

Lesson 1

The Ten Commandments

The First Commandment

The Second Commandment

The Third Commandment

✠ THE WORD OF FAITH ✠

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

Proper 21 C/Trinity 1

Discussion Questions

What kind of a man was the rich man? What does it mean that he “fared sumptuously every day”? What kind of position and probable reputation did he have in the community? What kind of a man was Lazarus? What was his status in the community? Why did the rich man go to hell? Who or what was the rich man’s god? Why did Lazarus go to heaven? Who was Lazarus’s God? What characterizes hell in this passage? How is heaven described? Why is *Father Abraham* chosen by Jesus as the “spokesman” for God and *Abraham’s bosom* as the designation for heaven? Is there any hope for an unbeliever after death? What is the rich man’s concern for his brothers? Why does he not want them to come to the place of torment? Was his concern motivated out of love for God, or something else? What, alone, can bring a sinner to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ? To whom do the Scriptures point?

Summary of the Bible Story

It is easy to despise the rich man because he had great wealth and did not seem willing to share it with his less fortunate neighbor. If we had lived in the same community with the rich man, however, we may not have had such a low opinion of him. The fact that he was “clothed in purple and fine linen” indicates that he was a prominent person in the community, perhaps a leader or merchant whose business fueled the local economy. In any case, there is no reason to believe that he did not enjoy the respect and admiration of his fellow citizens. Lazarus, on the other hand, occupied the lowest position in the community. He was a sickly beggar and the dogs licked his sores, a clear indication that he did not enjoy a position of respect or pity. It is

quite probable that Lazarus was despised and the rich man loved. Yet, it is the rich man who is condemned to hell and Lazarus who is saved.

It is not that the rich man was a sinner and Lazarus was not. They were both sinners before God who alone is holy and righteous. But the faith of their hearts was not the same. The rich man's god was his wealth and all the things that he had achieved for himself, including his good name and reputation. He was proud of himself. These were the things in which he trusted. Lazarus' God, on the other hand, was the Lord—the God of Abraham—through whom he received life, salvation, and all things. Lazarus' confession was this, "Though I am a sinner and deserve nothing from God, I trust Him and entrust myself to Him, whether for good or ill, because He is merciful to me a sinner through Jesus Christ my Lord."

Hell is the torment of being separated from God. Ironically, that is what the rich man wanted, for he put himself and his own works in the place of God. That is unbelief and idolatry. Even in hell the rich man's only thought was to avoid suffering for himself and his living brothers. There was no love of God in his heart. No sinner can escape the requirement of the First Commandment or the condemnation of hell by his own merit, works, or accomplishments. For in attempting to do so he makes an idol out of his own works!

The rich man refused to listen to the only thing that could have rescued him: the Word of God. The Word of God from Moses and the prophets, the Holy Scriptures, is the only thing that can bring sinners to repentance and faith. No miracle can rescue a sinner, not even the resurrection of the dead One, Jesus Christ, apart from the Word of the Gospel. The preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:36-53) tells us what Jesus' death and resurrection means and calls us to trust in Christ alone for salvation. For it is only through this Word that our unbelief is exposed and we are brought to faith in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen One, who takes away sin and restores us to the Father.

Heaven is the eternal communion with the blessed Trinity who, in selfless love, gives Himself to sinners. This is where all believers in Christ are found. Abraham is called the *father* of all such believers, because he received the promise of salvation in the Son who would take away sin and make a great nation of Abraham and all his believing descendants. All who trust in Jesus Christ are the children of Abraham (Galatians 3:5-14). His *bosom* is the comforting and eternal presence of the Lord where they will no longer hunger or thirst. In the bosom of Abraham, the Lord Jesus will comfort them with the forgiveness of sins and wipe away all tears from their eyes (Revelation 7:13-17). This is life eternal: to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3).

✠ THE CATECHISM IN DETAIL ✠

The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods. = "Trust Me!"

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in **God** above all things.

Synonyms for faith.

