

# **THE LUTHERAN HERALD**

**TRINITY 10—TRINITY 13  
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**THE HOLY GOSPEL**      **St. Luke 19:41-48 (NKJV)**

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house is a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’” And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him, and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.

**THE COLLECT**

O God, who declarest Thine almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity, mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace that we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

One would think that one chapter would have been enough talk about giving money to the church. Yet there is more to this exhortation than talk of money. St. Paul wraps up his thoughts by bringing the people back to what is central in all Christian teaching, the Gospel. Finally, everything done in the church and through the church is about the Gospel. Indeed, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

To understand our God, the true and living God, is to see God as giver. Whenever the law comes crashing down upon us and leads us to repentance, it is then that God as giver shines through the darkness of our sin. God brings the Gospel to lighten our lives. He brings the light of salvation in Christ to us, thereby showing us His love for us. Luther’s Small Catechism is a fine example of how this works. The first of the six chief parts of Christian doctrine is the Ten Commandments, law. Crushed by the weight of the law’s demands, we are left with the realization of our inability to satisfy God’s demands. We are then brought to the second chief part, the Apostles’ Creed. In the Apostles’ Creed we hear of God as giver. He gives us all that we need for life in this world. He gives us salvation in Christ. And He gives us His Spirit, who brings us to faith in Christ and keeps us in that faith.

God is “the Fount and Source of all goodness.” No wonder St. Paul could exhort the Corinthians, and us, and give thanks to God.

Ouch! St. Paul surely must have struck a nerve at this point in his letter to the Corinthians. He had written some hard-hitting remarks earlier in this letter. But now, everything comes home to roost, so to speak. Now St. Paul has the audacity to talk about money. St. Paul cites the generosity of the churches in Macedonia, who gave “beyond their ability” and did so because “they were freely willing,” as an example for the churches of Corinth. Not only does St. Paul write about giving money, he uses the people of Macedonia, who were not rich by any standard, as example.

“Ouch!” At least that is our first impulse. It is so easy for us to make money into a god. Christ said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). What we as Christians can so easily forget is that we are already rich. We are heirs of the kingdom of God. Everything that belongs to God is ours. The problem is that we want it all now!

Thankfully God knows us much better than we know ourselves. That is why the Holy Spirit is at work in us to daily confess our sin of placing our trust in the things God has given us, rather than trusting in Him. God graciously forgives our sins for Jesus’ sake and leads us to understand that we will always have “all we need to support this body and life,” for He is our loving Father. With God as the “fount and source of all goodness” in our lives, we can serve our neighbor.

True good works are those which proceed from faith out of thankfulness for Christ’s already-purchased salvation. Thus only a Christian can do a good work. Nevertheless, like the Malta natives who showed St. Paul and his companions “unusual kindness,” unbelievers can comply externally with the Law. For example, unbelievers may feed the hungry or even support the Church without fear, love, or trust in God.

Though the outward works of unbelievers do provide outward good in the civil sphere, they are not acceptable before God’s throne. Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him...” When unbelievers do the “things contained in the law,” it shouldn’t surprise us, as all men since the fall, have the law written in the heart. (Rom 2:14-15) Whenever St Paul was bitten by a viper, the Malta natives concluded, based on the law, that “justice does not allow [him] to live.” Even unbelievers understand that the wages of sin is death. When St. Paul didn’t die from the viper bite, they assumed that St. Paul was a god, though he was not.

Believers in Christ are commanded to be “zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14) so that they show forth the salvation which they have received. Having attempted to do good, Christians do not boast or trust in their works. Christ’s perfect righteousness forgives our imperfect keeping of the divine Law, when He covers over our sinful person. The Apology approves of St. Augustine who says, “All the commandments of God are fulfilled when whatever is not done, is forgiven.” (III, 51)

Though the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem said that they hadn't received any letters or heard any report about St. Paul, they did say, "for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere." (v.22) They called the Christian faith a sect, though without impunity. The Greek word αἰρέσις, from which we get the word heresy, still had the original meaning of those who choose (αἰρέω) or profess peculiar tenets. (See Acts 5:17, 15:5)

On an appointed day, St. Paul vigorously defended the teachings of Christianity. Our beliefs concerning salvation through faith in Jesus Christ are not a peculiar choosing of certain passages (misapplication), nor are they a philosophical ideology imposed on the text. The New Testament teachings of Christianity are nothing other the central teaching of all the Old Testament. St. Paul's teachings concerning Jesus came "from both the Law of Moses and all the Prophets."

