherd L. C. Rogers, AR

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Rev. Fillmore Alvarez

St. Mary's Lutheran Church
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Rev. Carlos Marin

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Medellin, Colombia

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



OCTOBER 3—OCTOBER 30, 2021

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NORTH AMERICA**

The Calendar

October 3 Trinity 18 Luther's *Te Deum*
October 10 Trinity 19 TLH 251
October 17 Trinity 20/St. Ignatius of Antioch,
 Bishop & Martyr TLH 343
October 18 (M) St. Luke, Evangelist
October 24 Trinity 21 TLH 373
October 28 (R) St. Simon & St. Jude, Apostles
October 31 Festival of the Reformation

ST. IGNATIUS LUTHERAN SEMINARY—Seminary classes resumed on Tuesday, September 7. The classes which are being taught this quarter:

E009—Greek Readings 1 (1 hr.)

S004—Christology (3 hrs.)

H008—Readings in the Church Fathers (1 hr.)

H002—Ecumenical Councils (2 hrs.)

E005—The Synoptic Gospels (3 hrs.)

The Fall Quarter will end on **November 12**. The seminarians will then have a two-week Thanksgiving break before the resumption of classes with the Winter Quarter, which will start on **November 29**.

FESTIVAL OF ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, BISHOP AND MARTYR—Salem Lutheran Church will mark the Festival of St. Ignatius as the 'day of name' for the diocesan seminary. It is requested that the the seminary would be included among the petitions in the General Prayers for that day.

Visitation of St. Luke Lutheran Church (Kenai, Alaska)

Bishop Heiser's visitation with Pr. Tolar and St. Luke Lutheran Church took place September 2–5 (right before the resumption of classes at St. Ignatius). With the uncertainties of travel and complex legal situation which existed regarding travel to Alaska throughout 2020, the bishop had not been able to visit last year.



Bishop Heiser was able to report to the congregation on all of the events which had been taking place in the 'lower 48' since his last visit. He also learned a great deal concerning the local circumstances of the Alaska parish in Kenai, Homer, and Fairbanks.



Visitation of St. Patrick Lutheran Church (Chipley, Florida)

Bishop Heiser conducted his visitation of Pr. Warr and St. Patrick Lutheran Church on September 17. This was the first visitation of St. Patrick's since Pr. Warr's installation as parish pastor last year.

Earlier this year, Holy Cross Lutheran Church (Peoria, IL) generously provided their ecclesiastical furnishings (including Altar, Font, Pulpit and Lectern, and pews) for the use of St. Patrick's. The gift from Holy Cross has been a great blessing to the saints in Chipley.

With guidance from their pastor, members of St. Patrick's are exploring possible locations in their area for a future diocesan family camp. There are several exciting possibilities in reasonably close proximity to the church, so it seems highly likely that we may all look forward to a camp in Florida in the coming year.



Lesson from the Book of Concord The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

Chapter V. Of the Law and the Gospel.

Statement of the Controversy.

Whether the preaching of the Holy Gospel be properly not only a preaching of grace, which announces the forgiveness of sins, but also a preaching of repentance and censure, rebuking unbelief, which is rebuked not in the Law, but alone through the Gospel.

Affirmative.

Pure Doctrine of God's Word.

1. We believe, teach and confess that the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is to be maintained in the Church as an especially brilliant light, whereby, according to the admonition of St. Paul, the Word of God may be rightly divided.

2. We believe, teach and confess that the Law is properly a divine doctrine, which teaches what is right and pleasing to God, and reproves everything that is sin and contrary to God's will.

3. Therefore everything that reproves sin is and belongs to the preaching of the Law.

4. But the Gospel is properly such a doctrine as teaches what man who has not observed the Law, and therefore is condemned by it, should believe, viz. that Christ has expiated and made satisfaction for all sins, and, without any merit of theirs [no merit of the sinner intervening], has obtained and acquired forgiveness of sins, righteousness that avails before God, and eternal life.

5. But since the term "Gospel" is not used in one and the same sense in the Holy Scriptures, on account of which this dissension originally arose, we believe, teach and confess that if by the term "Gospel" the entire doctrine of Christ be understood, which He proposed in His ministry, as also did His apostles (in which sense it is employed, Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21), it is correctly said and written that the Gospel is a preaching of repentance and of the forgiveness of sins.

6. But if the Law and the Gospel be contrasted with one another, as Moses himself is called a teacher of the Law, and Christ a preacher of the Gospel, we believe, teach and confess that the Gospel is not a preaching of

repentance or reproof, but properly nothing else than a preaching of consolation, and a joyful message which does not reprove or terrify, but against the terrors of the Law consoles consciences, points alone to the merits of Christ, and again comforts them by the precious preaching of the grace and favor of God, obtained through Christ's merit.

