

## Week of Trinity 16

*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:** *First Article of the Creed (Luther's Small Catechism)*

**Hymn of the Week:** *The Will of God is Always Best (TLH 517)*



### Monday - Introit (Psalm 86:3, 5, 1, 7)

**Read Psalm 86.**

Our *Introit* comes again from David's words in Psalm 86. Here we lead into the theme of this week by emphasizing the need for the forgiveness of sins. The raising of the widow's son is a lesson that Christ is Lord over death. But what is the sting of death? St. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that the sting of death is sin. So we sing the words of Psalm 86: "Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I cry to You all day long. For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You." It is by taking away our sins that God rescues us from death. And much more than that! He rescues us from eternal death in the pit of hell! We also sing: "For great is Your mercy toward me, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Hell."

God bows down his ear to hear us, just as Christ heard the cries of that poor woman and her loved ones. The cries of death are silenced by the gracious answering of the Lord who conquered sin and death forever. We therefore have the confidence that we will praise his name forever. This is nothing other than the hope of the resurrection of our bodies and eternal life. It all flows from the forgiveness of our sins won for us on Calvary. He preserves your life, because he has called you to be holy. That is to say, he has set you apart as his saint. Your death is precious in his sight, as Psalm 116 says. The confidence that his mercy does not count your sins against you is the confidence that he hears your cries in trouble and that he will raise you up according to his promise.

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## **Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (1 Kings 17:17-24)**

### ***Read 1 Kings 17.***

Our Old Testament lesson picks up right where it left off from last week. Elijah had been sent by God to live with a widow during a famine he sent because of King Ahab's idol worship. The woman only had enough flour and oil to feed herself and her son for one more day, but God saved her and her son by keeping the bin of flour and the jar of oil from being used up. Yet now, we hear that the son of the widow gets sick and dies. There is hardly anything more heartbreaking than a mother losing her son. And the mother at Zarephath expresses what even the most pious mothers feel. "What have I to do with you, O man of God?" she asks. "Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?"

Sadly, many people, after suffering tragedy, sneer at the thought that God is good and just. Why would a loving God do this to me? They rage against God, thinking they are justified in their anger. And of course, no one can talk them out of it, because you don't dare question someone who is grieving, especially a grieving mother. But this widow's reaction is more a reaction of fear. She shows that she knows why death happens. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). It isn't an accidental consequence of sin. It is God's judgment against sin. The woman is frustrated, to be sure. Who knows how many emotions are going through her? And understandably so! But she doesn't scoff in self-righteous anger. She knows her sinful condition. So in her grief, she entrusts her child to the Lord who restored him to life, because he is the God of the living. This is encouraging for all mourning mothers, whether you have lost your child in the womb or late in life. It teaches us what kind of God we have. He is the God of the resurrection who took on our mortal bodies and bore the judgment in our place. He even entrusted his weeping mother to the ministry of his Word as he hung on the cross (John 19:26-27). He desires the life of the sinner. So if you have suffered loss, imitate this widow's faith, and confess with the saints, "I look to the resurrection of the body, and the life of the world to come."

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## **Wednesday - Gradual (Psalm 102:15-16)**

### ***Read Psalm 102.***

Our *Gradual* is from Psalm 102, which speaks of how our days are limited, and we wither away like grass. But God endures forever. If God endures forever, then this is our hope that our life will be extended

with him. In him there is forgiveness; therefore, he is feared (Psalm 130:4). Therefore, we sing from Psalm 102: "The nations shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth Your glory." When Jesus raised the widow's son, fear came upon the crowd. The Lord who forgives and raises the dead is the God who is to be feared. It is when we fear him that we have the confidence that he will build us up. "The LORD shall build up Zion." He will, in other words, preserve his church, even as he promises to raise us up to eternal life.

This is the reason God revealed his glory in the flesh of his only begotten Son. He is full of grace and truth (John 1:14). It is because of his gracious act of raising the dead that the people glorified his name. This is his glory. It is in showing mercy on sinners who are dead in their trespasses and sins. It is in building us up according to his promise, cheering our mourning hearts, and pointing us to the fulfillment of his promises. It is in this way that we can find glory hidden underneath our afflictions, since we look to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

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#### **Thursday - Epistle (*Ephesians 3:13-21*)**

##### ***Read Ephesians 3.***

When a pastor or any Christian suffers for the sake of the truth, it is for the glory of the rest of the saints. Do not lose heart, Paul says, at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. Our glory is identified today in tribulations for the sake of the truth. If your glory were seen in everyone loving you for never saying anything against the waves of the culture, then you would not be finding your glory in Christ. But because your glory is in Christ, who is hated by the world, such glory is hidden under opposition to his Word.

So don't lose heart if people hate you or anyone else who confesses what you confess. When a saint is condemned for confessing the truth, then you can know that this is your glory. This glory is not yet revealed (Rom 8:18), but we know it is hidden underneath such suffering. Don't lose heart, and take warning, lest you fall into the idolatry of joining in with those who hate the truth. The devil often deceives the saints into judging by outward appearance and popularity. Pastors, and indeed all Christians, often have to say unpopular things. But when Christians get nailed for confessing the truth, it is there that we can identify the glory of God. It is in such tribulation, which all confessors of the truth share together, that God sends us his Holy Spirit to strengthen our inner man. It is in such

tribulations that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith so that we may be rooted and grounded in love. The love we have for one another is the love for the truth of the gospel of Christ. This is what holds us together, even against the hatred of the world. As Christ became our head through his suffering for our sins, it follows that he would reveal his glory to us through our struggle in this godless age. We cannot comprehend with our senses such love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge. We therefore cannot comprehend this love that we all share together. It is hidden under trials and tribulations. But where God's truth is confessed there is God's glory revealed.

