

CHAPTER 1 LISTENING TO THE WORD OF THE LORD

The story of the rich man and Lazarus concludes with these haunting words on the lips of Abraham: “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead” (Luke 16:31). The rich man had failed to hear the Word of the Lord and thus had no love for poor Lazarus, who was laid at his gate. Our Lord says, “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63). The rich man lived a life without the Word of God; death was his portion.

Luke 16:19-31

John 6:63

There is a collect in *Lutheran Service Book*, titled “Grace to receive the Word,” which tutors us in the art of listening to the Lord’s Word, His Holy Scriptures:

Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (LSB, p. 308)

The first line of the prayer, “Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning,” is anchored in the two great passages of the Bible that teach us of the origin and use of the sacred Scriptures.

The first of these passages is 2 Peter 1:16-21, in which the Apostle Peter links the Scriptures’ inspiration with the incarnation of the Son of God. The apostles, the eye and ear witnesses of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, testify to His reality. Peter points specifically to our Lord’s transfiguration. The transfiguration is the bridge between the crib of Christmas and the cross of Calvary, between Epiphany and Easter. In the trans-

2 Peter 1:16-21

1 John 1:1-4

Luke 9:28-35

A NARRATIVE COMMENTARY
ON THE DIVINE SERVICE

(Divine Service I, LSB, p. 151)

COMMENTARY 1:
INTRODUCTION

The high and holy worship of God is faith in Jesus Christ. Such faith is created and sustained by God's service to us. In the Divine Service, the Lord comes to us in His Word and Sacrament to bless and enliven us with His gifts. This service is not something we do for God; rather, it is His service to us to be received in faith. The liturgy is God's work: He gives, we receive. The commentaries that follow are designed to help us understand the structure and biblical content of the Divine Service so that we might more fully rejoice in the gifts that our Savior gives us in His liturgy.

John 4:20-26

Hebrews 8:1-6

COMMENTARY 2:
INVOCATION

From God's Word, we know that wherever God puts His name, there He is to bless. In the Old Testament, the temple was the place where God graciously caused His name to be present.

1 Kings 8:27-30

God has put His name—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—on us in Holy Baptism. The Divine Service begins, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Every Divine Service is for the hallowing of the Lord's name, which the Small Catechism reminds us is done "when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it" (SC III).

Matthew 28:18-20

COMMENTARY 3:
CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

It is only through the forgiveness of sins that we enter into the life of heaven. To confess our sins is to speak the truth about our lives. God seeks that truth in the heart and on the lips. To

1 John 1:8-10

CHAPTER 3

THE LAW OF GOD (COMMANDMENTS 4-10)

O God, whose never-failing providence orders all things both in heaven and earth, we humbly implore You to put away from us all hurtful things and to give us those things that are profitable for us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Collect for Trinity 7
LSB PCC, p. 594

The first three commandments (the first table) are vertical as they direct us to God alone: His lordship over all things, His holy name, and His holy Word. The remaining seven commandments (the second table) are horizontal in that they govern our relationship to our neighbor. The holy commandments of God demand love for the Lord God “with all your mind” and love of neighbor “as yourself.” God’s commandments are protective of human life. As Albrecht Peters says, “Luther unfolds the positive commandment that lies dormant in the negative prohibition” (*Commentary on Luther’s Catechisms: Ten Commandments*, p. 98).

Matthew 22:34-40

The Fourth Commandment has to do with the neighbors that God has placed over us in this life, namely, “our parents and other authorities.” Luther identifies the Fourth Commandment, “Honor your father and your mother,” as the first and the greatest commandment of the second table of the Law in that God hides His own majesty within parenthood:

God has given this walk of life, fatherhood and motherhood, a special position of honor, higher than that of any other walk of life under it. Not only has he commanded us to love parents but to honor

them. ... [H]e distinguishes father and mother above all other persons on earth, and places them next to himself. For it is a much higher thing to honor than to love. Honor includes not only love, but also deference, humility, and modesty directed (so to speak) toward a majesty concealed within them. (LC I.105-106, pp. 400-401).

Parents are the “masks” behind which God hides Himself as the creator. The “fear, love, and trust in God above all things” is expressed in the honor and love that children show their parents. However, this commandment extends beyond the relationship of children to their parents; it also encompasses our relationships with all of those whom God has placed in authority over us.

The Fifth Commandment concerns the physical life and well-being of our neighbor. Not only does this commandment guard the life of our neighbor, it also cuts to the source of murder: the sinful human heart. Thus, our Lord says that “everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment” (Matt. 5:22). Murder is a violation of God’s Word that proceeds from a heart that “abides in death,” being without eternal life (1 John 3:14).

