

## Week of Trinity 8

*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:** *Third Commandment (Luther's Small Catechism)*  
**Hymn of the Week:** *Preserve Your Word, O Savior (TLH 264)*

### Monday - Introit (Psalm 48:9-10, 1, 3, 11, 14)

#### **Read Psalm 48.**

The theme for this Sunday is watching out for false prophets. How do we do this? We do it as God's children, as St. Paul says in our Epistle lesson from Romans 8. Just as the Word of God gives us certainty of salvation and helps us fight temptation, so does the Word of God guard against false teachers. This is why we begin the service with our *Introit* taken from Psalm 48. Psalm 48 describes the deep meditation of God's Word. We sing, "We have thought, O God, on your loving kindness, in the midst of your temple." It is appropriate that before we take warning against false teachers that we first get to know who our true teacher is. Before we ward off wolves who deceive and devour, it is good to meditate on God's loving kindnesses. If you want to catch a fraud you don't study all the frauds. Instead, you study the real thing. So the best way to be prepared to mark and avoid false teachers is to meditate on God's true and pure Word.

If anyone tries to teach you that you become righteous before God by the works of your own hands, then meditate on what the Psalmist sings, "Your right hand is full of righteousness." There you learn that you find righteousness not in yourself, but only in Christ who sits at the right hand of the Father. If someone tries to tell you that the true church and true worship is where certain religious leaders are, then listen again to the Psalmist, "According to your name, O God, so is your praise to the ends of the earth." This is where we find true praise and worship of God. We find it in his name. As Jesus says (Matt 18:20), "Where two or three are gathered in my name I am in the midst of them." In other words, where God's Word is taught in Jesus' name, where people are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and where we pray to God in

Jesus' name, there is true worship of God. When God is your guide, leading you with his Word, then you are prepared to beware of false prophets. Our Lord will not leave us to the wolves. His Word is true and faithful.

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## **Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (Jeremiah 23:16-29)**

### ***Read Jeremiah 23.***

During the time of Jeremiah and the other prophets God spoke his Word through these men. But there were also other prophets who told lies. So how would you know which prophet is telling the truth? Jeremiah writes: "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD." You know the false prophet by the fact that he ignores God's Word and promotes his own dreams. You know the true prophet by the fact that he speaks God's Word faithfully.

But how would a faithful child of Israel know whether the word spoken by the prophets was in fact God's Word? The same way we know whether our pastors are speaking God's Word. They knew it from the Scriptures. Jeremiah records the following from God: "They continually say to those who despise Me, 'The LORD has said, "You shall have peace"; and to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, 'No evil shall come upon you.'" This is what the false prophets were teaching. They were teaching the people and the rulers who were worshipping idols that God's judgment was not going to come against them. But this was contrary to the Scriptures written by Moses. In Deuteronomy 28 Moses graphically describes the punishments God threatened to inflict on the people if they turned away from his law. So if you are a pious child of Israel living during the time that King Jeroboam of Israel built two golden calves for the people to worship, none of the Kings of Israel removing these golden calves, and many kings of Judah even promoting idols for the people to worship, then you know that judgment is coming. And you therefore know not to listen to anyone who says otherwise. So it is today. If you hear ministers telling you that you don't need to repent of any sin, that God's wrath is not real, then do not listen to them. Such preachers have no time for the true God who sent his only begotten Son to bear his wrath in our place. But he who speaks, let it be the Word of God, which consoles and cheers a bad conscience.

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### **Wednesday - Gradual (*Psalm 31:2,1*)**

#### ***Read Psalm 31.***

Psalm 31, which serves as the source for our *Gradual*, is a Psalm of David in which he laments the slander and lies of those who hate him. But he takes refuge in the God of truth. Foreshadowing the words of our Lord Jesus who spoke in his dying breath, David declares: "Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." It is because God is truthful that he is able to save us. False doctrine, slander, flattering lips, and deceit might seem strong and powerful for the moment, but they will always fail. They are useless idols. Only the truth of God's Word will prevail. So in our *Gradual* we sing these words from the Psalm: "Be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me. In You, O LORD, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed." God is our refuge and fortress of defense, because he is true, even though all men are liars.

And yet, though he knows that only God and his Word will endure against the useless idols, David is still severely grieved. "My life is spent with grief," he says, "My bones waste away. I am a reproach to my neighbors." When you contend for the truth in an age when many errors are passed off as the truth, this is a lonely road. It is a humbling experience, for example, when you stand up and say that Christ is our only Rock of salvation, that only his blood and merits will rescue us from condemnation, and that there is no path to eternal life apart from him. It's humbling, because it goes against everything this world teaches. When you treasure the truth more than earthly peace, then you easily become a reproach to your neighbors. But don't lose heart. Let the scoffers scoff. As for you, you trust in the Lord. You say, "You are my God." Those who promote wicked doctrines which attack the truth will be ashamed. So don't be afraid. Instead, "Love the Lord, you his saints! For the Lord preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud person. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord."

