

Week of Judica

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 Petition of the Lord's Prayer (Luther's Small Catechism)*

Hymn of the Week: *I Leave All Things to God's Direction (TLH 529)*

Monday - Introit (Psalm 43:1-2, 3-5)

Read Psalm 43.

Judica means "Vindicate!" It is the first word of the Introit this morning, and it comes from Psalm 43:1-2, "Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man! for You are the God of my strength." To be vindicated means to be proven right. It means that everything you have confessed has been proven true, and those who slandered you are silenced. The promise given to Abraham is despised by the world, but he still confessed according to God's promise, "The Lord will provide the lamb for the burnt offering." Indeed all those who trust with Abraham in God's promise in Christ are despised and thought to be fools. Yet even when he was told by God to sacrifice his only son, he knew that God would prove to be faithful. So we, with Abraham, pray for vindication.

Jesus would have prayed this Psalm as well. Even though Jesus was fully God -- the great *I AM* -- he humbled himself. He endured pain, suffering, sorrow, hunger, and loss, all with sinless obedience, so that he could live as our substitute under God's holy law. So in Jesus' perfect obedience to God he also entrusted himself completely to God. He did not tear down a mountain or lift the Temple off the ground in order to prove to the Jews who he really was. Rather, he depended upon nothing but the Word of God spoken through the Prophets. He knew that when he was lifted up as a the lamb provided for the burnt offering for sins, and when he was raised from the dead it was then that he would be proven to be who he said he was. So he entrusted himself to the will of his Father.

And when he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father he was thereby vindicated by the Holy Spirit (1 Tim 3:16). He was shown to be the Lamb of God who truly did take away the sin of the world (John

1:29). He was shown to be the true God of Abraham -- our shield and great reward (Gen 15:1) -- through whom all the world is blessed. He was shown to be our righteousness, which we receive through faith.

+++

Tuesday - Old Testament Lesson (Genesis 22:1-14)

Read Genesis 22.

Abraham rejoiced that he would see the day of Christ. This rejoicing of Abraham was a present rejoicing in the salvation promised to him. In other words, what was promised to come in the future he enjoyed already through faith. This is the same word St. Peter uses when he says (1 Pet 1:6), "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials." In what do we greatly rejoice? That we are being "kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet 1:5)" As St. Peter says we presently rejoice through faith in what has been promised to be revealed in the future. For Abraham this salvation was as good as his. He believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6). It was because he already possessed the salvation through faith that he could rejoice in it. And it was for this reason that he was able to endure the testing of his faith sent by God. Because Abraham was able to rejoice in the promised salvation, he was able to say with confidence to his servants, "I will return to you with the lad," and to his son, "The Lord will provide the lamb for the burnt offering."

So it is with us. We are able to endure whatever testing God gives us, not only because we are looking forward to the day when we will see Christ, but because we already presently rejoice in his salvation through faith. We at this moment possess the forgiveness of sins, the righteousness of Christ, eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven itself. So as we wait for what has been promised to appear, just as Abraham waited, we also rejoice in our salvation right now, just as Abraham also did. To be able to rejoice right now is nothing other than to have full confidence in your salvation. It is to be certain that all of your sins have been nailed to the cross with Christ and that your inheritance is reserved in heaven. This is a genuine faith, which clings with certainty to what God has promised. Abraham saw his Lord's day, and he was glad. And we will be glad when we see him. But in the meantime, we rejoice with such confidence of faith.

+++

Wednesday - Gradual (Psalm 143:9-10; 18:48)

Read Psalm 143.

"Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies; teach me to do Your will. He delivers me from my enemies. You have delivered me from the violent man." These words from Psalms 143 and 18 teach us that we have enemies. They are spiritual. As David says in verse 3 of Psalm 143, "The enemy has pursued my soul." While he certainly had physical enemies, he knew that his real enemy was spiritual. His real enemies were those who tried to prevent him from trusting in his Lord. This is why Jesus responds to his opponents when they say he has a demon. They can call him any name they would like. They can insult him and spit on him. They can slap him on the cheek. But if they accuse him of having a demon, then Jesus must respond. Because Jesus' battle is not a physical battle. It is a spiritual battle. It is not against flesh and blood (Eph 6), but against the devil and his minions. It is a battle of the truth against the lies of the devil, the world, and this sinful flesh.