→ The Holy Trinity:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

First Table
of the Law:
Love for God
Deut. 6:5
Mt. 22:36-40

Catechism Terms

the Law

sin

the Holy Trinity

a god

idolatry

fear

love

worship

faith

repentance

Excerpts from the Large Catechism on the First Commandment

A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress. So, to have a God is nothing other than trusting and believing Him with the heart. I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust is right, then your god is also true. On the other hand, if your trust is false and wrong, then you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. Now, I say that whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in is truly your god. (359:2-3)

See, here you have the meaning of the true honor and worship of God, which pleases God, and which He commands under penalty of eternal wrath. The heart knows no other comfort or confidence than in Him. It must not allow itself to be torn from Him. But, for Him, it must risk and disregard everything upon earth. (360:16)

[Idolatry] happens not merely by erecting an image and worshiping it, but rather it happens in the heart. For the heart stands gaping at something else. It seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devils. It neither cares for God, nor looks to Him for anything better than to believe that He is willing to help. The heart does not believe that whatever good it experiences comes from God. (360:21)

How Christians Should Be Taught to Confess from the First Commandment

My God is that which I love, trust, and fear most in my life.
I expect my comfort, good, and delight from my God.

Have I loved, trusted, or feared other things or people more than I love, trust, and fear God? Have I committed idolatry by seeking comfort, good, and delight from my own efforts rather than from God?

Do I look to God my heavenly Father for all love, good, and joy? Is everything measured for me by what pleases me?

In all things am I self-centered and selfish?

Do I see my worry and fretting as sin against trusting God? On what things does my attention focus?

Do I complain about the troubles, people, work, and suffering God lays on me?

Do I love the things God gives more than I love Him? And do I cling to what God takes away, even though He gives me Himself?

Bible Verses for Meditation on the First Commandment

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Psalm 90:1-2

Psalm 73:26

Psalm 118:8

Proverbs 3:5-6

John 14:6

To the Catechist:
Bible Verses for Meditation on the First Commandment

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!*

⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

*Or “*The LORD is our God, the LORD alone*” (that is, “*the only one*”)

The first commandment is spoken by Yahweh—“the eternal God of the promise of salvation” who called Abraham to faith, promised him salvation, and revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush as the great “I AM” (Exodus 3:14). This is the God of salvation by grace, and not by works, through faith in the call of the Gospel to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the New Testament He is revealed in our baptism specifically as the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This God is the one who speaks in the First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods.” Jesus applies the divine name of the LORD to Himself in John 8:58, when He says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

In this passage from Deuteronomy, Moses records the words of the LORD to the children of Israel after He, according to His promise of salvation to the patriarchs, had delivered them from bondage in Egypt and had given them the Law at Mount Sinai. Before entering the Promised Land, they were called to live by faith in the LORD, who is the only true God and source of life and salvation. This one is the only true God because He saves, not by our works, but by His promise of grace and mercy in the Gospel. For this reason, the children of Israel and the Church are called to confess that “the LORD—the eternal God of the promise of salvation—is the only true God.”

Because there is life and salvation from Him alone, the Law calls us to “love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” Love for God above all things summarizes the demands of the First Table of the Law (Commandments 1–3). Because of the corruption of sin such a demand is impossible for us to fulfill, and therefore, the Law always accuses us of sin: faithlessness and the lack of complete love toward God. Only in Jesus, the Son of God in human flesh, are the demands of the Law fulfilled for us. The name “Jesus” means “the LORD is salvation” and is derived from the divine name for God given at the burning bush. Jesus loves His Father with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength. He trusts in His Father above all things. In this complete and

unwavering faith and love for the Father, He suffers the death of the cross and fulfills the demands of the Law for our salvation. The Gospel gives what the Law demands, declaring us righteous and creating in our hearts faith and love for the only true God.

Psalm 90:1-2

A prayer of Moses the man of God

LORD, You have been our dwelling place* in all generations. ² Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

*Some manuscript sources give the word “refuge” in place of “dwelling place.”

In this prayer, Moses confesses Yahweh’s faithfulness to His gracious promise made to the patriarchs and fulfilled in every act of salvation for Israel. Though they did not deserve His salvation, though they rebelled against Him time and again, yet the LORD remained faithful to His promise of salvation and acted on their behalf. For this reason, the LORD—“the eternal God of the promise of salvation”—became their “dwelling place” from whom they sought “refuge” throughout their generations. The same is true for the Church and every baptized Christian. This prayer confesses that the LORD who is worshiped as the only true God is not only the Creator of all things from eternity, but also the God of salvation by grace in whom His children find refuge in every generation.