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### **Thursday - Epistle (*Romans 8:12-17*)**

#### ***Read Romans 8.***

Our confidence in our salvation is provided by the same source by which we fight against temptation. The Holy Spirit, St. Paul says, testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. He supplies the certainty of faith to us through his testimony of Christ who suffered and died to take away

our sins. It follows then that this is the same source of our battle against the desires of our own sins. St. Paul says, "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." It is by the Spirit that we fight against the sin that continues to stain our hearts, emotions, and our entire being. But it is the Spirit who leads us into freedom from this sin.

Those who are in bondage to sin are not led by the Spirit of Christ. They are led by false teachers who make them comfortable in their own sin and unbelief. But the Spirit bears witness to Christ's suffering, and those whom he leads he leads through crosses and trials. As St. Paul also says, we are indeed coheirs with Christ if we suffer with him. This doesn't mean that we must first suffer and then we will become heirs. No, it rather means that those who are truly heirs with Christ will suffer the contempt from the same contempt and hatred from the world. Those who find their only refuge from sin in Christ, his Word, and his Sacraments will be looked down upon by more spiritual types who find their religious fulfillment in their own pious exercises. They will be thought as fools by those who exalt human merits above anything that God could offer. They will mourn over their sinful nature as they, through contrition and repentance, put to death the works of the flesh. This is what it means to be led by the Spirit. Though we must bear the spiritual attacks from the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, we find our freedom from sin, death, and hell in the Christ to whom the Spirit bears witness.

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### **Friday - Alleluia Verse (Psalm 78:1)**

#### ***Read Psalm 78.***

This is a Sunday in which we are admonished to pay close attention to the Word of God. Jesus tells us in Matthew 7 to beware of false prophets who come to us in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. God tells Jeremiah (Jer 23:16 ff.) not to listen to the false prophets who claim to speak in the name of God. So as we sing our *Alleluia verse* we are admonished from Psalm 78 to pay attention to the Word of God. Psalm 78 is one of the history Psalms, recounting the history of Israel, God's great acts of redemption, Israel's rebellion, God's judgment, and God's deliverance. It is both a comfort as well as a warning. And it is fitting for us to sing the opening words of this Psalm in the midst of our Alleluias. Because even as we rejoice and praise the Lord for his salvation won for us in Christ, we learn to pay special attention to his Word.

"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth." As Jesus so often says, "Those who have ears to hear let them hear." We sing these words in preparation for the Gospel lesson in which Jesus teaches us how to identify false teachers. You know them by their fruits. You know them by what they do and say. But in the same way, you know God and his Son by his fruits. You know him by what he does and says. His many acts of deliverance -- saving his people from their enemies, forgiving them their sins, and promising salvation through the Seed of Abraham -- all of these identify God as the true God. He is not someone who is only out for himself. He is unlike any of the false gods made in man's selfish image. He does not flatter or deceive. He speaks harsh words, but they are true words so that he would direct us not to trust in any lies. So give ear to his words. They may be stern, but they are the words of eternal life, revealing the truth Prophet who came to give his life for us. To know his fruit is to know his salvation. Amen.

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## **Saturday - Gospel (Matthew 7:15-23)**

### ***Read Matthew 7.***

How are we to recognize false prophets? Jesus says that we know them by their fruits. The first indication that someone is a false prophet is if he (or she) does not have a legitimate call from God. The second indication is that he does not preach what God's Word says. The third indication is that he does not live according to God's Word. God says, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." Those who start preaching because they claim to have some kind of inner call from God are not true ministers of God. As St. Paul says, "How can they preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:15) This is why we Lutherans have always confessed, "No one should preach, teach, or administer the sacraments unless he is rightly called. (AC XIV)"

But how do we know if someone is rightly called? We know it the same way that we know if someone is teaching what ought to be taught. We know this only from the Scriptures. To be rightly called means to be called according to God's Word. This means that a man must be trained and examined according to Scripture and then elected to a certain congregation. This therefore necessarily excludes women (1 Tim 2:12; 1 Cor 14:34). God requires that such men who are placed in this office be apt to teach his pure Word and not live scandalous lives (1 Tim 3:1ff; Tit 1:5ff). This is all for the sake of the preaching of the gospel of the free forgiveness of sins by Christ's obedient suffering and death in the place

of all sinners. If the church allows just anyone to jump up and start preaching publicly, then we put the gospel and therefore real consciences at stake. If we let someone preach simply because he (or she) has a zeal to do so, then he will just preach whatever his heart tells him to preach. Instead, we are to beware of those who preach falsely. And we do this by seeing if their fruits (call to preach, doctrine, and life) actually match up with God's Word.

