

Week of Trinity 13

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

Hymn of the Week: *In Thee Alone O Christ My Lord (TLH 319)*



Monday - Introit (Psalm 74:20-23, 1-2, 19, 21)

Read Psalm 74.

In our *Introit* the psalmist asks God to have regard for his covenant. He says, "Arise, O God, Plead your own cause." These words come from Psalm 74, in which Asaph speaks of the coming tribulation God would send upon Israel for their sins and idolatry. Why have you cast us off forever, Asaph asks. "Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?" This is a complaint from a child to his Father whom he trusts. Asaph is concerned for the poor and the needy, and he does not want the wicked to get away with oppressing them. But how does Asaph pray to God? What does he ask God to do? He asks him to plead his own cause. He appeals to God's own will. He does not stand in judgment of God. Instead, he points back to what God had already done. He had caused water to come through a rock in which he fed his people. He caused many rivers to dry up, saving his people from Egypt through the Red Sea and bringing them into the promised land of Canaan through the Jordan River. God has a history of taking up the cause of the poor. This is because it is his own cause. And this is how we are to pray to God. It is God's cause to show mercy. So when we are praying for one another, asking God to forgive us our sins and have compassion, we appeal to the cause that God has already claimed for himself. We pray, for the sake of the bitter suffering and death of God's beloved Son, for him to have mercy on us. We point to what God has done and what he therefore promises to do. We do not appeal to our own intentions or understanding. Instead, he hold God to what he has promised in Christ.

Taking care of the poor among us can often seem helpless. After all, our sick mother gets sick again. Our poor neighbor gets poor again. But this is the comfort of our *Introit*. It is not simply some moral lesson for us to

go and do as many good works as we can. It is more than that. It is a lesson on what kind of God we have. Because even when our tasks to care for one another seem so feeble, we can know with confidence that God has taken up this cause.

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Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (2 Chronicles 28:8-15)

Read 2 Chronicles 28.

Our Gospel lesson tells of the example of Christ's mercy through a parable of a Samaritan showing mercy. The *Introit* is a cry to God to have mercy on the poor and afflicted. The Epistle from Galatians 3 teaches us about the law and the promise. The law confines all under sin. The gospel declares all free from sin. With all this in mind, we learn how we do our duty toward our neighbor. The Gospel teaches us to do our duty in love, imitating the mercy of Christ from the example of the Samaritan. The Introit teaches us to do our duty of prayer in faith as we rely on God to have mercy. In the Old Testament lesson from 2 Chronicles 28 we have an example of people of God doing their duty. But what sticks out here isn't just faith and love. Certainly, these are included. But what sticks out is fear and repentance. The children of Israel from Samaria do their duty toward their brethren from Judah, because they know that their brethren from Judah were being punished for their idolatry. And they thereby recognized that they themselves deserved the same judgment. In fact, just over six years later God would send the Assyrian army against them and wipe out the people of northern Israel. This was all because of their sins against God, following the idol worship established by the first king of the divided northern kingdom, Jeroboam. It was because of their Baal worship and their injustice against their brethren.

So the people of Samaria clothed, helped, and had mercy on their brethren from Judah, because they knew that God's judgment was coming. Here is a valuable lesson. We show mercy on one another in fear, love, and trust in God. When a brother is being afflicted we learn from Scripture to be mindful of God's coming judgment against sin. We labor in love while it is day, before the night comes when no one can work. When we truly fear God, mourning our sins, then God teaches us to fear him not as slaves but as true sons who trust and love him. Jesus bore God's judgment on behalf of sinners. So trusting in this, we learn what it is to love and trust God according to the will of our Savior. We

therefore learn not to fear mere men, but the good and just God who shows mercy.

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Wednesday - Gradual (Psalm 77:14-15)

Read Psalm 77.