God delivers us from the violent man who would do damage to our souls. Keep this in mind, especially when you are dealing with a conflict with someone in your life. Your true enemy is the devil. When Jesus told the Jews that they were children of the devil, he was not just insulting them. He was telling them the truth. He was warning them of the true, serious battle we are in. The devil has been a murderer from the beginning. He kills souls, and he inspires the feelings of resentment in the hearts of brothers, which leads to all sorts of murder. He does this by lying about God. But St. Peter teaches us that we resist the devil by faith (1 Pet 5). This is faith in God, faith that he will deliver us. It is confidence that he has already done so in Christ who gave his life up for us. This is the center of our fight, and it has already been accomplished by the Son of God who bore the violence of sin and hell so that we might rest securely in his deliverance.

+++

Thursday - Epistle (*Hebrews 9:11-15*)

Read Hebrews 9.

The law can teach you to live an outwardly good life. Like the sacrifice of the bulls and goats, which made purification of the flesh, following the law will teach you how to do good works, which help your neighbor and glorify God. And yet, such works are not truly good unless your conscience is good. Such works are only dead works unless your heart and mind are ruled by the peace of God. Otherwise, you are doing these works out of servile fear of punishment and a smug attempt to be

righteous.

The sacrifices were gifts, which taught that God would provide the sacrifice, just as Abraham taught Isaac. So even today, though the sacrifices are no longer offered, the law is a gift, which teaches us to repent of our sins not only on the outside, but especially in our own hearts and minds. The high priests were gifts of God to his people, who taught the people to find the atonement for their sins in the sacrifice provided by God. But such sacrifices were only an outward shadow of what cleanses the conscience. Jesus, as the High Priest, not of what is passing away, but of the good things to come, came with the tabernacle of his own flesh. As St. John says, the Word became flesh and made its tabernacle among us. He entered the Most Holy Place of the cross, suffering the penalty not only of outward, civil transgressions, but of the inward stain of the conscience, which does not fear, love, or trust in God. So while we hear the law, considering our station in life according to the Ten Commandments, it is only the blood of Christ, which frees our conscience from being burdened by its inherent guilt. Serving God can become a snare if it is a constant attempt to soothe one's conscience. But when the blood of Christ soothes your conscience, then your works are not dead, but living. And nothing can accuse you -- not the law, nor any elementary principle of pious men. Instead, you are free, having been baptized into Christ, which is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet 3:21).

+++

Friday - Verse (Psalm 129:1-4)

Read Psalm 129.

As we approach the last couple weeks of Lent, the hatred from the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh against Christ intensifies. In John 8, those who once believed in Jesus now have been driven by the sinful flesh to shout the scoffs of the world, being under the influence of their father, the devil. The seething mocking increases against our Lord. So before we hear this account in John's Gospel, the Psalmist prepares us with our *verse*, taken from Psalm 129. This, again, is a Psalm of Ascents, which the people would sing on the way up to Jerusalem to worship at one of the feasts. These Psalms of Ascents taught the people what true worship is before God. This Psalm in particular teaches them that the world is not their friend. Such honesty is crucial for true worship. As James says, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God. (Jam 4:4)" The Psalmist sings, "Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth," and he directs the people of Israel to repeat this. Here is emphasized the

intensity of the enemy's hatred against Zion, the holy people of God.