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## 264

## Preserve Thy Word, O Savior

Jude 20, 21

Erhalt uns deine Lehre

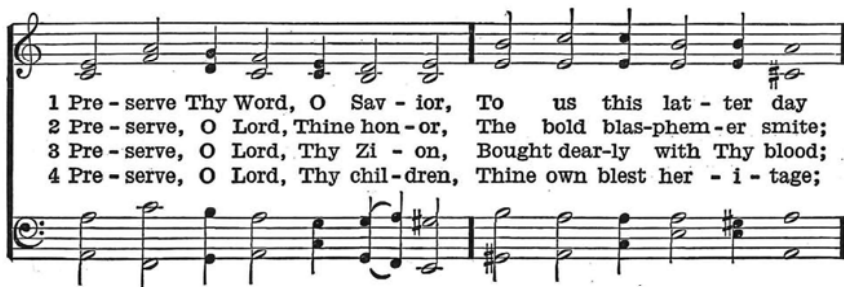
Andreas Gryphius, 1676, ab.

Tr., William J. Schaefer, 1933

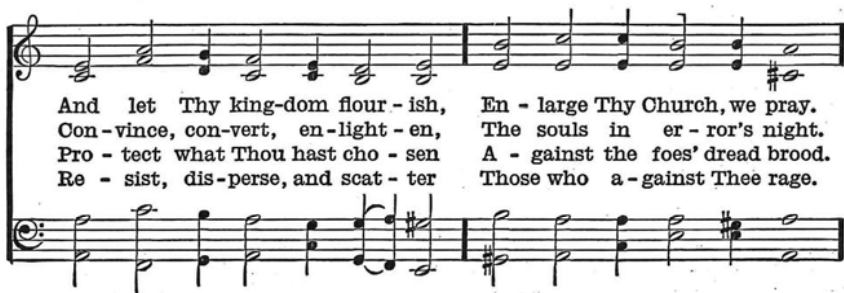
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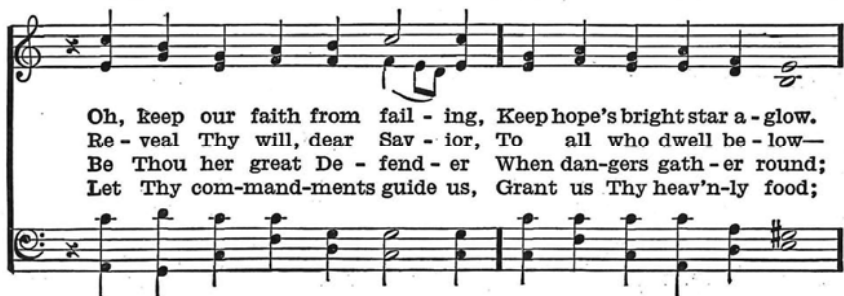
Hans L. Hassler, 1601



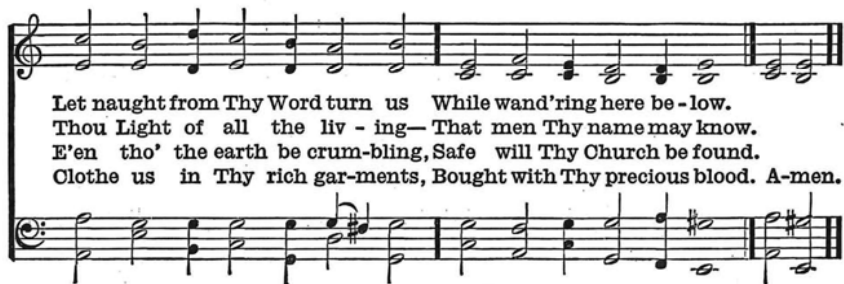
1 Pre - serve Thy Word, O Sav - ior, To us this lat - ter day  
 2 Pre - serve, O Lord, Thine hon - or, The bold blas - phem - er smite;  
 3 Pre - serve, O Lord, Thy Zi - on, Bought dear - ly with Thy blood;  
 4 Pre - serve, O Lord, Thy chil - dren, Thine own blest her - i - tage;



And let Thy king - dom flour - ish, En - large Thy Church, we pray.  
 Con - vince, con - vert, en - light - en, The souls in er - ror's night.  
 Pro - tect what Thou hast cho - sen A - gainst the foes' dread brood.  
 Re - sist, dis - perse, and scat - ter Those who a - gainst Thee rage.



Oh, keep our faith from fail - ing, Keep hope's bright star a - glow.  
 Re - veal Thy will, dear Sav - ior, To all who dwell be - low—  
 Be Thou her great De - fend - er When dan - gers gath - er round;  
 Let Thy com - mand - ments guide us, Grant us Thy heav'n - ly food;



Let naught from Thy Word turn us While wand'ring here be - low.  
 Thou Light of all the liv - ing—That men Thy name may know.  
 E'en tho' the earth be crum - bling, Safe will Thy Church be found.  
 Clothe us in Thy rich gar - ments, Bought with Thy precious blood. A - men.

5 Preserve Thy Word and preaching,  
The truth that makes us whole,  
The mirror of Thy glory,  
The power that saves the soul.  
Oh, may this living water,  
This dew of heavenly grace,  
Sustain us while here living  
Until we see Thy face!

6 Preserve in wave and tempest  
Thy storm-tossed little flock;  
Assailed by wind and weather,  
May it endure each shock.  
Take Thou the helm, O Pilot,  
And set the course aright;  
Thus we shall reach the harbor  
In Thine eternal light.