7. As to the revelation of sin, because the veil of Moses hangs before the eyes of all men as long as they hear the bare preaching of the Law, and nothing concerning Christ, and therefore do not learn from the Law to perceive their sins aright, but either become presumptuous hypocrites as the Pharisees, or despair as did Judas; Christ takes the Law into His hands, and explains it spiritually (Matt. 5:21 sqq.; Rom. 7:14). And thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sinners (Rom. 1:18), how great it is; by this means they are instructed in the Law, and then from it first learn to know aright their sins—a knowledge to which Moses never could coerce them.

Therefore, although the preaching of the suffering and death of Christ, the Son of God, is an earnest and terrible proclamation and declaration of God's wrath, whereby men are for the first time led aright to the Law, after the veil of Moses has been removed from them, so that they first know aright how great things God in His Law requires of us, nothing of which we can observe, and therefore should seek all our righteousness in Christ—

8. Yet, as long as all this (namely, Christ's suffering and death) proclaims God's wrath and terrifies man, it is still not properly the preaching of the Gospel, but the preaching of Moses and the Law, and therefore a "strange work" of Christ, whereby He attains His proper office, i.e. to preach grace, console and quicken, which is properly the preaching of the Gospel.

Negative.

Contrary Doctrine which is Rejected.

Therefore we reject and regard incorrect and injurious the dogma that the Gospel is properly a preaching of repentance or reproof, and not alone a preaching of grace. For thereby the Gospel is again converted into a law, the merit of Christ and the Holy Scriptures obscured, Christians robbed of true consolation, and the door opened again to the Papacy.

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome

Christ promises us peace. But this peace is not a freedom from persecution. Instead, through Christ we have peace amid persecution. St. Paul warns Titus, saying, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ... But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them." (2 Timothy 3:12, 14) The knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—of His victory over sin, death, and the devil—gives us courage and strength to endure suffering. Even the history of the saints in ages past serves to encourage us.

The world has always been the enemy of the Church; false gods, evil rulers, and the prince of this world are not letting up. Every day we hear more and more about how the faithful are being persecuted on account of their faith. But we should not lose heart. We should look to the example of our Lord Jesus, to the testimony of the martyrs, and to the promises of the Gospel for boldness to endure and not to surrender the faith. St. Paul writes to the Romans, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Romans 8:31, 35, 37)

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY, OCT. 29: ISAIAH 30:15–19 21ST SUNDAY A. TRINITY

The Lord has provided us with the Way of Salvation. But how many people think they know of a better way! They think they are wiser than God, and that they know what is good for themselves better than He does. When we turn from the Way that God has established for us, when we reject the only Means He has provided for us to endure unto the end, we have no foundation, no sure footing, and no courage against our spiritual enemies: the devil, the world, and our flesh. We are afraid of them, and we flee before them. But God is great in mercy and in patience. He always calls us back to Him. As a curb, the Lord lets us endure the consequences of our sins, but as a salve He invites us to return and to be reconciled to Him.

Christ Jesus is the Way—the only Way—that leads to salvation. Through Him we are more than conquerors over those who seek our destruction. He is our Mighty Fortress, and those who wait in faith on Him are kept safe from the trouble that pursues them. The Way of salvation is found in returning to our God through daily repentance. The preservation of the Church is found in its continuance in God's Word and Sacraments. Continuing in His grace alone gives us strength to endure trial and temptation in quietness and confidence.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 4: JOHN 15:1-17 18TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

Jesus teaches us to love Him by keeping His commandments. This seems like an impossible task for poor sinners. When we focus on ourselves and draw nutrients from our own righteousness, then we can clearly see that keeping God's commandments is impossible. To try to accomplish God's Law by our own righteousness is the trap the Pharisees of Jesus' day often fell into.

However, our Lord tells us where we must look in order to love and cherish His commandments. Jesus says that He is the true vine and we are grafted into Him. Our obeying the Law comes from the nutrients which the vine gives to the branches, which is the righteousness Jesus gives us sinners when He forgives our sins. He strengthens and preserves us in faith by His Spirit.

The righteousness of Christ pays for our sin and makes us a new creation so we can be free from sin and free to abide in Christ forever. We do not look to ourselves in order to keep the Law, but we obey Jesus' commandments because He has grafted us into the true vine and we receive our righteousness from Him.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5: DEU. 10:12–21 18TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

We see the essence of God's Law as Moses exhorts the people to follow the Lord, who is the God of gods and Lord of lords. God has given His Law because it is good and it reflects His character. He is faithful, therefore we are told not to commit adultery. He is the truth, therefore we do not give false testimonies. He provides what is necessary for us, therefore we should be content, avoiding theft and covetousness.