The Lord God established marriage from the beginning. The Sixth Commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” stands guard over the divinely established estate of marriage. Here God would guard and protect our sexuality, that in it He might be glorified as the Lord and Giver of every good and perfect gift.

As with the previous commandment, the Sixth Commandment applies not only to outward actions but also to the heart. Luther writes:

But inasmuch as there is such a shameless mess and cesspool of all sorts of immorality and indecency among us, this commandment is also directed against every form of unchastity, no matter what it is called. Not only is the outward act forbidden, but also every kind of cause, provocation, and means, so that your heart, your lips, and your entire body may be chaste and afford no occasion, aid, or encouragement to unchastity. (LC I.202, p. 414)

Leviticus 19:32
Proverbs 1:8; 23:22
Ephesians 6:1-4

Romans 13:1-7

Matthew 5:21-22

Deuteronomy 32:39
1 John 3:11-18

Matthew 19:5-6

Matthew 5:28

Catechism's conclusion to the explanation of each article of the Creed, "This is most certainly true," forms the foundation of how we pray to our heavenly Father. We pray on the basis of the certainty of God's promise to be our Lord and God.

Luke 18:9-14

The First Petition of the Lord's Prayer parallels the Second Commandment. Hallowing God's name is the opposite of taking it in vain. God's name is kept holy only by faith, as we see from the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector in Luke 18. Because the Pharisee did not hold to the Word of God in its truth and purity, his prayers as well as his life could only bring contempt on the name of God. False teaching gives God a bad reputation, a bad name.

Mark 1:14-15

Our Lord's kingdom comes to us by His Gospel and is received by faith. The Second Petition teaches us to pray in faith for the coming of God's kingdom among us in time and eternity. Here it is important to note that the Scriptures speak of three different aspects of God's kingdom. It is the kingdom of His power by which He rules over the whole creation. God's kingdom of grace is His Church on earth which lives under His gracious Gospel. God's kingdom of glory is His eternal and heavenly reign over His saints and angels in heaven.

Psalms 103:19

John 3:5

2 Timothy 4:18

In the Second Petition, we ask the Father to extend His kingdom of grace and glory: "The coming of God's kingdom to us takes place in two ways: first, it comes here, in time, through the word and faith, and second, in eternity, it comes through the final revelation. Now, we ask for both of these things: that it may come to those who are not yet in it and that, by daily growth here and in eternal life hereafter, it may come to us who have attained it" (LC III.53, p. 447). This is a prayer to a King whose "kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36) but who makes His Kingdom present in our midst (Luke 12:32).

John 18:36

Luke 12:32

The Third Petition flows out of the first two petitions. The Small Catechism answers the question, "How is God's will done?" with these words: "God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die."

Ephesians 1:9-10

The will of God is the salvation of sinners through His Son, Jesus Christ. We do not pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it

is in heaven,” as agnostics, that is, as those who do not know the will of God. God wills “all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). God’s will is made known, or revealed, in His Word.

1 Timothy 2:4

When we pray, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we are praying against our own will. We are not praying that God would conform His will (in heaven) to our will (on earth), but that He would align our will (on earth) with His will (in heaven). To pray this petition is to invite trouble!

For where God’s Word is preached, accepted, or believed, and bears fruit, there the holy and precious cross will also not be far behind. And let no one think that we will have peace; rather, we must sacrifice all we have on earth—possessions, honor, house and farm, spouse and children, body and life. Now, this grieves our flesh and the old creature, for it means that we must remain steadfast, suffer patiently whatever befalls us, and let go whatever is taken from us. (LC III.65-66, p. 448-9)

The Fourth Petition directs us back to the First Article of the Creed, where we confess that God, the Father Almighty, “richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.” We pray for that which God has promised to give us: daily bread. In the wilderness, God instructed His people in faith, training them to look to Him for their daily bread, which was manna from heaven. The people of Israel were instructed to gather only enough bread for the day. If they attempted to hoard more manna than needed, it would turn foul and become infested with worms. The Father teaches His children how to receive their daily bread in faith, which is the highest form of thanksgiving.

Exodus 16:17-21

Matthew 6:24-34

The forgiveness of sins is the theme of the Fifth Petition. Here we implore the Father’s forgiveness for all of our sins, even the sins of which we are unaware. This is the Christian’s daily prayer, for “[a]lthough we have God’s Word and believe, although we obey and submit to his will and are nourished by God’s gift and blessing, nevertheless we are not without sin” (LC III.86, p. 452). Forgiven by the Father, we are also to forgive those who sin against us. Forgiving the neighbor who sins against us becomes the outward sign that we have received the Lord’s forgiveness.

Psalms 19:12

Ephesians 4:32

Matthew 18:21-35