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**SERMONS**

**SERMONS OF  
MARTIN LUTHER  
VOL. 3  
SERMONS ON GOSPEL TEXTS  
FOR PENTECOST**  
*by Martin Luther*

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SERMONS  
OF  
MARTIN LUTHER

*Edited by John Nicholas Lenker*

*Translated by John Nicholas Lenker and others*

VOLUME 3

SERMONS ON GOSPEL TEXTS

FOR PENTECOST

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

One great encouragement in this enterprise has been the prompt and hearty co-operation of brethren. As will appear in due time some new and able translators have joined and strengthened our staff. May God grant his blessing to all united efforts in this field where we can so easily labor together, if only patience and charity are exercised to one another! And here we wish to say that it is wrong for the reader to attribute all errors to the translators, the editors are to blame for many, and we will gladly make any corrections or improvements. The Church should take to heart what Luther wrote about Translators.

Gratefully do we acknowledge that in this volume the first sermon for the Second Sunday after Easter was translated by Rev. L. H. Burry; the third sermon for the same Sunday and the third sermon for the fourth Sunday after Easter by President A. G. Voigt, D. D.; the first sermon for the fourth Sunday after Easter by Rev. Wm. Rosenstengel, D. D.; the first sermon for Ascension Day by Rev. J. A. Rimbach; the second sermon for Ascension Day by Rev. W. H. Lehman; the second sermon for the Sunday after Ascension Day by Prof. S. E. Ochsenford, D. D.; the third sermon for Pentecost by Rev. J. H. Sheatsly; the first sermon for Trinity Sunday by Rev. B. Lederer; and six other sermons by unnamed translators.

Third Week After Easter, 1907.

***J.N. LENKER.***

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER (MISERICORDIAS).

This sermon is not found in edition c. It appeared in eight different editions in tract form during 1523, under the title, “A Sermon on the Good Shepherd, John 10. Dr. Martin Luther, Wittenberg 1523.” It appeared also in the collection of “Ten Sermons Preached at Wittenberg by the Very Beloved Dr. M. Luther.”

German text: Erlangen Edition, vol. 12, page 1; Walch Edition, 11:1064; St. Louis Walch 11:778.

*“Have mercy upon me, O Lord.”*

*Psalm 51 (Misericordias. Also called “Shepherd Sunday”).*

*Text; <sup><B001></sup>John 10:11-16. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them: he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the. Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.*

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## **SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL:**

- 1.** Christ alone is the shepherd. He feeds his sheep with the Word, as he says to Peter in ~~21:16~~ John 21:16: "Peter, feed my sheep." And Christ does this that they may believe and live. Whatever is preached besides the Gospel is all poison and death to the sheep.
- 2.** Christ is solicitous, and keeps watch over his sheep: which is a great consolation and of which, nearly every prophet boasted and preached.

- 3.** There is indeed only one voice, and that is Christ's Word; but there are many calls; for he calls his sheep by name, one by this name, another by a different name.
- 5.** This shepherd knows of no human shepherd, because his kingdom is not of this world.
- 6.** They who seek only their own selfish ends, do not stand firm in the time of temptation and opposition; therefore they must always want that which they seek.
- 1.** This is a comforting Gospel, which so beautifully portrays the Lord Jesus and teaches us what manner of person he is, what kind of works he does, and how he is disposed toward men. And there is no better way to understand it than to contrast light and darkness and day and night; that is, the good shepherd with the wicked one, as the Lord himself does.
- 2.** Now, you have often heard that God has given the world two different proclamations. One is that which is declared in the Word of God when it says: Thou shalt not kill, not commit adultery, not steal (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 20:13-15), and when it adds the threat that all who do not keep these commandments shall die. But this declaration will make no one godly at heart. For though it may compel a man outwardly to appear godly before men, inwardly it leaves the heart at enmity with the Law, and wishing that there were no such Law.
- 3.** The other proclamation is that of the Gospel. It tells where one may obtain that which will meet the demands of the Law. It does not drive or threaten, but tenderly invites us. It does not say, Do this and do that, but rather: Come, I will show you where you may find and obtain what you need to make you godly. See, here is the Lord Jesus; he will give it to you. Therefore, the two are as contrary to each other as taking and giving, demanding and presenting; and this distinction must be well observed. Thus God ever has ruled and still rules the world today. To coarse and rude persons, who are not influenced by the Gospel, the Law must be declared, and they must be driven until they are humbled and acknowledge their imperfections. When this has been accomplished, the Gospel is to be applied.
- 4.** These are the two divine proclamations, which come from heaven. Besides these there are others that are not from heaven, but are human



prattle, which the pope and our bishops have invented that they might terrify our consciences. Such men are not worthy of being called shepherds or hirelings, but they are here designated by the Lord Jesus as thieves, murderers and wolves. For if men are to be savingly governed, it must be done with the Word of God; and if it is not done by the Word of God, they are not properly governed.

## I. THE NATURE OF THE OFFICE AND KINGDOM OF CHRIST EXPLAINED.

**5.** Now, here Jesus has in mind the second proclamation. He explains it and sets himself forth as the chief shepherd, yea, as the only shepherd; for that which he does not tend is not kept. This comforting and sweet proclamation we will now consider.

**6.** You have heard that after his sufferings and death Christ our Lord arose from the dead and entered upon, and was enthroned in, an immortal existence. Not that he might sit up there in heaven idly and find pleasure in himself, but that he might take charge of the kingdom of which the prophets and all the Scriptures have so fully spoken, and might rule as a king. Therefore, we should think of him as being present and reigning among us continually, and never think of him as sitting up there doing nothing, but rather that he from above fills and rules all things, as Paul says to the ~~4010~~ Ephesians 4:10, and especially that he is taking care of his kingdom, which is the Christian faith, and that therefore his kingdom among us here on earth must prosper. This kingdom, as we have said, is so constituted that we all must daily increase and grow in holiness, and it is not governed by any other power save the oral proclamation of the Gospel.

**7.** This proclamation is not of men, but Christ himself sent it forth, and then put it into the hearts of the apostles and their successors so that they understood it, and into their mouths so that they spoke and declared it. This is his kingdom, and so does he rule that all of his power is comprehended in and connected with the Word of God. They who hear and believe it belong to this kingdom, and the Word then becomes so mighty that it provides all that man may need and bestows all the blessings that we may desire. For it is the power of God, and it can and will save all who believe it, as St. Paul declared to the ~~4116~~ Romans 1:16. If you believe

that Christ died to save you from all evil, and will hold fast to that Word, you will find it so certain and sure that no creature can overthrow it; and as no one can overthrow the Word, neither can anyone harm you who believe it. Accordingly, with the Word you will overcome sin, death, devil and hell, and you will find a refuge in the Word and attain that which is found where the Word is, namely, everlasting peace, joy and life. In short, you will be participants in all the power that is in the Word. Therefore, it is a peculiar kingdom. The Word is present and is orally proclaimed to all the world, but its power is deeply hidden, so that none but they who believe realize that it is so effective and that it accomplishes such great things. It must be experienced and realized by the heart.

**8.** Hence, all that we preachers can do is to become the mouthpieces and instruments of Christ our Lord, through whom he proclaims the Word bodily. He sends forth the Word publicly so that all may hear it, but that the heart inwardly experiences it, that is effected through faith and is wrought by Christ in secret where he perceives that it can be done according to his divine knowledge and pleasure. That is why he says: “I am the good shepherd.” And what is a good shepherd? “The good shepherd,” says Christ, “layeth down his life for the sheep; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” In this one virtue the Lord comprehends and exemplifies all others in the beautiful parable of the sheep. Sheep, you know, are most foolish and stupid animals. When we want to speak of anybody’s stupidity we say, “He is a sheep.” Nevertheless, it has this trait above all other animals, that it soon learns to heed its shepherd’s voice and will follow no one but its shepherd, and though it cannot help and keep and heal itself, nor guard itself against the wolf, but is dependent upon others, yet it always knows enough to keep close to its shepherd and look to him for help.

**9.** Now, Christ uses this trait or nature of the animal as an illustration in explaining that he is the good shepherd. In this manner he plainly shows what his kingdom is, and wherein it consists, and would say: My kingdom is only to rule the sheep; that is poor, needy wretched men, who well see and realize that there is no other help or counsel for them.

**10.** But that we may make it the plainer, and may understand it the better, we will cite a passage from the prophet Ezekiel, where he speaks of the wicked shepherds that are against Christ, when he says (34:2ff): “Should not the Shepherds feed the sheep? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with

the wool, ye kill the fatlings; but ye feed not the sheep. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought back that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with rigor have ye ruled over them. And they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they become food to all the beasts of the field and were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my sheep were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and there was none that did search or seek after them,” and so forth. Accordingly, God reproves the shepherds who do not keep the sheep. And now mark well what he has written. His earnest intent in this paragraph is that the weak, sick, broken, those who are driven away and the lost, are to be strengthened, bound up, healed, and sought again, and that they are not to be torn to pieces and scattered. This you should have done, says he to the shepherds, but you have not done it; therefore, I will do it myself. As he says further on, in verse 16: “I will seek that which was lost, I will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.”

**11.** Here you see that Christ’s kingdom is to be concerned about the weak, the sick, the broken, that he may help them. That is, indeed, a comforting declaration. The only trouble is that we do not realize our needs and infirmities. If we realized them, we would soon flee to him. But how did those shepherds act? They ruled with rigor, and applied God’s Law with great severity; and, moreover, they added their own commandments, as they still do, and when these were not fulfilled, they raved and condemned, so that they were driving and driving and exhorting and exacting, continually. That is no proper way to tend and keep souls, says Christ. He is no such shepherd as that; for no one is benefited, but is rather wholly undone, by such a course, as we shall presently hear. Now let us consider this citation from the prophet in its order.

**12.** First, he says: The sheep that are weak are to be strengthened; that is, consciences weak in faith and troubled in spirit and of tender disposition are not to be driven and told: You must do this. You must be strong. If you are weak, you are lost. That is not strengthening the weak. St. Paul, speaking to the Romans (<sup><614></sup>Romans 14:1) says: “But him that is weak in faith receive ye, yet not for decision of scruples.” And shortly afterwards (<sup><615></sup>Romans 15:1) he says: “Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.” Accordingly, they should not be driven with rigor,

but should be comforted, even though they are weak, lest they be driven to despair; and in time they will grow stronger.

**13.** Isaiah, the prophet, speaks of Christ likewise (<sup>200B</sup>Isaiah 42:3): “A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench.” The bruised reeds are poor, tender consciences, which are easily distracted so that they tremble and despair of God. He does not fly at them then, and trample them under foot; that is not his way. But he deals with them gently, lest he break them to pieces. Again, the dimly burning wick, which still burns at least, though there be more smoke than fire there, he does not wholly quench, but lights, and again and again trims it. That is a great consolation, indeed, to such as experience it; and, therefore, he who does not deal gently with tender consciences is no good shepherd.

**14.** Secondly, the prophet says: “Neither have ye healed the sick.” Who are the sick? They are those who are manifestly deficient in certain of their works. The first clause has reference to tender consciences; the second, to outward conduct. As, for instance, when one growls and sulks, and now and then lapses, and in anger and other foolish ways oversteps the bounds; even as the apostles, at times, grievously stumbled. But even those who in their outward works before men manifest their shortcomings, so that people are offended at them and say that they are rude and peculiar, he will not cast away; for his kingdom here below is not so constituted as to embrace only the strong and the whole, as it will be in the life to come. Christ is sent here that he might receive and help just such people.

**15.** Therefore, even though we are weak and sick, we must not despair and say we are not in the kingdom of Christ. But the more we realize our sickness, all the more should we turn to him; for that is what he is here for, to heal and make us whole. Accordingly, if you are sick and a sinner, and realize your condition, you have all the more reason to go to him and say: Dear Lord, I come just because I am a sinner; that thou mayest help me, and make me good. Thus, necessity drives you to him; for the greater your ailment, the more imperative it is that you seek relief. And that is what he wants; therefore, he tenderly bids us to be of good cheer, and to come unto him. They who are not good shepherds, however, expect to make people good by hatefully scolding and driving them, whereas they are thereby only making matters worse. And this may be seen when we look upon present conditions, brought about by this wrong method, when everything is so piteously scattered, even as the prophet has here said.

**16.** Thirdly: “Neither have ye bound up that which was broken.” To be broken is as though one had a bone fractured or were otherwise wounded. As when a Christian is not only weak and infirm, so that he makes a misstep at times, but when he falls into such great temptation that he breaks his leg; for instance, if he should fall and deny the Gospel, as St. Peter did, when he denied Christ. Well, even though one should make such a misstep as to be impeded or overthrown — even then you should not cast him away, as though he no more belonged to this kingdom. For you must not rob Christ of his characteristic, that in his kingdom abounding grace and mercy alone prevail, so that he helps those who realize their misery and wretchedness, and desire to be helped, and that his kingdom is wholly one of consolation, and that he is a comforting, friendly shepherd, who tenderly invites, and would induce, all men to come unto him.

**17.** Now, all this is effected through the Gospel alone, by means of which we are to strengthen all the weak and heal all the sick; for this Word will satisfy every want of those whose consciences are troubled, and will give full consolation to all, so that no one, no matter how great a sinner he has been, need despair. Hence, Christ alone is the good shepherd, who heals all our infirmities and raises up again those who have fallen. He who does not do that is no shepherd.

**18.** Fourthly, the prophet says: “Neither have ye brought back that which was driven away.” What is meant by “that which was driven away”? It is that despised soul that is fallen so low that all efforts to reclaim it seem to be in vain. Nevertheless, Christ would not have even such dealt with rigorously. He would not have his kingdom narrowed down so as to include only such as are strong and healthy and perfect. That will be the case in the future kingdom that follows this life, as has been said: Now, because he reigns, pure grace and bliss only shall prevail. Even as God promised the children of Israel (<sup><1188></sup>Exodus 3:8) that the promised land would be a land flowing with milk and honey. Likewise St. Paul says that our uncomely parts shall have more abundant comeliness (<sup><1123></sup>1 Corinthians 12:23).

**19.** Fifthly, he concludes: “Neither have ye sought that which was lost.” That which was lost is that which is given up as already condemned, so that there is no expectation that it ever will return; as the publicans and harlots mentioned in the Gospel, and as the dissolute and intractable in our day, were and are. And yet, even these he would not have us pass by, but

would have everything possible done to reclaim them. This was done by St. Paul, on different occasions; as, for example, when he delivered two men unto Satan, as he said to Timothy (~~400~~1 Timothy 1:20): “Whom I delivered unto Satan that they might be taught not to blaspheme.” And, again, to the Corinthians he said (~~400~~1 Corinthians 5:5): “I have concluded to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” He had cast these away as condemned, and yet he goes after them again.

**20.** Therefore, we should so preach Christ as one who will reject nobody, however weak he may be, but will gladly receive and comfort and strengthen everybody; that we may always picture him to ourselves as a good shepherd. Then hearts will turn to him of their own accord, and need not be forced and driven. The Gospel graciously invites and makes men willing, so that they desire to go, and do go, to him with all confidence. And it begets a love for Christ in their hearts, so that they willingly do what they should, whereas formerly they had to be driven and forced. When we are driven, we do a thing with displeasure and against our will. That is not what God desires; therefore it is done in vain. But when I see that God deals with me graciously, he wins my heart, so that I am constrained to fly to him; consequently, my heart is filled with happiness and joy.

**21.** Now see what an evil it is when one person judges another. Christ’s kingdom, as we have heard, is calculated to heal and sanctify only such souls as are sick and needy; therefore all must err who look only upon those who are strong and holy. Consequently, the knowledge that rightly apprehends Christ is great and mighty. By our nature we are knaves to the very hide, and yet we expect everyone to be pious. With open mouth, we do not want to look at anybody but strong Christians. We ignore the sick and weak, and think that if they are not strong then they are not Christians at all. And others who are not perfectly holy we reckon among the wicked, and yet we, ourselves, are more wicked than they. That is what our evil nature does, and our blind reason, that wants to measure God’s kingdom by its own imagination, and thinks that whatever does not appear pure in its eyes is not pure in the sight of God.

**22.** Therefore we must get that idea out of our minds; for if we keep it before us too much, we will finally get into such a state of mind as to think: Oh, what will become of me if only they are Christians who are strong and healthy and holy? When will I ever reach that state? And thus we,

ourselves, will make it impossible. Therefore, we must eventually be driven to say: Dear Lord, I realize that I am very weak, very sick and despondent. Nevertheless, I will not allow that to confound me, but I will come to thee, that thou mayest help me; for thou art ever the good and pious shepherd, which I also confess thee to be, and therefore will I despair of my own works.

**23.** Let us, therefore, ever be wise and learn to know Christ well, and to know that in his kingdom there are only weak and sickly people, and that it is nothing but a hospital, where the sick and infirm, who need care, are gathered. And yet there are so few who understand that! And this fact seems so obscured that even they who have the Gospel and the Spirit are lacking in the knowledge of it; for it is the most profound wisdom that man can attain. For even though they see that the Scriptures praise this kingdom and speak of its preciousness, yet they do not realize what the words mean, and do not understand that they contain that true wisdom which is far above the wisdom of men. For it is not our wisdom that we deal with, and that we speak of and preach to sensible, prudent and wise people; but it is this, that we go among fools and simpletons, and care for them, not because we find pleasure in so doing, but in order that we may help them to get rid of their sins and foolishness and to find righteousness and true knowledge.

**24.** So you see that Christian wisdom does not consist in raising our eyes to that which is lofty and wise, to see ourselves reflected there, but in lowering our eyes to that which is lowly and foolish. Let him who knows this, thank God; for such knowledge will fit him to accommodate himself to, and guide him under, all circumstances in this life. Therefore you will yet find many even among those who preach the Gospel, who have not yet attained it. They never taught us thus before, and we were accustomed to think we did not dare to come to Christ until we had first become perfectly pure. Now you must get out of that way of thinking and come to a proper understanding of Jesus, and learn to know him as a true shepherd. But we have heard enough on this point for the present.

## II. CHRIST ILLUSTRATES HIS OFFICE AND KINGDOM BY COMPARING THE GOOD SHEPHERD WITH THE HIRELING.

**25.** Now, he contrasts the good shepherd with a wicked one, or a hireling, and says:

“The good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them and scattereth them: he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.”

**26.** In the strictest sense, he alone is the shepherd; and yet, as he alone is Christ but nevertheless calls us by the same name — Christians — even so, though he alone is the shepherd, he designates all those who exercise the office of the ministry among Christians by that name also. In like manner in ~~1023~~ Matthew 23:9 he forbids us to call any man on earth father, for one is our father, even he who is in heaven, yet Paul calls himself a father of the Corinthians when he says: “I begat you through the Gospel.” ~~1015~~ 1 Corinthians 4:15. Thus God acts as though he alone would be our father, and yet he attributes the name to men also, so that they are called fathers. But they have no right to this name in themselves; only in Christ is it theirs: even as we are called Christians though we have nothing of our own, but all we have has been given to us, in him. Now, “the hireling,” says he, “whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth,” etc. That is a hard saying, indeed, that some who truly preach and administer the Gospel and strengthen and heal the sheep, finally allow themselves to be carried away and leave the sheep when they are most in need of help. As long as no wolf is in sight, they are active and tend the sheep; but when they see the wolf breaking in, they forsake the sheep. If the sheep have been well kept, till they are strong and healthy and fat, they will then be all the more acceptable to the wolf, for whom they have been kept.

**27.** How does that happen? Well, says Christ, in my kingdom, whose whole object is to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, comfort the sorrowing, and so forth, the holy cross will not be wanting. For, if we preach that Christ alone must receive, strengthen, heal and help us poor



sheep, and that we cannot, by our own strength and works, help ourselves, and that, therefore, all works and whatever else the world pretends to offer in its many religious services are of no avail, the world cannot abide such preaching. Hence, it is but natural that the Gospel should bring with it the holy cross, and that they who confess it before the world should risk their necks in so doing.

**28.** Because this is so, the good shepherds are thus distinguished from the hirelings. Whoever is a hireling will preach the Gospel only so long as they say of him that he is a learned, pious and good man; but when he is attacked, and men begin to denounce him as a heretic and a knave, and challenge him to a dispute, he recants or runs away, and abandons the poor sheep in their distress, and things are in a worse state than they were before. For what advantage has it been to the poor sheep that they had once been well kept? Had the shepherds been faithful, they would have sacrificed their bodies and lives for the sake of the sheep, and would have given their necks to the executioner for the Gospel's sake. Accordingly, they are never true shepherds who, in preaching, have their own popularity, profit and advantage in view. They are surely hirelings; for they seek their own advantage, even when they dispense the true doctrine and Word of God. Therefore they continue only as long as they are honored and praised. Hence they retract, and deny the Word, when the wolf comes, or flee and leave the sheep in the lurch. The sheep bleat for pasture and for the shepherd to protect them from the wolves, but there is no one to succor them; thus they are deserted when they most need some one to help them.