Besides the obvious reason to obey God's Law--that is, to avoid the harmful consequences of sin--keeping God's Law also lets us treasure who God is as our redeemer from sin. To walk in His ways is to meditate on His mercy toward us. Just as He saved Israel out of the land of Egypt when they were strangers, so also the Lord saved you when you were estranged from Him by your own sin.

Moses calls the people to remember God's faithfulness to them by treasuring His Law. Christ's Church also continues this call so that it may show in our actions that the Lord has bought us out of slavery to sin into peace with Jesus Christ.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; 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, OCT. 28: 2 CHR. 29:1–11 FEST. OF ST. SIMON & ST. JUDE

The Church is called the Communion of Saints not because its members are holy in and of themselves, but because every Christian is holy before God through the forgiveness of his sins and sanctification of the Holy Spirit. In and of ourselves we are still sinful, and at times we fall into sin, shame, and vice. Not even the Ministers of the Word are wholly sanctified. If our worthiness to stand before God and to come into His house of worship were based on our holiness, no one would be able to approach Him. We all must confess that we deserve God's wrath and displeasure.

“Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” (Psalm 24:3-5) Thanks be to God that our worship is sanctified by our High Priest, Christ Jesus, who has ascended into heaven itself, there to intercede on our behalf! Knowing that we have access into God's grace--not by our works but through faith in Jesus--we should not neglect the opportunity to come into His holy house and worship Him with a clear conscience, having been forgiven of our sins.

Prayer: O almighty God, who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone, grant us to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine that we may be made a holy temple acceptable unto Thee; 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, OCT. 27: ROM. 14:4–12 21ST SUNDAY A. TRINITY

The Church is described as a household. And within this household we are called to be servants—the servants of God, created in Christ Jesus for good works. We are not called to be the Master of this house, or to be the Judge over our fellow Christians. This office is appointed to Christ, and to Christ alone. Christ is the Head; we all are members of one another. Christ is our Master; and we all are brethren. This is the appointed order in the Church, and when we operate this way with each other, the Church flourishes.

Disorder arises when we place ourselves over one another and usurp to ourselves the office of Judge and Master. We shouldn't judge one another in distinctions of worship days or outward observances that do not militate against the Faith. In matters of Christian liberty the strong should not offend the weak, and the weak should not prevent the strong. Christ died for us all, weak and strong. He has called us all to be members of this one household so that we all cooperate with one another in love. We must all give an account to God for our works, not for the works of someone else. We all have various responsibilities that God has given us to perform according to our own vocations. Each of us should focus on his own service, and not be so ready to judge our brother.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6: DEU. 30:11–20 18TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

The harsh reality is that death is the way of sin. The Lord gives life, and even life eternal. These two ways are so dramatically opposed to one another that there is no reconciling them. Sin brings death, but the Lord brings life. When we engage in active sin, we get for ourselves the consequence of sin. Sin brings death.

Those who make up the Church are simultaneously justified and yet still sinful. If we run in the ways of our old Adam and give into sinful temptation, we will inherit death. The Lord Jesus Christ came to give life. We have before us the way of the Lord--which is found in sinners being made new by faith--or the way of the old Adam and sin.

Moses tells the people of Israel that this separation is not a mystery. It is not hidden why sin and salvation cannot exist together. Therefore, we must cry out to our merciful Savior that He would make us new, send the Holy Ghost, and keep us steadfast in His Word, that we may not choose the path of death.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

In the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, the Epitome of the Formula of Concord states that the fruits of the Spirit happen in believers “voluntarily and freely, as if they had received no command, heard no threat and expected no reward” (Art. VI. Para. 5, Henkel Translation). In other words, those who believe in Christ and are regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost do good works voluntarily, simply because they are made new. It is in the nature of the believer to be generous, kind, and to reflect the Savior who has redeemed us.

This is why John commends Gaius in this reading. Gaius is not trying to show forth some sort of inner righteousness by works, but instead is showing that Christ makes all believers into faithful servants. Of course, this is not always perfect in us, which is why Jesus commands His disciples to call themselves “unprofitable servants” even after they have done all that they are required to do (Luke 17:7-10).

Ultimately, we can take comfort in the Holy Ghost causing our good works instead of relying on our own strength to muster up a righteousness that will not save. Those in Christ will do good works because of what Christ has done for them.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; 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 confess in the Augsburg Confession: “That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake.”