The church of God is a people called out of the darkness of the world to declare the wonders of their Savior (1 Pet 2:9). But too often this is taught in such a way which lacks the cross of Christ. Gimmicks and directions on how to get people to like you take over and cloud a sincere confession of Christ and his saving truth. There are even those who say that praying publicly with pagans is a good witness and opportunity to share Christ! The proclamation of the gospel is replaced by broadcasting worldly virtues. Instead, the Psalm teaches us that we should not expect friendly responses from the world. They will plow us on our back. And yet, our hope is in the Lord who cuts in pieces the cords of the wicked. Our confession of the gospel continues to bear fruit even as the enemy's hatred grows fiercer. Because those who hate the church of Christ will only be put to shame. This is precisely why we can keep confessing with our heads up, hopeful in what we say, and at peace even in the presence of our enemies. Because the devil, the world, and the flesh cannot prevail against those who keep the Word of Christ. These are blessed in the name of the Lord.

+++

Saturday - Gospel (John 8:46-59)

Read John 8.

Jesus never defended himself. Instead, he defended his Word. This is because this was the Word he has received from the Father from before the foundations of the world. He did not honor himself. It was the Father who honored him. He did not glorify himself. The Father would glorify him with the glory he has shared with him from eternity. Jesus is true God and true man, perfect God and Lord, the only begotten Son of the Father, and perfect man, born of the Virgin Mary. He already had all honor and glory from eternity as the great I AM who appeared to Moses in the burning bush. But he humbled himself, taking on the form of a servant. He allows himself to be insulted. The Jews call him a Samaritan, and he ignores this charge as nothing but a slur. What does it matter to him if he is insulted? It is the Word of God that he has come to fulfill. So when they say he has a demon, then he responds, since this is an attack on the Word. Jesus allows himself to be spit upon, insulted, and crucified. But he will not give an inch when it comes to God's Word. He did not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them. This is the Word, which says that the sinner must die. He does not rest until this sentence of God's Word is fulfilled, not in us who

deserve it, but in himself who is innocent. And so he continues to fight for his Word.

Those who refuse to listen to Jesus' Word will not see the life that he gives. He will eventually hide himself entirely from him. And by ignoring God's judgment, they imagine that they have escaped judgment. But the glory of God has departed from them. Jesus, however, was not above judgment, even though he is the only one who has the right to judge. He let the Father judge him. And the Father judged him to be righteous by raising him from the dead. Now Jesus, who will come to judge the living and the dead, teaches us to judge ourselves and repent of our sins according to his Word even as this same Word declares sinners righteous because of what he did. No one can accuse Jesus of sin. And yet, he allowed himself to become sin for us so that in him we may be found righteous in God's sight.

+++

529

I Leave All Things to God's Direction

Rom. 8: 23

Ich halte Gott in allem stille

Salomo Franck, 1685

Tr., August Crull, 11923, alt.

9. 8. 9. 8. 8. 8.

Wer nur den lieben Gott

Georg Neumark, 1640

1 I leave all things to God's di - rec - tion, He lov - eth
 2 My God hath all things in His keep - ing, He is the
 3 The will of God shall be my plea - sure While here on
 4 God knows what must be done to save me, His love for

me in weal and woe; His will is good, true His af - fec - tion,
 ev - er faith - ful Friend; He grants me laugh - ter af - ter weep - ing,
 earth is mine a - bode; My will is wrong be - yond all mea - sure,
 me will nev - er cease; Up - on His hands He did en - grave me

With ten - der love His heart doth glow. My For - tress and my
 And all His ways in bless - ings end. His love en - dures e -
 It doth not will what pleas - eth God. The Chris - tian's mot - to
 With pur - est gold of lov - ing grace. His will su - preme must

Rock is He: What pleas - eth God, that pleas - eth me.
 ter - nal - ly: What pleas - eth God, that pleas - eth me.
 e'er must be: What pleas - eth God, that pleas - eth me.
 ev - er be: What pleas - eth God, that pleas - eth me. A - men.

I Leave All Things to God's Direction

5 My God desires the soul's salvation,
Me also He desires to save;
Therefore with Christian resignation
All earthly troubles I will brave.
His will be done eternally:
What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me.