**29.** Such will be the result when men once begin to lay hands on and persecute us in earnest. There will be preachers who will hold their tongues and flee, and the sheep will be pitiably scattered, the one running here and the other there. God grant that there may be at least some who will stand firm and risk their lives to rescue the sheep. Thus Christ has here portrayed the hireling. He then proceeds:

*“I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own.”*

**30.** There is a great deal contained in these words, far too much to be exhaustively treated here. He speaks here of his own peculiar calling. “I know mine own,” he says, “and mine own know me.” How is this to be understood? That he explains further when he says:

*“Even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father.”*

### III. THE SPECIAL OFFICE CHRIST ADMINISTERS EXPLAINED.

**31.** How is he known of the Father? Not with an earthly, but with a heavenly, knowledge. Of that we have spoken more fully before, and the substance of it is this: Christ recognizes us as his sheep, and we recognize him as our shepherd. Now, we have heard what a good shepherd is, and also who the weak sheep are. He knows us to be such sheep as are weak, sick and broken. That is: It does not make any difference in his regard for them that they are weak and sickly, and he does not despise and reject them on that account; but he pities and heals them, even though they be so diseased that the whole world concludes they are not his sheep. Such is the world's knowledge, but that is not the way that Christ distinguishes them. He does not look upon their condition, but looks to see whether they are sheep, whether they may be designated sheep. He looks at the sheep, not at the wool.

**32.** Now, they are good shepherds who imitate Christ and know the sheep in the same way; who look at the person, not at the faults, and know how to distinguish between the sheep and the disease.

**33.** Even so the Father knows me also, says Christ, but the world does not know me. When the time comes for me to die a shameful death upon the cross, all the world will say: Well, is that the Son of God? That must be a malefactor, owned, body and soul, by the devil. And thus the world will look upon and know me; but my Father will say: This is my beloved Son, my King, my Savior. For he will not look upon my sorrows, nor upon my wounds, nor upon my cross and my death, but he will see the person that I am. Therefore, though I were in the midst of hell and in the jaws of the devil, I must again come forth, for the Father will not desert me. And thus I know my sheep and am known of them. They know that I am the good shepherd and know me; and therefore they come to me and abide with me, and they are not afraid because they are weak and sick, for they know that I will receive such sheep. He now concludes and says:

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.

**34.** Some have explained this passage in such a way as to make it appear that it will be fulfilled shortly before the last day, when the Antichrist appears, and Elias and Enoch. That is not true, and it is the devil himself who is responsible for this belief of some, that the whole world will become Christian. The devil did this that the true doctrine might be so obscured so that it might not be understood. Therefore be on your guard; for this passage was verified and fulfilled shortly after Christ ascended into heaven, and is still in process of fulfillment. When the Gospel was first proclaimed, it was preached to the Jews; that nation was the sheepfold. And now he says here: “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring.” Here he declares that the Gospel is to be preached to the gentiles also, so that they also might believe in Christ, that there might be one Christian communion, composed of Jews and gentiles. This was afterwards brought about through the apostles, who preached to the gentiles and converted them to the faith. Accordingly there is now but one church or communion, one faith, one hope, one love, one baptism, etc. And this continues to be so at the present day, and will continue until the day of judgment. Hence, you must not understand this to mean that the whole world, and all men, will believe in Christ; for this holy cross will always be with us. They are in the majority who persecute Christ, and therefore the Gospel must ever be preached, that some may be won for Christ. The kingdom of Christ is in process of growing and is not something that is completed. This is, in brief, the explanation of this Gospel.

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

## SECOND SERMON. ~~6101~~ JOHN 10:11-16.

This sermon is not found in edition c. It is one of the sermons Luther preached at Borna, 1522, and was printed with two other sermons preached at the same place, and printed with miscellaneous sermons in 1522. See second sermon for Sunday after Easter, Lenker's Luther, vol. 11 p. 364.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:17; Walch Edition, 2:1083; St. Louis Walch 2:793.

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## I. OF TEACHERS.

- 1.** This Gospel offers us instruction on the authority called spiritual or church authority, about which some severe things have been taught and preached, especially in our times, in order that the church authorities might never be despised; and they wish to be equal to Christ in authority, and exalt themselves too highly. Of this we will speak in brief.
- 2.** First of all we should observe that as Christ in this Gospel speaks of one shepherd, so there shall and must be only one shepherd; and as he speaks of one fold, so there shall and must be only one fold. Therefore, whoever advocates many shepherds and many folds does wrong. As Christ is, and calls himself a Shepherd, so should he who holds his office be and be called a shepherd. Just as Christ is a King, so are all his Christians kings; for all Christ is and has is ours, and we possess all too, if we believe in him.
- 3.** To be a shepherd, however, is not to exercise great pomp and glory; but it is a service one is wont to render another, as a servant in a household, who does all in his power to please his master, freely, without any restraint,

and is in all other respects faithful. Thus Christ did all in harmony with his office and his name. When he was here on earth he carefully tended his sheep and provided them with every thing needful for body and soul, with good and honest teaching and deeds of mercy, as the Evangelists record.

**4.** Thus also ought those do who boast of filling the office of Christ. To this St. Peter, who faithfully followed Christ the Lord in his office, as the Lord had commanded him in <sup><4015></sup>John 21:15, diligently exhorts them, when in his First Epistle, <sup><4011></sup>1 John 5:1-4, he says: “The elders, therefore, among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

**5.** There are three kinds of shepherds: good or true shepherds, hirelings and wolves. Good shepherds are like the good Shepherd Christ, who tends the sheep, goes before them, cares for those that are sick, scabby or have the snuffles; who does not flee when the wolves come, but “who giveth his life for the sheep,” as Christ here in this Gospel describes. It is not enough that we preach correctly, which the hireling can also do; but we must watch over the sheep, that the wolves, false teachers, may not break in, and we must contend for the sheep against the wolves, with the Word of God, even to the sacrifice of our lives. Such are good shepherds, of whom few are found. And they are now the righteous apostles and preachers, who are but the mouth-pieces of Christ, through whom Christ preaches.

**6.** This the hirelings do not; they care not for the sheep, they receive temporal wages, riches and honor, and feed themselves; yet they are good to a certain extent and Christ also preaches through them; but they are not true to the sheep. This may be seen in our shepherds today who almost entirely subvert their office. In times past the princes gave the bishops and priests great treasures, besides land and people, so that pious bishops did not want to accept the office, they even fled from it; but that is entirely changed at present and there is a running and racing after the best bishoprics. The greatest rush is for the offices, which afford the best livings. They all seek their own, not the things of Christ. <sup><4021></sup>Philippians

2:21. This is clearly seen, when trouble comes, when the wolves break in there is no one who remains faithful to the sheep. Then that occurs of which Christ here speaks: “He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, be-holdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them; he fleeth because he is a hireling and careth not for the sheep.” This is a lamentable and a miserable state of things.

**7.** In the third place, there are the wolves, which also give the sheep some attention. Who are these wolves? It is plain that they are the tyrants, both ecclesiastical and secular, that can tolerate neither shepherd nor hireling. The pope and the bishop, together with their officials, likewise the secular princes who cling to them, are now arising and taking captive, excommunicating, anathematizing, putting in the stocks, and on the block, garroting and murdering everywhere both shepherds and hirelings. These are the bold manifest wolves that may be recognized, that do not go about with cunning and flattery, against whom one may indeed still guard himself.

**8.** There are other wolves, however, who come to us in sheep’s clothing. They are the false prophets, who under the form of pious and religious instruction feed pure poison to the sheep of Christ. Against these Christ warns us, that we may be constantly on our guard, lest with sugar-coated words and flattering religious expressions they mislead us, deceive us, by their cunning, and draw us to themselves, as he says in <sup><4075></sup>Matthew 7:15: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.” In the same way Paul warns the elders at Ephesus, when he left them and he said in <sup><4018></sup>Acts 20:28-31, “Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord, which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish everyone with tears.” That I think is an earnest warning. O, I would to God that we might take it to heart, for it is greatly needed in our day.

**9.** Hence the wolves are none other than those who would outwardly in deed, and inwardly by false teaching, persecute and suppress the Gospel; as the secular tyrants, the pope and all heretics do.

## II. OF AUTHORITY, CIVIL AND SPIRITUAL.

**10.** We must understand that we have two kinds of authority: the secular that punishes with the sword, and the spiritual that exercises its office with the Word and by means of preaching. The secular power is ordained of God as Paul in many clear and beautiful words declares to the Romans, “Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou not fear the civil power, do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause we pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God’s service, attending continually upon this very thing.” ~~610~~ Romans 13:1-6.

**11.** Since there are few who heed the Gospel, the most people remain rogues and knaves, yea, they use the Gospel for their own licentious liberty and wantonness; hence it is necessary to have a civil government, which we would not need if all were Christian and evangelical. God has designed and ordained it, in order that the godly may live in peace; for he has established the secular sword to the end that the public peace may be preserved, the wicked punished and the just protected. On this account we must pay to the government rent and taxes and revenue by which it may support itself and administer its office.

**12.** The spiritual power they have vested in the pope; but how he has abused the same, thank God, almost everyone sees at present. He has subverted it and has by means of his clerical power become a secular authority. And what is the worst of all he uses his clerical power as a cloak of shame; he has brought it about to have himself placed over all secular government, he has become and is called its head, and that by no divine command, but contrary to the Word of God and the command of Christ, whose vicar he boasts himself to be.

**13.** In the Gospel we find an altogether different spiritual government, one that exists alone in the Word, by which sinners are convicted and the



Gospel proclaimed to the terrified and alarmed consciences. In <sup><41815></sup>Matthew 18:15-17, Christ speaks thus of that power: “And if thy brother sin against thee, go show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be to thee as the Gentile and as the publican.” Of this St. Paul also speaks to the Corinthians in his second Epistle, <sup><47310></sup>2 Corinthians 13:10: “For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present deal sharply, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down.”

**14.** From this it follows, that when the bishops and their officials want to put one under the ban the transgression is published to the whole congregation, otherwise their ban would not be noticed, and the messenger would be shown the door. The secular government should see to it, whenever the clerical authority overreaches its sphere to the injury of the soul, that it be restrained, and bishops and their officials be not permitted to excommunicate from the church anyone without his knowledge and will, whenever it pleases them. This the congregation also should unanimously oppose.

**15.** It does not concern God very much as to how the secular government uses its power, for he is concerned only about the soul, and with this the secular authority has nothing to do. It has received power to rule over the body and over property. Whether we govern well or not does not determine our salvation. But it would be a matter of great concern, if the spiritual authority were to say, Do this, and thou shalt be saved: do that not, and thou shalt be eternally lost. This is what the pope does. At certain times we must not eat eggs and meat and butter, but oil and fish; we are to do this and do that, believe this and believe that; and if it is not done he excommunicates, and issues one bull after another. Again, even if the secular authority should command: This thou must believe, and that thou must believe, and it should be contrary to the Gospel, you should refuse obedience and say with Peter in <sup><44019></sup>Acts 4:19 and <sup><44529></sup>Acts 5:29: “We must obey God rather than men.” This, however, must not be done with violence, nor so as to create a disturbance and an uproar of any kind.

**16.** Accordingly, the spiritual authority has another power, or function called the teaching of the Word of God, and the preaching of the Gospel of

Christ. Whenever the bishops and their officials proclaim to you the Word of God and preach the Gospel, you must hear them, for in this they are using their authority; but if they do not preach the Word, they have lost their power and their office is gone. Hence be on your guard when parties come with their spiritual claims and human ordinances of indulgences and satisfaction, and do not preach the Gospel of Christ in its purity. There is no preaching that reforms except the preaching of the Gospel. When they come to us without the Gospel, we will say to them: Dear bishops, you are not bishops, but painted images, and as Paul says in <sup><427B></sup>Acts 23:3, “whited walls.”

**17.** This they cannot bear, and hence they wish to prove their power by the Scriptures and say: Does not Christ declare in <sup><2006></sup>Luke 10:16: “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth, you rejecteth me?” Hear, ye simple folks, they say, do you not see what Christ says of us? To this you should answer: Yes, dear bishop, beloved official, put on your spectacles, look at the text closely, and mark well what Christ said to his disciples before in verse 3: “Behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves;” and a little further on in verse 9: “The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you;” and in <sup><4165></sup>Mark 16:15-16, he sends them and says: “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” Concerning such as preach the Gospel the Lord also says: “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me.” For whenever I hear the messenger of Christ, I hear Christ himself; but if I do not hear his messenger, I do not hear Christ.

**18.** Again, they say that Christ declares unto Peter in <sup><0169></sup>Matthew 16:19, “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Very true, but that power they abuse most valiantly and shamefully; for they bind what they will, make laws, burden the conscience with whatever they dream and whatever they please; and never ask whether or not it would be a burden and an unbearable load to others. No, beloved bishop and official, this passage does not apply to the burdening of the conscience with laws; but to the correction of the erring and to the reproof of sinners. There is no authority of Christ, except the one that is helpful in making the people better.

**19.** Therefore whoever uses this power wickedly is not a messenger of Christ, but of the devil, a wolf, a disturber of the flocks of Christ. The true sheep understand this very well. Hence Christ says here in this Gospel:

*“I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me.”*

### III. OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

**20.** The sheep of Christ know no other Shepherd but Christ. Those who do not preach that we must learn to know Christ, preach falsely and deceptively.

**21.** What is it to know Christ, but to discern him as a gift and as an example? A gift given by God that is your own; so that when you see and hear him suffering or doing anything, you may not doubt that Christ himself in such suffering and works is yours; upon which you may depend as though you yourself had done them, and as though you yourself were Christ. Observe this is what it means to know Christ aright: that he, with all that he has, out of pure divine goodness has been given unto us, that he has rendered satisfaction, obtained salvation and eternal life for us, and that all this is through him and for his sake, without our merit, bestowed upon us.

**22.** If in this way you have Christ as the foundation and chief treasure of your salvation, then follows the other part of laying hold of him as your example, that you give yourself to the service of your neighbor as he has given himself for you. Notice, then faith and love will be exercised, God’s commandment will be fulfilled, and man becomes happy and fearless to do and to suffer any and everything. Therefore, give heed and mark well; Christ as a gift nourishes your faith and makes you a Christian; but Christ as an example moves you to do good works; these do not make you a Christian, but they go forth from you who have already become a Christian.

**23.** The pope, however, has changed this entirely; for he commands: Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt do that. If you would be saved, you must pray the rosary, fast, become a Carthusian, flee to St. James, to Rome, to Jerusalem, buy indulgences, build churches, endow masses and do innumerable other things; not one of which Christ ever commanded. And most terrible of all, when they have practiced such works for a time, that have neither benefited God nor the world, they will boast of them and say:

I have fasted so many Fridays with bread and water, I have spent so many years in the cloister, I hope God will not leave me unrewarded for such service, but will on that account give me heaven. That certainly is denying Christ, and a terrible blasphemy of the great and unsurpassable grace of God manifested toward us in His son Christ Jesus, “Who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption,” as Paul also teaches in [1 Corinthians 1:30](#).

**24.** This is the true knowledge of Christ: to know why he came, and how we may appropriate him to ourselves. This knowledge St. Paul so often desires for the Christians in his Epistles: “Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death.” [Philippians 3:8-10](#). St. Peter speaks especially of this at the end of his second Epistle: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” [2 Peter 3:8](#). In such knowledge we should rejoice and shout, as also the prophets have exhorted us to do. For where such knowledge is, “The mountains melt like wax,” as [Psalm 97:5](#) says, Such are the saints with their great works they have done; and these are the works that they now despise and count as refuse as Paul says in [Philippians 3:8](#), and upon whom they may boldly depend. And this knowledge comes to us through the Gospel. Finally Christ speaks as follows in this Gospel:

“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.

**25.** Many say that this has not yet come to pass; but I say it has. The Jews were the first sheep, to them alone Christ preached at first; for then the Jewish name was as sacred, as the Christian name is now. The Gentiles, to whom we belong, were the strange sheep. These Christ has gathered into one fold, that is into one Christian congregation, through his apostles and preachers over the whole world, whose office still continues and whose course is not yet ended.

**26.** Let us conclude here, and call upon God to help us in these perilous times, while we are in the midst of wolves, that they may not lacerate and devour us and that we may remain in the knowledge of him and his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. forever, Amen.

# SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

## THIRD SERMON. ~~4301~~ JOHN 10:11-16.

This sermon is found instead of the two preceding sermons in edition c. German text: Erlangen Edition 12:27; Walch Edition, 11:0195; St. Louis Walch 11:802.

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**1.** Today's Gospel has been appointed, I think, for this Sunday because Christ announces in it that he will lay down his life for his sheep, that is, suffer and die; and yet he also shows, at the same time, that he will rise again, in that he says: "Other sheep I have; them also I must bring" etc. For if he is to be and remain a shepherd of his sheep, he must not remain in death, as he himself afterward explains and interprets, in plain words: "I have power to lay my life down, and I have power to take it again."



## I. HOW AND WHY THE JEWS WERE OFFENDED AT THIS SERMON.

**2.** The Jews indeed heard this parable and sermon of Christ, but did not understand it at all, as the context declares. It sounded altogether too strange in their ears that he alone should be the true shepherd, and yet he was in the act of laying down his life for his sheep. What kind of a shepherd, think they, was this to be, who would die and give his life for the sheep? Can that be called guarding and keeping the sheep?

**3.** In like manner it was an intolerable doctrine to them that he said he had other sheep which were not of this fold, that is, did not belong to the nation which alone was called God's people. These also he would bring, and of these, although they were not of this fold, there should be one flock, under one shepherd, regardless of what became of their fold and their shepherding. They understood very well what he meant by shepherd and sheep (for it was a form of speech familiar and current among them, especially from the Scriptures), namely, that he claimed to be a man who would teach and govern the people. But because, as they consider it, he puts forth his claim so unreasonably, wishing to be the shepherd alone and yet saying that he will lay down his life for the sheep and that he has still other sheep which he will gather and make one flock — notwithstanding that they, the Jews, refuse to be his sheep — they are offended in him and say that he is mad and that the devil speaks through him. They, nevertheless, understood this much, that his meaning was that their shepherding — that is, their entire government which they had from Moses, the Law, the priesthood, circumcision, the service of God, all appointed for them by God himself — should become void and henceforth count for nothing, and that he would institute something entirely new, in which he would be all in all and rule supreme and would gather a new flock of both Jews and gentiles, just as he should find those who would cling to him recognizing no one else, whether Judaism and its government, glory and existence should abide, stand or fall.

**4.** He makes matters still worse by saying, "I am the good shepherd," whereby he draws the people entirely to himself. He means to say, Dismiss the teachers and rulers you have, and take me for your shepherd. The very best of them, those who teach and profess Moses and the Law, he calls hirelings, who are to be forsaken and not listened to; without considering

that other multitude, the thieves and murderers, that is, those who teach against God's Word and are public persecutors. Hereby he well deserves that they should execute him without sentence and grace, as a public-accursed blasphemer against God, God's Law and God's people.

**5.** Without doubt, the great lords, high priests, Pharisees, scribes and all that belonged to their spiritual government, defiantly boasted and bragged against all this: We sit in the true office and priestly estate, ordained not by Moses, but by God himself through Moses. How dare you, rebellious scoundrel, open your mouth before all the people and boast against God's ordinance and commandment, that you are the shepherd and you alone? You are not even of priestly lineage, of those to whom God, through Moses, committed this charge and whom he commanded the people to hear. And when did God, publicly before all the people, speak to you as he spoke to Moses? Who are you, or where do you come from, that you dare, of your own authority, to utter such things and to apply to yourself alone all that has been said and commanded concerning the office of shepherd, thereby exalting yourself above and against Moses, the Law of God, the priesthood and all authority? Is not this both rebellious usurpation of the government and the crown by the whole people, and also blasphemy and sin against the divine Majesty?

**6.** To say, "I am the good shepherd," what else is it but to say: To me alone they must hearken, the whole flock of sheep. That is, the entire nation belongs to me alone. I alone am its shepherd, and the only good shepherd, who saves the sheep. You, however, are but hirelings, that care not for the sheep, seeking only your own in them and letting them perish in time of danger. In one word, this is to make the people revolt from them and to tell the people that they have no good shepherd or preacher who is faithfully-minded towards them or is able to save them and to whom they ought to give ear. "For my sheep," says he, "hear not the voice of a stranger." But he tells them, if they cling to him, they shall be saved.

**7.** Moreover, he not only says that he alone is the shepherd of these sheep, but that he also has another flock and people, who are not under the government of Moses but are altogether outside of this fold. These, also, are to cling to him, and all shall be alike to him, gentiles as Jews, and Jews as gentiles. This is now the most offensive thing of all, that he makes nothing of God's people and puts them, with their Law, priesthood and everything else, on a level with the gentiles, and the gentiles on a level with

them, so that neither is better, of more importance or has more than the other. In short, it is equivalent to saying that all Moses instituted and ordained in the priesthood, temple and service of God is to come to an end and to pass away; that now there is a new priesthood and government, and a new shepherd has arisen, whose alone the flock is to be and who is to do all. This surely is knocking the bottom out of the barrel and taking the head off from all Judaism, depriving it of all its glory. Hereby he simply bids them to yield up their shepherdhood, to hear him alone and to suffer him to be all in all.