God is superabundant in grace to His Church in that He not only gives us His Means of Grace, but also in that He calls and sends men to preach His Word to us, to administer His Sacraments, and to absolve us of our sins. St. Paul writes that the Holy Ministry is a divine gift to the Church “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). It is not the Lord’s intention that His people wander about as sheep without a shepherd, but He has set some in the Church to guide them in the paths of righteousness. When the Ministry is despised, then there is disorder in the Church and God’s people quickly stray from the fold, and go out seeking other gods in whatever form.

The Church should always pray the Lord continues to send faithful shepherds for the growth and guidance of the faithful.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

The tool that the devil uses against many is the sin of pride. When we become full of ourselves and put confidence in our own ability to stand, we neglect the grace of God. We do not hold fast to the Word and the work of the Spirit because we think we are sufficient of ourselves to persevere. That is when the Enemy strikes. “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18).

But “a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again” (Proverbs 24:16). The power to rise again after a fall into temptation does not come from within us. It is the grace of God alone, worked in us by His Spirit, through the application of Law and Gospel, that restores us and keeps us in the one true Faith. After his restoration, St. Peter would later write that the Church is kept by the power of God through faith for salvation (1 Peter 1:5). He writes that the devil prowls around like a lion, seeking whom he may devour, and Peter exhorts us to resist him and remain steadfast in the faith (1 Peter 5:8-9). If we are to persevere, we must appeal to God’s grace which is offered, given, and sealed to us in the Word and Sacraments, and abandon all thought of self-sufficiency. Only by constant humility and ceaseless, trustful prayer for the sustaining strength of God can we hope to remain faithful to the end.

Prayer: Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness, that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Do you believe in gravity? Gravity works whether you believe it or not. Likewise, what if someone told you “I believe in gravity!” and then threw himself off the Empire State Building? What would you think of that person? That person is either unstable, or lying about his belief in gravity.

This is the same when people say they believe in Christ and yet seek after things that are sensual and demonic. Envy and self-seeking betray the true intentions and beliefs of the one doing the actions. In other words, you will try to live the way you believe.

Some attempt to use the epistle of St. James to contradict the Biblical teaching of justification by faith. However, St. James is simply explaining that if one truly has faith then one will do what he believes. Just like the gravity analogy, one who proclaims his belief in Jesus and yet does contrary to it acts foolishly and wickedly. Those who participate in such wickedness need to be called to repentance and faith in Christ. When people engage in sin against their conscience and claim to be a Christian, they lie against the truth. May God continue to send His Spirit and wisdom so that sinners may repent and be forgiven.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9: PRO. 14:21–31 18TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

Sometimes we hear people talk about “finding the will of God in our lives.” Many so-called preachers tell their followers that God has a wonderful plan for their life. While that sounds good, often they mean something different than what the Scriptures say. These false teachers usually have a material prosperity in mind, and try to “win souls” by proclaiming this idea of extraordinary purpose in the Christian life. However, as we read through the Proverbs we realize God works through means in simple and humble ways. This is often seen in the vocations God has given us in our daily lives. We see in our reading from Proverbs today that wisdom in vocation is relevant to all people; everyone from laborers to kings.

In every vocation the wisdom of God is shown through His people humbly and earnestly doing what they have been given to do. Do you want to know the will of God for your life? Serve Him honestly and intently, no matter where you are or what you do. Serve God according to His Word, loving Christ and neighbor, and you will be doing the will of God.

Prayer: O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Gentium, and elsewhere, teaches to like effect. For in his *De Vocatione Gentium* he says as follows: “Redemption by the Blood of Christ would become of little value, neither would the preeminence of man’s works be superseded by the mercy of God, if justification, which is wrought through grace, were due to the merits going before, so as to be, not the free gift of a donor, but the reward due to a laborer.”

But, although this doctrine is despised by the inexperienced, nevertheless, God-fearing and anxious consciences find by experience that it brings the greatest consolation, because consciences cannot be pacified through any works, but only by faith, when they are sure that, for Christ’s sake, they have a gracious God. As Paul teaches [Rom. 5:11]: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” This whole doctrine is to be referred to that conflict of the terrified conscience; neither can it be understood apart from that conflict. Therefore inexperienced and profane men judge ill concerning this matter, who dream that Christian righteousness is nothing but the civil righteousness of natural reason.

Heretofore consciences were plagued with the doctrine of works, nor did they hear any consolation from the Gospel. Some persons were driven by conscience into the desert, into monasteries, hoping there to merit grace by a monastic life. Some also devised other works whereby to merit grace and make satisfaction for sins. There was very great need to treat of and renew this doctrine of faith in Christ, to the end that anxious consciences should not be without consolation, but that they might know that grace and forgiveness of sins and justification are apprehended by faith in Christ.