We dare not be led astray by those who would deny our chief article (God's free grace through faith in Jesus Christ) nor the foundation of that faith (the prophetic and apostolic writings). The Prophet Isaiah warned that many of the Jews would not believe, even as today "many hearts have grown dull." It is those who reject Christ that deserve the term heresy (with impunity). By their denial, they have forsaken the faith.

Ephesians 2:19-20, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."

St. Paul offers some insight to the heart of a pastor. He wrote, "For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it." I am sure that every pastor has the same kind of mixed feelings as St. Paul when having to bring God's law to bear in the life of a parishioner. As a sinner himself, the pastor knows the sting of the law. It hurts! No one like to feel pain, much less the exceedingly great pain of knowing one has transgressed God.

As most parents know, it is difficult to discipline a child. We all know the oft-spoken remark of the parent, "This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you." A parent knows that discipline must take place. Moreover, the parent knows the hurt the child will feel when disciplined. Yet it must be done if you truly love your child.

When the pastor brings God's law to bear in your life, he does so as your spiritual father. The law certainly stings. But when God's law bears down on you, His child, it is nothing compared to Jesus' suffering on the Cross. When the transgressing of God's law by the whole world was placed upon Christ and taken to the Cross, God could rightly say, "This is going to hurt Me more than it hurts you." Christ took the punishment for your sins, but He never regretted doing so! He willingly suffered in your place so that you do not have to suffer eternally. Thus, we thank God for leading us to repentance even though it hurts.

St. Paul is rather emphatic about the call to repentance. “Now!” “Now is the acceptable time.”

The Christian faith has never changed. From the time God went and sought out Adam and Eve, confronted them with their sin and preached the Gospel to them, until the time He sought you out, confronted you with your sin, and washed away those sins in Holy Baptism, God has done the same thing throughout history: He has called people to repentance. St. Paul quotes several Old Testament passages to the people of Corinth, showing that God’s way is the one, unchanging, and only way of salvation. People must turn to Him if they are to live.

Many of the people of Corinth to whom St. Paul was writing were stubborn and unwilling to leave behind the immorality of the world. This problem still exists. There are Christians, and those who call themselves Christian, who are willing to condone the sins of the world. Whether it be accepting the practice of “living together” outside of marriage, or no longer calling homosexuality a sin, or calling the slaughter of the unborn a “woman’s right to choose,” these sins remain sin in the sight of God.

The true voice of the Church will always speak God’s Word rather than what man thinks God is saying, and thus no longer call sin what it truly is. Indeed, “what communion has light with darkness?” God has called us out of the darkness of sin by leading us to repentance and to trust that His Word is Truth.

An endowment is the funds or property which has been donated to an institution. In 1 Corinthians 1:5-9, St. Paul speaks about a divine endowment which had come to the congregation. Due to this gracious gift, the Church of God at Corinth was “enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge.” Included in the “everything” are both the utterance of the lips and the knowledge of faith-filled hearts. Romans 10:9 speaks to the importance of this two-fold endowment, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Their endowment is not that different from ours. We, too, have been enriched in everything, when we received the message of the Cross! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ saves those who believe in His atonement. The Lord has called us by the gospel, enlightened us with His gifts, sanctified and kept us in the true faith. He has gathered us together in His Church.

Having received such great gifts, there is the temptation to brag and boast as if it was our doing or the result of our actions so that we received blessings. St. Paul asks, “What do you have that you have not received?” (1 Cor 4:7) The answer is obvious. Every good gift comes from the heavenly Father through Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is not my faithfulness that leaves me lacking in no gift, but the faithfulness of my God Who forgave my sin and called me into fellowship with His Son.

The revivalistic preaching and worship which has become popular among many Lutherans is condemned by St. Paul as a modification of the Holy Gospel. Contemporary Worship adherents do not understand that using “words which man’s wisdom teaches” contaminates the Gospel (God’s Wisdom). St. Paul says in verse 13, “These things (the things that have been freely given to us by God) we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches...” When the message of the crucified Jesus Christ is deemed to be deficient so that it must be combined with other elements in order to create faith, the result is not saving faith in Jesus Christ, the power of God. Revivalistic faith is faith in the wisdom of men.