**8.** This was to them necessarily an odious, blasphemous injunction. For in their minds nothing was more certain than this: We have been appointed by God, through Moses, to the priesthood, to the office of teaching and ruling the whole nation. Now, whatever God has commanded and ordained must stand and not be changed by any creature. Therefore, our priesthood and Moses' government must continue forever. And if the gentiles are to be added and to become God's people, this must not and cannot take place through this carpenter of Nazareth (as they regarded and called Jesus), but through Moses, in that they suffer themselves to be circumcised and accept his Law, and visit the temple at Jerusalem. Even the apostles at that time still believed that this must remain, above all things, as the ordinance and commandment of God, given and instituted from heaven. In opposition to this, Jesus of Nazareth dares to arise and publicly declare the contrary. If you would come to God and be saved, you must, after all, surrender Moses, the Law, the temple and the priesthood. All these will in nowise help you. You must come hither to me, whether you be Jew, gentile, priest, layman or what you will, even if you should be Moses himself. So the Jews were offended at this discourse, and are offended at it to this day. This stumbling-block of opposition to Moses and their Law so lies in their way that they cannot get over it.

## II. HOW THIS SERMON SERVES TO OVERTHROW THE FALSE TEACHINGS OF THE PAPISTS CONCERNING THE CHURCH.

**9.** In like manner it is also not less offensive to our opponents, the pope and his following, so to preach. For this Gospel makes it necessary to preach against their government, which has been called the only

government of the Christian church in the world, and which, it is claimed, possesses constituted authority and all that belongs to the church, namely, baptism, the sacrament, the keys etc., by inheritance from the apostles and by the prescription of so many years. Wherefore, like the Jews, they claim to be the people of God and the church alone. It is intolerable to them, when, in spite of all their pretensions, it is urged against them that they are not the church and that God cares nothing about their boasting, their government and all that. And it is likewise intolerable to them when we separate ourselves from them and renounce obedience to them and also teach others so to do; because, in the name of the church, of Christ and of faith, they have quite obscured the shepherd Christ, and in the name of the church and Christian government have filled the church with their own idle talk, and are not as good as hirelings, but are wolves and murderers. They, themselves, now prove this by their public persecution and execution of Christians on account of this doctrine and confession concerning Christ, that he is the only shepherd, through whom we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life, who alone laid down his life for us.

**10.** And I declare that if the case of the pope were as good as that of the Jews, who without contradiction had the Scriptures and God's Word in their favor, no man could get along with his adherents. For the Jews had the great advantage that their government was instituted by God's command through Moses, and moreover was confirmed by miraculous signs and was so strict in its provisions that whoever would not hear Moses was to be stoned and excluded from God's people. Such glorying and testimony, that their government of the church was commanded and confirmed by God, our opponents, God be praised, cannot produce. Nevertheless, they do as the Jews did. Let any one preach concerning Christ and the Gospel whatever he will, they at once cry out against it: The church must be obeyed, the fathers be heard, the canons and decrees of the councils be kept. How else, say they, shall it be known what and where Christians or the church are? There must surely be some organization proceeding in proper order, such as the fathers and councils nicely arranged, and as has existed for so long a time, namely, that the church has a common head, the pope, and a regular government of bishops, and, under these, the ordinary priesthood, and, over all, a general council, whose decision, conclusion and judgment must be followed in all things. And if any one does not observe this order and institution, or opposes it and gives

occasion to division, he must be of the devil, a perfidious, rebellious, accursed heretic.

**11.** In opposition to this, we must open our mouths and, in accord with this teaching of Christ, tell everybody, even as he commanded us to preach these things to all creatures: Dear friend, you may indeed observe, glorify and exalt such a human institution; but that does not make you a Christian. This is not yet the true shepherd and master, whose name is Christ. You must be led another way to know and hear him aright, else all this will not help you in the least to your salvation. For being a Christian is something different from the pope's government, and also something different from and higher than what the fathers have taught or the councils have decreed. Even though they did well, as Moses also did well and truly somewhat better — for example, the Jews circumcised, they sacrificed, and they observed their divine service — and even though among us a fine order of offices and ranks be maintained, and external discipline and a beautiful service of God, together with fasting, praying, singing etc. — all this is not yet what is meant by Christ's Word: "I am the good shepherd."

**12.** For this shepherd and his office must be carefully distinguished (wherefore he also teaches this) from all other preachers, teachers and everything else that claims to have the rule over souls. Let all these do as well as they can, still none of them is a good shepherd. For Moses, forsooth, did not do badly; he instituted a fine order of a spiritual and temporal government, both in external discipline and in the service of God. Nevertheless, his Jews are here compelled to hear that it can in no way help them before God, and that now, after it has endured and been maintained for so long a time, another is to come, who will glory exceedingly and boast: You have not yet the true shepherd that you ought to have. I alone am he, whose voice you must hear if you would be saved. And I have still other sheep, people who neither know nor observe anything at all of Moses and your entire government. Nevertheless, all shall be one flock. How so? Both shall learn to know me as their true shepherd and shall hear my voice. Therefore, I allow to preach whoever will preach, and let it pass; but the shepherd who can heal the injury, none will find until he comes hither and clings to me.

**13.** Therefore, we are also to conclude from this that there is nothing in the loud pretensions of those of the present day who would like to maintain the papacy with its counterfeit bishops, and who sputter much about the

church government which they affect, where they sit together in established inherited power, as the heirs of the sees of the first bishops, ordained by the apostles etc.; by which the whole government of the church is to be bound to them, so that without them there can be no church. They alone are to have power to ordain, consecrate and confirm bishops. They would persuade us to hear them alone in whatever they jointly decide, and of necessity receive from them all that pertains to the church, its office and government, the sacraments, the office of preaching, priestly orders etc. They would have us believe that they are no true bishops or priests, nor can they administer the sacraments, who have not received unction and chrism from them. Therefore, they also clamor and fume about us, saying that we are disobedient and rebellious and have set ourselves against the constituted power of the church and have seceded from them etc.

**14.** In opposition to this, Christ teaches us in this Gospel to look to him alone as the true shepherd, who only is the founder, lord and head of the church, and says his sheep hear his voice, and not a stranger's. Hereby he indicates that these are the true church, without regard to their being under the pope and his bishops, or even under Moses. For he and his kingdom and church are bound neither to Moses' Law nor to Judaism, although they were instituted by God, much less to the government of pope and bishops, established by themselves. Neither has he taken or received anything from them, but he is the Lord of Moses and of all creatures, to whom all men should be subject.

**15.** Therefore, when the Jews in the name of Moses, or our opponents in the name of the church and its power, undertake to draw people away from Christ, that is, from his Word and the pure teaching of the Gospel, he opposes them and says: "My sheep hear my voice; and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." Here he gives us not only the right and power, but even a distinct command not to hear nor to be allied with them.

**16.** Since now we see and apprehend that the whole papal party not only keep, believe and teach nothing concerning Christ, but are public persecutors of the Gospel, that is, wolves and murderers of Christ's sheep and church, and that they conduct and exercise a real anti-Christian government, we should and must, by Christ's command, break away from their imagined power and possessions, from which they already are deposed by Christ himself. We are commanded to have nothing to do with

them, but are to avoid and flee from them as the devil's church, as St. Paul also utters this sentence (Galatians 1:8): "Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach any other gospel, let him be anathema." This is certainly a strong enough deposition from all power in the church, a command to respect the deposition and condemnation of God.

### III. WHAT IS THE SUMMARY OF THIS SERMON?

**17.** This then is the main thought and sum of this Gospel, that Christ alone is the good shepherd. It teaches us the power and fruit of the preaching of the Gospel and its ministry and distinguishes it from the office of Moses and the preaching of the Law. Christ names only two who keep and feed the sheep, the true shepherd and the hireling. For the wolf is but a murderer, who works only injury and havoc; to resist him shepherds are necessary. But if the shepherd and the hireling are compared, it becomes manifest that Christ alone is the shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep. Neither Moses nor any other preacher of the Law does this.

**18.** For this reason, he justly calls himself alone the good, that is, the comforting and helpful, shepherd. For, although Moses, the prophets and all other preachers of the Law preach and teach, they are not able to lay down their lives for the sheep and to save them. They all had to die for themselves, and were not able thereby to save either themselves or others. But Christ says: It is I alone who lay down my life for the sheep. Only death brings salvation to the sheep. And because I am such a one, I found this new doctrine and a new flock and people.

**19.** In this way he refers the true shepherd's office, that is, the authority to help consciences and souls, to his own person alone, as the only one who has effected and completed the work of our redemption, given his body and life for his sheep, and instituted and perpetuated the office through which he gathers, governs and preserves them. This office, therefore, comprises the whole preaching of the Gospel, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever it is done. These preachers are also named, after Christ shepherds; not for themselves, for that honor belongs to Christ alone, but because they are in the office which is Christ's and which he exercises through them.

## IV. HOW CHRIST EXPLAINS IN THIS SERMON HIS PERSON AND OFFICE BY A REVERSE PICTURE.

20. This then is the first section, treating of Christ's person and the office which he exercises in his church. Afterwards, when he speaks of his sheep, he elucidates it further. But first he pictures the hireling in contrast and says:

“He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them; he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.”

**21.** He names three kinds of persons or three offices which have to do with the sheep: The true shepherd, which, as has been said, he is himself; the hireling, including all besides him who preach the Law and teach how we ought to live and do good, but do not point to Christ, like the scribes and Pharisees among the Jews of old; and finally the wolf, who wishes to be among the sheep and to rule over them but only works injury and ruin. The wolf is the devil, who also has his messengers and preachers. However, they have not the Word of God, neither the ten commandments nor the Gospel, but they mislead souls by false doctrine and heresies, which St. Paul, <sup>500</sup>1 Timothy 4:1-2, calls “doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy.” Such are now the pope's anti-christian doctrines, the Koran of the Turks, and doctrines of other sects. These three kinds of teachers have always been in the world from the beginning. We should keep the first, reform the second, and shun the third. None do this, however, except the true sheep, that is, the little flock which knows Christ.

**22.** He also manifests here the condition of the sheep, and why he alone must be known and believed as the true shepherd. The condition of the sheep is such that, if the shepherd is absent, they are in the certain danger and distress of being seized, torn and killed by the wolf, for by their own strength they can neither guard nor defend themselves against him. A sheep is naturally a poor, weak, defenseless animal above all others and is quite dependent upon the protection, care and help of someone. The true shepherd must devote himself to the sheep, ever be with them, watch over them, rescue and defend them, whenever it is necessary, so that they may



not perish. A stranger or a paid hireling, whose own the sheep are not, says Christ, will not do that; although for a time he leads and feeds them, he will not hold out to the end. When the wolf comes, he flees in order to save himself, and meanwhile lets the poor sheep face the danger and perish.

**23.** So, also, it is with consciences in a spiritual way. If Christ himself, by his shepherd's office, does not guard, lead and guide, all other preaching is vain, even if in other respects it is good and right. It cannot serve in distress, when the devil opens the jaws of hell by the terrors of sin and everlasting death. When this comes to pass, the poor sheep stands there alone and forsaken, dependent upon itself and its own efforts, according to the doctrine of the Law and of works, with nobody to help or assist, from whom to obtain comfort or find salvation.

**24.** No better example of this can be adduced than what we, ourselves, experienced under the papacy in times past. The sweetest preaching possible was given, which, among others, I gave diligence to teach both myself and the people. We were told: You ought to keep the ten commandments, love God with your whole heart and your neighbor as yourself. This teaching was not wrong, for the Law should be taught. But in order to impress this on the people, they added: Man can well do this, for he has the natural light of reason, given by God, by which he understands what he ought to do and what leave undone. Moreover, he has a will, by which he can resolve and begin to do this. And if with all diligence he exercises himself in such works and does what is in his power, God will regard and accept this, and undoubtedly bestow grace upon him.

**25.** To this comforting assurance they added many good counsels. For they, themselves, felt that what they taught concerning the decalogue was not sufficient. The purpose of their counsels was to escape from death and to obtain salvation. They prescribed extraordinary, severe orders and modes of life, mortification of the body, fasting, watching, pilgrimages etc. All this they considered good and valuable, and performed it with the good intention that it was to be acceptable to God and to be received as a fulfillment of his commandments. But when all this had been tried, and when finally the devil came, in the hour of death or in other grievous trials, then all such teaching and works were found wanting, and poor consciences were miserably led into the devil's sweat-box, in which they worried and tormented themselves with thoughts of despair, with words

and groanings, crying: O Lord God, if I could live longer, I would do penance for all my sins! etc.

**26.** Such was the use and fruit of the hireling-doctrine, which referred poor souls to their own doing and suffering, while nothing was said of Christ and of faith. This kind of teaching can only comfort and sustain so long as the devil is not present; for he is not concerned about our works, satisfactions and life. Where he does not find Christ, he has won the game. He advances, tears and devours souls without restraint or hindrance, according to his pleasure. Indeed, these teachers and masters are powerless to help themselves. They are frightened and scattered as well as the sheep, so that they know not where to abide and finally, unless they learn of other help, they become the prey of the enemy. An example of this is the case of a hermit who once came to a sick man on his deathbed and endeavored to comfort him so that he might die peaceably. He exhorted him, as is the custom of such comforters, work-saints and monks, to die willingly, and to suffer patiently; this would secure for him forgiveness of all sins, with God. He was willing to pledge his soul for it. Gracious God! Here lies a poor sheep in its dying moments; it accepts what it cannot avoid, and on the strength of such comfort dies. But what happens? Soon after the death of this poor wretch the old hermit's last hour comes and fills him with such anxiety and terror that he becomes despondent of the very comfort which he gave to others. No attempt at consolation will avail him, and he finally sinks into despair.

**27.** This is what must come to pass when only our own words are preached, or even only the ten commandments are taught, notwithstanding the preaching of these things is necessary, especially for the rude multitude. But where there is no Christ, it only serves to confuse and scatter the poor sheep and to drive them into terror and despair, so that they must perish, unless they are restored again by the true shepherd.

**28.** When human nature and reason hear the preaching of the Law, even in the case of those who teach the Law in the very best manner without however knowing Christ, they foolishly err and imagine, when they have heard this doctrine, that they can easily fulfil it. For they say they have both the understanding and the will to do it. They think no further than that it is accomplished with their self-devised thoughts and outward works. Accordingly they proceed, and imagine that they must do whatever is told and held up to them in the way of good works, as commanded by God.

They seek thereby to atone for sin and to blot it out, whereas God by no means demands that we do good works to this end, or that sin can be blotted out by works. Hence, they go on in this erroneous delusion and gather and accumulate all the works they can think or hear of, which God certainly has not commanded. They are simply caught by this conclusion: Good works are to be done; this is a good work, therefore I am under obligation to do it. In this manner they proceed and are ever doing, but never arrive at fulfillment. Hence, they are not able to resist the wolf. The more they do, the less they are satisfied and the more they find to do. And as soon as the devil comes and pretends: Behold, this is a good work, which you have done — they cannot get around it and must allow themselves to be carried away.

**29.** Yea, though they had done all that man can do, nevertheless, if the wolf appears before their eyes with his gaping jaws of hell, they realize that it will not stand before God's wrath and judgment. With a single breath the devil blows it all away and says: You have done much, it is true; but when have you fulfilled God's commandment, to love him with the whole heart above all things, to have no evil thought, desire or lust in the heart, to speak no idle, vain words? Then both the doctrine which the hireling gave you, and all your works and deeds which cost you so much labor and toil, drop and fall. You have no comfort or refuge against the devil, for he always has the advantage of driving you back on your own conscience and the testimony of your own efforts, as the hireling instructed you, who taught you only what to do, but imparted no strength to do it, and so left you in the lurch. In short, you are overcome by yourself and are convicted by the sentence: The good must be done.

**30.** In this way the devil introduced the mire and filth of all human doctrines into the church through the pope, and there was no one to resist him, for all proceeded on the principle that what is good must be done. Therefore, whatever they called good and a service of God, had to be done. And even now they have not ceased to spew venom upon us, contending that our doctrine of faith and love is a bad doctrine; that we know nothing better to preach than the childish lesson of the ten commandments; that we must rise much higher and do much more, and teach not only what is contained in the Scriptures, but also hear what the church and the councils say etc.

**31.** Hence, everything that any shabby, impudent mendicant monk dared to hold forth was violently confirmed and swept in like a deluge. Indeed, we simpletons, doctors of the Holy Scriptures as we were, could not prevent the pernicious barefoot (Carmelite) sect from persuading the people that if a dead man was buried in their monk's cowl, he would be saved and the devil could not get him, or else he would have taken him before. For we were all dazzled and taken captive by the sentence: We must do good works, and whoever does them is saved.

**32.** Verily, even to this day we could not stand before the papacy or overthrow its least error if we had not more than this doctrine of our works and deeds. Even as the pious martyr, John Hus, was cried down and condemned by the devil in the diabolical council at Constance, when he rebuked the pope and his followers on account of the wicked, shameless life by which they often violated their own canonical laws. For this was their defense against him, that although the life was not right, the doctrine, that these things were to be kept and done, was right. Hence, the papacy has hitherto resisted overthrow so long as its doctrine has been considered true and remained unchallenged.

**33.** Therefore, these two, the hireling and the wolf, are always together. The devil likes such teachers, for, in the absence of the true shepherd, they serve him in enabling him to rend and kill the sheep without trouble, when and as he wills. And there is no defense save Christ and his doctrine and protection. As the only true shepherd, he does not allow the sheep to struggle with the wolf (for if it once comes to that, they are already in his jaws), but flings himself against the latter and gathers us around himself, and so protects us that the devil is compelled to flee. This takes place when from the Scriptures it is taught that no human work or endeavor, however good it may appear, even if done in accordance with the ten commandments, and no possible teaching, will avail to free from sin or stand before the wrath of God and the terrors of death and hell etc. This alone avails, that Christ laid down his life for you and took it again, and thereby overcame the devil and death and made them subject to himself, in order that by his power and strength you might be saved.

**34.** But where the voice of this shepherd remains, the sheep can guard themselves against both hireling and wolf, and say: You, indeed, say truly that I ought to keep the ten commandments; but you do not tell me where I am to take refuge, seeing I have not fulfilled them. Here I will rather hear

my dear shepherd, who died for me, and died not without reason nor in vain, but for this very purpose that I, who was such a poor lost sheep without a shepherd and in the power of the wolf, might be rescued. So, also, when the devil shows his teeth in your heart and threatens to kill and devour you, and tells you that you ought to have done or left undone this or that which you have not done or left undone, and that therefore you belong to him, you can take refuge with Christ as a sheep that knows its shepherd; and you can tell the devil to attack him who died and rose for you, and to try what he can win from him.

**35.** Still more can you repulse others who are not as good as hirelings, but are the wolf's servants. They come and preach, as geese gabble, about our own fancied works. Say to them: I will hear and know nothing of these, for I have a much greater thing to do in learning the ten commandments. I am not able to keep them. Why should I worry myself with such useless works, which only harm and hinder me from properly considering the ten commandments? It indeed happened that the world was so filled with commandments and doctrines of men that no bishop and no doctor knew or taught the ten commandments properly.

**36.** For this reason we have reproved and attacked the papacy, not on the ground of their wicked and shameful life, which they themselves also acknowledge, but we say to them that, even if they led holy angelic lives, which they never have done and never will do, and if they kept not only their own law, but also the law of Moses, both of which are impossible, we nevertheless should regard them not only as hirelings, but also as wolves, because they teach only what destroys the souls. For nothing can feed or give life to the soul, which is not the doctrine of Christ. Although the hireling does not himself slay and destroy, he does not restrain the wolf. Therefore, because you neither point out nor teach this shepherd, you shall not and ought not to be heard, but you shall be shunned as a wolf.

**37.** With this argument the papacy and all that leads away from this doctrine are overthrown. Otherwise it is impossible, as has been said, to correct the least error which is given out under the pretence of a holy life. And no doctrine is so foolish or disgraceful but that it finds hearers and disciples, as is proven by the experience of the church with so many heresies and divisions. The heathen were reasonable and highly intelligent people, yet we read of them that they worshiped not only cats and storks, but also cabbages and onions, and even a member of the human body. All

this comes from the name and delusion that such things are good works and render a service to God. The preacher of such works comes with the reputation and pretence of a shepherd who desires to counsel and direct souls on the way to God.

**38.** Alas! we have hitherto not been able to correct or prevent the shameful lies and fables of the monks concerning the rosary of Mary. This consisted of fifty Ave Marias and five Pater-Nosters addressed to Mary the Virgin. The popes granted many indulgences to it, and the preaching friars (Dominicans) scribbled great books full of fanciful and disgusting lies concerning the power and wonderful efficacy of this prayer, which they themselves invented. Besides there was the frippery of innumerable similar lies invented by others, like the barefooted friars' (Carmelite) crown and Psalter of Mary, concerning which they themselves are now silent and ashamed. Indeed, at the present day nobody in the papacy could refute or resist the faith of the Turks or of the Jews, for they of the papacy have not the true master nor the true solid doctrine of this shepherd. Therefore, the devil has power and authority over them, even by the decalogue. He always has the advantage of convicting you by your own conscience of not having kept the commandments; so much the more if you have spent your life in works based on human teaching.

