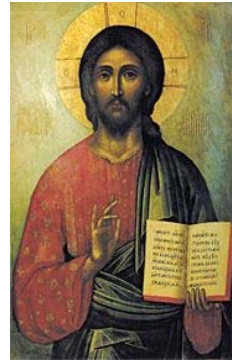


Week of Trinity 15

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: *Tenth Commandment (Luther's Small Catechism)*

Hymn of the Week: *What God Ordains is Always Good (LSB 760)*



Monday - Introit (Psalm 86:1-3, 4, 6, 15-16)

Read Psalm 86.

Our *Introit* comes from David's words in Psalm 86. "Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me; You are my God; save Your servant who trusts in You!" This sentence describes how our God is different from all the other so called gods, just as David also says in this Psalm. Whether we are talking about the false gods from Islam and Hinduism, or the false gods more close to home to us, like human reason and emotions. None of these things can bow down to hear you. You must invoke them, satisfy them, and merit their nonexistent ear. They are merciful if you do the right things. But the Lord's mercy endures forever. He doesn't sit up in heaven waiting for us to fulfill a bunch of rules. No, he is ready to forgive, filled with compassion, ready for action. And even in the duties he gives us he is intimately with us through his Word and Spirit. He became a man in the person of his Son and died the death that we deserved in order to make satisfaction on our behalf. He acts on what he says, saving our soul from hell. There is no god like this great and only true God. He certainly does wondrous things.

Consider then what it means to be God's servant. You can't serve God and mammon, Jesus says. To be mammon's servant means that you strive and toil to satisfy your belly and your own self-image. You labor for a good conscience, which never lasts, since your sins continue to cling to your nature no matter how many good works you do. To be the servant of any false god of this world is to satisfy him, placate him, and tap into his vain benefits by your fervent devotion. But what does it mean to be God's servant? The Psalmist says, "Save your servant who trusts in You!" To be God's servant is to be saved by God through faith in his promise. He saved us by sending his Son to die for us. He is full of compassion, a word David uses, which comes from the word for womb.

It's as if he is saying that God has given birth to us and nurtures us as a mother has compassion on her children. This is the compassion by which he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin to join himself to us, bend down to us, and save us. That is the God we have.

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Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (1 Kings 17:8-16)

Read 1 Kings 17.

God sent Elijah to Zaraphath, which belonged to Sidon. This was where the Canaanites were driven during the conquest of Israel in the days of Joshua. This was also the area where the wicked queen Jezebel was from. God sent him to a widow who would feed him. But when Elijah arrived, the widow told him that she had only enough flour and oil for her and her son. They were going to it and then starve. But Elijah told her to make him some bread first before she makes some for her and her son. And he added this promise from the Lord: "The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil be dried up until the day the Lord sends rain upon the earth." Elijah taught her that the soul is more than food. The body is more than clothing. Listen first to God's promise, and everything else will be added unto you. God kept his promise to this widow, even raising her son when he died.

God teaches us to trust in him as our Father who provides for our every need. And then he promises to raise us up even when we die. What is God doing when he teaches us this? He is inviting us to trust in him against all the evidence. Here is a woman in a pagan land run by a pagan king. When so few believe and confess the true God of Israel, this is when God tests and proves our faith. She had nothing but the Word of God spoken by the prophet. And she didn't merely acknowledge that it was true, as if it is some tidbit in a textbook. Even more so, she trusted in it. She depended on it. In her pathetic state she took refuge in it. This is how God tests our faith. He teaches us that we have nothing more to gain from this earth, but we have everything to gain from God's promise. And this promise is fulfilled for us in Christ who has come with his kingdom and righteousness to take away sin and raise us up with him from the chains of death. Paul says, "Those who are taught the Word share all good things with those who teach." Because by doing so you are confessing that the bread in your cupboard and the money in your bank is nothing compared to the gospel of salvation proclaimed to you. So seek this first. It will not run out.