Psalm 73:26

A psalm of Asaph

My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

This prayer confesses the great truth that we have no spiritual strength of our own, but that both our faith and our salvation are dependent entirely upon God. The “flesh” of a human being is a designation for that which has been thoroughly corrupted by sin and is, therefore, incapable of loving God and trusting in Him. The “heart” designates the place of faith. According to the Law, out of our hearts we are to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things,” and yet, such spiritual powers are dead in us. God alone is the source of spiritual life, faith, and love for Him. Apart from the God of salvation who has redeemed us by the death of His Son, we have no spiritual strength. But in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God gives Himself to us and He becomes the source of our spiritual life, the strength of our faith, and the very content or “portion” of our salvation.

Psalm 118:8

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

Psalm 118 was prayed by the children of Israel as part of the liturgy of the Passover celebration that finds its fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Christ and the Supper of our Lord. After 430 years of bondage in Egypt, only the LORD could deliver Israel, and He did so through the blood of the Passover lamb, according to the promise of salvation that He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Men fail. But the LORD never fails to keep His promises of salvation. He acted for the salvation of Israel, even though they so often rebelled against Him, did not deserve His saving acts, and relied upon themselves. He does the same for us in Christ, the true Passover Lamb and Redeemer of His Church. This passage invites us to trust in the LORD who never fails to keep His promises and who always acts on the basis of His promises for the salvation of His people.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct* your paths.

*Or “make smooth” or “straight”

To “fear, love, and trust in God above all things” means that we trust in Him for everything we are and need for life and salvation. To trust in God above all things means that we yield our own reason, will, and

understanding to Him precisely because all our faculties are corrupted by the self-centered, sinful perversions of the flesh. Faith is the living trust of the heart that relies on, depends upon, and looks to the LORD for everything. Faith yields to the LORD in all circumstances of life and confesses that the LORD’s will is always good and always right. The LORD promises to “direct” or “make smooth” our paths as we rely upon Him through faith in His Word. This does not mean that life will go the way that we desire; it rather means that our faith and life will rest confidently in the sure promises of God’s Word.

John 14:6

Jesus said to [Thomas], “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

The basic meaning of this passage is that Jesus confesses Himself to be God—the only “way” to God and salvation, the only “truth” by which we know God and ourselves rightly, and the only “life” apart from whom there is only death and separation from God. Through Jesus alone—His death and resurrection—we have salvation from sin and reconciliation with God the Father. Apart from Jesus there is no salvation from the judgment of the Law.

The fuller meaning of this passage lies in the understanding the LORD gave the children of Israel concerning the Holy Scriptures and, particularly, the five books of Moses called the Pentateuch (five books) or Torah (Law, as in the eternal truth and life-giving Word of Yahweh). They were taught that the Pentateuch or Torah was “the way, the truth, and the life” because it was the very Word of God by which they were saved, became His people, and enjoyed life with Him. The Torah was considered “the way” of life for them, “the truth” by which they lived, and “the life” of all who belonged to the LORD. They even spoke of consuming or eating the Torah (Psalm 119:103), for it was the very life-giving Word of the LORD. When Jesus claims to be the way, the truth, and the life, He declares that the totality of the Torah—all the commands and promises of the LORD, the Law and the Gospel—is fulfilled in Him, in His person and in His work for us.

The Second Commandment

You shall not misuse the **name** of the Lord your God. = "Pray to Me!"

→ The Baptismal Name: Father, Son, & Holy Spirit

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God } 1st Commandment foundation

so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, } Negative command
lie, or deceive by His name,

but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks. } Positive command

What we are to do.

First Table
of the Law:
Love for God.

Catechism Terms

the name of God

cursing

swearing

satanic arts (or witchcraft)

superstition

Excerpts from the Large Catechism on the Second Commandment

The First Commandment has instructed the heart and taught the faith. This commandment now leads us forward and directs the mouth and tongue to God. For the first things that spring from the heart and show themselves are words. I have taught above how to answer the question "What does it mean to have a god?" Now you must simply learn to understand the meaning of this commandment and all the commandments, and to apply it to yourself. (364:50)

"[Taking God's name in vain] means misusing God's name when we call upon the Lord God—no matter how—in order to deceive or do wrong of any kind." Therefore, this commandment makes this point: God's name must not be appealed to falsely. Or taken upon the lips, while the heart knows well enough—or should know—that the truth of the matter is different. This is what happens with people who take oaths in court, where one side lies against the other. For God's name cannot be misused worse than for the support of falsehood and deceit. (364:51)

The greatest abuse occurs in spiritual matters. These have to do with the conscience, when false preachers rise up and offer their lying vanities as God's Word. (364:54)

You must also know how to use God's name rightly.... For His name has been revealed and given to us so that it may be of constant use and profit. So it is natural to conclude that since this commandment forbids using the holy name for falsehood or wickedness, we are, on the other hand, commanded to use His name for truth and for all good, like when someone takes an oath truthfully when it is needed and it is demanded. This commandment also applies to right teaching and to calling on His name in trouble or praising and thanking Him in prosperity, and so on. (365:63-64)

How Christians Should Be Taught to Confess from the Second Commandment

My God has placed His name upon me in Holy Baptism and made me His dearly beloved child through my dear Lord Jesus Christ. In His name He has revealed Himself to me as the God of love that I might worship Him.