**39.** If, however, you know this shepherd, you can defend yourself against devil and death, and say: Alas! I have not kept God's commandments, but I creep under the wings of this good hen, my Lord Jesus Christ, and believe that he is my shepherd, bishop and mediator with God, who covers me with his innocence and bestows his righteousness upon me. What I have not kept he has kept, and the sin I have done, he has atoned for with his blood etc; for he died and rose, not for himself but for me. Even as he says here, that he lays down his life, not for himself, but for his sheep; that is, as St. Peter says (~~1~~ 1 Peter 3:18): "Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous." Thus you are secure and the devil and hell must leave you in peace. The devil certainly will not be able to do harm to Christ, who has overcome him, and who, if you only believe in him as his sheep, will, as a faithful shepherd, not forsake you, but will stand by you, protect and preserve you.

**40.** If now under this shepherd you are secure against the wolf, it is right that the hireling should also come as a good teacher, showing how you ought to live according to God's commandments and to do good works,

and go before you where now you can walk yourself (as far as lies outside of the conflict of the conscience with sin and death), provided, however, that you are first in the protection and pasture of this shepherd and do not stray away from him.

**41.** Behold, these are the three forms of preaching which always exist in the world: First, that of the great multitude, who set forth not God's Word, but human doctrine. These are the wolves, such as the pope with his decretals, the Turk with his Koran, the Jews with their Talmud, and other sects against the pure teaching of the Scriptures. Second, the hirelings, who preach only the decalogue. They are few, and without the Gospel cannot long remain pure. Third, those who sincerely and truly point and lead to Christ. These are the fewest of all, but they will necessarily be found somewhere until the last day, as we say in the creed: "I believe in the holy Christian church etc."

**42.** These are, and are called, true shepherds, because they preach not themselves, but Christ, and hence are the mouth of Christ, as he himself says in <sup><4010></sup>Matthew 10:20: "It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you;" and again in <sup><4215></sup>Luke 21:15: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or gainsay," that is, it shall not be your mouth, but I will prepare your mouth that it shall be full of wisdom given by me, and shall speak by me. For this is the clap of thunder by which everything that is not of this doctrine and quality is laid low so that it serves and avails nothing for the life to come. It may in other respects be good to keep people under restraint or to bring them to a knowledge of their faults. For what is it that a man, pope or Turk can do in the face of eternal death and hell!

**43.** Hereby the pope's government and all doctrines of men are stormed and overthrown. However, we do not antagonize them because they do not keep their own commandments and doctrine; for against this they always have the defense that, although their life is censurable, their doctrine is good and right. Hence they maintain their government by force, arguing from the words of Christ in <sup><412></sup>Matthew 23:2-3: "The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe: but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not" etc. Therefore, before we had the Gospel, we were able to accomplish nothing against them. But now that we know Christ, we are able to condemn their doctrine together with all their works.

**44.** Here now you have the distinction which Christ draws between his preaching and government and that of all others who desire to rule consciences and hearts without or independent of him. With so many words about the hireling he pictures the danger, nay more, the injury and destruction, which must follow if he is not heard and known as the only shepherd, namely, that the wolf cannot be warded off, however numerous the hirelings. For with their doctrine they cannot help or give counsel how to escape from sin and death, nor can they resist the devil: and the poor sheep must soon be eternally lost and destroyed, unless it comes to this shepherd. Therefore, he again repeats what he said at the beginning, in order to impress it upon us, that we must hold fast to his protection and pasture, that is, to his Word and ministry, and says:

“I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

## V. HOW CHRIST SETS FORTH HIS OFFICE AND GOVERNMENT IN THE MOST CHARMING MANNER.

**45.** Many, alas! too many, are called shepherds and undertake this government, which consists in feeding and leading souls; but I alone, says he again, am called and truly am the good shepherd. This means in plain words: All others besides me are not good, but are unmerciful, cruel shepherds, because they leave the sheep in the jaws of the wolf. But me you must learn to know as your dear, faithful, good, kind, sweet and comforting shepherd, towards whom your heart must be filled with laughter in the assurance that by him you are redeemed from every burden, fear, trouble and danger, and that he will not and cannot let you perish. I prove this, says he, by laying down my life for the sheep. Therefore, joyfully abide with me and let none other rule in your consciences. Listen only to me, who speak and by deeds prove this comforting word, that I will not drive, trouble or burden you like Moses and others, but will most lovingly lead and guide, protect and help you.

**46.** In this manner he ever insists on this one doctrine as the chief point of our salvation, that there is no deliverance or help apart from this shepherd,



Christ, apprehended in the faith that he alone rescues us by his death from the power of death and the devil. Therefore, this is the most necessary doctrine to be taught in the 'church. The devil is hostile to it and cannot endure that we remain with this good shepherd and in the pure sense and significance of his teaching. Therefore, he is always raging against it through his agents, with cunning and deceit, with persecution and blasphemy, with a view of tearing people away from it, just as he also opposed this teaching through the Jews. But we on the other hand, as his pious sheep, must listen to the shepherd's voice and know that, when all things fail and the counsel and help of all men come to naught, we are safe and are preserved by faith in this shepherd, who laid down his life for us. He also concludes concerning his sheep, that is, the whole church, that he knows them and they know him:

*“I know mine own, and mine own know me.”*

**47.** This is, indeed, strange language, and naturally was singular and ridiculous to the Jews, just as when he had said that he alone was the shepherd. Without doubt they scornfully curled their lips at it and said: You talk much about your shepherd's office and your sheep. Man, where have you your sheep and where are they to be found? We have a nation and a flock, who adhere to the temple and the service instituted by God, and keep the Law of Moses. By this they are organized into a fold; so that they can be known and named. But where are yours? How are they known? What are they like? Give them a name and sign. No, says he, you shall not know them in the way that you conceive. Your sheep have their marks, by which they are known and distinguished: they are circumcised, they come to the temple at Jerusalem etc. But my sheep have another mark, not made or painted with colors and red ochre, so as to be visible on the forehead or on the wool. The pope, also, imitating the Jews, makes and marks such a church and Christians that everybody may know them by their outward conduct and life. No, it will not do, he means to say, to indicate them with the mark and seal which you put upon them or Moses puts upon them; but they are so marked and distinguished that nobody knows them except me alone.

**48.** Although Christians also have external marks, given by Christ, to-wit, baptism, the sacrament and the preaching of the Gospel, these may fail when we have to judge any individual minutely. For many a one has been baptized, hears the Gospel, and goes to the sacrament with others, and yet

is a rogue and no Christian. But the distinguishing mark is this alone, that the faith that looks upon Christ as the shepherd dwells within the heart. But who knows this? You cannot see it in me, nor I in you; for nobody can look into the heart of another. So, then, it remains true that nobody knows or is able to describe these sheep and this flock, except this shepherd, Christ, alone. Again, my sheep alone know me, says he, and so know me that they do not allow themselves to be turned or torn from me, but abide in the faith, confession and doctrine that I am the shepherd and give my life for them against the devil, the world, death and hell.

**49.** Now, here again he overturns Judaism with its law and priesthood, and still more our papacy with all that belongs to it, and deprives them of the power of ruling and of judging his flock. He simply will not have himself and his church ruled by them, and therefore rejects and condemns all such judgment as they, according to Moses or any other external order and government, wish to pronounce in regard to who are Christians or not Christians and God's people. On the contrary, he tells them that they neither shall nor can know his sheep, yet he will have and preserve his church, although they know and receive neither shepherd nor sheep, but reject and condemn both, as cut off from the people of God.

**50.** Moreover, he gives us the criterion by which we are to distinguish the true church or people of God from that which has the name and reputation but in truth is not the church. He teaches us that the church neither is nor ought to be a society which must be organized with an external government and order, like the Jewish people under the Law of Moses. Nor does it exist, nor is it governed and preserved, by outward human power; much less is it bound to a regular succession or government of bishops or their successors, as the papacy claims. It is a spiritual assembly, which hears this shepherd and believes in him, and is governed by him through the Holy Spirit. It is outwardly recognized by this alone, that it has his Word, that is, the preaching of the Gospel, and his sacraments. Inwardly it is known to him alone, as in turn it also knows him by faith and clings to him when it hears his Word, regardless of the fact that it may neither maintain nor even know anything of that outward Jewish or papistical government and order, and may be scattered here and there in the world without any organized external government; as in fact it was in the time of Christ and the apostles, who, apart from and in opposition to the regular power of the whole priesthood, believed in Christ and confessed him.

**51.** Therefore, if you wish really to know what a Christian is or why a man is called a Christian, and to give a true definition of the same you must not look to the Law of Moses the government of the pope, nor the life and sanctity of any man, however holy. But you must look alone to this Word of Christ, where he says: “My sheep know me, and my sheep hear my voice.” Then you will say: A Christian is not one who leads a strict, severe, earnest Carthusian or hermit life; for Jews and Turks can also do that, some of whom do live even more strictly. In short, nothing that is in us or can be done by us, makes a Christian. What then? This alone, that one knows this man, and regards him and trusts him as he wishes to be considered, namely, as the good shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep and knows them.

**52.** This knowledge is nothing else than faith, which arises from the ministry of the Word. The Word consists not of our own thoughts nor does it come from men; but it was brought from heaven and was revealed by Christ himself, as he said to Peter in ~~10:17~~ Matthew 16:17: “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee” etc. These two must always come together and agree: his Word and our faith. For if he were not to reveal himself by his Word nor let his voice be heard, we would know nothing of the shepherd. I say, in this way and in no other does a man become a Christian, when he hears this voice alone, and knows no other shepherd and allows no other to be fashioned for him, whatever his fame and luster, but grasps this image alone in his heart. And all the sheep of Christ without distinction have this one color and form, whereby they are to be identified, and are like each other in this, that they believe on this shepherd and confess his Word, although externally they differ in many respects, and are scattered here and there in the world without order and are spread abroad among different peoples.

**53.** Hence we derive this comfort, that if anyone knows Christ in this way, he is certainly one of his sheep, and is already known by him and elected to be a sheep. He ought and needs not to seek and to look further how he may become a sheep, nor to worry and torment himself with the vain thought of whether or no he is elected and how he may become certain of salvation. But he ought joyfully to comfort himself and be secure in this, that if he hears the voice of Christ, he has in him a dear shepherd who knows him, that is, cares for him as his sheep, provides for him, protects and saves him, so that he need have no fear of the devil, hell and death. This knowledge of his sheep and its power he further explains with

comforting words and says: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.”

**54.** And for still greater comfort he adds: “Even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father.” It is a glorious, comforting knowledge with which the Father knows his dear Son in inexpressible, unfathomable, eternal love, as he publicly testified by the voice from heaven and said: “This is my beloved Son,” <sup><4017></sup>Matthew 3:17. So that for his sake he took pity and had mercy on the human race, when it had fallen into eternal wrath and condemnation and was in danger of being eternally lost; as St. Paul says in <sup><4006></sup>Ephesians 1:6: “Which (grace) he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” etc. In the same manner Christ also knows us with a like inexpressible love, as from the beginning he loved the human race, and therefore most deeply humbled himself beneath all men and even beneath sin and death, and endured the wrath of God for us, that God might not permit the devil to keep us in his bonds and in everlasting condemnation.

**55.** Since now, the Father knows Christ in this way, and Christ in the same manner also knows us, his sheep, the knowledge which comes to us from the Father through Christ and that whereby we should know the Father’s heart toward us through Christ, become one and the same. That is to say, as he loves Christ his Son, so he cherishes toward us, who know Christ as sheep know their shepherd, true paternal love, in order that we may know that it is not his will that we should be lost or condemned if only we believe in his Son whom he has given for us. For he cannot hate his Son; and he sent him from heaven that through his blood and death he might deliver us from sin.

**56.** This is truly a high and glorious consolation. But it is also a very spiritual, that is, hidden and secret, knowledge in our eyes and thoughts, to believe that both Christ and the Father know us in this way. For to all human eyes it is deeply buried under manifold scorn, weakness and hostile opinions of the world and of our flesh and blood. In the world they take offense at this kingdom of Christ and his church, because it does not accord with their wisdom and is not organized and regulated as in their opinion it should be regulated if it is to be God’s government and work. Indeed, because its course is contrary to reason, sense and thought, the world regards the doctrine as pure folly and delusion, and condemns and persecutes all who adhere to it and are unwilling to follow the world’s own

opinion. Not only is Christ hidden from the world, but a still harder thing is it that in such trials Christ conceals himself even from his church, and acts as if he had forgotten, aye, had entirely forsaken and rejected it, since he permits it to be oppressed under the cross and subjected to all the cruelty of the world, while its enemies boast, glory and rejoice over it, as we shall hear in the next Gospel. Moreover, Christians must suffer themselves to be especially tormented by the devil inwardly, in their hearts, with the terrors of their sin and God's wrath, and so must endure every misfortune and the tortures of hell; not to mention what they are otherwise compelled to feel and see in themselves and among their own brethren in the way of weaknesses and faults in both faith and life, and whatever scandal the devil can cause.

**57.** Under these circumstances, who knows the sheep, or regards them as such, seeing they are so deeply buried and overwhelmed with suffering, shame, disgrace, death, scandal etc., that they are concealed even from each other? Certainly nobody but Christ alone. He tells them, and comforts them by it, that notwithstanding all that excites the displeasure of the world and our own flesh and blood, he nevertheless knows his sheep, and neither forgets nor forsakes them, although so it seems.

**58.** And in order to impress this more deeply upon us, he adds a comparison and says: "Even as the Father knoweth me." This is truly also a deep, hidden knowledge, that God the Father knew his only begotten and beloved Son, when like the child of the poorest beggar he had to lie in the manger, not only unknown by his entire people, but cast out and rejected; or when he hung in the air most disgracefully and ignominiously, naked and bare, between two murderers, as the most wicked blasphemer of God, and a rebel, cursed by God and all the world, so that he was compelled to cry out to him in great agony: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" <sup>41246</sup> Matthew 27:46. Nevertheless, he says here: My Father knoweth me, precisely in this suffering, disgrace and offensive form, as his only Son, sent by him to be the sacrifice and to offer up my soul for the salvation and redemption of the sheep. Likewise I know him, and am aware that he has not forgotten and forsaken me, but that he will lead me through and out of disgrace, the cross and death to eternal honor, life and glory. In the same way my sheep shall also learn to know me in their misery, shame, suffering and death, as their dear, faithful Savior, who has suffered in like manner and given his life for them. They shall trust me with assurance that in their distresses they are not forsaken or forgotten by me, as reason and the

world imagine; but that in all this I will wonderfully preserve them and thereby bring them to eternal victory and glory.

**59.** Behold, this is the true knowledge of Christ, with which he knows us and we are known by him. High and glorious wisdom! But for the reason and thought of the world it is far too deeply buried and hidden. It is comprehended by faith alone, which must here undergo a great conflict in order to keep this knowledge and to increase in it, lest by the great occasion for stumbling which appears here it be drawn away from Christ; as he himself admonishes in <sup>4006</sup>Matthew 11:6: “Blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me.”

**60.** Here we are also to learn, as I have often said, that we must not judge of the kingdom of Christ and his church by the outward appearance and with the judgment of reason and human wisdom. For here you are told that this knowledge of the sheep belongs to Christ alone, and that it is as much hidden to reason under the greatest offense as he himself was when hanging on the cross.

**61.** Therefore, the presumption of the mad, proud, sanctimonious and unreasonable wisecracker is to be rebuked, who with their arrogant judgment are already to secure and condemn Christians who possess the teaching of the Gospel and faith in purity, when they detect in these any weakness or fault. In their minds they picture a church which has only perfect, heavenly saints, without any fault, defect or offense — a manifestly impossible thing in this life. For even if the devil be not always busy sowing his seed in the true church through his sects and false saints, there are many Christians who are still weak in faith and show many infirmities in life; yea, even the greatest saints, who are pure in faith and irreproachable in life, find and feel in themselves many a weakness and remaining sinful inclination, and find cause enough for grief and conflict in overcoming this offense in themselves.

**62.** Particularly they who fill the office of the church as preachers and pastors, are to learn here how they ought to conduct themselves toward the weak and erring, so that they may learn to know them as Christ knows us. That is to say, they ought not to be harsh and rude towards them, forcing and scolding them, or condemning them if everything is not always just right; but they ought to deal gently and tenderly with them and bear their weaknesses until they grow stronger. Wherefore, the prophet Ezekiel also rebukes the priests and those to whom God committed the office of

shepherd, because they ruled over the sheep harshly and rigorously, and did not nurture the weak, nor heal the sick, nor bind up the wounded: nor restore the erring, nor seek the lost, and says (~~2815~~ Ezekiel 34:15-16): “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick” etc. Hereby he shows that God also has in his flock the weak, the wounded, the erring, aye, even the lost. Still he recognizes these as his sheep, and will not have them rejected, but nurtured, bound up, healed and restored. And because they, wishing to rule strictly and rigorously, according to the government of Moses and by enforcement of the Law, failed to do this, he gives the promise of the kingdom of Christ, in which he will himself rule and feed his sheep, by the Gospel, through the true shepherd, Christ:

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.”

**63.** Concerning these words we said in the beginning that with them Christ bids farewell to the Jews with their synagogue, the people and priesthood, who adhere to Moses, and declares that, although they do not receive him and regard him as their shepherd, which he was ordained of God to be, even by the testimony of Moses, he would still find sheep, both among them and, because they are not willing, among others who are not called God’s people nor know ought of Moses, that is, the gentiles. As he had also announced before through the prophets (~~28123~~ Hosea 2:23): “I will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people.” And “I will move them to jealousy with those that are not a people.” ~~65221~~ Deuteronomy 32:21. These, says he, will I bring, not to hear Moses and you, but to hear my voice and so through my Word to become my sheep, even though they do not come hither nor receive circumcision and the government of Moses, nor even have me visibly and bodily present with them. In this way all shall be, in one word, faith and Spirit, one flock under Christ, the only shepherd, and shall be subject to nobody else. This work began at his ascension, and will be in course of fulfillment daily until the end of time.

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER (JUBILATE).

This sermon is not found in edition c. The appendix is found in a letter of a certain Nather to his father in 1531, that the Word of God is not only hearing, but hearing and doing.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:57; Walch Edition 2:1133; St. Louis Walch, 2:829.

*Text: <sup><B1616></sup>John 16:16-23. A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me. Some of his disciples therefore said one to another, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? We know not what he saith. Jesus perceived that they were desirous to ask him, and he said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves concerning this, that I said, A little while, and ye shall behold me not, and again a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world. And ye therefore now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you. And in that day ye shall ask me no question. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name.*

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## SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL.

1. An upright, true faith is tested and confirmed in trials; for then we realize how far Christ is from us.

2. Trial is the more bitter to us and the more sad because it seems to us that God is on the other side, with our enemies and persecutors. Therefore Christ says to his disciples: "The world shall rejoice but ye shall be sorrowful."

3. However, from these words we have on the other hand consolation, when he says: "But your sorrow shall be turned into joy." The sorrow of believers and of the pious is only temporal; their joy, however, is eternal. The joy of unbelievers and of the godless is temporal and transitory; but their sorrow has no end. It lasts forever.

4. In all trials and adversity we should be comforted by the parable the Lord here puts forth of the woman in travail.

## I. WHAT MOVED CHRIST TO DELIVER THIS SERMON OF COMFORT.

1. Here in this Gospel we see how the Lord comforts and imparts courage to his children whom he is about to leave behind him, when they would come in fear and distress on account of his death or of their backsliding. We also notice what induced the evangelist John to use so many words that he indeed repeats one expression four times, which according to our thinking he might have expressed in fewer words. There is first of all

presented to us here the nature of the true Christian in the example of the dear apostles. In the second place, how the suffering and the resurrection of Christ are to become effective in us.

**2.** We also see that Christ announces to his disciples, how sorrowful they should be because he would leave them, but they are still so simpleminded and ignorant, and also so sorrowful on account of his recent conversation at the Last Supper, that they did not understand at all what he said unto them; yea, the nature of that which Christ presents to them is too great and incomprehensible for them. And it was also necessary that they should first become sorrowful before they could rejoice, even as Christ himself was an example to us that without the cross we could not enter into glory. Hence he says in <sup>(23)</sup>Luke 24:26 to the two, with whom he journeyed to Emmaus: “Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?” If therefore the dear disciples were to have joy, they must first of all pass through great sorrow. But this joy came to them through the Lord Jesus; for it is decreed in the Gospel, that without Christ there is no joy; and on the other hand, where Christ is, there is no sorrow, as is plainly stated in the text. Hence when Christ was taken from them, they were in great sorrow.

**3.** And these words here in this Gospel Christ the Lord spoke unto his disciples after the Last Supper, before he was apprehended. Let us look at them:

*“A little while and ye behold me no more, and again a little while and ye shall see me, for I go to the Father.”*

## II. THE SERMON OF COMFORT ITSELF.

### A. CONTENTS OF THIS SERMON.

**4.** “A little while,” he says, “and ye behold me no more,” for I shall be taken prisoner and they shall deliver me to death. But it will not last long, and during this short time ye shall be sorrowful, but only remain steadfast in me and follow me. It will soon have an end. Three days I will be in the grave; then the world will rejoice as though it had gained a victory, but ye shall be sorrowful and shall weep and lament. “And again a little while, and ye shall see me; and, Because I go to the Father.” That is, on the third day

I will rise again; then ye shall rejoice and your joy no man shall take from you, and this will not be a joy of only three days, like the joy of the world, but an eternal joy. Thus the Evangelist John most beautifully expresses the death and resurrection of Christ in these words, when Christ says, “A little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see me; and, Because I go to the Father.”