St. Paul teaches that God uses the Law to reveal our unrighteousness, our unholiness, and our bondage to the slavery of sin. God then uses the Gospel—Jesus Christ, Who became for us the wisdom of God—that He might reveal our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. These words the Holy Spirit uses to create a faith which trusts in Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Similarly, the Office of the Holy Ministry has been instituted by God in order that He might bring to us the message of “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” The instrumental means of God does not require the addition of any superior rhetoric or human wisdom in order to make it effective for creating faith. Quite the opposite, any addition to God’s message would create “faith in the wisdom of men.” (v. 5) It is good to know that with the words of God’s wisdom, “the man of God is thoroughly equipped.” (2 Tim 3:17).

St. Paul’s plea to the people of Corinth, and to us, is to “be reconciled to God.” Such a reconciliation comes only through the preaching of the Word of God, Law and Gospel. St. Paul did not turn his back on the people of Corinth because of their sins. Rather, out of Christian love he clearly pointed out their sins in the earlier chapters of this letter. He wanted them to know that God had not turned His back on them either. That is what the preaching of the law is about. It is God showing His love for His people. A father or mother does not simply watch their child wander into the street and do nothing about it. The parent yells at the child, “Stop!” while running toward the child in order to scoop up the child and rescue the child from imminent danger.

Likewise, God continues to call out to His children to stop going in the way of sin and turn to Him. He rescues us from that which can harm us eternally by leading us to repent of our sins and to trust in His forgiveness. Even though we face the dangers of temporal death every day and will one day succumb to that death, God has assured us that this is not the death to fear. We are to fear eternal death that comes to the impenitent.

As Christians, we have nothing to fear in death. All that God sees when He looks at His people is the righteousness of His Beloved Son, into Whom He has baptized us.

“Therefore we do not lose heart.” It is so easy to fall prey to Satan’s tactics. He comes at the Christian from every angle. His attacks can be ruthless or subtle, but every attack is designed to break one’s spirit and to lead one to reject the faith that God has so graciously given to the Christian. Satan’s temptations will either lead one to self-righteousness or self-pity. Either way, one’s eyes are drawn away from Christ and focused on oneself.

It is truly a scary proposition to think that one can be so easily swayed by Satan. The Christian cannot wage this battle on his own lest he be overtaken by Satan and his minions. St. Paul thoughts do not end in a simple spiritual pep talk: “Therefore we do not lose heart.” God knows that the Christian cannot rely on himself for anything, except the ability to sin. So God has taken it upon Himself to save you. Your assurance of salvation can be found in Holy Baptism. In Holy Baptism God has anchored you to Christ and the Church. There in Holy Baptism you have God’s promise to keep you in Christ.

“Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.” There you have it! You are “being renewed” by God. God is doing it all for you and that is why “we do not lose heart.”

The Apostle Paul groups himself with Pastor Apollos in the same Pastoral Office calling them both “ministers through whom you believed.” Neither the Ministers (“God’s fellow workers”) nor the hearers (“God’s field... God’s building”) can take credit for the spiritual growth. All Ministers are simply instruments through whom God “gives the increase.”

The problem with the Corinthian hearers was that they had not been feeding on the solid food of God’s Word, as was evidenced by their envy, strife, and divisions. Instead of living as temples of the Spirit of God, they were behaving like mere men favoring a Minister based on his personality.

St. Paul teaches them how to rightly judge a builder (Pastor). First, there are those who build with good materials (true doctrinal teaching) upon the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ. These orthodox workers will be rewarded. Second, there are those who build with poor materials (an inadequate understanding of Christian doctrine) upon the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ: We may hope for their salvation, but the labors which result from an inadequate knowledge of the Christian verity will be burned up. Third, this person isn’t called a builder at all because the foundation isn’t used. This one defiles the temple of God, and “God will destroy him.”

Let neither the hearer nor the Minister “deceive himself.” Pastor, build on the foundation of the Church of God by preaching the forgiveness of sin in Jesus Christ and celebrating the sacraments rightly. Hearer, confess your sins, believe in Jesus, and receive the Lord’s forgiveness. Then lead a life of thankfulness by selfless love and unity with fellow believers.