Do I curse? Have I cursed?

Do I use God's name cheaply for oaths that are frivolous or false?

Do I stand up and swear by God's name when it is for the truth of the Gospel or the benefit of my neighbor in need?

Do I pray with fervor in times of trouble? Am I bored and indifferent in prayer?

Is it true that I cannot speak about God rightly because I am bored with God's Word and neglect the study of the catechism and doctrine?

Is my heart and life in the praise of God in worship? Am I mouthing things while my heart is far away?

Is my life—sealed with the name of God in Baptism—characterized by thanksgiving and praise?

Bible Verses for Meditation on the Second Commandment

Leviticus 19:12

Hebrews 6:16

Numbers 30:2

Matthew 5:37

To the Catechist:
Bible Verses for Meditation on the Second Commandment

Leviticus 19:12

You shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

The Second Commandment does not forbid taking oaths in court or swearing by God's name when called upon to do so in the support of the truth, the defense of one's neighbor, or for the honor of God. The Second Commandment forbids any use of God's name to support falsehood or for uses for which God did not intend it. God's name is shorthand for God and all that He is and reveals of Himself, especially the promises of the Gospel. "To profane" God's name is "to treat it like dirt," including the use of God's name in profanities, cursing, or in a frivolous or cheap way.

The proper use of God's name is to "call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks" (Small Catechism). God's name is given to us in Holy Baptism. The proper use of God's name flows from faith in who He is: "I am the LORD"—the eternal God of the promise of salvation.

Numbers 30:2

If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

Moses' catechesis teaches us that the LORD gave the Second Commandment to protect truth and to preserve the integrity of a person's word. God's people were called to be *faithful* to their vows, oaths, and agreements precisely because their salvation rested upon the *faithfulness* of the LORD in His promises to them. So it is for us. The Christian who is called to faith by God's faithful Word in the Gospel is being called by the name of the God of truth to speak only what is true and to bind his word to the God who never fails to do all that He has promised. To break an oath or to fail to do all that one has said is a denial of one's faith in the LORD whose Word is truth.

Hebrews 6:16

For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.

The writer to the Hebrews instructs us that oaths are taken by men in the name of Him who never lies, but whose very Word is truth and the source of life,

salvation, and every good gift. To violate one's oath in the name of the Lord is, itself, blasphemy against God and the desecration of His holy name. This is why a proper oath is to end all disputes in the Church and among Christians, because the name of the God who does not lie has been called upon to stand behind that oath and to confirm what was spoken in the name of the Lord, the God of all truth.

Matthew 5:37

[Jesus said], "**But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.**"

Satan is called the "father of lies" (John 8:44) because, by his lie in the Garden of Eden, he brought all sin, death, and deception into the world. Sin is not only a denial and rejection of God's Word but, as such, it is also a denial of everything that is true. Jesus' catechesis on the Second Commandment teaches us that we are not only called "not to lie," but we are also called by God's Word to speak only that which is the truth, that which honors God, and that which serves our neighbor in love. There was no hint of falsehood or deceit in our Savior Jesus Christ. He is our Savior from the lies of Satan, precisely because He spoke only what was true according to the Word of God. By speaking what was true, He honored His heavenly Father and saved us from the false doctrine of the evil one.

(See p. 60a under the Eighth Commandment for additional commentary on this text.)

The Third Commandment

Remember the **Sabbath** day by keeping it **holy** = "Hear Me!"

What does this mean?

literally: "Sanctify the day of rest."

We should fear and love God } 1st Commandment
so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, } Negative
but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it. } Positive

What we are to do.

First Table
of the Law:
Love for God.