**5.** An example is here given us, which we should diligently lay hold of and take to heart; if it went with us as it did in the time of the apostles, that we should be in suffering, anxiety and distress, we should also remember to be strong and to rejoice because Christ will arise again. We know that this has come to pass; but the disciples did not know how he should be raised, or what he meant by the resurrection, hence they were so sorrowful and so sad. They heard indeed that they should see him, but they did not understand what it was or how it should come to pass. Therefore they said among themselves, “What is this that he saith to us, A little while? We know not what he saith.” To such an extent had sadness and sorrow overcome them, that they quite despaired, and knew not what these words meant and how they would see him again.

**6.** Therefore we must also feel within us this “*a little while*” as the dear disciples felt it, for this is written for our example and instruction, so that we may thereby be comforted and be made better. And we should use this as a familiar adage among ourselves; yea, we should feel and experience it, so that we might at all times say, God is at times near and at times he has vanished out of sight. At times I remember how the Word seems neither to move me nor to apply to me. It passes by; I give no heed to it. But to this “*a little while*” we must give heed and pay attention, so that we may remain strong and steadfast. We will experience the same as the disciples. We cannot do otherwise than is written here; even as the disciples were not able to do otherwise.

**7.** The first “*a little while*” in that he says, “A little while, and ye shall behold me no more,” they could soon afterwards understand, when they saw that he was taken prisoner and put to death, but the second “*a little while*” in that he says: “And again a little while, and ye shall see me,” that they could not understand, and we also cannot understand it. Yea and when he says: “Because I go to the Father,” that they understand still less. Thus it also goes with us: although we know and hear that trials, misfortune and sorrow endure but a little while, yet we see that it

constantly appears different than we believe. Then we despair and waver, and cannot be reconciled to it. We hear and we know very well that it shall not last very long, but how that result shall be accomplished we can never understand, as the disciples here cannot understand it.

**8.** But since they are unable to understand it why does Christ relate it to them or why is it written? In order that we should not despair but hold fast to the Word, assured that it is indeed thus and not otherwise, even though it seems to be different. And although we do at times depart from the Word, we should not therefore remain altogether away from it, but return again, for he makes good his Word. Even though man cannot believe it, God will nevertheless help him to believe it, and this he does without man's reason or free will and without man adding anything thereto. Yea, the Evangelist tells us that the disciples could not understand the words the Lord spoke to them; how much less could they understand his works which followed afterwards. So very little does the free will and understanding of man know of the things pertaining to the salvation of the soul. These temporal things the free will can perceive and know, such as the cock crowing, which he can hear and his reason can also understand it; but when it is a question of understanding the work and Word of God, then human reason must give it up; it cannot make head or tail of it, although it pretends to understand a great deal about it. The glory thereof is too bright, the longer he beholds it the blinder he becomes.

**9.** This is presented very plainly to our minds in the disciples who, though they had been so long with the Lord, yet they did not understand what he said to them. Well, neither will we be able to learn nor to understand this until we experience it; as when we say, Such and such a thing happened to me; this I felt and thus it went with me, then I was in anxiety; but it did not last long. Then I was encompassed by this temptation and by that adversity, but God delivered me soon out of them etc.

**10.** We should take to heart and firmly hold fast to these words and keep them in mind when in sorrow and distress, that it will not last long, then we would also have more constant joy, for as Christ and his elect had their "a little while," so you and I and everyone will have his "a little while." Pilate and Herod will not crucify you, but in the same manner as the devil used them, so he will also use your persecutors. Therefore when your trials come, you must not immediately think how you are to be delivered out of

them. God will help you in due time. Only wait. It is only for a little while, he will not delay long.

**11.** But you must not lay the cross and sorrow upon yourself as some have indeed done, who chose for themselves death and imprisonment, and said, Christ willingly entered into death; he willingly permitted himself to be apprehended and delivered. I will also do the same. No, you dare not do this. Your cross and suffering will not long delay coming. These good people did not understand it. The dear disciples also said in <sup>4155</sup>Matthew 26:35 that they would remain with Christ and die with him. Peter said in <sup>4137</sup>John 13:37 he would not deny Christ, or would give his life for him; but how was it in the end? Christ went into the garden, trembled and quaked, was apprehended, put to death; Peter however forsook him. Where was now this great confidence, this boldness and courage of Peter? He thought Christ would die with joyful courage, and he would also follow him, but alas he was badly mistaken.

**12.** Here you easily see that the sorrow and sufferings, in which we expected to remain permanently, were of our own choosing, but when the hour finally comes, of which you never thought before, you will hardly be able to stand, unless you become a new man. The old Adam despairs, he does not abide, he cannot abide, for it goes against his nature, against his purpose and against his designs. Hence you must have your own time, then you must suffer a little. For Christ withdraws himself from you and permits you to remain in the power of sin, of death and of hell. There the heart cannot accomplish very much to calm the conscience, do whatever it will, for Christ departs and dies. Then you will have the refrain, "A little while, and ye shall not behold me." Where will you go? There is no comfort. There is no help. You are in the midst of sin; in the midst of death; in the midst of hell. If Christ would not come now independent of any merit of your own, then you would be compelled to remain in this tribulation and terror eternally, for thus it would have happened also to the disciples, if Christ had not risen from the dead and become alive. Therefore it was necessary for him again to arise from the dead.

**13.** Now this everyone must experience and suffer, either now or upon his deathbed when he dies, but how much better it is to experience it now, for when at some future time we shall be cast into the fire for the sake of the Gospel and be counted as heretics, then we shall see of what profit this is; for if the heart is not strong at such a time, what shall become of us, for

there our eyes shall see the torture and the terror of death. Whither shall we go? Therefore if Christ is not present, and if he should then withdraw his hand we are already lost; but if he is with us to help, the flesh may indeed die, but all is well with the soul, for Christ has taken it to himself. There it is safe, no one shall pluck it out of his hand. ~~6:18~~ John 10:28.

**14.** But this we cannot accomplish with words, an experiences here needed for that. Well it is for him who experience this now, then surely it will not be hard for him to die. It is very perilous indeed if we must learn this upon our deathbed, namely, how to wrestle with and conquer death. Therefore it was indeed a great favor and mercy of God, which he showed to the holy martyrs and apostles in whom he had first conquered death, then afterwards they were prepared without fear to suffer everything that could be laid upon them.

## **B. THIS SERMON OF COMFORT EXPLAINED.**

**15.** All this is presented to us in our Gospel, but since the disciples could not understand what he meant in that he said “A little while” and he noticed that they were desirous to ask him, he continues and explains it to them in these simple words and says,

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”

**16.** This is spoken to all Christians, for every Christian must have temptations, trials, anxieties, adversities, sorrows, come what may. Therefore he mentions here no sorrow nor trial, he simply says they shall weep, lament, and be sorrowful, for the Christian has many persecutions. Some are suffering loss of goods; others there are whose character is suffering ignominy and scorn; some are drowned, others are burned; some are beheaded; one perishes in this manner, and another in that; it is therefore the lot of the Christian constantly to suffer misfortune, persecution, trials and adversity. This is the rod or fox tail with which they are punished. They dare not look for anything better as long as they are here. This is the court color by which the Christian is recognized, and if anyone wants to be a Christian, he dare not be ashamed of his court color or livery.

**17.** Why does God do this and permit his own to be persecuted and hounded? In order to suppress and subdue the free will, so that it may not seek an expedient in their works; but rather become a fool in God's works and learn thereby to trust and depend upon God alone.

**18.** Therefore when this now comes to pass, we shall not be able to accommodate ourselves to it, and shall not understand it, unless Christ himself awakens us and makes us cheerful, so that his resurrection becomes effective in us, and all our works fall to pieces and be as nothing. Therefore the text here concludes powerfully, that man is absolutely nothing in his own strength. Here everything is condemned and thrust down that has been and may still be preached about good works; for this is the conclusion; where Christ is not, there is nothing. Ask St. Peter how he was disposed when Christ was not with him. What good works did he do? He denied Christ. He renounced him with an oath. Like good works we do, when we have not Christ with us.

**19.** Thus all serves to the end that we should accustom ourselves to build alone upon Christ, and to depend upon no other work, upon no other creature, whether in heaven or upon earth. In this name alone are we preserved and blessed, and in none other. ~~4012~~ Acts 4:12 and ~~4106~~ Acts 10:43. But on this account we must suffer much. The worst of all is, that we must not only suffer shame, persecution and death; but that the world rejoices because of our great loss and misfortunes. This is indeed very hard and bitter. Surely it shall thus come to pass, for the world will rejoice when it goes ill with us; but this comfort we have that their joy shall not last long, and our sorrow shall be turned into eternal joy. Of this the Lord gives us a beautiful parable of the woman in travail, when he says:

“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come, but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world.”

### **C. THIS SERMON OF COMFORT IS ILLUSTRATED BY A PARABLE.**

**20.** With this parable he also shows that our own works are nothing, for here we see that if all women came to the help of this woman in travail, they would accomplish nothing. Here free will is at its end and is unable to accomplish anything, or to give any advice. It is not in the power of the woman to be delivered of the child, but she feels that it is wholly in the



hand and power of God. When he helps and works, then something is accomplished, but where he does not help, all is lost, even if the whole world were present. In this God shows to the woman her power, her ability and her strength. Before this, she could dance and leap; she rejoiced and was happy, but now she sees how God must do all. Hereby we perceive that God is our Father, who also must deliver us from the womb and bring us forth to life.

**21.** Christ says here to his disciples, So it will also go with you. The woman is here in such a state of mind that she is fearful of great danger, and yet she knows that the whole work lies in the hands of God; in him she trusts; upon him it is she depends; he also helps her and accomplishes the work, which the whole world could not do, and she thinks of nothing but the time that shall follow, when she shall again rejoice; and her heart feels and says, A dangerous hour is at hand, but afterwards it will be well. Courage and' the heart press through all obstacles. Thus it will also be with you, when you are in sorrow and adversity, and when you become new creatures. Only quietly wait and permit God to work. He will accomplish everything without your assistance.

**22.** This parable of the woman is a strong and stubborn argument against free will, that it is entirely powerless and without strength in the things pertaining to the salvation of our souls. The Gospel shows very plainly that divine strength and grace are needed. Man's free will is entirely too weak and insignificant to accomplish anything here. But we have established our own orders and regulations instead of the Gospel and through these we want to free ourselves from sin, from death, from hell, and from all misfortune and finally be saved thereby. A great mistake.

**23.** Here you see in this example, that if a man is to be born the mother must become first as though she were dead; that is, she must be in a condition as though she were already dead, she thinks it is now all over with her. Thus it shall be also with us. If we want to become godly, we must be as dead, and despair of all our works, yea, never think that we shall be able to accomplish anything. Here no monastic life, no priest-craft and no works will be able to help; but wait thou patiently and permit God to do with you according to his will. He shall accomplish it; permit him to work, We shall accomplish nothing ourselves, but at times we shall feel death and hell. This the ungodly shall also feel, but they do not believe that God is present in it and wants to help them. Just as the woman here

accomplishes nothing, she only feels pain, distress and misery; but she cannot help herself out of this state.

**24.** But when delivered of the child she remembers no more her sorrow and pain, but is as though she had become alive again. She could not before even think that her sorrow and pain should have an end so soon. Thus it is also with us in the trials of sin, of death, and of hell; then we are as though we were dead; yea, we are in the midst of death, and Christ has forsaken us. He has gone a little while from us. Then we are in great pain and cannot help ourselves; but when Christ returns, and makes himself known to us, our hearts are full of joy, even though the whole world be to the contrary.

**25.** This no one can realize unless he has once been encompassed by death. He who has once been delivered from death must then rejoice; not that such a person cannot again fall and be sorrowful at times, but since this joy is at hand he worries about nothing. He also fears nothing, no matter by what dangers he may be surrounded. This joy can indeed be interrupted, for when I fall again into sin, then I fear even a driven leaf. <sup>(1336)</sup> Leviticus 26:36. Why? Because Christ has departed a little while from me and has forsaken me; but I will not despair, for this joy will return again. I must not then continue and cling to the pope, nor endeavor to help myself by works; but I must quietly wait until Christ comes again, tie remains but a little while without. When he then looks again upon the heart and appears and shines into it, the joy returns. Then shall I be able to meet every misfortune and terror.

**26.** All this is said and written that we may be conscious of our weakness and inability, and that as far as our works are concerned all is nothing, all is utterly lost. But this joy is almighty and eternal when we are dead; but now in this life it is mixed. Now I fall and then I rise again, and it cannot be eternal, because flesh and blood are still with me. Therefore Christ says to his disciples:

*“And ye now have sorrow, but I will see you again,  
and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”*

**27.** All this David has described in a psalm in a most masterly and beautiful manner, when he says in <sup>(1337)</sup> Psalm 30:1-8: “I will extol thee, O Jehovah, for thou hast raised me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Jehovah, my God: I cried unto thee and thou hast healed me. O Jehovah,

thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol, thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Sing praise unto Jehovah, O ye saints of his, and give thanks to his holy memorial name for his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime; weeping may tarry for the night, but joy cometh in the morning. As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved. Thou, Jehovah, of thy favor hadst made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face; I was troubled. I cried to Thee, O Jehovah; and unto Jehovah I made supplication.” Where is now the man who just said: “I shall never be moved?” Well, he replies, when thou, Jehovah, of thy favor didst make my mountains to stand strong, then I spoke thus. “But when thou didst hide thy face, I was troubled,” I fell. If Christ were continually with us, I really believe we would never be afraid; but since he occasionally departs from us we must therefore at times be afraid.

**28.** In this Psalm is beautifully portrayed to us how to recognize and experience a good conscience, for here David considers the whole world as a drop, and is not the least afraid of it, even though it should storm and rage against him, for he has the Lord with him. He has made his mountain to stand strong, but when he fell and the Lord hid his face from him, then he was afraid. Then were heart, courage, and mountain gone. Then was he afraid of a driven leaf, who before was not afraid of the whole world, as he also says in another psalm unto the Lord: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” <sup><4234></sup>Psalm 23:4. Likewise in <sup><4916></sup>Psalm 3:6 he says: “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people that have set themselves against me round about.” Passages like these can be multiplied in the Psalms, all of which show how an upright good conscience stands, namely; when God is with it, it is courageous and brave, but when God has departed, it is fearful and terrified.

**29.** Here we rightly understand now what the words of Christ signify, “I go to the Father.” Before this no one understood them, not even the disciples. But this is the road: I must die, he saith, and ye must also die. Peter vowed boastfully; for according to the old Adam he wanted to die with the Lord, and we all think we want to die with Christ, as all the other disciples said that they would enter into death with Christ. <sup><4155></sup>Matthew 26:35. But all this must perish in us. You must come to the moment of trial, when Christ does not stand by you and does not die with you, when you cannot help yourself, just like the woman in travail. When this takes place, then you

come to the Father. That is, you are filled with his power, and he makes a new man of you, who thereafter is not afraid, whose character is already here a heavenly character, as St. Paul calls it in <sup><small>3080</small>Philippians 3:20; and this has its beginning here, by faith. Then you become courageous and brave, and can say as the prophet in the Psalm, “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,” and “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.” Why all this? Because you have come to the Father. Who can now overthrow God’s omnipotence? No one. Aye, then no one can do anything to you or cause you any harm.</sup>

**30.** This no one will understand until it has come to pass. Have you been encompassed by death and been delivered from it, then you will say, I was in death, and if the Lord had not delivered me, I would have remained in death’s grasp forever. The entire thirtieth Psalm refers to this, which you will do well to examine thoroughly and consider faithfully.

**31.** Here you have now the fruit and the example of the death and the resurrection of Christ, and how free will is nothing, and everything reason concludes regarding these things, which pertain to our salvation. May God give grace that we may lay hold of it and regulate our lives accordingly, Amen.

## APPENDIX TO THE FOREGOING SERMON.

### CHRIST.

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice” etc.* <sup><small>3180</small>John 16:20.</sup>

**1.** No one should lay his cross upon himself, as some foolish persons have done and are still doing. They even court the prison and death, and say: Since Christ of his own free will entered death, I will follow him in his example as he commanded us to do. There is no need whatever to do this, for your martyrdom and cross will not be wanting. Such people, however, do not understand divine things, they think they will suddenly enter death with Christ, whom they have never learned to know except in words. Thus was Peter also disposed, but he stood before Christ like a rabbit before one beating a drum. Notice, how the old Adam lacks courage when under the cross! The new man, however, can indeed persevere through grace. In

suffer{rig pious persons have no aim of their own, but if it be God's will they bear good fruit like the tree planted by the streams of water; and that is pleasing to God, and besides all presumption is condemned, all show and every excuse however good they may be. But he who battles heroically will receive for his suffering here joy, the eternal in place of the temporal. Of this Christ says: "Your joy shall be turned into sorrow."

**2.** This saying of Christ is addressed to all Christians in general. For things may go well or ill, still a Christian must contend with persecution, need, distress and opposition. Moreover Christ does not specify here any special punishment, cross or martyrdom; hence he says simply: You will weep, lament and be sorrowful; for Christians suffer many kinds of persecutions. Some have their property damaged, others have their name dishonored, some are drowned, others burned or beheaded. Thus Christians die, being put to death by many different hands, each with greater contempt than the other, so that misfortune, persecution and adversity are constantly weighing upon the neck of Christians, by which they are stricken, and there is nothing more certain for them to hope for as long as they crawl here upon the earth. And this is the court-dress by which Christians are identified. Now, whoever wishes to be a Christian dare not be ashamed of his colors.

**3.** But why has God appointed his own children to be driven here and there by persecution? On account of free will, that it may be humbled to the ground and become a perfect fool in the works of God, and learn to trust in God alone; as a result give to God good works, things, and at last give ourselves and thus rightly trust in God and cling to Christ. It may, however, well grieve one that the world rejoices over our misfortunes. It is a common thing, the jay-bird can never stop jumping. But the comfort of the Christian is, that the world's joy will not last long. and that his own distress shall be changed into joy eternal. Amen.

# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

## SECOND SERMON. ~~1616~~ JOHN 16:16-23.

This sermon is not found in the editions a. b. and c. but only in the edition of 1531 r.

### CONTENTS:

#### **CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS AND RESURRECTION; THE COMFORT CHRIST MINISTERS TO HIS DISCIPLES WHILE IN SORROW, AND THE JOY OF THE WORLD.**

**1.** First, we will consider this narrative in the simplest manner, as it occurred after the Last Supper, while the Lord was in the garden on the way with his disciples to his last sufferings and death. In this historical narrative of today's Gospel the Lord preaches his death and resurrection to his disciples, the words of which narrative the disciples at the time failed to understand, these words being to them dark sayings and totally hidden from them — an experience that may easily be ours, those of us who are not yet firmly established in the faith. What, however, hindered the beloved disciples from understanding the narrative? This, namely, that they thought Christ was about to establish a temporal kingdom which would make an impression upon the world, and move along in pure, perpetual life, not in death, of which he here speaks when he says: "A little while, and ye behold me no more." As if he wished to say: I will be with you yet a little while longer, perhaps to midnight; after that I will die and be buried, and be taken out of your sight, so that you will see me no more. But again a little while and ye shall see me; that is, on the third day I will arise again and see you again, and ye shall see me again.

**2.** This is the sense according to the history, and they are very cold words if not understood in a spiritual way. Yet the Lord also comforts his disciples and says that they will be sorrowful because of his departure but

their sorrow will soon have an end. It will be with them as with a woman who lies in the pangs of childbirth; as soon as she is delivered of the child, she forgets her pain. And although this is plain and easy to understand, yet the disciples did not understand how they should fare, what the Lord meant to teach them by these words and by this parable; for such words they had never before heard. But these sayings seem simple to us now, since we often preach and apply them. Were not this the case they would be as dark to us as they were to the beloved disciples. Therefore, let us carefully examine these words and first consider what it means to go to the Father

**3.** To go to the Father means nothing but to enter upon a new life. As if Christ were to say: I will leave this life of time, of the senses, of nature and of death, and will enter upon the immortal life, where the Father will make all things subject to me, where there is no sleep, no eating, no drinking, as while I lived in the body, and yet the flesh and blood, which I took from the virgin Mary, will continue. That is, I will take to myself a spiritual government to rule the hearts of believers in spirit and faith, and not found, as you imagine, a temporal kingdom. To this spiritual rulership I cannot come except by the way of death. But, as I said, the disciples did not understand it; they thought they would lose the Lord entirely when he died. Hence they fell into grief and sorrow.

