

Week of Trinity 17

First recite the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the weekly section of the Small Catechism. Then read the Proper and assigned Scripture reading followed by the devotion. Conclude with singing the hymn of the week.



Weekly Catechism section: Second Article of the Creed (Luther's Small Catechism)

Hymn of the Week: I Know My Faith is Founded (TLH 381)

Monday - Introit (Psalm 119:137, 124, 1-2, 5-6)

Read Psalm 119.

The theme for this week is about wisdom. It is about learning, knowing, and understanding God's Word. Proverbs 25 is reiterated by Jesus in Luke 14. Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king. Do not take the high spot at the table. Take the lower spot, because he who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted. In Ephesians 4, Paul admonishes us to be bound together in the peace of the Lord with humble minds and meekness, striving to guard the unity, which the Spirit has given us. All of these lessons teach us what true wisdom from God's Word is. The Pharisees thought they figured out God's Word by making human rules on how to obey it. By forbidding healing on the Sabbath, they proved that they miss the point of God's law. But he who truly understands God's Word is the one who seeks mercy from God's gospel in Christ, and he therefore lives his life, not under the law, but in the law of love under grace (Gal 5:18), united with Christ through faith by the one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. He is not put to shame when he looks into God's commandments. While they accuse his sinful flesh, he learns mercy as one who is shown mercy by God.

Therefore, our *Introit* comes from Psalm 119, a Psalm about learning the Law, or the Word of God. It begins with verses 137 and 124, which say, "Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments. . . Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, and teach me Your statutes." When God deals with us, not according to our sins, but according to his mercy in Christ who took our sin away by his death in our place, then we can learn his Word, both law and gospel. We learn wisdom. We learn that true blessing is not in having our reward right now in this life, but waiting for God to compensate us for anything we might lose. He who seeks God with his whole heart is he who keeps his testimonies and statutes. In other words, he guards what God has promised to him. This is he who is blessed by God. God's Word will not be a burden to him. He will learn from the law even though it condemns his flesh. His ways are directed to keep God's statutes, which teach him what God promises.

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Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (Proverbs 25:6-14)

Read Proverbs 25.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." This beautiful phrase describes the beauty and edification of God's Word. God's Word is not just a bunch of rules. It is wisdom, which fits our every need. It teaches us humility. Don't exalt yourself before the king. Take the lower seat. Don't boast in your giving. It teaches us to seek peace. Settle with your accuser before court. These bits of wisdom all reflect the new life our Lord Jesus won for us. He gives us the same lessons, not simply as a list of hoops to jump through, but as a description of the life he has given us. He gives us rest from our labors through his Word.

And God has entrusted this message to us, his church. "Like the cold of snow in time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him, for he refreshes the soul of his masters." God is our Lord and Master, who has in Christ reconciled the whole world to himself and entrusted to us his Word of reconciliation. This shapes everything we believe and do in our Christian life. He sends public ministers to teach his Word to his whole flock. And he sends all Christians in their daily stations to confess and apply his Word, fitly spoken in each one's calling -- mothers to their children, fathers to their households, pastors to their congregations, and all Christians to their neighbors, friends, and family. It is by the Word of God that we have rest from sin and guilt. It is the Word of God that guides us. It is the Word of God we heed when our ministers proclaim it, and it is the Word of God by which we encourage one another. So receive with meekness this implanted Word, which is able to save your soul!

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Wednesday - Gradual (*Psalm 33:12, 6*)

Read Psalm 33.

Psalm 33 is a song of praise to God's Word. The Word of the Lord is right, and all his work is done in truth. You cannot separate what God does from what God speaks. And so we get the words for our *Gradual*, "By the Word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." It is by the Word that God created all things. And this isn't just his spoken Word. It is the very person of the Word, the Son of the Father through whom all things were made (John 1:1-3) and in whom all things hold together (Col 1:16-17). To have the Word of God spoken to you is to have the Son of God, the begotten Word made flesh for us. He reconciled all sinners to himself so that all who are called to him may have eternal life. By his obedience and death he has fulfilled his Word. Again, the Word and work of God cannot be separated. So if you have the gospel of your Lord, the promise of God in your baptism, the faith created in your heart by the Spirit of God, then you can know for sure that you have everything God accomplished for you in the work of his Son.