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Wednesday - Gradual (*Psalm 118:8-9*)

Read Psalm 118.

Our *Gradual* is from Psalm 118, a very popular Psalm in our lectionary and liturgy. Here we get the words for the *Sanctus*, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" We have the great and bold confession of the resurrection, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord!" We give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endures forever. His right hand does valiantly and is exalted! Today, as we meditate on the theme of trusting in God's loving care, we concentrate on these words from verses 8-9:

It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in man.
It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in princes.

God certainly puts people in our lives to help provide for our daily bread. This includes princes. We should trust God to work through these various people to provide the protection and care we need. But leave it to the sinful, idolatrous nature to put trust in these things! It's amazing how many Christians continue to go along with what the "princes" are doing, even when abominations and false worship are being promoted. After all, they think, the princes must know what they're talking about. Trust the experts, they say! Before they know it they are becoming sheep of the so called experts rather than sheep of Christ the Good Shepherd. They assume that the princes provide an education, but they don't equip their children to stand up against the attacks on their faith, increasingly promoted by the princes and experts. The experts tell them they won't make it without them. They are fooled into thinking they need the experts, employed by the princes, to teach their kids about sex, tolerance, and birth control, rather than God's Word to teach them about chastity, true worship of Christ, and the blessings of marriage and children. People trust the experts, who tell them that it's unsafe to receive the Lord's Supper. They trust the experts who tell them it's unwise to have more than a couple kids. How has that gone for us? How about we be wise! Listen to what experts have to say for what it's worth. But it's much better to trust in the Lord who shed his blood for us, gives us godly offspring, and promises to raise us up on the last day!

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Thursday - Epistle (*Galatians 5:25-6:10*)

Read Galatians 6.

To sow according to the flesh is to put your stock in the things that pass away. It is to hand yourself over to the gods of material wealth, worldly pride, and selfish ambitions. It is to justify yourself according to your own flesh, which includes your own thoughts, words, and deeds. Some of these thoughts, words, and deeds might seem pretty pious and religious. But sowing according to the flesh turns any good deed into a dead work, tainted with the flesh, which manifests itself in things like hatred, murder, adultery, fits of wrath, and such. To sow according to the Spirit is to put your stock in that which never passes away. It is to put your stock only in the righteousness of Jesus received by faith, and live, as St. Paul says (Gal 2:20), "by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." This manifests itself in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, and the like. These things never pass away, because they flow from faith, which receives the Word of Christ. And as Jesus says, "My word will never pass away."

If you are harboring hate toward your brother rather than bearing with his weakness, then you are putting your stock in the wrath of man, which never produces the righteousness of God (Jam 1:20). Walk and bear with your brothers lest you grow embittered toward them and lose what has been given to you. Sowing by the flesh reaps corruption. Sowing by the Spirit reaps eternal life. Such life consists in love, joy, peace, etc. Corruption consists in hatred, jealousies, and all sorts of contentions. Eternal life consists in perfect love, which never fades away (Matt 24:35). The Spirit produces these fruits of eternal life in us right now, even though they are hidden under the burden of this world and our own sin. But when we bear one another's burdens we fulfill the law of Christ (John 13:34), "Love one another as I have loved you." We thereby bring to mind how Christ has loved us. He bore our burden of sin. This is the source of our life. It is therefore the source of our walk. So depend on it even as you must bear with one another.

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Friday - Alleluia Verse (*Psalms 95:1*)

Read Psalm 95.