**4.** Now, here we must take heed, and also learn something from this, lest we read this narrative in vain. To the beloved disciples the greatest pain and sorrow were not that they should never again see the Lord in the body, but the fact that their hearts had lost the Lord was a greater distress and calamity. They were happy to behold the Lord in the body, but they clung much more to him with their hearts. Hence they also thought: If he disappears from our eyes, he will also disappear from our hearts. Just so was it with their joy. To see him again in the body was not the true joy; that they could hardly expect. But that they received him again spiritually and by faith into their hearts, as Savior and Comforter, was their true comfort and joy. For when he is believed in as the Savior the heart rejoices, and aside from this belief there is no help, no counsel, nor any comfort at hand.

**5.** This we see in the case of the beloved disciples when they fled and forsook and denied the Lord, and shockingly fell into the sin of unbelief. Then there was no longer a Savior before their eyes. Comfort had departed, Christ had fallen out of their sight, counsel and help were no

longer present, and they would have had to remain in this grief and doubt forever had Christ not again caused them to rejoice; for besides this Savior there is none other. Hence, when he is removed there is no other comfort to be had, and nothing but anxiety, need, despair and hell itself must be there. This was the real anxiety, grief and sorrow of the disciples.

**6.** What agony and grief, think you, they must have had when they recalled the kindness and friendship of the Lord, and the good deeds he did them, and that they were all so unfaithful to him! Then their hearts confessed: Aye, how friendly and lovingly he associated with us and showed us all exceptional love and friendship! And we have acted thus toward him, have forsaken him and are forsaken by him. Like unfaithful villains, we have denied him, have misused his teachings and grace. What will become of us? We dare not appear before God, neither can we stand before man, much less before Satan. There is now no consolation. The Savior has departed. We are in a hopeless, condemned and lost state. Observe, the beloved disciples stood in such anxiety, need and grief that no fasting, no praying, no chastisement, could have helped them. All was lost.

**7.** In like manner God deals with his children today. Whenever he wants to comfort them, he first plunges them into similar anxiety and temptation. It is agony unbearable when the conscience passes sentence against one. The heart and every refuge fail and anxiety penetrates every nook of the conscience. Anguish and fear consume the marrow and bone, flesh and blood, as the prophet David often laments in his Psalms.

**8.** But Christ does not let his disciples be long in such anguish and need. He had said, "And again a little while, and ye shall see me." This happened on Easter, when he appeared to them and offered them his peace, by which he comforted them and they forgot all the distress, fear and need which they had endured for the little while, until the third day. Narratives like this we should remember when we are in anguish and need, and have lost all hope of comfort. When man is troubled by an evil conscience because of his sins, the heart thinks it is eternal pain; and so it is, also, as man calculates, for he sees no end of it. He thinks God is against him and will not help him, and he himself will not allow God to help him. He looks about and finds no succor from any creature. Yea, he thinks all creatures are his enemies. Therefore, the heart soon concludes and says: Here is eternal anguish, here there will be no change, here there is no help, no comfort. God and everything are against me. In truth it is not so, but it is



only a transition. It will not last long. If we can only keep quiet for a little time, he will surely not remain away long with his comfort. This is the Lord's meaning when he here says to the disciples: "A little while and ye behold me no more," namely, when ye are steeped in anguish and trouble. "And again a little while, and ye shall see me," namely, when I shall visit you with my consolation and cause you to rejoice."

**9.** Since the holy disciples experienced what it was to be overwhelmed by anguish and want, we must not think that it will be better with us. God will not make an exception in our case. But let us remember that Christ foretells to his disciples their fall, fear and sorrow, and also comforts them in order that they may not despair. Thus we should likewise comfort ourselves and allow the same to be spoken to us, so that when we are taken captive by sin and feel our consciences troubled and burdened, we do not despair; but rather remember it will not continue long. Therefore this is a very comforting Gospel to all troubled and terrified consciences. First, because Christ promises here he will not let them be captives to their misery very long; then, because he shows such kindly friendship to them — casts them not quickly from his presence, although they do not at once learn and understand his discourse; but bears with them, instructs them and deals with them most tenderly.

**10.** Therefore, should a person come into like fear and misery of conscience, he ought to call to mind these words, and say: Well, a change is taking place. Christ says, A little while and ye shall see me again. It will not last long. Keep calm. It is a matter of only a short time and then Christ will permit us to see him again. But where the conscience is so terrified, one cannot grasp nor understand these words of comfort, even if he hears them. Such was the case with the disciples here. While they were in trouble they could not understand these words. It requires an effort if one is to comfort such terrified and troubled consciences. Hence the Lord uses a parable to explain his former words, in order to establish the disciples firmly in them. He takes an example of a woman in the labor of childbirth, and in such labor that she does not die from it, but brings a happy sight to the world. This is also very comforting and is spoken in order that the disciples may not despair when overtaken by temptation or fear, but may remember that, like a woman lying in travail, it will soon have an end; it is pain for only an hour or so. Christ thus, by means of this parable, makes their sorrow and trouble sweet and beautiful to his disciples.

**11.** Now we must carefully consider this example. As it is here, so is it in temptation, and especially in the perils of death. Notice how God deals with a woman suffering in childbirth. There she is left alone in her pain by everybody, and no one can help her. Yea, nothing whatever is able to rescue her from her agony; that rests in the power of God alone. The midwife and others around her may indeed comfort her, but they cannot avoid the agony. She must go through it, and venture and freely hazard her life in it, not knowing whether she shall die or recover, because of the child. There she is truly in the perils of death and completely encompassed by death. This parable St. Paul also uses in ~~1~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:3, when he tells the Thessalonians how the day of judgment will suddenly fall upon them, just like the pangs of a woman in travail, and they will not be able to escape.

**12.** Just so it is also when the conscience is in agony or when one lies in the perils of death. Then neither reason nor anything else can help. No work, whether this or that. There is no comfort. You think you are forsaken by God and everybody; yea, you imagine how God and everything are against you. Then you must restrain yourself to quiet and cling only to God, who must deliver you. Besides him nothing else, neither in heaven nor upon the earth, can deliver. The same God gives his help when he thinks it is time, as he does to the woman in travail. He gives her cheer when she no longer thinks of her pain; then joy and life are where death and all distress reigned before. In like manner God makes us happy, and gives us peace and joy where before there were misery and all kinds of sorrow. Therefore, Christ here presents to us all this example, and comforts us with it, in order that we may not despair in the time of death and temptation. It is as if he wanted to say to us: Dear man, when fear, sorrow, temptation and tribulation come, doubt not, despair not. It is only for a little time. When these are over, then follow their fruits, peace and joy.

**13.** In such sorrow and distress the beloved disciples were when the Lord departed from them. They were forsaken by everybody. They had no place of refuge. They stood in the gate of hell, expecting every hour to meet death; and they heard the judgment of God, thinking they had sinned and must now be given over to Satan. But immediately after his resurrection Christ comes and causes them to forget all their affliction and heart-sorrow. Then they become happy and go and bring forth fruit, and bestir themselves to help all mankind to the same joy. It is a beautiful example and a comforting passage of Scripture for all who experience temptation

and trouble. Such should remember that Christ says: “A little while and ye behold me no more and again a little while, and ye shall see me,” and never forget the Gospel of the woman in travail, who gladly goes through all and soon reaches the goal.

**14.** This Gospel thus arms us for temptation and tribulation, and the sum of it is, that Christ the Lord reveals himself to his own as pure love and friendship, so that they are comforted. This may ever be the case with us, since we know, and from this Gospel learn, that Christ will not forsake those overwhelmed by the perils of death and the temptations of conscience, but will come and comfort them just as he does here his disciples, not leaving them long in their distress. There is truly still hope for one who is terrified in conscience and is troubled because of his sins. But when one doubts and falls into such presumption that he feels in his heart: “There is no hope for me. It cannot be otherwise. I must be condemned. There is no help nor comfort left, do as I will” — when man is brought to this and hazards everything, it is a terrible fall. May almighty God ever protect us against such a fall! Though the sin be ever so great, if only one does not doubt he will be in no trouble. God will surely rescue him in his own good time.

**15.** Thus, you have heard here of two kinds of sorrow: The first, that of the disciple when deprived of the bodily presence of Christ; the other, our own, when his spiritual presence departs from our hearts. The first sorrow Christ removed by his resurrection; the other he removes when he causes the conscience again to rejoice. Of this he here speaks further, and says:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: ye shall be sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”

And immediately following the parable he adds:

“And ye therefore now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you.”

**16.** Here the Lord means the joy with which the conscience is again comforted and made to rejoice when Christ becomes known as a Savior. For then sorrow, sin, death, hell and all misfortune vanish. And this is not a worldly joy, as the world rejoices, sings and dances over success, but it is a heavenly and eternal true joy before God, and truly well pleasing to God.

Of this joy the prophet says in <sup><168B></sup>Psalm 68:3: “But let the righteous be glad; yea, let them rejoice with gladness.” And Christ says here to his disciples: “And your joy no one taketh away from you.” How does this come about? Thus: When Christ stands again before your eyes, and the conscience finds that it possesses the Lord, from whom it expects everything good, then nothing more can be done for him; for who will harm the heart that is thus established upon Christ? Of what should one be afraid as long as he can say: My Lord Jesus Christ is Lord over all things; over death, hell, Satan, and over everything in heaven and upon earth? As St. Paul also defiantly boasts in <sup><168B></sup>Romans 8:31-39. “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written,

For thy sake we are killed all the day long;  
We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter. (<sup><164B></sup>Psalm 44:23).

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**17.** These were the words of St. Paul. In the same spirit David also speaks in <sup><127B></sup>Psalm 27:1-3, and says: “Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers came upon me to eat up my flesh, even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, even then will I be confident.” And in <sup><123B></sup>Psalm 23:1-4 he says: “Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters, he restoreth my soul: he guideth me into the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.”

**18.** Behold, how courageous and defiant is this man! Who gave him such a valiant and defiant courage? or whence did it come to him? From the Savior alone. And the more we are driven from him, the more we cling to him. The more injury, misfortune and sorrow people cause us, the more we rejoice, for this joy is eternal; and the more they tear us from it, the greater it becomes.

**19.** Now the question may be asked, can one fall from this joy? Yes. And as soon as we fall, eternal pain is at hand, out of which, although it is in its nature eternal, yet God rescues his own. Thus the joy continues forever, but as long as the person is upon the earth he may fall from it. You should understand it thus: Christ is my Savior, if! so believe and confess. This joy is to me an eternal joy so far as I remain in it. But when Christ departs out of the heart, then the joy also departs. The grace continues, but the conscience can easily fall. I tell you this to the end that you may not be offended in the future when many of you shall fall from the Gospel and deny Christ. For wherever Christ shall be with his joy and comfort, there the cross and persecution are also soon at hand. But I fear we have neither the joy nor the persecution, since we so little appropriate the Gospel. We continue ever in our old nature and despise the dear and precious treasure of the Gospel; therefore God will visit us with greater punishment than he did the Jews, namely, with blindness and error. As Paul says to the Thessalonians: “And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” ~~2~~ 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. For God cannot allow his Gospel to be disgraced. That one should stumble he will indeed allow, but for one thus to despise his mercy he will not permit, and it is not right that he should. Therefore, it is to be feared that heresy and working of error will come, so that no one will know what is the trouble, as is already evident and will become still more so. May God restrain Satan and save us from such a visitation! Amen.

# THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

## THIRD SERMON. ~~616~~ JOHN 16:16-23.

This sermon appears in place of the two preceding in edition c. It was preached in 1542 and published in the same year in two pamphlet editions, under the title: “A sermon for Jubilate Sunday, preached before the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse, By Dr. Martin Luther, Wittenberg, 1542.” At the close are the words “Printed at Wittenberg by Nicholas Schirlenz, 1542.”

German text: Erlangen Edition 12:82; Walch Edition 2:1150; St. Louis Walch, 11:853.

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## I. CHRIST'S PASSION AND RESURRECTION.

1. This Gospel contains, and likewise pictures before us, the high and excellent work God accomplished when Christ, his only Son, died and rose again from the dead for us. Much has been said on this theme and there is much more to say. As for myself, I find that the more I study it, the less I master it. But since it is God's will that we think of him, praise his work and grace, and thank him for the same, it is proper that we speak and hear all we can about them.
2. The Lord addresses his disciples here in dark and veiled words, which they do not understand; chiefly, no doubt, because he wishes thus to admonish them and thoroughly impress these words, so seldom heard, upon them, that they may not forget. A deeper impression is made upon one by words that are seldom used than by the forms of speech in general use.
3. The result was that the disciples even repeated the words twice and asked one another what they must mean. Christ likewise repeated them, and no less than four times. Still they remained dark and unintelligible words to them until later he revealed their meaning, when he rose from the dead and bestowed upon the disciples the Holy Spirit. Then they clearly understood his words. So we now understand them, to the extent that we hear and read them; but that they should be understood to their depth, that will not be in this life. But as I said, the longer and the more one learns from them, the less one can, and the more one must, learn.
4. For the Word of God is a different government, and the Holy Scriptures a different book, from the discourses and writings of man. St. Gregory spoke truly when he uttered the fine proverb: The Scriptures are a river in which a large elephant must swim and across which a little lamb can wade on foot. For the Scriptures speak clearly and plainly enough to the common people, but to the wise and very learned they are unattainable. As St. Paul confesses concerning himself in <sup><0185></sup>Philippians 3:15.
5. And St. Peter says in <sup><0112></sup>1 Peter 1:12 that such things were announced and written in the Scriptures that even the angels have their satisfaction and enough to occupy them, in the great work that Christ, God's Son, became man, suffered death on the cross, but rose again and sits now at the right hand of the Father, Lord over all, even according to his human nature, and



governs and preserves his church against Satan's wrath and all the power of the world. We have, it is true, the words treating of this, but the angels see and understand it and therein have their eternal joy. And as they in eternity cannot behold it enough, much less can we understand it, for it is a work that is eternal, inexpressible, unmeasurable and inexhaustible.

6. This is said *de cognitione objectiva*; that is, as one sees it at a glance, as the angels view it, and as we will see it in the life beyond. But in this life we must have a different understanding of it, a practical knowledge (*cognitio practica*), that we may learn to confess what the power of this work is and what it can do. This is done by faith, which must cease in the next life, where we also shall know it by a full vision of it.

## II. THE COMFORT CHRIST MINISTERS TO HIS DISCIPLES IN THEIR SORROW, AND THE JOY OF THE WORLD.

### A. THE SORROW OF THE DISCIPLES AND THE JOY OF THE WORLD.

7. We must learn here now what it is that the Lord says: "A little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while and ye shall see me," etc. This passage is fraught with as much meaning as that other: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice," etc. "But your sorrow shall be turned into joy." A rare saying: A little while not see and be sorrowful, and yet a little while again see and be joyful.

8. According to the letter and history, it is indeed easy to understand what these words mean, especially in our day. In the confession of our faith even the children say: "I believe in Jesus Christ," etc; "was crucified, dead and buried; the third (lay he rose again from the dead." These are the two "little whiles," of which Christ here speaks. But since there is deception where we also seek, and taste it, and we should try to bring it into life or experience, the words have a wonderful depth of meaning — that we should lose Christ, whom we believe to be God's Son, who died and rose for us, etc; that he should die in us, as the apostles experienced until the third day. A terrible crucifixion and death begin when Christ dies in us and we also in him. As he here says: Ye shall not see me, for I am to depart

from you. That is, I die, hence ye also will die, in that ye will not see me; and thus I will be dead to you and you will be dead to me. This is a special, deep and severe sorrow.

**9.** As there are many kinds of joy, so there are many kinds of sorrow. As, for example, when one is robbed of his money and property, or is reviled and disgraced when innocent, or loses father and mother, child and dear friends, etc; likewise, when Satan afflicts and martyrs one's soul with sad thoughts, as Satan so easily can, though one knows not why or whence. But the really great sorrow above all sorrow is for the heart to lose Christ, so that he is no longer in view and there is no hope of further comfort from him. There are few who are so sorely tried. Surely not all even of his disciples experienced this. Perhaps not St. Thomas, St. Andrew, St. Bartholomew, and others, who were such good, common and plain people. But the other tender hearts, St. Peter, St. John, St. Philip and others, to whom these words applied, as they all had heard that they would lose Christ and never see him again.

**10.** Christ here also addresses, more than others, persons who truly believe and experience that Christ died and afterwards rose again; and it is to them a little while, in a common, small and childish sense, and only a bodily sorrow. But the disciples had to keenly feel and experience what it is to lose Christ out of view, not only to have him taken away bodily, but also spiritually, leaving them in a twofold misery and sorrow. For they had had not only the joy of his bodily presence, in that he was so long with them, cared for them, ate and drank with them, and passed through loving, sweet customs and fellowship, but he had associated so affectionately with them and had borne their weaknesses, yea, companioned with them more intimately and lovingly than a father does with his children. He often gave them remarkable liberties and even animated them by innocent trivialities. Therefore, they were pained to lose such a companionable Lord,

**11.** But the chief cause of their sorrow lay in the fact that they had set their hearts on his becoming a mighty lord and king and founding a government by which he would make them, along with himself, lords. They thought he would never suffer them to die. Such was hitherto their hearts' joy and confidence in this Savior.

**12.** Now, however, they lose both utterly and at one time, not only the friendly companionship of the Lord, but also this beautiful, glorious confidence, and they suddenly fall into the abyss of hell and eternal sorrow,

Their Lord is most shamefully put to death, and they must now expect every moment, because of him, to be seized in like manner. They must now sing this song of mourning: Alas, how our confidence is now totally lost! We hoped to become great lords through this man and possess every joy we desired. Now he lies in the grave and we are fallen into the hands of Caiaphas and Judas, and there are no more miserable and unhappy people on the earth than we.

**13.** Notice, this is the true sorrow and heart agony, of which Christ here is really speaking, into which God does not lead everyone, nor anyone so readily; for here he offers comfort against it, as he shows in this Gospel. Other bodily suffering and need may be considered sorrow, as, when one suffers persecution, imprisonment and misery for Christ's sake, and loses his property, honor and even his life. But the greatest of all sorrows is to lose Christ. Then all comfort is gone and all joy is at an end and neither heaven nor sun and moon, neither angel nor any other creature, can help you; nay not even God himself. For besides this Savior, Christ, there is none in heaven nor on earth. Now, when he has departed, all salvation and comfort are gone, and Satan has gained an opportunity to plague and terrify the troubled soul. This he desires to do in the name and person of God, as he can then play the part of a lord.

**14.** On the other hand, the highest of all joy is that which the heart has in Christ, our Savior. That is, indeed, also called joy, when one rejoices over the possession of great fortune, money and property, power, honor, etc.; but all this is but the joy of a child or of a maniac. There is also the infamous joy of Satan which even rejoices over the injury and misfortune of others, of which Christ here also says: The world will rejoice, and laugh in its sleeve over your crying and weeping when they put me to death and cause you every misfortune. There are also many like these in worldly affairs, who can never be happy unless they have brought misfortune to their neighbor or have seen him meet it. They are like the poisonous reptile, the Salamander, which (as the fable runs) is so cold that it can live in fire or can exist out of fire. So these people live and grow fat on the misfortunes of other people. The nice, envious person who is sad when another prospers, and would gladly have one eye less if thereby his neighbor had none, is the product of Satan.

**15.** But all this is still nothing compared with the joy the world, ruled by Satan, has in opposing Christ and his followers. It rejoices the most over

the great misfortune of his followers in that Christ is crucified, all the apostles are banished, the church is completely destroyed, God's Word is silenced and his name totally blotted out. This is spiritual joy just as truly as the severe sorrow is spiritual. However, it is not from the Holy Spirit, but from those who belong, body and soul, to Satan, and still are called the wisest, the most learned and the holiest persons upon the earth. They are like the high priests, Pharisees and scribes, who have no peace and know no joy so long as they hear the name of Christ mentioned and know that his Word is preached, or see one of his disciples still alive. As they say, in the Wisdom of Solomon 2:15: "He is grievous unto us even to hear or to behold," and while Christ hangs on the cross, they blaspheme and revile in great joy thus: "If thou art the Son of God, and the King of Israel, come down from the cross; he trusteth on God, let him deliver him now," etc. <sup><174></sup>Matthew 27:40-43. See how their hearts leap with joy, what a paradise and kingdom of heaven they have in seeing the dear Lord reviled on the cross and put to death; and that they themselves did it, is to them nothing but sugar and sweet grapes.

**16.** Observe, Christ here gives such joy to the world, and on the other hand severe sorrow to his disciples in that they must see, hear and suffer this. It must penetrate through their hearts, through their bodies and lives. And he truly pictures the world here to be as terrible and horrible as a child of Satan that has no greater joy than to see Christ defeated and his followers shamefully condemned and lost.

**17.** We see almost this condition now in our clever noblemen, the pope, the bishops and their rabble; how they maliciously rejoice and shout when they discover it goes a little ill with us, and how anxious they are that it under no circumstances remains concealed. It must be trumpeted forth until it reaches the abyss of hell. Dear God, what have we done to them? They still have their property and money, power and luxury, while we have hardly our daily bread. It is not enough that they are superior to us in everything they crave, while we are in other ways harassed and afflicted but they must besides be such bitter enemies to us that they do not wish us God's grace but would have us burned in the lowest fires of perdition!

