

**Clergy of the ELDoNA,
affiliated congregations and missions**

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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. Michael Henson

Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL

Rev. Martin Jackson

Lamb of God Ev. Lutheran Church, Rogers, AR

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Trinity Lutheran Church, Herrin, IL

Rev. Dcn. Jacob Henson

St. Henry Lutheran Mission (WI and MI), especially Apologia Lutheran Mission, Deer Park, WI

Rev. Dcn. Anthony Oncken

Salem Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

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Rev. Daniel Mensing

THE LUTHERAN HERALD



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The Calendar

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

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

May 4	Misericordias Domini (Easter 2)	ASBH 31
May 11	Jubilate (Easter 3)	ASBH 32
May 18	Cantate (Easter 4)	ASBH 33
May 25	Rogate (Easter 5)	ASBH 34
May 26–28	Rogation Days	
May 29(R)	The Ascension of our Lord	ASBH 35

Salem Lutheran Church Anniversary

Next year, Salem Lutheran Church in Malone will celebrate the 140th anniversary of the establishment of the congregation. Before *that* anniversary, this year the congregation is celebrating the **30th anniversary** of the dedication of the current church building. The anniversary of the current church **will be celebrated on June 8**. (The present Salem is the fourth church to stand on this ground since the parish was established in 1886; the cemetery was established in 1888.)

St. Ignatius Lutheran Theological Seminary classes continue

Spring 2025 Quarter begins until Monday, **March 10**. Classes for the Winter Quarter are:

E000—Greek (3 hrs.)

S002—Lutheran Confessions 2 (3 hrs.)

H001—Apostolic Church and Early Church to Nicea (3 hrs.)

Classes will run from **March 10–April 11**, and then will take a three week break for Holy Week, Easter Week, and Synod & Colloquium. Classes will resume **May 5** and continue until **June 6**. (June 6 is also the 139th anniversary of Salem Lutheran Church and the 19th anniversary of the establishment of the ELDoNA.)

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

bombarded with songs that, at best, reflect only a bumper-sticker theology. Musically, the church is awash in a triviality designed either to make us feel good or to manipulate us to someone else's predetermined ends. That triviality makes a mockery of the integrity of the Gospel itself.

“While we cannot foretell the outcome for the foreseeable future, we know that the good and gracious will of our God, who is ultimately in control, will prevail.”

Carl F. Schalk, *God's Song in a New Land—
Lutheran Hymnals in America*

(St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), p. 183–185

The Importance of Faithful Hymnody

“For almost four and one-half centuries Lutheran hymnody has changed and adapted with each successive age, absorbing what it has found useful and edifying in each successive age, rejecting that song which it has found to be contrary to its liturgical, sacramental understanding of worship. Each successive hymnal that Lutherans have produced has been the potential point of conflict where the spirit of the Lutheran tradition meets the spirit of the age. Where those two spirits have largely coincided there has been one result; where they are at cross purposes, quite another outcome occurs.

...

“Where that Reformation song was alive and well in the mouths and hearts of congregations, there was the assurance that the Gospel message of sin and grace, death and rebirth, would continue to resound within the church. Where the normative core was diluted, emasculated, or eliminated from Lutheran hymnbooks, it was a muted message—often a message other than the Gospel—that was to sound out. Through the centuries the church’s song has continued to be enriched with the best of the new song of each successive age. But where the church has lost its moorings in the Gospel proclamation so uniquely given expression in the 16th-century chorale, the church’s worship has experienced deterioration, decay, and decline. ...

“The challenges to American Lutheran hymnody in the past several centuries, however, do not die easily. Pietism, rationalism, revivalism, and an easy-going ecumenism have reappeared in the 20th century in new and tempting guises. Marketed and promoted with all the trappings of 20th-century technology, they continue to threaten to move Lutheran hymnody from its central concerns of proclamation and praise to other attractive, but peripheral, concerns. Rather than an assurance mediated through God’s Word and sacraments, a new pietism has arisen in our time that seeks religious assurance within one’s self, that seeks immediate affirmation in the senses. Rather than texts which ‘tell the story,’ we are



Lesson from the Book of Concord Misericordias Domini Sunday

Article XIV.