St. Paul mocks the Corinthians for behaving in such an unchristian way and yet boasting of themselves with puffed-up pride. In verse 8 he says that the Corinthians act as if they are so full and satisfied that they need no feedings from God's Word. They act as they are so rich in spiritual matters that they need no gifts of the Holy Spirit. They act as if they are already reigning as kings and are looking forward to no heavenly crown. The Christian life on Earth is simply not this way. This foolish world attacks the wisdom and will of God. The beatitudes portray the true Christian life: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted...Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Mt 5)

God has set up Pastors as "stewards of the mysteries of God," so that they would feed God's people with the Holy Word. The Word of Law reveals sins and the Word of Gospel begets sons as it presents our Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ, Who died for sins. If our Lord in His wisdom has judged that we need Word-preaching-stewards to teach us everywhere in every church, then who are we to think that we can go beyond what is written. We are called by the Lord not to make our own judgments (concerning ourselves or others), but to be faithful to the Word.

**THE HOLY GOSPEL****St. Luke 10:23-37 (NKJV)**

Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

So he answered and said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself."

And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'

So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?

And he said, "He who showed mercy on him."

Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

**THE COLLECT**

Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou does promise, make us to love that which Thou does command; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.



If the Law of God is supposed to be a good thing—if it is the expression of God’s love for us—why is it called the “aroma of death”? Because “sin, that it might be shown to be sin, worked death for me through that which is good.” The Law shows us our sin. And in order for us to know that our transgression of the Law is sin, sin had to bring the punishment of death.

Therefore, those who cling to their works—who desire salvation by how good of a person they are—only provide our Lord with an unpleasant aroma, the aroma of death. To help you visualize this, think of the smell of the rotting carcass along the side of the road. This is your “good works” to the Lord.

However, there is hope. For having been called out of darkness through the working of the Holy Ghost by the waters of Holy Baptism, we cling in faith to our Lord Jesus Christ and His merits, that is, His perfect obedience to the Law of God and His suffering and dying on the holy Cross for our redemption.

Since we cling to the merits of Christ we are the “fragrance of Christ” to our Lord God, and are therefore an “aroma of life.” The image that would have been invoked upon hearing this Epistle would have been the sweet smelling aroma of incense used in the Liturgy. This is why incense is still used in some parishes today, as a reminder that we are the “fragrance of Christ” to our Lord.

**THE HOLY GOSPEL**

**St. Luke 18:9-14 (NKJV)**

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**THE COLLECT**

Almighty and everlasting God, who is always more ready to hear than we to pray and are wont to give more than either we desire or deserve, pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy, forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

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

## Article XI.

Of Confession, they teach, that Private Absolution ought to be retained in the churches, although in confession an enumeration of all sins is not necessary. For it is impossible, according to the Psalm: “Who can understand his errors?” [Psa. 19:12].

## Article XII.

Of Repentance, they teach, that for those that have fallen after Baptism, there is remission of sins whenever they are converted; and that the Church ought to impart absolution to those thus returning to repentance.

Now repentance consists properly of these two parts: One is contrition, that is, terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which, born of the Gospel, or of absolution, believes that, for Christ’s sake, sins are forgiven, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terrors. Then good works are bound to follow, which are the fruits of repentance.

They condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that those once justified can lose the Holy Ghost. Also those who contend that some may attain to such perfection in this life that they cannot sin. The Novatians also are condemned, who would not absolve such as had fallen after Baptism, though they returned to repentance. They also are rejected who do not teach that remission of sins cometh through faith, but command us to merit grace through satisfactions of our own.

—Augsburg Confession

FRIDAY, AUGUST 23: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-22

TRINITY 12

In Holy Baptism, after you have renounced the devil and of all of his works and ways, and have confessed your faith in the one true God, the Lord bids you to be marked with His Name. He places on your forehead the sign of the holy Cross with the words, “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”

From then on, that savage beast, the devil, is shameless, and when he hears those words he grows all the more wild, and desires to assault and destroy you on sight. This why God has stamped upon you the sign of the holy Cross. With this holy Cross God holds in check all the frenzy of the Evil One, for the devil will not dare to look on such a sight as our Lord Jesus Christ dying to destroy him and win for us freedom from his evil power. To him it is like the blinding rays of the sun.