Men are also admonished that here the term “faith” doth not signify merely the knowledge of the history, such as in the ungodly and in the devil, but signifieth a faith which believes, not merely the history, but also the effect of the history—namely, this article of the forgiveness of sins, to wit, that we have grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins, through Christ.

Now he that knoweth that he has a Father reconciled to him through Christ, since he truly knows God, knows also that God careth for him, and calls upon God; in a word, he is not without God, as the heathen. For devils and the ungodly are not able to believe this article of the forgiveness of sins. Hence, they hate God as an enemy; call not upon Him; and expect no good from Him. Augustine also admonishes his readers concerning the word “faith,” and teaches that the term “faith” is accepted in the Scriptures, not for knowledge such as in the ungodly, but for confidence which consoles and encourages the terrified mind.

Furthermore, it is taught on our part, that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God.

—The Augsburg Confession, §1–27

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Twenty—First Sunday after Trinity

Article XX.

Our teachers are falsely accused of forbidding Good Works. For their published writings on the Ten Commandments, and others of like import, bear witness that they have taught to good purpose concerning all estates and duties of life, as to what estates of life and what works in every calling be pleasing to God. Concerning these things preachers heretofore taught but little, and urged only childish and needless works, as particular holy days, particular fasts, brotherhoods, pilgrimages, services in honor of saints, the use of rosaries, monasticism, and such like. Since our adversaries have been admonished of these things they are now unlearning them, and do not preach these unprofitable works as heretofore. Besides they begin to mention faith, of which there was heretofore marvellous silence. They teach that we are justified not by works only, but they conjoin faith and works, and say that we are justified by faith and works. This doctrine is more tolerable than the former one, and can afford more consolation than their old doctrine.

Forasmuch, therefore, as the doctrine concerning faith, which ought to be the chief one in the Church, has lain so long unknown, as all must needs grant that there was the deepest silence in their sermons concerning the righteousness of faith, while only the doctrine of works was treated in the churches, our teachers have instructed the churches concerning faith as follows:

First, that our works cannot reconcile God or merit forgiveness of sins, grace and justification, but that we obtain this only by faith, when we believe that we are received into favor for Christ's sake, who alone has been set forth the Mediator and Propitiation [1 Tim. 2:5], in order that the Father may be reconciled through Him. Whoever, therefore, trusts that by works he merits grace, despises the merit and grace of Christ, and seeks a way to God without Christ, by human strength, although Christ said of Himself: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" [John 14:6].

This doctrine concerning faith is everywhere treated by Paul [Eph. 2:8]: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works," etc.

And lest anyone should craftily say that a new interpretation of Paul has been devised by us, this entire matter is supported by the testimonies of the Fathers. For Augustine, in many volumes, defends grace and the righteousness of faith, over against the merits of works. And Ambrose, in his *De Vocatione*

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

Article IV.

Also they teach, that men cannot be Justified before God by their own strength, merits or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, hath made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.

—Augsburg Confession

Today's Scripture reading instructs the Christian on many things the Christian is supposed to do: "Set your mind..." "put to death..." "put off all these..." "do not lie..." "put on..." You find yourself with so much to do that you may feel overwhelmed and ask, "How? How am I supposed to do all this?"

Every day we are faced with "fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Every day we have to come to grips with our own "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, [and] filthy language." Every day we find that we "lie to one another." So how are we supposed to stop doing all this?

Even though we are Christians, we never stop sinning. "How am I going to stop?" The change that God desires for you comes not by you changing your life, but by Him placing you into Christ. There your sins are hidden from His sight, and all He can see in you is Christ's perfection. While you cannot stop being who you are because of your sinful nature, your comfort is found in knowing that "it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). When you trust in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you have "set your mind on things above" and "put to death your members which are on the earth."

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; though Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Paul preached Christ crucified as the fulfillment of the things promised to the sons of Abraham. He preached for all who feared God. But he did not pander to egos, encourage "identity politics", or reduce the Law so that rebellious hypocrites would not be offended. Paul preached that the Scriptures, beginning with Moses and the Prophets, were fulfilled in the betrayal, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul also includes the warning from the prophet Habakkuk, "For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you" (1:5). Moses and the Prophets told the people. Jesus told the people. Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles told the people. The faithful Church and its Apostolic Ministry continue to tell the people to this very day. But still, the faithless ignore the work of God and the hypocrites who say "Lord, Lord" twist the truth. The sure mercy of God in Jesus Christ is preached and worked in His Church, but some people still do not believe.