Catechism Terms

**Sabbath
to keep holy**

**preaching
the Word of God**

Excerpts from the Large Catechism on the Third Commandment

God's Word is the true "holy thing" above all holy things. Yes, it is the only one we Christians know and have. Though we had the bones of all the saints or all holy and consecrated garments upon a heap, still that would not help us at all. All that stuff is a dead thing that can sanctify no one. But God's Word is the treasure that sanctifies everything. By the Word even all the saints themselves were sanctified. (369:91)

Whenever God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or meditated upon, then the person, day, and work are sanctified. This is not because of the outward work, but because of the Word, which makes saints of us all. Therefore, I constantly say that all our life and work must be guided by God's Word, if it is to be God-pleasing or holy. (369:92)

It is not only the people who greatly misuse and desecrate the holy day who sin against this commandment (those who neglect to hear God's Word because of their greed or frivolity or lie in taverns and are dead drunk like swine). But even that other crowd sins. They listen to God's Word like it was any other trifle and only come to preaching because of custom. They go away again, and at the end of the year they know as little of God's Word as at the beginning. (369:96)

Even though you know God's Word perfectly and are already a master in all things: you are daily in the devil's kingdom. He ceases neither day nor night to sneak up on you and to kindle in your heart unbelief and wicked thoughts against these three commandments and all the commandments. Therefore, you must always have God's Word in your heart, upon your lips, and in your ears. But where the heart is idle and the Word does not make a sound, the devil breaks in and has done the damage before we are aware. On the other hand, the Word is so effective that whenever it is seriously contemplated, heard, and used, it is bound never to be without fruit. It always awakens new understanding, pleasure, and devoutness and produces a pure heart and pure thoughts. For these words are not lazy or dead, but are creative, living words. (370:100-101)

How Christians Should Be Taught to Confess from the Third Commandment

My God has given me His Word that I might know Him and believe in Him. His Word makes me holy. It gives me eternal life and rest from all my enemies.

Do I strive to make the day of rest holy? Do I care about holy living?

Do I use the Word of God and prayer to make my time, work, study, and life holy day by day? Am I lazy and bored with the Word of God? Have I any fear of God over this neglect?

Do I honor the Word of God highly by eagerly hearing it preached at the times that are appointed? Do I gladly learn it by heart and live in it? Do I despise the Word of God by neglect, paying no attention to it when it is preached, taught, or read?

Do I love my fellow Christians by being present with them in the divine liturgy to sustain them? Am I quick to make excuses for neglecting the divine liturgy because of what someone else has said or done, or to do other things I like more?

Do I complain about the worship, the pastor, or other people in the congregation? Do I learn the Word of God gladly so that I may teach it to others?

Bible Verses for Meditation on the Third Commandment

Catechism—Table of Duties: To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers

Catechism—Table of Duties: What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

Psalm 111:10

Psalm 119:105

Isaiah 55:11

Luke 11:28

John 17:17

2 Timothy 3:16

Psalm 26:8

Psalm 27:4

Romans 1:16

To the Catechist: *Bible Verses for Meditation on the Third Commandment*

Catechism—Table of Duties: To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers

(See p. 354 for the text of this section of the Table of Duties.)

The Third Commandment not only has implications for the hearers of God's Word, it also has implications for those who are called to preach God's Word. Pastors "despise preaching and God's Word" when they do not live "above reproach" before the world, but live a manifestly immoral life. They also despise God's Word when they do not "hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught" and are, therefore, ill-equipped to defend the truth or teach God's Word to others.

Ministers need ministers to preach to them, to hear their confession and to pronounce absolution to them, and to admonish and counsel them with the Word of God. This is how God's Word sanctifies them for the work of the ministry they are called to give. As they "hold God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it" for themselves in repentance and faith, they are enabled to faithfully preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments to those entrusted to their care. The Word of God alone sanctifies His ministers and is their only strength and authority in the conduct of their office. As they "hold God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it" they are sanctified in their own sinful flesh and the Gospel of Christ brings forth His fruits in their ministry.

So that he does not dishonor and profane the Word of God he preaches, the minister is called to be "temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable ... not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, [and to] manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect." For the sake of the Gospel, it is also the responsibility of the Church to call and ordain to the Office of the Holy Ministry only those men who are "above reproach" before the world and who "hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that [they] can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it."

(See p. 365, "Christian Vocation—Living by Faith in the Gospel of Christ: Catechesis on the Table of Duties," and p. 368, To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers for additional commentary on these texts.)

Catechism—Table of Duties: What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors

(See p. 355 for the text of this section of the Table of Duties.)