It is by the Word of God that the heavens were made and by which all things still hold together. This is the same Word fulfilled by Christ in his act of salvation. And this is the same Word proclaimed to you even today. It is by this Word that God calls us, enlightens us, and chooses us for eternal life. And so we also sing these words from Psalm 33, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he has chosen as his own inheritance." We don't choose him. He chooses us. And we can know he has chosen us by listening to his Word of truth. Meditate on what he has done for all sinners. Consider that you have been baptized and caused to be born again to a living hope. Examine yourself to see if you truly believe this Word of God. It wasn't because of your own strength that you ever believed it. And this means that your faith is as great a miracle, and even greater, than the very creation of the heavens and the earth. This is why we sing praises about God's Word and work. It strengthens us even as it holds all things together in the Son of the Father, who is our all in all.

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Thursday - Epistle (*Ephesians 4:1-6*)

Read Ephesians 4.

There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in you all. God is everywhere. He holds everything together, every cell, molecule, body, plant, planet, and star. He rules over all thing. He works through all things, in heaven and on earth, and he is in all things. So just as he is everywhere, he is also all powerful. The Scriptures call him the Almighty or the Mighty One (Gen 17:1; Job 5:17; Luke 1:49). He rules the universe with his strength, working

through everything. As Jesus says, not a bird falls to the ground without the Father's will (Matt 10:29).

And yet, how is this one God who rules all, works through all, and is present in all, revealed to us? We know that he is above all and even in the smallest kernel of grain, yet where can we find him? St. Paul says right before this, there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The Father is revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Heb 1:2). As Jesus says (John 14:9), "If you have seen me you have seen the Father." And it is through baptism and the teaching of the Christian faith that our Lord promises to remain with us (Matt 28:18-20). His Spirit, working through his Word, delivers this to us. So just as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are bound together from eternity as one, God binds his church together by his peace. Now consider what St. Paul says in our epistle lesson. Walk worthy of your calling. And how? By demonstrating your power over others? By showing the world how righteous you are with public-relation promotions of mercy projects and other charities? No, but "with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love." God's almighty strength, which fills the universe, was made perfect in the weakness and suffering of his Son who died for our sins. He was exalted because he did not presumptuously take what was rightfully his, but humbled himself for our sake in obedience unto death (Phil 2:5-11). So we do not find our glory in self-promotion, whether we boast of our own friendliness, liveliness, or relevance; rather our sufficiency is in God the Mighty One, who exalts the lowly.

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Friday - Alleluia Verse (Psalm 116:1)

Read Psalm 116.

Our *Alleluia verse* is from Psalm 116, "I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications." Later on the Psalmist says, "I was brought low, and he saved me." This is a great segue into our Gospel Lesson from Luke 14. Two things are going on. First, a man with a terrible disease in which his body swells up with water walks into a house where they are having a dinner. He is humiliated, and the sight of him certainly would have been pitiful. So Jesus heals him on the Sabbath. He gives the man rest on the day of rest. As the Psalmist also sings, "Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." The second thing that happens is Jesus notices that the people are trying to take the more dignified spots at the Sabbath supper. Using this man as an immediate object lesson, he teaches them to take the lower seat, lest if they take the higher seat they be put to shame and humiliated. But if they take the lower seat, then there is the promise that the Lord will exalt them.