In spite of man's sinful obstinacy, the Lord continues to send His mercies through the Church. He continues to work so that people may repent, believe, and be saved. And He continues to strengthen our faith and hearts so that we may be part of that work. We support the Ministry of preaching and the Sacraments, and bear the good fruits of grace, mercy, and peace in what we do so that others may also fear, love, and trust in God above all things in Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22: 1 KINGS 9:1–9 20TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

God gave Solomon the gracious promise that there would be a “man on the throne of Israel,” and that man would be Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But He also warned Solomon, and all who would come after, that faithlessness and rebellion would bring tragic results. The kingdom and house that was built would be destroyed, and it would be an example to others.

Christ continued to teach and warn the people of Israel, but Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Other kingdoms and houses have risen up in the name of God throughout history, but they have fallen because they were not faithful and obedient to the righteous commands of His Word.

A life of faith is not just about making sure you get to heaven when you die. And it is not just about leaving a legacy or having people remember you as a good person. As our Lord said to Solomon, we are to teach our sons (and daughters) to be faithful, so that we may all serve the true Kingdom of Heaven. We are to be a blessing to those who follow after, and help them avoid the bad results that come from sin, rebellion, and unrighteousness. Our Savior exemplified this love. He knew He was faithful, and He knew He would be at the right hand of the Father, but still He labored and even wept over the fate of those who ignored His Words. May He continue that loving, gracious work through our lives, not for our glory, but for the glory of His kingdom.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12: MAT. 6:19–23 19TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

In today’s reading Jesus gives two brief illustrations of faith vs. unbelief. To put it simply, the Christian faith trusts in what is unseen--the forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake--while unbelief trusts in what the person sees, whether that be a graven image, wealth, one’s “good” life, or whatever.

We are only days away from celebrating the festival of the Reformation. One of those things that really ruffled Luther’s feathers was the selling of indulgences. One could basically buy a piece of paper that would release a person from punishment for sin. The person could see the paper and find in it, rather than in Jesus, a sense of relief over a particular sin.

However, their eye was “bad,” for it was no longer focused on Jesus. God cannot be bought off. After all, how can a person give God anything since the whole of creation belongs to Him in the first place. Yet, so many people still think it is up to them to somehow please God, thereby placing all their hope in themselves.

By God’s grace, Christians have been given “good” eyes. We have eyes of faith that look to Christ for the forgiveness of sins, which is paid for “not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.”

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

The last verse of today's reading takes us back to the first. What are "the ways of the Lord"? God's ways are always about God calling sinners to "return" so that they may call upon Him to "take away all iniquity."

Since Adam and Eve's fall into sin God has been calling out to people to "return" to Him. "Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?'" (Genesis 3:9). Throughout the centuries, God's message through the Prophets, the Apostles, and faithful pastors has remained unchanged. God calls people to turn to Him for forgiveness of their sins.

One might wonder, "Is that all it takes? It seems too simple." Yet, it is the very simplicity of the Gospel that makes believing the Gospel so difficult, indeed, impossible. Our sinful nature is always looking within ourselves for the answer to all our problems, including the problem of sin. It is only when our selfish conceit is overcome by the power of God's Spirit can we look outside ourselves for help, and God stands ready, willing, and most assuredly able to do so. Thus the hammer of the Law breaks down our selfish conceit to the point where nothing of us is left, and all we can do is cry for God's mercy, which He gladly and freely gives us for Jesus' sake.

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; though Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

"Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"

Our Lord was often very direct about exposing the hypocrisy of sinful hearts. The rebellious false teachers were focused on their own will, which was unfortunate enough. But they were also pretentious and manipulative. They wanted to seem righteous and respectful even though they despised what Jesus said and did.

Our fruits and our labors show what is in our heart, whether or not we want them to. Sin manifests itself in what we do and in what we leave undone. Similarly, little things can show what's in our hearts as much as big efforts. Giving a cup of cold water can be a kind and faithful gesture; but grand prayers and sacrifices can actually be wicked, self-condemning acts.

When our Lord calls us to repent of the rebellion and hypocrisy that comes from our sinful hearts He is not being hateful toward us. He is showing His loving desire that we repent, be truly faithful, and let His Spirit accomplish in us those thoughts, words, and deeds that are truly pious and loving. Pretense may fool other people, but the Lord knows whether or not we have a proper foundation. He wants to save us from the collapse and ruin that self-will causes. It is truly a blessing that God can see our hearts and teach us to repent and be faithful, because only He can help us and set us on the solid foundation of faith in Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 20: MAT. 9:35–38 20TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

There is often a distinction between the multitudes and the disciples. Many would gather to hear Jesus preach and teach, but His disciples were the ones who were committed to learning from Him. We still have examples of this difference in our time. Some people say they are “spiritual”, or they like the idea of what Jesus was about. But passing interest does not really make one a “disciple”.