**18.** It is always a horrible sight, and the true fruit of the infernal spirit, that people cannot rejoice so highly over the good nor over worldly or human joy. Yea, no gold nor silver they love so intensely, no stringed instrument sounds so sweet to them, no drink tastes so good as to yield them the joy

they feel when they see the fall and grief of pious Christians. They are so inflamed by hatred and a desire of revenge that they enjoy no really happy moment until they are able to sing: Praise be to God, the villains are at last out of the way! We have now rooted the Gospel out of the country. They have no rest and taste no joy before they have brought this about.

Heretofore they have sought and partly accomplished this by many prompt intrigues, tricks and ill offices, and God allowed some to have for a short time a little joy, which individuals [contrived and arranged. But they by no means cooled their anger in this way, as they had desired to do.

## **B. THE COMFORT CHRIST MINISTERS TO HIS DISCIPLES.**

**19.** Hence, Christ wishes to say here: You have now heard both what kind of joy the world will have, and what kind of sorrow will be yours.

Therefore, learn it and cleave to it when you meet and experience it, so that you may have patience and lay hold of true comfort in the midst of such suffering. I must try you thus and let you taste what it means to lose me and for me to die in your hearts, in order that you may learn to understand this mystery and secret; for you will otherwise not study me. It will be too great for you to serve your time of apprenticeship in this exalted work, that God's Son returns to the Father, that is, that he dies and rises again for you, to bring you to heaven. And if I do not allow you to be tried for a time, you will remain too imprudent and finally be incapable of doing right.

**20.** Therefore, he says, you must adapt and resign yourself to this, so as to experience what this "little while" means, and yet not despair and be wrecked therein. And therefore I tell you before, that it must be so. You have to pass through such sorrow inwardly and outwardly, that is, both in body and soul; but when it takes place and the hour comes that you have nothing to comfort you, and you have lost both me and God, then hold fast still to my Word that I now speak to you. It is only a matter of a little while. Now, if you can learn this saying, and retain these small words, "a little while," and "again a little while," there will be no trouble.

**21.** True, the first "little while" that you now see me and still have me with you, until I depart from you — that you can suffer and pass through. But the other "little while," until you shall see me again — that will be an especially long and hard time for you. For it is the hour of true sorrow, when I will be to you dead, with all the joy, comfort and assurance you had

from me, and you yourselves will be totally lost. However, my dear little children, only think of these words and forget not entirely what I now say to you. It shall not be so forever. A little while I shall be lost and not be seen. This you must now learn by experience. But only retain this much, that I called it “a little while,” and in my eyes it is only a little, short hour, although in your hearts and feelings it is not a little but a long while; yea, an eternally long while and a long eternal while. According to your feelings you will not be able to think differently, for when I am taken from you, you have lost all, since I am the eternal good and the eternal consolation. When that is gone, there is no longer a little while, nothing but the eternal; namely, eternal sorrow and death.

**22.** Notice, Christ preaches here for the comfort of his disciples and of all Christians when tempted thus by God, whether it takes place inwardly or outwardly, bodily or spiritually, especially in the highest form, which is called losing Christ out of the heart; that they may learn this passage, and retain this drop of the lavender water, by which to refresh and strengthen their hearts. Christ, my Lord, has surely said it shall be only a little while. Although I now lose him and know of no joy whatever, but lie prostrate and languish in pure sorrow, yet I will use that drop and cling to the cordial that he shall not continue to be lost to me. He says that it shall be only a little, short season, although it appears to me indeed to be great, long, and eternal. He will come again, as he here and in ~~4415~~ John 14:18 says: “I will not leave you orphans: I come unto you,” etc. And thus we shall possess in him eternal comfort and joy instead of this little season of sorrow.

**23.** On the other hand, Christ says further that you must endure it that the world rejoices over your suffering and sorrow, for which it has no reason except that of pure satanic jealousy, by which it is so completely blinded, embittered and exasperated that no joy relieves it until its jealousy sees you stumble and become ruined. This is its heart’s delight and pleasure and it esteems it a heavenly, eternal joy. Then it says: Let us now see whether God will save him; is he the Son of God, then let him come down from the cross, etc. ~~4415B~~ Mark 15:31-32. As if they should say: He is now out of the way, and we are done with him forever.

**24.** But notice what further follows. Just as you, he says, shall not be robbed of a view of me forever, nor remain in your sorrow, so they shall not rejoice over your misfortune forever; but it shall be for them also only a short season, and be, as they say, a dance at high mass. For I will soon

come to you again and make it worse and more bitter for them than it has ever been before. This was fulfilled in them after Christ's resurrection, so that the Jews have no severer suffering than that they must hear and see Christ, our Lord. Although it pleases them a little that they slander Christ and his mother Mary and us Christians in the most ignominious manner, yet true joy they can never possess as they desire. And they continually hope that their Messiah will come and uproot all Christians.

**25.** Thus, also, our Caiaphas and Judas, the pope, with all his factions, who continually console themselves with the hope that we shall yet be uprooted cannot be happy while we live and the Gospel spreads. Nothing that causes man to rejoice has any effect upon them. Some are so angry that they cannot cease their raging and roaring until we all are dead. When that takes place they will be once happy, but the joy for which they long shall never be theirs. For, although we are dead, the Gospel will still remain and others will take our places, and that will be to them a new heart agony.

**26.** The Turk likewise imagines he will exterminate Christ and enthrone his Mohammed in all the world, and he rejoices whenever there is any hope of doing so; but this joy he craves he shall never experience. Our Lord, whom the Turk himself highly exalts and must esteem as a great prophet, shall restrain him; yea, finally season his joy and make it bitter enough through the exalted work of his death and resurrection, by which he tramples under foot sin, death and Satan. The victory which God accomplished through Christ was long before announced in the Scriptures, whereupon the beloved prophets and fathers died in this joy, as Christ says of Abraham in ~~886~~ John 8:56.

**27.** Since Abraham received such joy before it had yet transpired, but was only in word and promise, how much more can and will he receive it in the future after it has transpired and is proclaimed in the earth and even in heaven by the angels! Neither pope nor Turk can smother and extinguish it. They may indeed try to smother it, and fancy they have a bite of sugar when they do Christendom a little harm; but they shall never obtain the joy they hope for and for which they thirst.

**28.** They may rejoice for a season, Christ says, but not longer than while you are in sorrow. That joy is particularly short, as your sorrow is short and lasts only a little while, and shall soon be turned into joy that no one will take from you. Without doubt that joy will, on the other hand, be also turned into sorrow that will never end.

**29.** Here upon the earth, however, you will not be able to have enough joy, nor will it be of the true, perfect quality that will quench your thirst. Only a foretaste, an appetizing morsel or a refreshing sip. It is too great ever to be exhausted as also the work that develops this joy is far too great to be fathomed by our learning. God mingles and tempers things thus upon the earth so that those who should by right rejoice must experience great suffering and sorrow; and, on the other hand, those who should be sorrowful here are happy and have a good time, but still in a way that this outward joy works their ruin. For they cannot acquire the true inner joy they long for, therefore their outer joy will also be their destruction. Their wealth, power, honor, pleasure and high living by no means make them happy, and they cannot lay their heads down to rest until they see that Christ is dead and his disciples are banished from the earth. These are always poor, miserable people whom one may truly pity. They fare the worst in that they cannot have their temporal joy pure, as they desire, because of their jealousy and hatred; and we even are altogether too ready to take vengeance by doing them harm. What more misfortune can they have and what greater injury can they do themselves than that they themselves should spoil and annihilate their own joy?

**30.** We also have true sorrow, both outwardly and inwardly, when Christ conceals himself from us; not like them, moved by jealousy and hatred, but because we do not possess Christ, the chief good. For this, however, there is already mingled with the sorrow the sugar that Christ speaks. Beloved, only persevere a little. It shall not be eternal, but short-lived sorrow, and soon it will be better. It is only a matter of a little while.

**31.** These words I hear, but when sorrow comes, it is stamped so deeply in the heart that I do not feel this comfort, and I fancy that it is impossible for the sorrow to have an end. However, this comfort keeps me, so that I do not fall from Christ to the other party. Though I experience grief and need, still they keep me, so that the sorrow must not be thoroughly bitter. As in the case of the others, their joy is sweetened and sugared through and through, yet it is always spoiled by wormwood and gall, so in our case sorrow has within itself its sugar and honey.

**32.** Therefore, let us continue to hear Christ and learn to understand his language, that we judge not according to our feelings, as if comfort were lost forever and sorrow had no end. That you feel and think thus, he says, I know very well; but still listen to what I say to you and learn only this



word *modicum*, a little while. Sorrow must also be felt, but it shall not harm you, besides it shall not last long. Even by this the sorrow is already sugar-coated and tempered. Later, when the “little while” has passed and triumphed, then one feels what Christ says: “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” Then the true joy of the heart commences and the soul sings an eternal Hallelujah, and Christ is Risen — a joy which will in the life beyond be perfect, without a defect and without an end.

**33.** Notice that the articles of our faith, both on the death and the resurrection of Christ, are thus set before us in this Gospel, and how the same must be put to practice by us. learned, and exercised in our deeds and our experiences, and not only heard with the ears and spoken with the mouth. Also, that we thus feel it, and such power works in us that both body and soul thereby become changed; that is, Christ dies in us and we also die in him. That is a great change, from life to death. However, then I must cleave firmly by faith to the words Christ says, “A little while,” and not only hear, but also take to heart the truth that trial will not last forever, but there will be a change from death to life when Christ again rises and lives in me and I become alive in him. Then the words shall come true, “I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you,” etc. For this meeting every Christian should be prepared whenever he is called for it; for he must experience something of it either in life or at the hour of death; so that he will then be reminded of this saying of Christ and let nothing tear this comfort out of his heart. Amen.

**34.** Whatever is to be said further on this Gospel in a textual exposition of it you can read in the explanation of the three chapters of John, the discourses Christ spoke at the Last Supper to his disciples, where this and the Gospel for the following Sunday are treated at length.

## FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER (CANTATE).

The following two sermons are not found in edition c. They first appeared in three pamphlet editions in 1523 under the title: "A sermon for the fourth Sunday after Easter, John 16, Martin Luther, Wittenberg, 1523." It appeared in the collection of 13 sermons.

German text: Erlangen Edition 12:95; Walch Edition 2:1165; St. Louis Walch 11:865.

*Text: <sup><BIB></sup>John 16:5-15. But now I go unto him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you. And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, shall come, he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak; and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you.*

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## **SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL:**

**1.** Christ's Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom and not an outward affair; consequently it excludes all confidence that one may have in the flesh, in order that it may reign through the Spirit in the hearts of believers.

**2.** The flesh always tries hard to come to honor without the cross and without any adversity.

**3.** The Holy Spirit will convict the world, that is, kills, condemns and overthrows all our doings, our sins, our righteousness, judgment and everything else that is, or appears to be, good in us.

**4.** Therefore without the Holy Spirit our doings can never displease us, and we remain thus in condemnation, and it matters not how holy and prudent we may be or appear to be in the eyes of the people.

**5.** The Holy Spirit teaches us everything we should know, and truly nothing except what Christ taught and preached. Christ has given us teachings, but without the Spirit the Word and its doctrine neither can nor

do they wish to be understood. Therefore he said better to his disciples before in <sup><6148></sup>John 14:26: “The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.”

**6.** But the Holy Spirit, says Christ, “Will convict the world in respect of sin, because they believe not in me.” Therefore it follows that unbelief is the right and true sin; other sins flow out of unbelief and are even the fruit from this root.

**7.** In the second place: “Of righteousness, because I go to the Father,” to another Kingdom, not to begin an outward one; “and ye behold me no more; for my kingdom is not of this world,” in order that the whole world may be put to shame by the Spirit; because it makes its righteousness to consist in outward things.

**8.** In the third place: “Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged”; which the world does not judge or condemn, but flatters and welcomes the devil, who is now already judged; that is, whose kingdom is already condemned, in that, error has come to the light of day through the Gospel, and becomes manifest.

**1.** The meaning of this Gospel lesson we have also often heard elsewhere; the only trouble is, the words have not generally been understood to have the meaning of things with which we are familiar. Therefore we will explain it a little, in order that one may see that the same teaching is contained in these words, that is found in all the other Gospel lessons. It is a fine Gospel, but it also requires fine students. We will omit the first part and consider what the Lord says, that the Holy Spirit is to convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, and will see what the meaning of all this is.

**2.** In the first place, we see here that the world is accused of blindness and ignorance. All those who are without the Holy Spirit, however wise they may be in matters pertaining to the things of this world, are, before God, fools and blind. They do not like to hear this; and when they are told that their doings are of no account before God, it displeases them and makes them angry, because they insist that they are in possession of reason and the natural light, which God created in them. But what does this matter to us? There are the Scriptures and the Word of God plain and clear, that the Holy Spirit is to come to ‘convict the world, because it does not know

what sin, righteousness and judgment are. Thus it is determined, there it stands; let be angry who will, Christ does not care.

**3.** It is much to be deplored that the world is convicted, not only because of its sin and want of righteousness, not being able to judge rightly, but that it does not acknowledge nor see this, to say nothing of its endeavor to alter the matter. Oh, how completely the praise of all comes to naught, who, while they endeavor to make other people pious, know not themselves what sin is! Let us take, for example, at the present day, all the schools of learning and the learned men and see whether they can tell us what that one little word “sin” is? For who has ever heard that not to believe in Christ is sin? They say, it is sin if one speaks, desires or does something against God’s will and commandment. But how does that correspond with this saying of Christ: It is sin because they do not believe on me? Therefore, they are easily convicted of the fact that they know not what sin is; and if they be ever so learned, they will not be able to explain this text.

**4.** In like manner, they are not able to know what “righteousness” is. For who has ever heard that a man should become pious and just because Christ ascended to heaven or goes to the Father and we see him no ,more? There we must say, a fool has thus spoken and not a wise man. For they say, righteousness is a virtue, which teaches man what he owes others. This is true, but the trouble is, they do not understand their own words, such blind fools they are. Therefore, one needs not be surprised that they rage so much against the Gospel and persecute the Christians. How could they do otherwise? They know no better.

**5.** Neither do they know what “judgment” or right is, that is, a right judgment, a correct good opinion and sense, or whatever you may call it. For they say: Right is that which is written in books, how one is to know and distinguish things, to quiet and end quarrels. But how does Christ define it? He says: “It is right, that the world is to be judged.” Who understands such speech, and where will it go in or out, and how does it correspond with reason? Let us see whether we can explain it so that it may be understood.

**6.** In the first place one must know that the Word of God does not speak only of the outward existence and appearances, but it takes hold of the heart and the depths of the soul. Accordingly it does not judge man as to his outward appearance and action, but according to the depths of his

conscience. Now, everyone will experience in himself, if he wishes to acknowledge it, however pious he may be (even though he were a Carthusian or as holy as any one on earth), that in his heart he would rather do the contrary, and otherwise than what he is outwardly compelled to do. Thus, if I were left to myself, a monk, who walks about in poverty and chastity, as they pride themselves, but were made to confess how I feel in my heart, I must say: That which I do, I would rather not do. If there were no hell and I would not feel the disgrace, I would leave my office have the misfortune, and run off. For I have no desire from the heart to do it, but am compelled thereto, and must do it in spite of hell, punishment or disgrace. It is not possible that I should do it from choice and gladly. Such everyone who is without grace finds in his own heart. The same you will find continually in other matters. I am never from my heart kind and friendly to my enemy, for this is impossible to nature; and though I act otherwise, in my heart I think thus: If it were not for the punishment, I would have my way and not remain without revenge. Thus, I still go about before the world, and do not as I would like and feel inclined to do, for fear of punishment or disgrace. Likewise if you go through all the commandments, from the first to the last, you will find that there is no one who keeps God's commandments from the bottom of his heart.

**7.** Now, against this evil God found a remedy and determined to send Christ, his Son, into this world, that he should shed his blood and die, in order to make satisfaction for sin and take it away, and that the Holy Spirit then should enter the hearts of such people, who go about with the works of the Law, being unwilling and forced to it, and make them willing, in order that without force and with joyous heart they keep God's commandments. Otherwise there might be no means of removing the misery; for neither human reason and power, nor even an angel could rescue us from it. Thus, God has done away with the sins of all men who believe on the Christ, so that henceforth it is impossible for one to remain in sin who has this Savior, who has taken all sins upon himself and blotted them out.

**8.** Inasmuch as Christ has now come and commanded to preach that everything we may do, however great and beautiful it may appear, is sin, because we do nothing that is good with pleasure and willingly, and that for this reason he has stepped forward and has taken away all sin, in order that we may receive the Holy Spirit, through whom we obtain love and pleasure to do what God wants us to do, in order that we do not attempt

to come before God through our own works, but through Christ and his merits, therefore it cannot be called any longer sin committed against the Law, for the Law did nothing to assist us in becoming pious, since we are not able to do anything good.

**9.** What sort of sin then remains upon earth? No other than that one does not receive this Savior and refuses to accept him who has taken away sin. For if he were present, there would be no sin, since he, as I have said, brings the Holy Spirit with him, who kindles the heart and makes it willing to do good. Therefore, the world is no longer punished and condemned on account of other sins, because Christ blots them all out; only this remains sin in the New Testament, that one will not acknowledge nor receive him. Therefore he likewise says in this Gospel:

*“When the Holy Spirit is come, he will convict the world in respect of sin, because they believe not on me.”*

**10.** As if he wished to say: Had they believed on me, everything would already have been forgiven them, whatever sin they might have committed, for I know that they by nature cannot do otherwise. But because they will not receive me, neither believe that I can help them, this it is that will condemn them. Therefore, God will at the final judgment pass a sentence like this on them: Behold, thou wast in sin and couldst not free thyself from it, still I did not on this account wish to condemn thee, for I sent my only begotten Son to thee and intended to give thee a Savior, in order that he might take the sin from thee. Him thou didst not receive. Therefore, on this account alone, thou wilt be condemned, because thou hast not Christ.

**11.** This sentence, then, is given for the honor and glory of the high grace, which God has given us in Christ the Lord. What reason would have ever been so wise as to discover that this was done for man’s sake? Reason is not able to rise higher in its thoughts than to say: I have sinned in deeds done. I must make good by doing other deeds. I must blot out and pay for the sin, in order that I may thus obtain a gracious God. If reason comes so far, it has reached its climax. Still it is nothing but foolishness and blindness.

**12.** But God speaks thus: If thou wilt be rid of sin, thou must do other works wherewith to pay the price. But with all the works which thou dost, thou canst do nothing but sin, even with the works wherewith thou thinkest to reconcile me and to do penance for thy sins. How wilt thou



then, thou fool, blot out sin with sin? For even in the works which thou considerest the best and which thou canst do, thou sinnest if thou dost not do them willingly and from the heart. For if thou didst not fear punishment, thou wouldst rather not do them at all. Thus thou dost no more than that thou seekest to blot out little sins by doing greater ones; or else to commit such great ones that thou mayest lay aside others.

**13.** Wherefore, it is ever great blindness that a man does not see what sin is, nor know what good works are, but accepts sin for good works. When the Holy Spirit comes, he convicts the people and says: The works which thou hast done, as well as those which thou art still doing, are nothing but sin; therefore, it is all in vain that thou dost attempt to make satisfaction for thy sin according to thy ability. Then they feel compelled to say: Behold, this I did not know. Then says he: For this purpose I am here, in order to tell thee this. If thou hadst known it, it would not have been necessary for me to come and make it known. What wilt thou do now in order to be helped? This thou must do: Believe on the Savior, the Lord Christ, that he has taken away thy sin. If thou believest this, he is thine and thy sins will disappear; if not, then thou wilt never get rid of sin, but wilt always fall into it deeper and deeper.

**14.** Thus, with this passage everything has been completely overthrown that has hitherto been preached about penance and satisfaction for sin, and all else that has been practiced and urged. For this reason there have been founded many orders and masses, and on this account we have become priests and monks and have run to and fro in order best in the world, which the world considers pious and holy, to get rid of sin. Therefore, it also follows: Whatever is that is nothing but mere sin and a damnable thing. Thus we have considered one part of this Gospel.

**15.** The second thought then follows: “The Holy Spirit will convict the world in respect to righteousness, because I go to the Father,” says Christ, “and ye behold me no more.” Righteousness means piety and a good and honorable life before God. What is this now? It is, says Christ, “because I go to the Father.” We have often said about the resurrection of Christ that it came to pass not for his sake, but for our sakes, in order that we may apply it to ourselves as a blessing which is our own. For this reason he is risen from the dead and has ascended to heaven, that he might begin a spiritual kingdom, in which he reigns in us through righteousness and truth. Therefore, he sits above; he does not rest and sleep, does not play with

himself, but, as Paul says, ~~402~~ Ephesians 1:22, has his work here upon the earth, governing the consciences and the souls of men with the Gospel.

**16.** Wherever Christ is now preached and acknowledged, there he reigns in us, from the right hand of his Father, and is himself here below in the hearts of men. There he reigns with might, power and dominion over you and all your enemies, and guards you from sin, death, devil and hell. Thus is his resurrection and ascension our comfort, life, blessing, righteousness and everything in one. This is what the Lord means when he speaks of righteousness, that the people thereby should become pious and righteous, that he ascends to heaven to the Father and we see him no more. This the world does not know, therefore the Holy Spirit must come and convict the world of it.