This Psalm teaches us faith and the love that proceeds from faith. St. John says that we love God because he first loved us, giving his Son up for us to save us from our sins (1 John 4:19). Our love does not form our faith in God. It is a response to what faith receives. God hears our prayers. This is what faith relies on. God pays attention to his saints, especially when they are in distress and low times in their lives. In fact, even their death is precious in his sight. The world will tell you to get a seat at the table, to be aggressive, and to keep fighting until you have a voice. But by faith you have confidence that God hears your voice. You don't need to exalt yourself. In the meantime, the voice that God has given us, which speaks louder than sitting on a panel, being in charge, or casting a vote, is the voice that proclaims God's steadfast love in Christ. I believed. Therefore I spoke. And God hears this voice of faith in the lowest of times, promising to raise you up on the last day. So you don't need to exalt yourself. Humble yourself under God's mighty hand that he might exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxieties on him. For he cares for you (1 Pet 5:6,7).

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Saturday - Gospel (Luke 14:1-11)

Read Luke 14.

The Sabbath day was a day of worship. So what is worship? It is, first and foremost, to receive God's mercy, and secondly, to show mercy. Some people try to make worship only about the second part. They say, "Deeds, not creeds!" as if, rather than God's Word, our works make us Christians. If we receive salvation only through faith in his merits, apart from any of our own works, then the purpose of good works become clear. If they don't help get you closer to God's favor, then they are not performed with any ulterior motive, but only to glorify God by serving your neighbor. If following rules makes you a Christian, then you are going to be too busy trying not to break those rules than actually serving your neighbor. If you think your good deeds somehow make you closer to God, then they are necessarily works of pride, no matter how humble and generous they might appear. But if you know that they don't save you, then they are done in humility.

This is why Jesus teaches us charity and humility at the same time. Charity is selfless love that bears all things and covers a multitude of sins (1 Cor 13; 1 Pet 4:8). Love that tries to earn God's favor is no love at all, but a mere selfish motive. So our merciful Savior teaches us true charity by healing a man with dropsy. Humility is the demeanor of faith. Faith does not try to earn God's favor by taking the best seat at the feast. It rather passively receives what God gives. It does not find strength in itself, but casts all anxieties on God as it is humbled under his mighty hand. And because it receives God's care apart from human merit, it is strong against the devil's attacks and exalted at the proper time (1 Pet 5:6-7, 9). Charity and humility therefore go together. If you receive all things from God's mercy alone and not because of any merit or worthiness in you, then you are truly humbled. If your love proceeds from such mercy-receiving faith, then it manifests itself in true mercy for your neighbor as you learn from Jesus what true worship is.

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381

I Know My Faith is Founded

2 Tim. 1: 12

Ich weiss, an wen ich glaube
Erdmann Neumeister, 1718
Tr. composite

7. 8. 7. 8. 7. 6. 7. 6. 7. 6. 7. 6.

Nun lob, mein' Seele!
"Concentus Novi"
Augsburg, 1540

1 I know my faith is founded On Je-sus Christ, my God and Lord;
 2 Increase my faith, dear Sav-i-or, For Sa-tan seeks by night and day
 3 In faith, Lord, let me serve Thee; Tho'-per-se-cu-tion, grief, and pain



And this my faith con-fess-ing, Un-moved I stand up-on His Word.
 To rob me of this trea-sure And take my hope of bliss a-way.
 Should seek to o-verwhelm me, Let me a stead-fast trust re-tain;



Man's rea-son can-not fath-om The truth of God pro-found;
 But, Lord, with Thee be-side me, I shall be un-dis-mayed;
 And then at my de-par-ture Take Thou me home to Thee



Who trusts her sub-tle wis-dom Re-lies on shift-ing ground.
 And led by Thy good Spir-it, I shall be un-a-fraid.
 And let me there in-her-it All Thou hast prom-ised me.



God's Word is all - suf - fi - cient, It makes di - vine - ly sure,
A - bide with me, O Sav - ior, A firm - er faith be - stow;
In life and death, Lord, keep me Un - til Thy heav'n I gain,

And trust-ing in its wis - dom, My faith shall rest se-cure.
Then I shall bid de - fi - ance To ev - 'ry e - vil foe.
Where I by Thy great mer - cy The end of faith at-tain. A-men.