Christians need pastors because the faith of every Christian is dependent upon the ministry of the oral and external Word of God from outside the self. By the external Word of preaching and catechesis, the Christian is called to renewed repentance and faith in Christ. Because the Old Adam resists the call to repentance, the Christian cannot be a pastor to himself. To create and sustain faith in Christ and to produce the fruits of faith in love toward the neighbor "God instituted the preaching office to give the Gospel and Sacraments" (AC V). Faith is created and sustained through these gifts; by these gifts, received in faith, love and faithful service toward others is produced in the Christian's life.

The Third Commandment not only describes the relationship of Christians to the Word of God, but it also describes the relationship of Christians to the men called to preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments to them. Because they preach the faith-creating and life-giving Word of God, pastors are to be loved, honored, and respected by those who hear and receive that Word. This love, honor, and respect is also demonstrated in the generous temporal support of their pastors. The "obedience" spoken of in these passages is always the "obedience of faith" that says "amen" to the preached Word, not because of the person of the preacher but because of the Word of God he proclaims. Faithful preaching of the Word of God always calls for the "obedience of faith." Pastors receive their greatest honor when their hearers say "amen" to the Word that is faithfully proclaimed to them. The hearers of God's Word "despise preaching and His Word" when they do not provide adequate temporal support for their pastors.

(See p. 365, "Christian Vocation—Living by Faith in the Gospel of Christ: Catechesis on the Table of Duties," and p. 370, What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors for additional commentary on these texts.)

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

“These words” refer to the commandments of the Law and the promises of the Gospel. “The Law of Moses” (the Pentateuch or the Torah) in the Old Testament contained the whole counsel of God’s Word—not just commandments, but commandments and promises of salvation—both Law and Gospel. This is the Word which is to be *kept* in the heart by faith and passed on to the next generation of Christians.

This instruction of the LORD through the prophet Moses does not apply to the Old Testament children of Israel alone. It applies to the children of the New Testament Church as well. The Word of God, both Law and Gospel—its stories, admonitions, calls to repentance, promises of salvation, and proclamations of forgiveness—is taught to our children in and through the normal activities of life: conversations in the home, at work, at play, around the dinner table, and during daily prayers at bedtime, when rising in the morning, and at mealtimes.

The text of the Catechism provides the basic vocabulary for fathers and mothers for teaching the Word of God in the daily conversations of faith and prayer in the home. This is why the headings of each of the Chief Parts of the Small Catechism begin with the words, “As the head of the family should teach . . .” The Word of God—its call to repentance and proclamation of forgiveness that we receive through public preaching in the Divine Service and ongoing catechesis—is to be carried with us into our homes and daily lives. The Catechism is learned by heart by both young and old that it might function as a prayer book and handbook in the conversations of faith and prayer by which faith and life in Christ is nourished, sustained, and passed on to the next generation of Christians.

Psalm 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.

“Fear” is one of the synonyms for faith in the Lord. “Fear” is the reverence of the heart toward God that believes Him to be good, that believes that He has the right to kill and to make alive, and that believes Him to be just and the justifier of the repentant sinner who has faith in His Son. Such “fear of the LORD” trusts in His

Word and submits to His Word, even when it contradicts human reason and understanding. Such faith is the foundation and beginning of true wisdom. Out of such faith flows “a good understanding” of the ways of the LORD and an obedience to God’s commandments that is based upon this fear and trust in Him.

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

All of Psalm 119 is a meditation upon the Word of God. It is an acrostic meditation in which the verses of each section begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Over the course of the entire psalm, the Hebrew alphabet is covered in sequence, from *Aleph* to *Tau*, in twenty-two meditations upon the power and efficacy of the Word of God. The Word of God creates, destroys, saves, sanctifies, and gives life. By God’s Word all things were created and are sustained. God’s Word is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. Apart from God’s Word we have nothing.

God’s Word is light because it is truth. Everything that is not true is darkness because it is contrary to the Word. From the Word of God we have all things for life and salvation. As such, the Word of God “is a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path.” Apart from God’s Word we “stumble” into unbelief. From God’s Word the path of faith is established and we stand upright.

Isaiah 55:11

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

The Word of God by which we are called to faith is also that Word we are called to trust. God's Word always accomplishes what God intends for it to accomplish, even and especially when we do not see the results. We cannot manipulate God's Word or use it according to our own will. The Lord alone determines the use, purpose, and desired outcome for the proclamation of His Word. God's Word can never be a useless, impotent, or empty thing.