Our Lord’s teaching was focused on the disciples. He preached to them in ways that held them accountable to their faith, and He taught them wisdom that would help them to grow in that faith. However, He definitely had compassion on the multitudes who were “just visiting,” as well. This continues to be true in His Church. The Apostolic Ministry preaches, teaches, and administers the Holy Sacraments for the sake of those who are committed to the Scriptural doctrine and fellowship of the orthodox Church, but we are also glad to have visitors come to our worship. After all, visitors often become members!

But the lambs need to be part of a flock, and they need to be with a good shepherd. So we should continue to help and pray for those who are interested in order that, by God’s grace, they may truly hear the Good Shepherd and be one of His faithful disciples in the Kingdom of God.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14: HEB. 10:1–10 19TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

The author of the letter to the Hebrews offers up a clear Law/Gospel message to the reader. All the actions carried out by those following the ceremonial Law of the Old Testament could not make them perfect. On the contrary, the sacrifices made them all the more conscious of their sins because of the simple fact they had to do these things year after year.

While God had indeed told them to do these things, as with all of God’s commands, sinful people cannot do God’s commands perfectly. Thus, “In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.” God takes no pleasure in sinners trying to do His commands, because His commands are never done perfectly by sinners.

What is God looking for in man? Answer: Perfection! Christ is perfection in the flesh. God delights in Christ, for only Christ--true God and true Man--does the will of God perfectly. All the ceremonial laws that were carried out by sinners are now replaced by the Gospel, Jesus doing God’s will. Jesus does the will of the Father, fulfilling the Law by way of His infinite mercy toward us. Jesus is everything God is looking for in a man, and through our faith in Christ God sees the same perfection in us.

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15: 1 COR. 13:9–12 19TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

“For we know in part...” This phrase can easily be misunderstood and leave the impression that Scripture is lacking something. That has been, and continues to be, the Devil’s ploy, that is, to get you to believe that God is withholding something from you. In the Garden of Eden, the Devil led Adam and Eve to think God was holding back, in that they did not have a knowledge of good and evil. We know how that turned out. The temptation with this passage is to think that we can not be sure of our salvation since we only “know in part.”

But to think Paul is saying, “Hey, we’re missing something important,” is to forget what Paul had written near the beginning of his letter to the people of Corinth. “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). In other words, when you trust in Jesus and trust that you have forgiveness because He paid the price for your sins by dying on the cross, you have all that you need.

And yet, in having Jesus as your Savior, you want to know more about Him and God’s work of grace and salvation through His Son. The “part” which you “know” continues to grow as you (to use words from the Collect for the Word [TLH, pg. 14 and 107]) “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” God’s Word.

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; though Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19: MAT. 21:28–44 20TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

Jesus said to the hypocrites, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” These Jews knew the Scriptures and claimed to have faith, but they rejected Christ’s explanation of the truth. They could not escape the clear logic that He taught with His parables, so these spiteful men became more and more entrenched in their contempt for Him. Our wicked hearts often do the same thing. We can admit the reasonable truth of a situation, but when our conscience convicts us according to the Lord’s wise Law, then we often become pridefully agitated.

This is one of the many reasons that the faithful children of God in Jesus Christ are called to repent of our sins often. Satan constantly tempts us to ignore the very truth that God places on our lips. Even when we confess rightly and do those things that make for peace and good works, the devil can tempt us to hypocrisy.

Our Savior loved even the wicked hypocrites who fought against Him, which is why He kept on trying to teach them and bring them to repentance. Unfortunately, many of them probably died in their faithless rebellion. May God make us truly thankful for His Spirit, who makes us able to hear His truth, repent, and believe, even though we had walked as sinners before.

Prayer: Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 18: ZEC. 1:1–16 FESTIVAL OF ST. LUKE

Satan often tempts the saints of the Church to look back at the unfaithfulness of former generations, or at the wickedness of those presently around us, and think that we are better than they are because of our faith. We ought not think we are better or wiser. We are fortunate. The Lord has been calling and teaching people throughout all the ages, and we should simply give thanks for His mercy that has found us and made us able to believe and be saved from our unrighteousness.

Our Lord's desire to save His people through the Words of Moses and the Prophets, as well as His sadness and anger when Jerusalem and the Jews rejected Christ, should give us humble pause, not a vain sense of superiority. All men are sinful and capable of such blindness. And Satan never stops attacking us through the world around us and by our own flesh. As our heart and mind are made faithful in Christ Jesus, our will should also be toward helping the unfaithful hear and repent. We pray that His will be done, which means we pray that He use us to carry out that gracious, benevolent will toward others through us as well!