His eyes will be blinded also by the sight of the holy Name, which you bear upon your brow, and he will depart. Through Holy Baptism God has claimed you under His protection. Therefore rejoice that God Himself has anointed you by the hand of the Minister, as St. Paul says: “He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

Love is the fulfillment of the Law. Scripture also says, “God is love.” What this means is that God’s Law is an expression of His love for us. We show our love for God through our keeping of the Law, especially the First Table (commandments 1-3). We show our love for our neighbor through our keeping of the Second Table (commandments 4-10), where the care and nurture of our neighbor is our prime concern.

If we do not have this love we are a “sounding brass,” that is, we are only making noise. This is a description of the Church of Corinth. They lack love for each other, and therefore they are divided because each one only seeks his own welfare and good.

St. Paul says of faith, hope, and love that the greatest is love. Love is eternal. Faith is trust in things we have not seen, like the full glory our Lord Jesus, but someday we will see it. Hope is an expectation of a promise, like eternal life with our Lord, but someday the promise will be fulfilled. Therefore, faith and hope will no longer be necessary after this life, but love is eternal, just as God is eternal, and the wisdom of His Law is eternal.

We, like the Church of Corinth, lack perfect love, because we fail daily to keep the Law. Therefore, God sent His Son in flesh and blood to fulfill all love, and Christ sent His Holy Ghost to us so that, clinging to His gifts in faith and hope, we might receive the eternal gift of love through His means of grace, and learn to live in unity with each other.

Paul urges the Church at Corinth to be unified in the work and person of Jesus Christ, rather than in the work of this man or that man and who baptized who. Where the work and the person of Jesus Christ is proclaimed in its purity and received and believed by faith, there the Holy Spirit rightly convicts man concerning sin, righteousness, and judgement, and He effects the outcome of man living daily in humbleness before God.

Our reading for today is filled with descriptions of how the saints of Christ treat one another when one is wronged or cheated. It is not as people of the world treat one another, showing judgement, but as God treats mankind, being just, yet showing mercy. The people of Christ must be strengthened through daily repentance, remembering and giving thanks that they have been washed and sanctified, and have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of the living God. Then one is enabled to remember that we belong to the Lord, that our body is His and not our own. Therefore we gladly glorify God in our body and in the Spirit, which are God’s.

We pray: Built on the Rock the Church doth stand, even when steeples are falling; crumbled have spires in every land, bells still are chiming and calling, calling the young and old to rest, but above all the soul distrest, longing for rest everlasting (TLH 467:1). Amen.

Today's reading involves Paul's continued instruction for the people of Christ and how one respects another within the Body of Christ. Today's emphasis is in regard to man and woman as husband and wife, and what is pleasing to the Lord.

Paul first emphasizes that man should be married for the sake of avoiding immorality, and that man and women become husband and wife for the sake of the other; both for affection, love, and companionship. They should remember that neither has the right to mistreat the other in any capacity, but they submit themselves for the sake of the other as Christ was a sacrifice for the Church.

Next, Paul touches on ending a marriage, which is not to be desired. Why? How does one in the Body of Christ practice faithfulness to the Lord and not show forgiveness when one is wronged or cheated, even within marriage? He can't! Paul's point is to show mercy at all cost as Christ has shown to us. If a person does not wish to receive that forgiveness, then let her go and remember that Christ has called you to be His own.

We pray: Surely in temples made with hands, God, the Most High, is not dwelling; high above earth His temple stands, all earthly temples excelling. Yet He whom heavens cannot contain chose to abide on earth with men, built in our bodies His temple (TLH 467:2). Amen.

Why is it that not everyone is a Minister? Put simply, that is not the way God has established things. The One, True, Triune God through the work of the Holy Ghost has so ordered the Church that it works to His glory and honor, to His alone, and not to the praise of mankind. God has called men to be His Ministers and to serve His people on His behalf.

Furthermore, the Lord God has not appointed all men, but only those who have been rightly called and ordained (as our Confessions teach in article 14 of the Augsburg Confession). These few who have been rightly called and ordained, in order that God alone might have the honor, are as full of sin as any other member of the Church. But like the rest of the members, these men are made holy through Christ!