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### **Friday - Alleluia Verse (Psalm 115:11)**

#### ***Read Psalm 115.***

Our *Alleluia verse* from Psalm 115:11 prepares us for our Gospel lesson by addressing those who fear the Lord. When Jesus raised the widow's son from Nain from the dead, Luke records that "fear came upon all." You don't have to tell people to be afraid or to fear. People naturally fear things. Sure, some people are more carefree than others. Some people are braver than others. But fearing something is common to all. The question isn't whether you have a fear. The question is, rather, this. What or whom do you fear? Psalm 115 talks about the futility of idol worship. Their idols are works of their own hands. But they can't speak, see, or hear, even if we give them mouths, eyes, and ears. Those who trust them become just like them. So it is with the things we fear. Whatever you fear, love, and trust in the most is your god. This ultimate false god is death. Man's attempt to keep his wits, make himself comfortable, younger, and healthier all seem like good things. After all, these are all blessings from God. But natural man seeks these good things not out of fear toward God. Instead, he simply fears death. He fears slowing down, getting old, losing his wits, suddenly dying, slowly dying, being dead and lifeless. Here is the ultimate false god. The writer to the Hebrews says that this is exactly why the true God, Jesus Christ, became man and suffered death: "to deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Heb 2:15)"

When Jesus raised the widow's son, he taught the people to fear God rather than death. In other words, set your mind, your anticipation, your anxious heart, your concern, your life, and all things toward God. Because God is mindful of you. And here is the message the Psalmist gives to those who fear the Lord: "Trust in the Lord!" Because he will

bless you, even in the midst of the curse of death. The dead do not praise the Lord, but those who trust in the Lord do not need to fear death. They will live even though they die, and they will recount the deeds of the Lord. They will bless the Lord forevermore.

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### **Saturday - Gospel (Luke 17:11-17)**

#### ***Read Luke 17.***

Last week we heard Jesus condemn the false god of money and anxiety. Now this week we hear Jesus come with a vengeance against the false god called death. A god is whatever you fear, love and trust in the most. It is, as Luther says, confidence and faith of the heart that make both God and an idol (LC I, 2). And this faith of the heart begins with fear. The fear of God, after all, is the beginning of all wisdom (Ps 111:10). So it follows that the fear of anything else is the beginning of all idolatry. When you fear a false god then you will begin to trust in it and look for all you may think you need from it. And because you fear it, you will always try to appease it. Instead of standing on God's Word and being a man, a husband tries to appease his disrespectful wife because he is afraid of her. Or a woman allows a man to manipulate her away from God's Word because she is afraid of him leaving her. And so it is with death. Death is the greatest false god of them all. By fearing death we turn it into a god. And no matter how much you try to placate its wrath, no matter how much you try to flower up a funeral as a celebration of an inspiring life, no matter how much you try to soften it by calling it something else, the false god of death will never be satisfied. As long as you fear death instead of God, you will never find true confidence of the heart.

But Jesus comes to destroy death by taking away its sting, which is sin. He therefore interrupts death's procession, not even acknowledging that false god or any of its power. Instead, with the voice that pleads for our forgiveness from the cross, he says, "Do not weep." In other words, "Don't fear death!" He then turns the boy's death into a light sleep so that fear ceases the crowd. He therefore teaches them that they must fear God rather than death. After all, it is not death against whom you have sinned, but God. And it is with God -- not with death -- that there is forgiveness and life in his Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, he is feared (Ps. 130:4). And those who fear him lack nothing (Ps 34:9).

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## The Will of God Is Always Best

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Matt. 6: 10

Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh' allzeit  
 Albrecht von Brandenburg, c. 1534, *usc.*  
 Tr., composite

8. 7. 8. 7. D. Iambic

Was mein Gott will

French melody, 1529

Harm. by Johann S. Bach, †1750

1 The will of God is al-ways best And shall be done for-ev - er;  
 2 God is my Com-fort and my Trust, My Hope and Life a - bid - ing;  
 3 Lord Je - sus, this I ask of Thee, De - ny me not this fa - vor:  
 4 When life's brief course on earth is run And I this world am leav - ing,

And they who trust in Him are blest, He will for-sake them nev - er.  
 And to His coun-sel, wise and just, I yield, in Him con - fid - ing.  
 When Sa - tan sore - ly trou-bles me, Then do not let me wa - ver.  
 Grant me to say: "Thy will be done," By faith to Thee still cleav - ing.

He helps in-deed In time of need, He chas-tens with for - bear - ing;  
 The ver - y hairs, His Word de - clares, Up - on my head He num - bers.  
 Keep watch and ward, O gra - cious Lord, Ful - fil Thy faith - ful say - ing:  
 My heav'n - ly Friend, I now com - mend My soul in - to Thy keep - ing,

They who de-pend On God, their Friend, Shall not be left de - spair - ing.  
 By night and day God is my Stay, He nev - er sleeps nor slum - bers.  
 Who doth be - lieve He shall re - ceive An an - swer to His pray - ing.  
 O'er sin and hell, And death as well, Thro' Thee the vic - t'ry reaping. A - men.