Prayer: O almighty God, who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Head Cornerstone, grant us to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine that we may be made a holy temple acceptable unto Thee; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16: ZEP. 3:14–20 19TH SUNDAY A. TRINITY

Much of what is recorded in Zephaniah is the prophet warning the Israelites of their impending doom, should they not repent of their idolatrous behavior. Sadly, the nation of Israel did not repent; they were overrun by the Babylonians, and taken captive.

What is oft times forgotten is that there were faithful people in the nation of Israel who had not bowed down to idols. These faithful people clung in faith to the promise of the Messiah and the forgiveness of sins for His sake. Much like a classroom of rowdy children wherein a few children are behaving themselves, the entire class is punished. So it was with the nation of Israel. The entire nation, faithless and faithful alike, were taken into captivity. This brings to mind the familiar exclamation, "It's just not fair!"

In the Divine Service we confess that we "justly deserved Thy temporal and eternal punishment." The faithful are still sinful like the faithless, and being faithful does not absolve us from the temporal consequences of our sins, nor from the consequences of the sins of those around us. "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Your joy in the midst of all life's problems is knowing what the prophet Zephaniah proclaimed, "The Lord has taken away your judgments."

Prayer: O almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready, both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done; though Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Lesson from the Book of Concord The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

Chapter XI.

OF GOD'S ETERNAL FOREKNOWLEDGE AND ELECTION.

Concerning this article no public dissension has occurred among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession. But since it is a consolatory article, if treated properly, and by this means the introduction in the future of a controversy likely to cause offense may be avoided, it is also explained in this writing.

AFFIRMATIVE

The Pure and True Doctrine concerning this Article.

1. First of all, the distinction between foreknowledge and predestination, that is, between God's foreknowledge and His eternal election, ought to be accurately observed.

2. For the foreknowledge of God is nothing else than that God knows all things before they happen, as it is written (Dan. 2:28): "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."

3. This foreknowledge is occupied alike with the godly and the wicked; but it is not the cause of evil or of sin, so that men do what is wrong (which originally arises from the devil and the wicked, perverse will of man); nor the cause of their ruin, for which they themselves are responsible; but only regulates it, and fixes to it a limit how long it should last, and that everything, notwithstanding that in itself it is evil, should serve His elect for their salvation.

4. The predestination or eternal election of God, however, is occupied only with the godly, beloved children of God, and this is a cause of their salvation, which He also provides as well as disposes what belongs thereto. Upon this [predestination of God] our salvation is founded so firmly that the gates of hell cannot overcome it (John 10:28; Matt. 16:18).

5. This is not to be investigated in the secret counsel of God, but to be sought in the Word of God, where it is also revealed.

6. But the Word of God leads us to Christ, who is the Book of Life, in whom all are written and elected that are to be saved, as it is written (Eph. 1:4): "He hath chosen us in Him" [Christ] "before the foundation of the world."

7. Thus Christ calls to Himself all sinners, and promises them rest, and He is anxious that all men should come to Him and permit Him to help them. To them He offers Himself in His Word, and wishes them to hear it, and not to stop their ears or despise the Word. He promises besides the power and efficiency of the Holy Ghost, and divine assistance for perseverance and eternal salvation.

8. Therefore we should judge concerning this our election to eternal life neither from reason nor from the Law of God, which would lead either into a dissipated, dissolute epicurean life, or into despair, and would excite in the heart of men pernicious thoughts (and such thoughts cannot be effectually guarded against as long as they follow their own reason), so that they think to themselves: "If God has elected me to salvation, I cannot be condemned, although I do whatever I will." And again: "If I am not elected to eternal life, it matters not what good I do; for my efforts are nevertheless all in vain."

9. But the true judgment concerning predestination must be learned alone from the Holy Gospel concerning Christ, in which it is clearly testified that "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all," and that "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (Rom. 11:32; Ez. 18:23; 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2).

10. To him, therefore, who is really concerned about the revealed will of God, and proceeds according to the order which St. Paul has observed in the Epistle to the Romans, who first directs men to repentance, knowledge of sins, to faith in Christ, to divine obedience, before he speaks of the mystery of the eternal election of God, this doctrine [concerning God's predestination] is useful and consolatory.

11. That, however, "many are called, few are chosen," does not mean that God is unwilling that all should be saved, but the reason is that they either do not at all hear God's Word, but wilfully despise it, close their ears and harden their hearts, and in this manner foreclose the ordinary way to the Holy Ghost, so that He cannot effect His work in them, or, when it is heard, they consider it of no account, and do not heed it. For this [that they perish] not God or His election, but their wickedness is responsible (2 Pet. 2:1 sqq.; Luke 11:49, 52; Heb. 12:25 sq.).

—The Formula of Concord, Epitome, §1–12