So, what does this mean? It means that the Church is One Body, but many members. Some are called to be bishops, pastors, and deacons, and some are called to hear and receive the Word of God, as often as the parish meets, from those who have been called to serve them. God has arranged the Church in this way so that all might honor Him and not themselves, so that all might cling to Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation, and not despair or become haughty because of their place in the Body of Christ. All parts are necessary for a healthy Body.

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 20: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-13      TRINITY 12**

When some people read this text all they see is the different kinds of gifts of the Holy Ghost. However, these people miss the point that St. Paul is trying to make, for in listing the various gifts of the Holy Ghost he is pointing out that all these gifts come from the same place. When we focus on the gifts of the Holy Ghost we are no different than the Church of Corinth, who compared themselves to each other through the abundance or modesty of their spiritual gifts.

The focus rather, according to St. Paul, should be on Who is giving the gift—the Holy Ghost. What is the purpose of these gifts from the Holy Ghost? It is that we might obtain faith in the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and having obtained faith, we might have life in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is addressed in article five of 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.”

There is one Ministry through which the one Holy Ghost works to create and sustain faith and life in those who believe. Therefore, let us not focus on who has more or less gifts, but rejoice that our Lord has been revealed to us through the working of the Giver of gifts, and given us forgiveness through those gifts.

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-40      TRINITY 11**

Our reading today reveals Paul’s concern about a man and a women having a relationship in the Body of Christ verses men or women who are not married in the Body of Christ.

Paul’s concern is about a Christian realizing that living for the Lord in the Body of Christ takes a lot of commitment in a person’s life. Living as husband and wife in a marriage is demanding. Marriage involves two people and their different opinions, emotions, values, cares and concerns as they are joined in the sight of God in one flesh. How does one cope with those demands and pleasing God with one’s deeds at the same time?

Paul is not saying that those who are married should get divorced, or that those who are not married must never marry. But Paul is encouraging one to stop and think about where one’s priorities of life lie, and what does he or she desire to accomplish for the sake of the Lord. Paul is promoting what every Christian should be about doing regularly: examining our motives and priorities in life, and seeking what is pleasing in the sight of the Lord with a clear conscience.

We pray: We are God’s house of living stones, builded for His habitation; He through baptismal grace us owns, heirs of His wondrous salvation. Were we but two His name to tell, yet He would deign with us to dwell, with all His grace and His favor (TLH 467:3). Amen.

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 15: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13      TRINITY 11**

“A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one.” Such are the words of Martin Luther writing on Christian freedom.

This illustrates the purpose of St. Paul’s writing to the Corinth congregation regarding their being the Body of Christ, and what that knowledge means insofar as dealing with those around them. By God’s grace working in our Baptism, we are free from the law and its curse. However, that does not mean we can use our freedom to act carelessly in the face of those who do not have that freedom in Christ, as it may hurt those who are bound by their consciences. We must be careful to always live with our Christian freedom in a way that someone else might see and understand our relationship with Christ that leaves us with a guilt-free conscience, free from condemnation.

It is true, “A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one” for the sake of Christ, with whom we are bound to live as slaves of righteousness.

We pray: Now we may gather with our King even in the lowliest dwelling; praises to Him we there may bring, His wondrous mercy forthtelling. Jesus His grace to us accords; Spirit and life are all His words; His truth doth hallow the temple (TLH 467:4). Amen.

**MONDAY, AUGUST 19: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34      TRINITY 12**

When we partake of the Holy Supper we are proclaiming the Lord’s death, and in so doing we are proclaiming our belief that our sins are forgiven by God through this Body and Blood, given under bread and wine.

Therefore, we should receive this Holy Sacrament often, for we not only continually sin, but on account of original sin our very nature is corrupt. For this reason we should always seek the “remedy,” that is, the medicine for our soul.

One thing that makes a person unworthy to eat and receive this meal is his unbelief that this meal grants forgiveness of sins; unbelief that the Lord is truly present in His Body and Blood under the bread and wine to grant forgiveness. In this, the doubters show their contempt of this Blessed Sacrament. They are, in a sense, pouring out the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus onto the ground and wasting it, as if this meal meant nothing.

Therefore, let us come together often to eat this meal, for our Lord, on the same night He was betrayed took bread; He gave thanks, and in the same manner also, after Supper, He took the Cup and gave it to us that we might have the remedy which grants us forgiveness.