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

Article XV.

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

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

Article IV. Of the Papacy.

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

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

This is not a neat and clean analogy, at least in the estimation of human reason, which would prefer a one-to-one correspondence. How can Jesus claim to be both the door and the shepherd? How can He be the one who leads us *and* the thing through which we are led?

But this is not the only place we see this kind of curious paradox in the Scriptures. Consider the fact that Jesus preached the Word of God, and, at the same time, He Himself is the Word (John 1:1). Or consider Baptism, how Jesus is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8), and, at the same time, He is also the one into whom we are baptized (Gal. 3:27). Again, consider the Lord's Supper, that He is the one who sets the heavenly feast before us, and, at the same, He Himself is the food and drink.

We realize that Jesus is teaching us about the means of grace. As our Good Shepherd, He leads us into the abundance of eternal life through the narrow gate of His Word and Sacraments, in which He Himself is truly present. He is the Preacher and the Word, the Baptizer and the Living Water, the Servant and the Bread from Heaven, the Shepherd and the Door.

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

“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.”

“Join in following my example.” Wow! What a thing for the Apostle to say! Did he not also say, “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice” (Romans 7:19)? Does he want us to practice the evil that he wishes he did not do? Clearly not. It is all too easy for us to look at a statement like this and think only in terms of the Law.

By all means, we want to strive to obey the Law. In Romans 7, St. Paul is simply expressing the frustration we all should feel, that we are not doing better! But in our text, when Paul encourages us to follow his example, it makes sense if we think in terms of the Gospel: when Paul beholds his own sinfulness, he makes no excuses. He repents. He receives the forgiveness of sins that his Savior Jesus Christ purchased for him. So it is in this way that we would follow Paul's example: making no excuses, repenting of our sins, and rejoicing to receive the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ Jesus.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens, so may we also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell; who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“...the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession...”

As we celebrated Christ’s ascension into heaven yesterday, we now begin to look forward to the Feast of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit that it commemorates. In our text, St. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as “the guarantee of our inheritance.” The idea is somewhat similar to a down-payment on a house: how does the bank know you will make your house payments? You made a down-payment, and you will lose all that money if you do not make your payments and they have to foreclose.

There need be no concern that our Lord will not keep His promises; of course He will. But the Holy Spirit is given to us as a guarantee that we will receive every bit of the promised inheritance of heavenly glory. This guarantee is given to us for our comfort, that we may be all the more confident that the good work He has begun in us will be brought to completion on the coming day of our Lord Jesus Christ. That day we receive the eternal possession purchased for us by Christ Jesus Himself.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens, so may we also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell; who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

With what food was Peter supposed to feed the sheep of Jesus? The food and drink of believers is Jesus Himself. “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” (John 6:35). Yesterday we learned that Jesus is the Good Shepherd and the Door. We can add that Jesus is also the green pasture and the quiet water that satisfy the sheep. Our Good Shepherd commands all pastors, just like St. Peter, to feed His sheep. He gives these servants His Word and Sacraments, by which they feed His sheep with His presence.

Why would a man follow Jesus into a job like this, especially when it might require that he also lay down his life for the sheep, as Jesus prophesied would happen to Peter? Why would anyone, for that matter, follow Jesus as a believing sheep? There are many possible answers, but only one good answer: faithful love. Both the faithful pastor and the faithful hearer love the Good Shepherd more than anything else, for He has laid down His life for them. The cross gives us this love. Whenever affliction comes, hear the Lord asking you, “Do you love me more than these?” May God grant us the Holy Spirit so we may say, “Yes Lord, You know that I love You.”