This promise calls us to trust that God will accomplish what He *wills* to accomplish through His Word. This promise, therefore, gives freedom to the Church and her preachers to simply be faithful in proclaiming what God has given them to proclaim and to allow God to accomplish what He pleases with His Word. His Word will never return to Him "void" or "empty" but will always accomplish His purposes, whether for salvation or judgment.

Luke 11:28

[Jesus said,] **"Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"**

"Hearing" is another synonym for faith. To hear the Word of God is to believe the Word of God. Those who believe the Word of God "keep it," that is to say, they hold on to it, entrust themselves to it, and rely upon it for faith and life. Faith is the trust of the heart that receives what God gives. All of God's blessings come to us through the Word of God alone. This is why everyone is "blessed" who "hears the Word of God and keeps it."

John 17:17

(Jesus' High Priestly Prayer)

[Jesus prayed to the Father,] **"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."**

In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prayed to the Father that His apostles and those who would believe in Him through their preaching would be sanctified by the Word of God. It is not simply that the Word of God is true; it is truth! God's Word is truth because it conveys Christ, the Truth, to us in the call to repentance and faith in Him. It is God's Word that "sanctifies" or "cleanses" us from all sin because the Word of God declares righteous, for Jesus' sake, all those who are

called to faith in Christ. Out of this justifying faith our lives are made holy by the Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

The origin of the Holy Scriptures is the Holy Spirit. He is the "breath of God" by which all Scripture has been "inspired" or, literally, "breathed by God" into the men who wrote the sacred texts. For this reason, the Scriptures are said to be "inspired" by God and, therefore, "inerrant" (without error). Although this passage refers most specifically to the Old Testament Scriptures, the Apostle Paul is also catechizing the Church concerning the divine and authoritative nature of the apostolic Scriptures of the New Testament and the use of all Scripture in the Church.

These words were addressed to Timothy, a minister and Paul's colleague, who was responsible for training pastors to preach the Gospel faithfully. Paul's teaching indicates that everything that the minister needs for the faithful administration of his office as a preacher of God's Word is given to him in the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures are "profitable" or "valuable" because of the "doctrine" or "teaching" that they present. At the heart of the Church's ministry and life is right "doctrine" or "teaching" that is centered in the person and work of Christ. "Reproof" and "correction" refer to how the Word of God is used to call sinners to repentance and to admonish the Church against false doctrine that threatens her from within and without. "Instruction in righteousness" refers to the chief function of the Scriptures, which is to proclaim Christ, who is the very "righteousness of God" in His all-atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world in His death upon the cross. In other words, the Scriptures teach us everything that we need to know about Christ that we might be justified, declared righteous, through faith in Him.

(See p. 150c under the Third Article of the Creed and p.174a under the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer for additional commentary on this text).

Psalm 26:8

A psalm of David

LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells.

For David, “the house of the LORD” was the tabernacle—the place of God’s saving presence. There He met with Israel according to His Word and promises in the divine liturgy of the tabernacle, which the LORD, Himself had given to Israel. God’s glory was present in the tabernacle because there He forgave their sin and comforted them with His mercy.

The same pattern is true for us. The Lord has given us the preaching of the Gospel and the sacraments of Christ that we might know where He is to be found and where He meets with us. “The Lord’s house” is that place wherever His Gospel is purely preached and His sacraments are administered according to His institution. The glory of the LORD is conveyed to us when our sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake in Holy Baptism, in the hearing of the Gospel, in the pronouncement of Holy Absolution, and in the reception of the Lord’s body and blood. The angels of heaven sing of this glory at each Divine Service, and we join in their song in the words of the Sanctus: “Holy, holy, holy, LORD God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.” The glory of God is seen in His love and mercy for sinners in His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who comes to us in the preaching of His Gospel and in the reception of His sacraments. We “love the habitation” of the LORD’s house because, in these gifts of Word and sacrament, the LORD Himself is with us to save, help, comfort, strengthen, and defend.

Psalm 27:4

A psalm of David

One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.