What great thing must one do to inherit eternal life? If you want to know what to do, then look to the law. Love God above all things, and love your neighbor as yourself. Love is the fulfillment of the law. Be merciful as your Father is merciful. When we ask what we should do, our old, sinful nature simply wants to know what we have to do so we can figure out what we don't have to do. But the law requires much more than a task or a habit. It requires your entire heart. The law requires mercy. When we begin to see how deep this mercy is and how impossible it is for our sinful desires, then we learn what true greatness is. We learn what true wonders are. The world can use ethics, morals, and the principles of this life to accomplish what seem like greatness. But faith knows what the true wonders are. The Christian who knows God through Christ knows what true strength and greatness is. It is in his mercy.

Our *Gradual* is from Psalm 77:14-15. First we address God as the God who does wonders and shows his strength among the peoples. But then we sing of what those wonders are, which show God's strength. It is that he has redeemed his people. His mercy is his strength. The gospel is his power to salvation for all who believe (Rom 1:16). This mercy is truly what the law requires. It is truly what indicts the self-righteous heart to be nothing more than a self-seeking, merciless hypocrite. All of the great works this world celebrates as wonders must bow in reverence to the greatest wonder. It is that while we were estranged enemies of God, he sent his Son to die for us. It is that God shows mercy on the unworthy. This is what he did with the children of Israel. This is what he has done for all sinners. He does it with his arm, Jesus Christ. His mercy, which compelled God to create and provide for mankind, is the same mercy that prompted him to save sinners from hell by the blood of his Son. This is the mighty arm of God's mercy, which fulfills the law. It is credited to the sinner through faith. Such faith is found active in love among those you wouldn't expect. So show mercy on one another. And marvel at the mercy of God.

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Thursday - Epistle (*Galatians 3:15-22*)

Read Galatians 3.

St. Paul says that the Scriptures have confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to all who believe. The law was added because of sin, in order to keep us in line until the Seed, Jesus Christ, would come and fulfill God's promise to Abraham (Gen 22:18): "In your Seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed." The law stops us dead in our tracks, not allowing us to justify ourselves. You see, this is what our sinful nature does. St. Paul says that sin seizes the opportunity when the law is proclaimed (Rom 7:11).

Because of our sinful nature we seize the opportunity to justify ourselves. And so we skip over the first table of the law and go right into the second. We figure that we have God pegged. Call it a personal relationship. But when the second table of the law is spoken, "Love your neighbor as yourself," well, then we start asking questions. After all, it's easy to love God, because he's invisible and easy to ignore. But who is my neighbor? That's what we really want to know. Our sinful nature wants to know whom we may love and whom we may hate. But St. John says that if we cannot love God whom we have not seen if we hate our brother whom we have seen. This is why we need the law to bring us back to that first table: "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 this is how the Scriptures confine us all under sin. The law doesn't simply judge our outward behavior toward the select few with whom it is easy to get along. No, it brings us back to the first table. It requires our entire heart and soul, all our strength and mind. It requires that we have the deep compassion that God has for sinners. While we boast in the sacrifices we have made, the Scriptures teach us what God really desires. He desires mercy. This is the mercy that we could not possibly earn or attain. And this is how the law confines us all under sin. It gives us nowhere else to turn but to the mercy of Christ, which is received by faith.

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Friday - Alleluia Verse (*Psalms 88:1*)

Read Psalm 88.

Our *Alleluia verse* once again comes from Psalm 88:1, "O Lord, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before you." This was our *verse* on the tenth Sunday after Trinity. Then it prepared us to weep with Jesus, teaching us how to cry with hope in our salvation given by God.