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

“You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God.” Here God shows what it means to be a man. Man was created to relate to God as a sheep relates to a shepherd. In fact, we can conclude that God created sheep to teach us about ourselves, that we were meant to be gathered together, protected, and nourished by our God.

Before the fall into sin, Adam and Eve enjoyed all of the blessings described in the first part of this reading. But Satan, the father of all spiritual thieves, infiltrated Paradise. He led Adam and Eve away from the door of the Word of God and convinced them to follow the voice of a stranger. As a result, they found themselves outside the safety of the sheepfold.

In today’s reading, our Lord promises a restoration of man’s original state, to raise up for us a “garden of renown” and to make us His sheep once again. This is accomplished by His servant David, that is, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Door by which we are brought back into Paradise. Through faith in Him we become the kind of men we were supposed to be, as we sing in the Venite, “For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand” (Psalm 95:7).

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

“He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.”

That part of our Lord’s ministry in this world was completed, and He ascended into heaven. Before He visibly departs, He blesses His disciples. What did He say to them? Was it the Aaronic Benediction—“the Lord bless thee and keep thee”—that we hear at the end of every Divine Service? Was it something else? It does not say.

What it does say is that “He lifted up His hands.” Those uplifted hands would have displayed the nail prints, the glorious scars that procured our salvation; and that really says it all! They had the joy, and we have the joy, of knowing, as our Lord ascended, He has done everything that needed to be done. Those hands serve to declare that the biggest problem we ever had or ever could have—our separation from God—has been solved. Forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation are ours. Though they no longer see Him, the disciples worship Him, and they are filled with great joy. So are we. Thanks be to God for the completed work of Christ!

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens, so may we also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell; who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.”

Yesterday, we heard that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. Today, we hear Jesus praying for us. Pay careful attention to that prayer! He prays not that we be taken out of the world, but that we be protected from the evil one.

There is a false teaching called the “theology of glory.” It has many versions, but it basically teaches that “if you work our God-program, God, who rides above the messiness of life in this fallen world, will pull you out of the messiness and make your life glorious too!” We have the opposite: Jesus prays this on the night in which He was betrayed. Jesus, our God, comes down to where we are, suffers all the ugliness of life in this world, and ultimately dies on the cross to redeem us. So, we do not pray to get out of all the hardships. We pray rather that we may be instruments of Christ, bringing the message of forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation to others who, like us, labor under the difficulties of life in this fallen, sinful world.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we, who in our affliction put our trust in Thy mercy, may ever be defended by Thy protection against all adversity; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

As Jesus spoke these words to His disciples, a little child was standing in the midst of them, placed there by Jesus Himself (verse 2). It was this little child whom Jesus was referring to as “lost.” Little children are not innocent, as some seem to think. By nature they are lost in sin and need saving. All of us were born in this state.

Jesus, however, does not want us to remain lost. He pursues us and seeks to bring us back to the protection of His fold. But as Christ told us earlier this week, there is only one door through which we can enter into salvation. He is that door, specifically, His presence in the means of grace. Having found us with the preaching of His Word, He brings us into His Church through the door of Holy Baptism.

There is not one door for adults and one door for children. Just as all are lost in sin, all are saved by being baptized into Christ. Those who would deny baptism to little children should pay attention to Jesus’ warning, “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones.” It is a tremendous sin against a child to prevent him or her from entering into the salvation of Christ’s Church through Holy Baptism.

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

FRIDAY, MAY 9: JEREMIAH 23:1-6 MISERICORDIAS DOMINI

The pastors that the Lord threatens in today's reading are motivated by something besides love for Jesus. The text says that they do feed the sheep, but apparently not with Jesus' presence in the Word and Sacraments.

What then are these evil shepherds feeding the sheep? Just as Satan tricked Eve into thinking that the forbidden fruit was good for food, so false pastors feed their churches with things which appear to be spiritually satisfying, but are not. They offer a supportive community, or affirmation in life's daily struggles. They prepare stories that pull the heart strings and captivate the imagination. They serve up music that powerfully moves the emotions. But none of these things truly nourish the sheep or gather them together. Instead, they destroy and scatter them.