The words “desire,” “seek,” “dwell,” “behold,” and “inquire” refer to faith in Christ and where He promises to be found. David underscores what is the most important thing in a Christian’s life: to dwell in the house of the Lord where His Gospel is preached and His sacraments are administered. Why is this *the* single most important desire for the Christian? Because Christ is present through these gifts with His forgiveness and mercy full and free. Take away the preaching of the Gospel and the sacraments of Christ and there is no Jesus. But where the Gospel is preached faithfully and the sacraments are administered rightly, there is

Jesus Himself with all the blessings of His death and resurrection for our salvation. “The beauty of the LORD” is Christ’s love for us and what He has done for us in His death and resurrection. Nothing else is more precious to the Christian. To continue to behold the beauty of the Lord in the Gospel and sacraments is our greatest desire and the subject matter of our most fervent prayers.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,* for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

*NU-Text omits “of Christ”

Christ is the content of the Gospel. Faith has no value apart from its object: Christ. Christ, the Son of God in human flesh, who suffered and died for our salvation, freely, in love for us, apart from our merit, is the content of the Word of the Gospel. It is this preaching of the Good News of Jesus’ love for us in the redemption of the world that saves us from our sin, the condemnation of the Law, eternal death, and the power of Satan. The Word of the Gospel is the power of God precisely because Christ and His Holy Spirit are the content of that Gospel. By the Gospel we are called to faith and declared righteous (or justified) as a free gift of God’s grace through faith in Christ. Paul is confessing the power of the Word of the Gospel to create faith, to save, and to justify apart from any merits or works on his part. This word came to the Jew first, but was intended also for the Greek (or Gentile). Paul is not ashamed of this Gospel, precisely because it is God’s power to save and it is a power that cannot be thwarted or destroyed. Upon this preaching of the Gospel rests the Church’s entire confidence and hope.

✠ A LOOK AT THE DIVINE LITURGY ✠

Lutherans Believe that the Highest Worship of God Is the Desire to Receive God's Gifts of Grace in Christ

So the worship and divine service of the Gospel is to receive gifts from God. On the contrary, the worship of the Law is to offer and present our gifts to God. However, we can offer nothing to God unless we have first been reconciled and born again. This passage, too, brings the greatest comfort, as the chief worship of the Gospel is to desire to receive the forgiveness of sins, grace, and righteousness (*The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, V, 130:189).

The divine liturgy of the Church names God for who He is and for what He does for us. It not only uses the language of the Scriptures, it also faithfully confesses the faith of the Scriptures. We learn what the Church believes by the way in which she worships.

The First Table of the Law describes the Church as a people who “fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” Such a faith is impossible for us to achieve by the Law. The Law can only expose our sin and failure to believe. Nevertheless, the faith demanded by the Law is born in us by the Gospel and Holy Baptism.

The First Commandment in the Divine Liturgy

In the ancient Athanasian Creed we confess, “The catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity” (*LSB*, p. 319)

Our trinitarian faith is reflected throughout the Divine Service:

- ◆ *The Invocation and Absolution:*
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ *The Gloria Patri in the praying of the Psalms:*
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
- ◆ *The threefold Kyrie:*
Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.
- ◆ *The Gloria in Excelsis:*
Glory be to God on high O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ
For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord.
Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,
art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

- ◆ *The termination of Collects:*
... through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
- ◆ *The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds*
- ◆ *The threefold Sanctus:*
Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth; heav'n and earth are full of Thy glory.
- ◆ *The Benediction:*
The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

The Second Commandment in the Divine Liturgy

In the liturgy the company of the baptized *call upon* the name of God, asking for the good things which He Himself has promised:

- ◆ *The Confession of Sins:*
Our help is in the name of the Lord.
- ◆ *The Salutation:*
The Lord be with you. And with thy spirit. (or, And also with you.)
- ◆ *The Collect of the Day*
- ◆ *The Prayer of the Church*
- ◆ *The Preface and the Sanctus:*
We laud and magnify Your glorious name
Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.
- ◆ *The Lord's Prayer*
- ◆ *The Prayer Offices: Matins and Vespers*
- ◆ *The Psalms* (including the Introit, Gradual, Verse, and Offertory, which are prayed verses of Holy Scripture)
- ◆ *The Canticles:* the Nunc Dimittis, the Magnificat, the Benedictus, and the Te Deum Laudamus

The Third Commandment in the Divine Liturgy

In the Divine Service the Sabbath is hallowed by the preaching and hearing of the Word of God:

- ✦ The prophets speak in the Old Testament Reading.
- ✦ The apostles speak in the Epistle.
- ✦ The Lord Jesus speaks in the Holy Gospel.
- ✦ The minister preaches the Sermon “in the stead and by the command of Christ,” according to the faith of the Church, which is founded upon the Word of the apostles and prophets of which Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20, see also Luke 24:25-27, 44-47).