# Lesson from the Book of Concord

## The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

### Article XX. Of Good Works.

In the twentieth article they [the Roman Catholics] lay down these words, viz. that they reject and condemn our statement that men do not merit the remission of sins by good works. This article they clearly declare that they reject and condemn. What is to be said on a subject so manifest? Here the framers of the Confutation [the Papists' answer to the Augsburg Confession] openly show by what spirit they are led. For what in the Church is more certain than that the remission of sins occurs freely for Christ's sake, that Christ and not our works is the propitiation for sins, as Peter says (Acts 10:43): "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins"? To this Church of the prophets we would rather assent that to these abandoned writers of the Confutation, who so impudently blaspheme Christ. For although there were writers who held after the remission of sins men are just before God, not by faith, but by works themselves, yet they did not hold this, viz. that the remission of sins itself occurs on account of our works, and not freely for Christ's sake.

Therefore the blasphemy of ascribing Christ's honor to our works is not to be endured. These theologians are now entirely without shame, if they dare to bring such an opinion into the Church. Nor do we doubt that his most excellent imperial majesty and very many of the princes will not allow this passage of the Confutation to remain, if they be admonished of it. On this topic we could cite infinite testimonies from Scripture and from the Fathers. But above we have quoted a sufficient number on this subject. And there is no need to testimonies for one who knows why Christ has been given for us, who knows that Christ is the propitiation for our sins. Isaiah says (53:6): "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The adversaries on the other hand teach that God hath laid our iniquities not on Christ, but on our works. Neither are we disposed to mention here the sort of works which they teach. We see that a horrible decree has been prepared against us, which would terrify us still more if we were contending concerning doubtful or trifling subjects. Now since our consciences understand that by the adversaries the manifest truth is condemned, whose defense is necessary for the Church, and increases the glory of Christ; we easily despise the terrors of the world, and patiently will bear whatever is to be suffered for the glory of Christ and the advantage of the Church.

—The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, §78–82

FRIDAY, AUGUST 16: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-23

TRINITY 11

One of mankind's greatest problems, due to sinful nature, is boasting; he boasts in his accomplishments, his good works, and his ability to be greater than others. One of the points that Paul addresses, so that the Corinthians might know true joy and be unified as the church, was his effort to identify with them personally as one in need of the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

We see this in Paul's words in today's reading as he identifies himself as being an apostle, the one who had the privilege of bringing the Corinthian Christians their first hearing of the Gospel, having the same freedom in Christ as they do, and as one who personally has seen Jesus. Yet in all this Paul can only boast having the privilege of sharing the Gospel, for he knows what it produces: faith, hope, and the joy of being in the fellowship of Jesus Christ with other believers, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

When one is in the unity of the Spirit there is a drive to promote the Gospel and seek fellowship with those who are like-minded! This is the will of Jesus Christ, who alone saves; it is not the man that God used to deliver the Gospel that saves, or who baptized who, but only Jesus Christ and His life, death, and resurrection.

We pray: Still we our earthly temples rear that we may herald His praises; they are the homes where He draws near and little children embraces. Beautiful things in them are said; God there with us His covenant made, making us heirs of His kingdom (TLH 467:5). Amen.

Paul pleads with the Church at Corinth to be unified in how they treat others within the Body, and not to believe they are alone in that goal. Everyone strives and struggles with sin and its effects in our lives, families and friends. The question is, how do we deal with those effects? Do we seek to use the Word of God for our example to follow and live in unity, running to the Gospel for guidance, or do we evaluate how the Word of God can best lift us up above others?

Today's reading is a plea to not be like the children of Israel. They drank from the same spiritual Rock who is Jesus Christ, but yet God was not pleased with them. Why? They lived to satisfy their own lusts, rather than living according to the will of the Lord. God does not give us His direction or commands so we might decide which ones we want to follow and which ones are inconvenient for us. He speaks so that we might all run the same race for the same reason, so that the name of the Lord might be glorified for showing us mercy and grace.

We pray: Here stands the font before our eyes, telling how God did receive us; the altar recalls Christ's sacrifice and what His table doth give us; here sounds the Word that doth proclaim Christ yesterday, today, the same, yea, and for aye our Redeemer (TLH 467:6). Amen.

**THE HOLY GOSPEL**

**St. Mark 7:31-37 (NKJV)**

Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."

Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

**THE COLLECT**

Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it comes that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises; through Jesus Thy Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.