The Church is unified and properly fed only when Jesus Christ Himself sends out pastors who speak with His voice and gather His believers together around His presence in the Word and Sacraments. As our Augsburg Confession states, "And to the true unity of the Church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments" (Article VII).

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

Tuesday May 27: Romans 8:24-28 Rogation Day

"We do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

As we continue in these Rogation days of asking, one may well ask, "what should I be praying for?" Our text today invites us to the humble, honest acknowledgment of the fact that "we do not know what we should pray for as we ought." And in that recognition it can be tempting not to pray, for fear that our prayers will be wrong and not heard by God. The Word of God, however, points us very much the other direction. Go ahead and pray! Your prayers have an 'editor,' so to speak. The Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us. He takes our flawed and imperfect prayers, and intercedes for us with His divinely perfect "groanings."

Like us, the disciples also wanted to know how to pray rightly. When they asked the Lord to teach them how, He gave them the Lord's Prayer. So we offer our prayers boldly and with confidence, and then we may rejoice to speak the Lord's Prayer in summary of all, rejoicing that, as those redeemed by the shed blood of Christ, our prayers will be heard.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we, who in our affliction put our trust in Thy mercy, may ever be defended by Thy protection against all adversity; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

“I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men...”

The first three days of this week are called “Rogation Days.” Their observance goes back for centuries. “Rogation” comes from the Latin word that means “to ask.” For what shall we ask? Our text for today’s devotion would have us praying for all people, and it specifically encourages prayers for political authorities.

Prayers for political leaders need not be partisan. No matter who wields political power at the moment, we pray for them. We pray that they would rule in a manner pleasing to God, so we rejoice in godly magistrates. But even ungodly rulers can serve to maintain law and order, so that “we may lead quiet and peaceable lives” of humble service to our Lord.

As the Lord blesses us with such, God grant us not to squander it! Such as we are able, we pray that God would have His use of us and give the gift of stability in our land, in order that we may engage in faithfully carrying out our vocations, especially confessing the Gospel. As we are assured, this is pleasing to God, who would have all people come to a knowledge of the saving truth of Christ.

Collect: Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that we, who in our affliction put our trust in Thy mercy, may ever be defended by Thy protection against all adversity; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

When Jesus goes out and finds lost sheep, often He finds them not wandering alone, but with many other sheep in the ‘care’ of a hireling. Those sheep who hear Jesus’ voice and follow Him will often find themselves fleeing their previous fold in which they were fed with “various and strange doctrines” which do not profit. The author of Hebrews says that we ought to expect those who remain in false-teaching churches to heap scorn and reproach upon those who leave. So it was when the believing Jews left the corrupt synagogues, and so it is today.

But if Christ is “outside the camp,” then we must go to Him. He provides a better altar, where we are sanctified by the sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He places over us good pastors, who actually do the hard work of watching over our souls, instead of taking the path of least resistance.

Christ’s flock is one in exile. It may lack the comfort of an institutional sheep pen. It may not provide the sense of security that comes from being surrounded by multitudes of other sheep. But it is the only flock which can claim to be led by the Good Shepherd, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

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

Lesson from the Book of Concord

Jubilate Sunday

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

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

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

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

except the dream taken from the second book of Maccabees (15:14).