This week, the *Alleluia verse* prepares us for the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan is an image of what it really looks like to love one's neighbor as oneself. But blessed are the eyes which see Christ, the God of our salvation. Blessed are those who cry out to God for mercy and hear his gracious call through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Psalms 88 is worth meditating on again this week. It is the prayer of one who has been beat down and abandoned by those who would be loved ones and friends, who pass by on the other side of the road. They figure that you must have had it coming when others revile you and say all kinds of evil against you. Being persecuted is not always simply being killed for your bold confession. It involves much more. It includes realizing God's heavy hand upon you. It includes confessing the truth in weakness, being reminded all the more of your own frailty and sinfulness. And it is to have no sympathy from those who pass by. You must have had it coming when people get angry at you for confessing the truth. And perhaps they are right. Perhaps you lacked love in your heart and had too much pride. Your conscience bears witness to this, and the devil takes full advantage to bind you in despair. But the Good Samaritan doesn't care what the man did to get himself into his helpless state. He doesn't care count the man's faults or likely vices. Instead, the Good Samaritan only cares about showing mercy to one who needs it. This is because he loves God. His eyes can see by faith the value of God's saving truth above all things. So standing on this truth, as a matter of confession, he shows mercy. Even as he knows that when he called upon the Lord and was helped, so does he know the mercy needed by the helpless man he sees. So call upon the Lord of your Salvation. He will help you. And imitate him who is eager to show mercy toward you.

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Saturday - Gospel (Luke 10:21-37)

Read Luke 10.

Jesus gives his disciples a great lesson on faith and works. First he tells them that their eyes and ears are blessed for seeing and hearing the things that the prophets and kings desired to see and hear. This showed that it was not by their merit at all that they could see Christ and hear his Word. They didn't earn it. In fact, the prophets, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, as well as the godly kings, like Josiah and Hezekiah, were much more lauded than these disciples. But it was given to the disciples to see and hear the Christ purely out of God's free grace. Here Jesus teaches his disciples faith by teaching them the free gift of God's mercy (Eph 2:8-9).

He then teaches about works. When the lawyer asked what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus said that he must keep the law perfectly. But we know this is impossible for sinful man who has fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Yet we learn from Jesus that our love for our neighbor flows from the love he had for us, his neighbor. He likens poor sinful men to a man who has been left for dead, our feeble attempts to earn God's favor to a priest and a Levite who show no interest in helping their neighbor, and finally himself to a despised Samaritan who has compassion. The lawyer rightly identified this act: mercy. And this is exactly what Christ has done for us. This is how his fulfillment of the eternal law is carried out -- in mercy toward fallen sinful man. He did not come to earth to show off how righteous he is only then to tell us to try harder to be like him. He rather came to show mercy. His righteousness consists of bearing our burdens with the scorn of his cross and softening our calloused hearts with the oil of his Word. Therefore he tells the lawyer to go and do likewise. Show mercy, because this is the kind of God you have -- the one who has compassion on you. Unless we rely solely on Christ who came to love us, his neighbors, and rescue us from sin and death, then we cannot begin to grasp the purpose of good works. May God, by his mercy, continue to comfort us with his grace and favor in Christ and thereby teach us to do the same for each other!

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In Thee Alone, O Christ, My Lord

Rom. 3: 25

8. 7. 8. 7. 8. 8. 8. 4. 3.

Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ
Johannes Schnecking, 1542, ab., asc.
 Tr., Arthur T. Russell, 1851, alt.

Allein zu dir
Separate Print, Nürnberg, 1541
 Harm., Johann S. Bach, †1750

1 In Thee a - lone, O Christ, my Lord, My hope on earth re-
 2 My sins, O Lord, a - gainst me rise, I mourn them with con-
 3 O Lord, in mer - cy stay my heart On faith's most sure foun-

main - - eth; I know Thou wilt Thine aid af - ford,
 tri - - tion; Grant, thro' Thy death and sac - ri - fice,
 da - - tion And to my in-most soul im - part

Naught else my soul sus - tain - - - eth. No strength of man, no
 To me a full re - mis - - sion. Lord, show be - fore the
 Thy per - fect con - so - la - - tion. Fill all my life with

earth - ly stay, Can help me in the e - vil day;
 Fa - ther's throne That Thou didst for my sins a - tone;
 love to Thee, Toward all men grant me char - i - ty;

Thou, on - ly Thou, canst aid sup - ply. To Thee I cry;
 So shall I from my load be freed. Thy Word I plead;
 And at the last, when comes my end, Thy suc - cor send.

On Thee I bid my heart re - ly.
 Keep me, O Lord, each hour of need.
 From Sa - tan's wiles my soul de - fend. A - men.