Anyone who is familiar with the daily office of Matins recognizes the words of Psalm 95, which serve as our *Alleluia verse*: "O come let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our Salvation!" In the service of Matins we call this the *Venite*, which is simply the Latin

for the first word, "Come!" It is in the season of Advent when we emphasize the coming of our Lord Jesus in the flesh, through his gospel, and on the last day on the clouds of heaven. But today we are urged in our inner man to come and approach the Lord. Seek him, his kingdom, and his righteousness. Walk and sow by his Spirit. As we prepare to hear our Lord Jesus' instruction from his Sermon on the Mount, we sing these opening lines of Psalm 95, which invite us to worship the Lord as the Rock of our Salvation. Jesus is the Rock, the chief cornerstone. We rest on a firm foundation when we come to him, build upon him, trust in him, and rely on him. Christ promises that all other needs will be added unto us when we seek first his kingdom and righteousness. Psalm 95 certainly reminds us of this. Throughout the Psalm we sing of how God is our gracious Maker who created and sustains all things. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry lands. Even the deep places of the earth are in his hands. Who is this God who created and holds together all things? He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, the sheep of his hand.

Now, the hand of the Lord usually refers to the Son. We are his sheep, and he is the Good Shepherd who laid his life down for us, bearing our sins and saving us from God's wrath. Through his blood he has given us rest and peace with God. This is why Psalm 95 concludes with this warning, "Today when you hear his voice do not harden your heart as in the rebellion . . ." and "I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" He has prepared a rest for you from all troubles of both body and soul. Therefore, don't get so distracted by earthly things that your heart is hardened and you forget who your God is! Seek first the rest and peace he gives you in Christ. And cast your cares on him.

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Saturday - Gospel (Matthew 6:24-34)

Read Matthew 6.

The words of Jesus in the Gospel lesson teach us about faith. Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you. This means that before anything else in all the world, before your job, your sports, even your house and food, you seek the righteousness of Christ in his Kingdom. This is what it means to believe. It means to cling to the righteousness that we need to stand before God. It means to trust in Jesus' promise that we may live under him and his Kingdom serving him in everlasting righteousness, innocense, and blessedness.

This Kingdom is ours through faith in Christ, who by his death gives and by his resurrection guarantees to us an inheritance that will never pass away (1 Pet 1:3-5). God gives this to us freely through his Word (Rom 10:17). This is why the Word of God is the greatest treasure in all of heaven and earth. In fact, while heaven and earth even pass away, the Word of God will never be broken (Isaiah 40:8; Matt 24:35). When we hold it close to our hearts as our dearest treasure, then we are blessed with the Holy Spirit who comforts us, taking away the worries caused by sin. Tomorrow can worry about itself when our consciences are ruled by the peace of God. And this isn't merely a "don't worry be happy" message that could be given by a Bobby McFerrin, or an "Every little thing is gonna be alright" given by a Bob Marley. This is more than simply optimistic encouragement. This is the Word of our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, who by his death took away any need for us to worry. So seek first what Christ freely gives you. And teach your children to do the same. Because when the time comes that they have nothing left on earth, the Kingdom of God and his righteousness will hold them up (Is 41:10).