Moreover, even supposing that the saints certainly pray for the Church, yet it does not follow that they are to be invoked. Although our Confession affirms only this, that Scripture does not teach the invocation of the saints, or that we are to ask the saints for aid. But since neither a command, nor a promise, nor an example can be produced from the Scriptures concerning the invocation of saints, it follows that conscience can have nothing concerning this invocation that is certain. And since prayer ought to be made from faith, how do we know that God approves this invocation? Whence do we know without the testimony of Scripture that the saints perceive the prayers of each one? Some plainly ascribe divinity to the saints, viz. that they discern the silent thoughts of the minds in us. They dispute concerning morning and evening knowledge, perhaps because they doubt whether they hear us in the morning or the evening. They invent these things not in order to treat the saints with honor, but to defend lucrative services. Nothing can be produced by the adversaries against this reasoning, that, since invocation does not have a testimony from God's Word, it cannot be affirmed that the saints perceive our invocation, or that they especially perceive that God approves it. Wherefore the adversaries ought not to force us to an uncertain matter, because a prayer without faith is not prayer. For as they cite the example of the Church, it is evident that this is a new custom in the Church; for although the old prayers make mention of the saints, yet they do not invoke the saints. Although also this new invocation in the Church is dissimilar to the invocation of individuals.

Again, the adversaries not only require invocation in the worship of the saints, but also apply the merits of the saints for others, and make of the saints not only intercessors, but also propitiators. This is in no way to be endured. For here the honor belonging only to Christ is altogether transferred to the saints. For they make them mediators and propitiators, and although they make a distinction between mediators of intercession and mediators of redemption, yet they plainly make out of the saints mediators of redemption.

—The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, §1–14

Lesson from the Book of Concord

Rogate Sunday

Chapter IX.

Article XXI. Of the Invocation of Saints.

The twenty-first article they [the Roman Catholics] absolutely condemn, because we do not require the invocation of saints. Nor on any topic do they rhetoricate with more prolixity. Nevertheless they do not effect anything else than that the saints should be honored; likewise that the saints who live should pray for others; as though indeed the invocation of dead saints were in addition necessary. They cite Cyprian, because he asked Cornelius while yet alive to pray for his brothers when departing. By this example they approve the invocation of the dead. They quote also Jerome against Vigilantius: "On this field," they say, "eleven hundred years ago, Jerome overcame Vigilantius." Thus the adversaries triumph, as though the war were already ended. Nor do they, in their stupidity, see that in Jerome against Vigilantius there is not a syllable concerning invocation. He speaks concerning honors to the saints, not concerning the invocation. Neither have the rest of the ancient writers before Gregory made mention of invocation. Certainly this invocation, with these opinions which the adversaries now teach concerning the application of merits, has not the testimony of the ancient writers.

Our Confession [the Augsburg Confession] approves honors to the saints. For here a threefold honor is to be approved. The first is thanksgiving. For we ought to give thanks to God because He has shown examples of mercy; because He has shown that He wishes to save men; because He has given teachers or other gifts to the Church. And these gifts, as they are the greatest, should be amplified, and the saints themselves should be praised, who have faithfully used these gifts, just as Christ praises faithful business-men (Matt. 25:21, 23). The second service is the strengthening of our faith; when we see the denial forgiven Peter, we also are encouraged to believe the more that grace truly superabounds over sin (Rom. 5:20). The third honor is the imitation first of faith, then of the other virtues, which everyone should imitate according to his calling. These true honors the adversaries do not require. They dispute only concerning invocation, which, even though it would have no danger, nevertheless is not necessary.

Besides, we also grant that the angels pray for us. For there is a testimony in Zach. 1:12: "O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem?" Although concerning the saints we concede that just as when alive they pray for the Church universal in general, so in heaven they pray for the Church in general, albeit no testimony concerning the dead praying is extant in the Scriptures,

the Word of God is preached, accepted or believed, and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be wanting. And let no one think that he shall have peace; but he must risk whatever he has upon earth—possessions, honor, house and estate, wife and child, body and life. That hurts indeed our flesh and the old Adam. For the test is to be steadfast and to suffer with patience whatever afflictions befall us, and to yield whatever is taken from us.

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

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

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

—The Large Catechism, the Lord's Prayer

This lesson fits well with the Collect for the week. The Collect reads, “Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness...” Job had erred from the way of righteousness in his words. Though he was correct in maintaining his innocence against the accusation of his friends, still he complained too much against God and questioned His will. As Job later confessed, “I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know” (Job 42:3).

We also often err from the way of righteousness. When we complain about our life and the cross God has placed upon us, we speak what we do not understand. We question things which are too wonderful for us. Like Job, we need to be called back to the light of divine truth. We need to be shown our error by the Word of God so that we may repent and return into the way of righteousness.

Job’s example demonstrates that God justifies those who repent. After Job confessed his sin, God accepted him and brought no wrath against him (Job 42:8). So, God will accept us when we repent of our sins and trust in Jesus Christ as our righteousness.

Collect: Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness: Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s Religion that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

What hymns did Paul and Silas sing? Were they even more beautiful than Gerhard hymns or Bach cantatas? J. S. Bach was sometimes called “the fifth evangelist” because of how beautifully he set the words of Scripture to music. Whatever they sang, the other prisoners were listening. It should remind us that others are always listening to our witness, especially our children.

When the earthquake came and all the prisoners’ chains fell away, they no doubt connected their miraculous freedom to the hymn-singing of Paul and Silas. No doubt, those hymns were about the Gospel message. They prayed to God and sang about His mighty deeds. They displayed otherworldly calmness and courage in the face of suffering. These were divinely powerful and important men, even though they looked common. It must have been that impression they gave that kept all the other prisoners from fleeing. It is also what caused the jailor to fall down at their feet. He believed these things happened because of the God they were singing about. This powerful witness is what convinced him and his whole house to believe and be baptized. Lord, let us be Your humble witnesses as well.

Collect: O God, who makest the minds of the faithful to be of one will: Grant unto Thy people that they may love what Thou commandest, and desire what Thou dost promise; that, among the manifold changes of this world, our hearts may there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Even with all the evil and suffering in the world, we are not the defeated. We are not the ones that hopelessly look forward to decline and death. Our God has triumphed on Easter morning! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are such earth shaking events that no one has been able to ignore them ever since. The unbelievers may reject Him, but no one ignores Him. God has revealed His power “in the eyes of all the nations.” The atoning work of Christ was not done in a corner like Mohammed’s meeting an angel in a cave. Jesus’ teaching, miracles, life, and death were done before the whole world. “And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God.” It was an event in time and in history.

Even today, the whole world can see God’s salvation in the faithful Christian Church. The Word is preached publicly and the Sacraments are administered in public. Those who bear the vessels of the Lord still present the redeeming Savior to the world. All may come to salvation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Collect: O God, who makest the minds of the faithful to be of one will: Grant unto Thy people that they may love what Thou commandest, and desire what Thou dost promise; that, among the manifold changes of this world, our hearts may there be fixed where true joys are to be found; 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 disciples of John believed that, if a man wanted to please God, he needed to fast like the Pharisees. Jesus had nothing against fasting, but He wanted to teach them that it was to be done in faith and discernment. As it is written in the book of Ecclesiastes, “To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven... A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance” (Eccl. 3:1, 4). The disciples of Christ would fast, but this was not the proper time. Fasting is a sign of mourning and repentance. Since Jesus, their Bridegroom, was dwelling among them, it was a more appropriate time for feasting and joy.

In the Christian Church on earth, we are free to fast or not to fast at any time. We weep or laugh as best fits the season and our circumstances. As Paul says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15). Nevertheless, when we join our Bridegroom in heaven, we will no longer fast. There the season of mourning will come to an end, for our hearts will rejoice in the presence of God, and our joy no one will take from us (John 16:22).

Collect: Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness: Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s Religion that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Today's lesson presents us with a picture of the Christian Church. She is described as a mother who lovingly cares for her children. She feeds and satisfies them at her breasts; she consoles them at her bosom; she carries them on her sides; she dandles them on her knees. So also, in the fellowship of the Church, God feeds us with His Word and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; He consoles us with the forgiveness of sins; He carries us by His doctrine over the troubles of this life; He dandles us with joy and peace that flows like a river. Given this wonderful picture, we should desire to remain and live in this Christian Church. We should seek to dwell among believers and gather around God's Word and His Sacraments. There, our mother will nurture us. "In Jerusalem," we shall be comforted.