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Deut. 32: 4

Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan

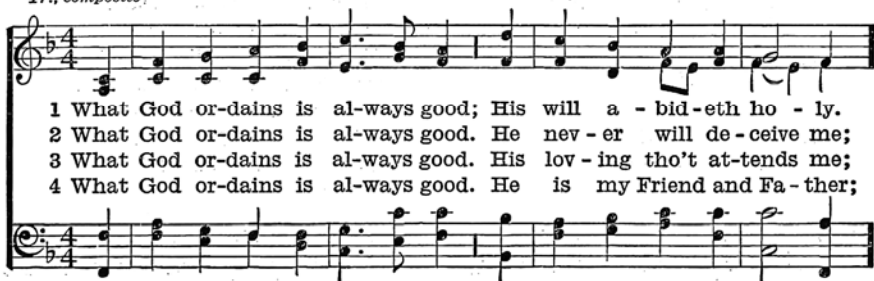
Samuel Rodigast, 1675

Tr., composite

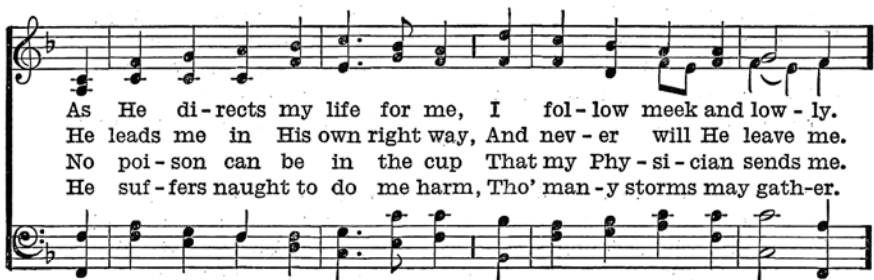
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Was Gott tut

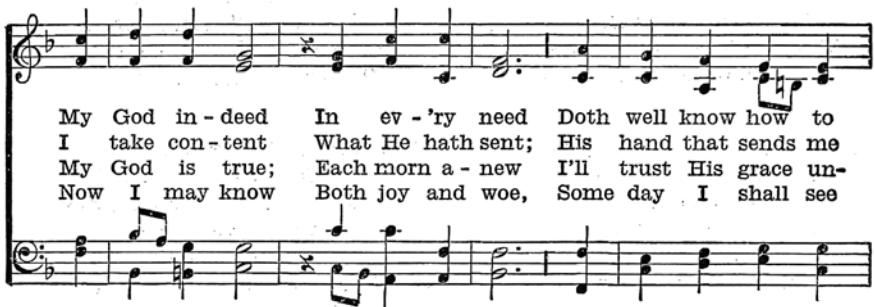
Severus Gastorius, 1681



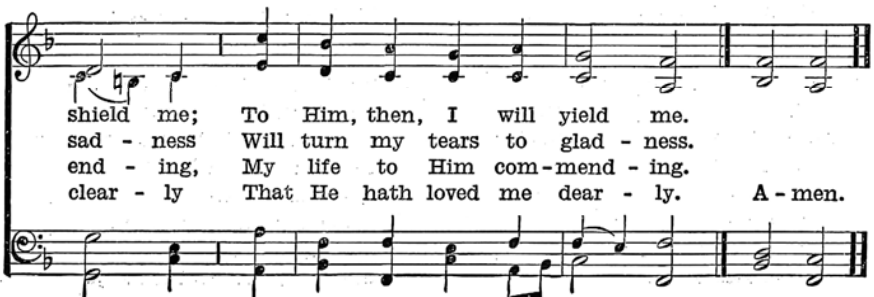
1 What God or-dains is al-ways good; His will a - bid-eth ho - ly.
 2 What God or-dains is al-ways good. He nev - er will de-ceive me;
 3 What God or-dains is al-ways good. His lov - ing tho't at-tends me;
 4 What God or-dains is al-ways good. He is my Friend and Fa - ther;



As He di-rects my life for me, I fol - low meek and low - ly.
 He leads me in His own right way, And nev - er will He leave me.
 No poi - son can be in the cup That my Phy - si - cian sends me.
 He suf - fers naught to do me harm, Tho' man - y storms may gath - er.



My God in - deed In ev - 'ry need Doth well know how to
 I take con - tent What He hath sent; His hand that sends me
 My God is true; Each morn a - new I'll trust His grace un -
 Now I may know Both joy and woe, Some day I shall see



shield me; To Him, then, I will yield me.
 sad - ness Will turn my tears to glad - ness.
 end - ing, My life to Him com - mend - ing.
 clear - ly That He hath loved me dear - ly. A - men.

5 What God ordains is always good.
Though I the cup am drinking
Which savors now of bitterness,
I take it without shrinking.
For after grief God grants relief,
My heart with comfort filling
And all my sorrow stilling.

6 What God ordains is always good.
This truth remains unshaken.
Though sorrow, need, or death be mine,
I shall not be forsaken.
I fear no harm, For with His arm
He shall embrace and shield me;
So to my God I yield me.