Those who think they do not need the Church are depriving themselves of their mother. They are leaving behind their food, their consolation, and their doctrine. God promises to give peace and comfort "in Jerusalem." Therefore let us not forsake the Word of God and the gathering together of the saints. Rather, rejoice and be glad with Jerusalem, "that you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory."

Collect: Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness: Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Religion that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

We rightly reject false compassion and the empty sentiments of those who express their care for others, but do not act accordingly. There is also the distortion of men who try to express gentleness by being effeminate. It has become fashionable in certain circles to push back against these distorted modern 'virtues' by trying to make virtues out of rudeness, callousness, and arrogance. They end up sliding from one ditch to the other.

Manliness is not the opposite of Colossians 3; God's Word shows the core of true manliness. The virtues of Colossians 3 mark true Christian men and women, because these virtues imitate Christ's virtues. When the world is callous, the Christian is compassionate. When the world is arrogant, the Christian is humble. We are marked by compassion and forgiveness because that is what Christ is to us. In our baptism, Christ took us out of our miserable situation and restored us to our Father's house. Jesus Christ gave us everything freely.

We can now live in bold openness and love to all around us. That doesn't mean we live foolishly or unrealistically, but in concert with clear-eyed sobriety about the world. We can live in quiet compassion for others. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts," not the perpetual outrage of the sinful masses and their false virtues.

Collect: O God, who makest the minds of the faithful to be of one will: Grant unto Thy people that they may love what Thou commandest, and desire what Thou dost promise; that, among the manifold changes of this world, our hearts may there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

To “abide” is to remain faithful and constant. It is to remain fixed in place, unmovable from adherence to the Word of Jesus. Sometimes people briefly or temporarily believe the Word of Christ, but then let other things draw them away from the Word as the touchstone of their existence. If they “abide,” they will truly be disciples. Therefore, they will “know the truth.”

To *know* something is more than intellectual assent. To *know* something is to take knowledge, absorb it, and reflect upon it. It is to feel it, to intuit it, to have it become one’s impulse and ground of other knowledge. To *know* is to be shaped and formed by something. The knowledge becomes part of you. And when that knowledge is of the One who is the Truth, He leads you into all truth; that is, He leads you to reality and clarity. You can truly live outside the power of falsehood and lies. You can be free of the darkness of this world. Only Jesus, our Truth, can do that for us. All foundations that are not built on this Truth will crumble.

Collect: O God, who makest the minds of the faithful to be of one will: Grant unto Thy people that they may love what Thou commandest, and desire what Thou dost promise; that, among the manifold changes of this world, our hearts may there be fixed where true joys are to be found; 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’s text begins where the Epistles from the last two Sundays left off (1 Peter 2:11-20 and 21-25). In those lessons, Peter taught that we should live ‘in the world’ by submitting to authorities, but we should not be ‘of the world.’ Since we are sojourners and pilgrims in this life, our conduct is different from the world. We act contrary to culture, since this glorifies God and provides an honorable witness among the unbelievers.

St. Peter continues this teaching in today’s text with special instructions for wives. Wives who have unbelieving husbands should not leave them or try to undermine them. They should submit to them, just as they submit to Christ. By this counter-cultural submission, they may even win their husbands to the faith. When these men observe their wives’ chaste conduct, they may glorify God because of them. As Jesus taught in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

This special teaching for wives has a general application for all of us. We also have the opportunity to win others to the faith by our godly conduct. The Holy Spirit does the converting, but we can adorn the Word of God by our gentle and modest behavior. The Gospel will appear very attractive to those who do not yet know Christ!

Collect: Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness: Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s Religion that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

The disciples were worried about Jesus' plan to return to Jerusalem. The last time he had journeyed there the Jews had tried to stone Him. What was He thinking by wanting to go back? Jesus responded that, although the hour of darkness was coming, He still walked in the day. There were still many hours remaining before He would be betrayed into the hand of sinners and put to death. As long as it was day, Jesus planned to continue His prophetic work. He would return to Judea, comfort Mary and Martha, raise Lazarus from the dead, cleanse the temple, preach sermons to the people, refute the Pharisees and Sadducees, and give final instruction to His chosen Apostles. As Jesus said in John 9:4, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day."

It is day for us, as well. Each of us has hours remaining in our lives in which we can still work and do the will of the heavenly Father. Who are we to decide when our night has come? Who are we to decide when our work has ended? God has still given us day! There are yet "twelve hours" in which we may work in our God-given vocations. So walk, while it is yet day! "If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble."

Collect: Almighty God, who showest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness: Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Religion that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Christ's death compels St. Paul and all the Apostles to live their lives for Christ. The gift of the Gospel is so great that they cannot think of their own lives as if they were somehow separate from Christ's life. Christ died for all. St. Paul tells us this twice.

Our Lord didn't just die for the elect, but for all the world. The universal atonement is extremely important for us to confess in our worship. This is why in the English translation of the Nicene Creed we say: "Who for us men and for our salvation..." "Men" is not sexist. It means *all humans*. When it was proposed by some to render it, "Who for us and for our salvation..." it was ambiguous. Was the "us" the elect or all men? In trying to eliminate "sexism" they threw universal atonement into question. Faithful Lutherans unwaveringly confess the universal atonement. Christ "died for all." Those who live in Him by faith find eternal life; and it is the Office of the Ministry that brings to us the life giving Word and Sacraments.

Collect: O God, who makest the minds of the faithful to be of one will: Grant unto Thy people that they may love what Thou commandest, and desire what Thou dost promise; that, among the manifold changes of this world, our hearts may there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Here we have a prophecy of the fall of Babylon and the rising of Israel. Some interpretations generally focus on the historical interpretation of passages like this. Of course, the historical aspect is important, knowing the context and the perspective of the prophet at the time of the writing, but Lutherans focus their interpretation Christologically and in view of the ultimate fulfillment.

Here, “the king of Babylon” doesn’t just point to a specific ruler, but is a kind of symbol of worldly power in general. Here, Isaiah points to the ultimate overthrow of the powers of this world. God will bring “Babylon” low, while raising up “Israel.” Ultimately, Babylon represents all the wicked rulers of this world that come against God’s people or oppose God’s will. And Israel represents the faithful Church. Christ’s Church suffers in this world, but it will one day be brought up to glory, while the pomp and glory of those who oppress His Church will be brought to nothing. Verse one alludes to the Gentiles being brought into the kingdom of God. In verse two, “people” refers to the Babylonians, or those who held God’s people captive. The captor and captive roles will be reversed. The oppressors will now serve the Church, but, in doing so, will find true joy and freedom.

Collect: O God, who makest the minds of the faithful to be of one will: Grant unto Thy people that they may love what Thou commandest, and desire what Thou dost promise; that, among the manifold changes of this world, our hearts may there be fixed where true joys are to be found; 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 last Sunday’s Gospel reading (John 16:16-23), Jesus told the Apostles that He would soon be taken away from them. Later that Maundy Thursday evening, He would be seized by the chief priests, condemned, and put to death. This separation would cause the Apostles sorrow, but only for a little while. After Jesus’ resurrection, their sorrow would be taken away since they would see Him again. Their hearts would rejoice and their joy no one would take from them.

There is a parallel (and even greater) joy coming for the whole Christian Church. After the resurrection of all flesh we will see Jesus with our own eyes! Our hearts will rejoice because we will enjoy the fullness of fellowship with God—not for a little while, but for eternity. Thus our text says: “they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.” This is a joy which no one will take from us. We shall weep and lament no more, because the tribulations of this world will be ended. We shall see God, and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

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

Lesson from the Book of Concord Cantate Sunday

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