**17.** How does this come to pass? Just as we have heard. Am I to become pious, it will not be enough for me to perform outwardly good works, but I must do them from the bottom of my heart, gladly and willingly, so that I may be free from the fear of sin, death and the devil; be joyous, and with a good conscience, and all confidence stand before him and know how I stand with him. This no work, no creature can give unto me, but Christ alone, who has ascended into heaven — there, where one cannot see him, but must believe that he sits yonder and wishes to help one. Such a faith makes me acceptable unto God; Christ gives me the Holy Spirit into my heart, who makes me willing and happy in the doing of every good work. In this manner I become righteous, and in no other; for the works themselves make me more and more unwilling, the longer I occupy myself with them.

**18.** But the longer one is engaged in this work, the more willing it makes one's heart; for wherever there is such knowledge, there the Holy Spirit cannot be wanting. When he comes, he makes the heart willing, joyful and happy, so that one may be free and willingly do what is pleasing to God, with joyous courage, and suffer whatever there is to suffer, yea, and even die willingly. And in proportion as this knowledge is clear and great, in that proportion the willingness and joy will also be great. Thus the commandment of God is fulfilled and everything done that one is to do, and thus thou art righteous. Who would ever have thought that this would be righteousness and that thus it should be. This question we have hitherto often heard about and considered, and although the words here be different, yet the sense and meaning are the same.

**19.** In the third place, the Holy Spirit is to convict the world in respect of judgment, that is that the world does not know what right is. For who has ever heard the definition of this right to be, because the prince of this world hath been judged? The prince of the world, to be sure is the devil, which one may readily see in his government.

**20.** If now I have learned to know what sin is and am free from it, and have obtained righteousness, so that now I stand in a new character and life and have become another man — have now the Lord Christ and know that something else than our works is required to get rid of sin — if these have come to pass in me, it then follows that I may have a correct judgment, having learned to judge differently before God. For, according to such understanding, I know how to discuss, conclude and judge of all things in heaven and upon earth, and to pass correct judgment; and when I have passed such a judgment, I can live accordingly. This no one else can do.

**21.** The world, in its holiness, maintains that righteousness means to perform good works wherewith to do penance for sin and reconcile God. This has been taught in all the schools of learning. Such teachers think it is right and well done if only they can accomplish good works. But now comes the Holy Spirit and says: Not so. You err and are mistaken. Your judgment is wrong. Therefore there must be another judgment. You should judge thus: Everything that your reason concludes, is erroneous and false, and you are a fool and a simpleton.

**22.** Reason may do other things; for instance, know how to judge in worldly and human matters and affairs, how to build cities and houses, how to govern well, and the like. In such matters one may easily be able to judge and decide more wisely than another. Of this, however, we do not speak here, but of judgment in the significance of what is right or wrong before God. Here the Holy Spirit concludes thus: Every judgment of reason is false and worth nothing. Everything that is born of man and is not born from above, must be rooted out and crucified, so that no one may boast of it and depend upon it. Again, whatever the world considers as wisdom, that which it votes as wisely and intelligently devised and accomplished, is foolishness before God. In short, whatever the world does, is useless and cursed, unless it proceeds from Christ, the Lord, and is of his Word and Spirit, as he teaches us. If it does not proceed from him, it is surely mere blindness and there is no good in it.

**23.** Therefore everything that the world considers good is debased. Everything is evil because it does not proceed from the Word and the Spirit, but from the old Adam, who is nothing more than a blind fool and sinner. And why? Should not your wisdom and reason be foolishness and count for nothing, since the most exalted one, who has all the power and wisdom of this world in the highest degree, is condemned? For, without doubt, there is no one in the world so wise, shrewd and rational as the devil, and no one is able to make a more pious appearance. And all wisdom and holiness that do not proceed from God, as well as the most beautiful things in the world, are found in their highest degree in the devil. Since he is a prince and the ruler of the world, the wisdom and righteousness of the world must proceed from him; here he reigns with all his power. Therefore, Christ says: Since the same prince of the world is condemned, with all that he has and can do, the world is ever blind because it considers that to be good which has been condemned already, namely his wisdom and piety.

**24.** We must, therefore, pass a correct judgment, such as Christ passes, if we are to guard against everything that the world considers and declares precious in order that it may appear before God prudent, wise and pious. If people who have not the Word and Spirit of Christ, desire to teach and govern, everything is already condemned; for in this way one accomplishes no more than to make the old Adam stronger and to establish him in his opinion that his works, his piety and prudence are to avail before God. Thereby one must work himself deeper and deeper into the devil's kingdom.

**25.** But now, since the prince of this world and the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the devil, are directly opposed to one another, and the Holy Spirit is not willing that anyone should parade his own deeds and praise himself on account of them, the holy cross must soon follow. The world will not consent to be reprimanded for its blindness. Therefore one must willingly submit and suffer persecution. If we have the right kind of faith in our hearts, we must also open our mouths and confess righteousness and make known sin. Likewise we must condemn and punish the doings of this world and make it known that everything it undertakes, is damned. For this we must be considered heretics, and must pass through the fire. They say: This is against the holy councils and the canon of the holy father, the pope. Then you are to answer: How can I help it? Here it stands — the text does not say the Holy Spirit is to convict them and say their doctrine is error, blindness and the

government of the devil. This, of course, they will not endure, but would have us call them gracious noblemen. Therefore, one must here risk his neck.

**26.** These are the three parts we have in this Gospel lesson: Sin is unbelief; righteousness is faith; the judgment is the holy cross. Therefore give heed and learn to consider everything that is without the Spirit as nothing and as condemned, and afterwards be prepared for the holy cross that thou must suffer on account of it. Now follows in the Gospel further:

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.”

**27.** These words ought to be understood in all their simplicity, as if the Lord were to say: “These three parts which I have now related, you cannot yet fully understand, even though I were to explain them unto you. I would have to say much about them in order to explain them more fully, to make plain how things shall be, and you still stick too deep in your coarse, carnal reason to be able to comprehend it. Therefore, I will forbear now. When the Holy Spirit comes, he will enlighten your hearts, so that you will understand it, and will call to your remembrance all things, I tell you of it now, in order that you may think about it. Thus, we give these words in their simple meaning. It is as if I conversed with some one and said: I would yet have many things to say, but they are too difficult for you. You cannot yet comprehend and grasp them.

**28.** But our doctors and highly learned men have made use of these words in a frivolous way and said that it was necessary to have something more than the Gospel and the Scriptures; therefore one ought also to hear what the councils and the popes decree. They endeavor to prove in this way that Christ says here: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now;” therefore, because he has not told them all things, it must follow that he told them to the councils, popes and bishops, who are now to teach them.

**29.** Now look at these fools, what they say. Christ says: “I have yet many things to say unto you.” What does “you” mean? To whom does he speak? Without doubt, to the apostles. To these he says: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth.” Therefore, if

Christ is not to lie, his Word must have been fulfilled at the time that the Holy Spirit came. The Holy Spirit must have said everything to them and accomplished everything that the Lord here refers to, and, of course, he led them into all the truth. How, then, do we get the idea that Christ should not have said everything, but should have kept much back, which the councils were to teach and to determine? With this idea his words do not at all harmonize. Christ gives to understand that soon the Holy Spirit would tell and explain to them all things, and that afterwards the apostles should carry out everything, and through them should be made known to the world what they have learned from the Holy Spirit. But, according to the councils and popes,' it depends on what they say, teach and command, even to the end of the world.

**30.** Moreover, Christ says further: “He shall guide you into all the truth.” Here we conclude: If what the councils teach be the truth, that one is to wear the tonsure and the cap and live a life of celibacy, then the apostles never came to the truth, since none of them ever entered a cloister, nor kept any of those foolish laws. Thus, Christ must indeed have betrayed us in this, that he said the Holy Spirit should guide us into all the truth, when in reality he wished to teach how we were to become priests ‘and monks and not to eat meat on certain days, and like foolish things.

**31.** Without doubt it is “truth” before God when one lives an upright and sincere life. But if we now look at our ecclesiasts, pope, bishops, priests and monks, we see nothing but carnival masks, who give themselves the outward appearance of being pious, but in their hearts they are villains. What popes, bishops, and orders have ever led us into this truth, which should spring from within — out of the heart? In everything they are concerned about the outward appearance of things, in order that they may make a display before the eyes of the people.

**32.** Thus they have perverted this text masterfully in order to strengthen their lies; and yet we are to call them gracious lords! To hear such things is exasperating and it should grieve our hearts that we are to suffer such great outrage — should see how shamefully the people act against the precious Word of God and that they make the Holy Spirit a liar. Should not this single passage be powerful enough against the pope and the councils, even if we had no other in the Scriptures?

**33.** Thirdly, Christ says: “You cannot bear them now.” Here we ask: My dear, should it have been too hard for the apostles to understand or to obey

such laws as abstaining from meat, and the like? They had been accustomed in the law of Moses to observe many such outward ceremonies, and had been educated therein all their life, so that it would have been child's play for them. Moreover, they understood this better than we do. Is it such a difficult matter — that a monk must wear a black or gray cap, the pope three crowns, a bishop a pointed hat, or the manner of dedicating churches and altars and baptizing bells — are these so difficult as to make it necessary that the Holy Spirit should come from heaven to teach such things? If it is not acting the fool enough that one jests with these noble words, then I do not know how one may be a worse fool.

**34.** Therefore, beware of these liars and understand the words rightly, thus: Christ wishes to speak of the inward, actual character, not of outward jugglery. He wishes to make the heart, before the eyes of God, pious and righteous in order that it, in the first place, acknowledge its sin, and in the second place, that it acknowledge him to be the one who forgives sin and suffers himself to be sacrificed upon the cross. This is that “truth” which the apostles were not yet able to hear and understand. But those outward things make no one righteous, lead no one to the truth. They make only hypocrites and a show, by which the people are deceived.

**35.** Thus, we have the true meaning of this passage, from which we see how fools who seek from it to bolster up their jugglery, place themselves in opposition to it and build upon the sand. There is scarcely a passage that is more strongly opposed to them than this one. We have briefly explained this Gospel lesson in order that we may see how it teaches just that which we have always preached.

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

## SECOND SERMON. ~~431f~~ JOHN 16:5-15.

This, like the preceding sermon, is not found in edition c. It appears in the collections of 14 and 27 sermons, and is one of the “Five beautiful Christian sermons preached by Dr. Martin Luther at Wittenberg, 1523.”

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:109; Walch Edition, 11:1182; St. Louis Walch, 11:877.

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## I. THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS THE WORLD OF SIN.

1. Christ pictures to us in this Gospel what his kingdom is and what takes place in it, how it is governed and what it accomplishes. Here you learn that there is a kingdom upon the earth and that it is invisible, and that it cleaves to and rests upon the Word of God alone. Christ does not say that he wishes his disciples to follow him up into heaven at once; but that he will send them the Holy Spirit and that he departs from them for the very purpose of sending them the Holy Spirit, in order that thereby his kingdom may be further developed. Therefore, he says: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." They could not understand that kingdom, how it should exist and be administered. Their reason and senses were still too carnal, they had never seen a spiritual kingdom, nor heard of one; therefore they continually thought of a temporal, outward kingdom. And here as in other Gospels, faith and trust in Christ are preached. We wish now to consider the leading thoughts in this Gospel and to explain them as far as God gives us his grace to do so. The Lord addresses his disciples thus:

"When the Comforter is come, he will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me."

2. Here we must let that be "sin" which is ascribed to, and included in, sin by the high majesty of heaven. In the text only unbelief is mentioned as sin, "because," says the Lord, "they believe not on me."
3. But what is it to believe on Christ? It is not simply to believe that he is God, or that he reigns in heaven in equal power with God the Father; many others believe that: But I believe on Christ when I believe that he is a gracious God to me and has taken my sins upon himself and reconciled me with God the Father, that my sins are his and his righteousness mine, that

there is an intermingling and an exchange, that Christ is a mediator between me and the Father. For the sins of the whole world were laid upon Christ, and the righteousness of the Father, that is in Christ, will swallow up all our sins.

No sins dare and can remain upon Christ. Such faith makes me pure and acceptable to the Father. Of this faith the pope and our highly educated leaders know nothing to speak, much less to believe. They teach that man should do many good works if he is to be acceptable to God and be free from sin, and that then God imparts to him his grace.

**4.** However, here the Lord speaks quite differently, and says: “The Holy Spirit will convict the world in respect of sin, because they believe not on me.” Unbelief only is mentioned here as sin, and faith is praised as suppressing and extinguishing the other sins, even the sins in the saints. Faith is so strong and overpowering that no sin dare put it under any obligation. Although sins are present in pious and believing persons, they are not imputed to them, nor shall their sins condemn them. This is Paul’s meaning when he says in <sup><481></sup>Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Their hearts are cleansed by faith, as Peter writes in <sup><415></sup>Acts 15:9. Therefore, whatever they do in this faith, in this assurance is all good, pure and pleasing to God. On the contrary, without this faith all their doings are sin and destruction, though their good works may shine and glitter as beautifully as they will, and ever though they raise the dead. For Paul says: “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin,” <sup><512></sup>Romans 14:23.

**5.** What will now become of all the priests, nuns and monks who, wishing to escape sin, run into cloisters and undertake to do many good works without this faith? Unbelief is called sin, as I said, but to believe on Christ — that he takes my sins upon himself, reconciles me to the Father and at the same time makes me his heir of all that is in heaven and earth — this is good works. In <sup><415></sup>John 6:28-29, the Jews asked Christ: “What must we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered: “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” Yea, and should we preach thus, who will then enter the cloisters or contribute anything for them? The purses of the monks would then surely become flat, their kitchens scanty, their cellars empty and neglected. For this reason they will not allow faith to be preached; nay, they condemn this doctrine and banish

its preachers. Indeed they have already set about it in good earnest. Christ further says:

*“Of righteousness, because I go to the Father.”*

## II. THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS THE WORLD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

**6.** Here all the learned come armed, yea, the whole world besides, and tell us what kind of righteousness this is. Yes, and they shall err. For the world has never known this righteousness; it does not yet know it, and it does not wish to know it. Hence, the Lord says here that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of this righteousness.

**7.** But what are we to understand here by “the world?” We dare not understand by it the coarse, outward sins, as adultery, murder, stealing and theft. There are instituted for such characters the wheels and gallows, with which the worldly powers, the kings, emperors and princes, have to do. But we will interpret “the world” as the subtle and secret sins, of which the Holy Spirit convicts, which the world does not know as sin. Yea, it pronounces them divine works; it applauds them and will not permit them to be called sins. How else can unbelief and other secret sins live in the heart while the heart itself is not conscious of them and knows not that they are sins? But those who convict the world must, on that account, be reviled as heretics and be banished from the country, as we see at present. Therefore, the Holy Spirit must convict the world.

**8.** The rod, however, by which the world is convicted and punished, is the divine Word and the holy Gospel, proclaimed by the apostles and preachers, as God the Father says to his Son in <sup><4911></sup>Psalm 2:9: “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” That is, you shall humble them with the holy Gospel. But the world resents such conviction and punishment; yet it punishes severely, and even more severely than the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit takes rods, but the world uses swords and fire. Isaiah also speaks in like terms of Christ our Lord in <sup><23104></sup>Isaiah 11:4: “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”

**9.** What is now the righteousness the Lord means here? Some say righteousness is a virtue that gives to every person his own. Although this is a fine definition, yet it is misleading, in that we do not know how we are indebted to every one, to God and to man. This God desires and demands of us. Therefore, his righteousness is nothing more than the faith and grace of God, by which God makes us pious and righteous. Such righteousness we must have and thus be righteous, if we are to be found righteous and unblamable before God, and not only before man. For the smallest letter or tittle of the Law shall not fail, but all will be fulfilled.

**10.** Noah was found to be such a righteous man. It is written of him in <sup><008></sup>Genesis 6:8-9: “Noah was a righteous man, and blameless in his generation; he walked with God. Therefore he found favor in the eyes of Jehovah.” It is also written of Job, in <sup><800></sup>Job 1:1, that he was a perfect and upright man, one that feared God and turned away from evil. But that is done only by faith, when one believes that God has strangled and swallowed up one’s sins in his righteousness. For this righteousness is nothing but to believe that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father; that he is equal with God, possessing equal power; that he has become Lord by virtue of his passion, by which he has ascended to the Father, reconciled us with God and is there as our mediator. This is what the prophet means in <sup><19B001></sup>Psalms 110:1. “Jehovah saith unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Therefore, St. Paul calls Christ now a mediator, <sup><5015></sup>1 Timothy 2:5; <sup><8016></sup>Hebrews 8:6; then a throne of grace, <sup><6025></sup>Romans 3:25; a propitiation, <sup><602></sup>1 John 2:2, and other like names. God requires this honor from us and faith demands it that we possess him as our Lord and Savior; and this glory he will not concede to any one else, as he says through the prophet: “My glory will I not give to another,” <sup><308></sup>Isaiah 42:8.

**11.** His way to the Father is his glory. For “to go” means to die, and to pass through death to the Father and enter upon another existence. He glories in his future course when he says: “I go unto the Father.” Therefore, here righteousness is nothing more than traveling by faith the road through death unto the Father. This faith makes us righteous before God, this faith by which we believe that he delivered us from sin, death, Satan and hell, through his passion, and that thereby God, the Father, is reconciled and our sins are blotted out by his blood. This is also the reason that he mentions his going, when he says, in respect of righteousness, not that he is with the Father, but that he goes to the Father. In this going, sin

is swallowed up in righteousness and Christ passes cheerfully through death, so that no one is even aware of it. Therefore it follows:

*“And ye behold me no more.”*

**12.** The nature and art of faith are here set forth: Faith neither feels nor gropes, nor do the things connected with it require a science; but it bestirs itself cheerfully to believe the things it neither feels nor ‘can measure with all its powers inwardly or outwardly. Paul says in <sup><4192></sup>Romans 8:24: “Who hopeth for that which he seeth?” Therefore, the Lord aptly says: “And ye behold me no more.” As if he would say that this way of good works which he is traveling, will not be seen nor grasped by the senses, but it must be believed. Now follows the third and last part of our Gospel.

### III. THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS THE WORLD OF JUDGMENT, OR THE CROSS.

*“Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”*

**13.** The prince of this world is Satan, and his members include all unbelieving and godless persons, all flesh with all its powers is condemned by these words, and what the world praises is condemned by God, including both the godly and the ungodly, believers and unbelievers, friends and enemies, as St. Peter cites in his first Epistle (<sup><4047></sup>1 Peter 4:17), when he says: “For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God,” that is, with the elect, in whom God dwells. The righteous, while they live here, have flesh and blood, in which sin is rooted. To suppress this sin God will lead them into great misery and anxiety, poverty, persecution and all kinds of danger (as Paul writes to the <sup><4378></sup>Romans 7:18ff; 8:4; and to the Corinthians) until the flesh becomes completely subject to the Spirit.

**14.** That, however, does not take place until death, when the flesh is completely turned to ashes. We must be in all points like Christ. Since he was here despised, mocked and tried, so that, as the prophet Isaiah (<sup><2813></sup>Isaiah 53:3) says, he was esteemed and held as one stricken and smitten of God, the most despised and unworthy, full of grief and sorrow. His disciples must also go through the same experiences. Everyone should carefully consider this. It is so decreed, as Christ himself before declared to his disciples, saying: “Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant

is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me they will also persecute you.” <sup><6152></sup>John 15:20. Hence Paul says in very plain words in <sup><6182></sup>2 Timothy 3:12: “All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

**15.** Therefore, St. Peter carefully discriminates and says: “If judgment begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?” <sup><6047></sup>1 Peter 4:17-18. This discrimination is between the sufferings of the godly and of the wicked. Godly and believing persons know their sins; they bear all their punishment patiently, and are resigned to God’s judgment without the least murmur; therefore, they are punished only bodily, and here in time, and their pain and suffering have an end. Unbelievers, however, since they are not conscious of their sins and transgressions, can not bear God’s punishment patiently, but they resent it and wish their life and works to go unpunished, yea, uncensored. Hence, their punishment and suffering are in body and soul, here in time, and last forever beyond this life. The Lord says here, “The prince of this world is already judged.” As if he were to say, All that the world and humanity in the world discover, praise and condemn, amounts to nothing; and whatever God judges the world cannot suffer nor bear, but rejects, repudiates and condemns.

**16.** Thus, three thoughts have been presented to us in this Gospel: Sin, righteousness and, finally, the cross and persecution. We shall be freed from sin through faith. If we believe that Christ made satisfaction for our sins and that his satisfaction is ours, that is then the righteousness. When we are free from sin, and are just and pious, then the world, Satan and the flesh will arise and contend and battle against us. Then come persecution and the cross. This we wish to have set forth in brief at present from this Gospel. May God grant his grace that we learn it thus, and know how to govern ourselves by it when we need it.

# FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

## THIRD SERMON: ~~<Bib>~~ JOHN 16:5-15.

In place of the two foregoing sermons this one was inserted in edition c.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:118; Walch Edition, 11:1193; St. Louis Walch 11:885.

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## **I. SERMON ON CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND THE CONVICTING OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

### **A. THIS SERMON OF CONSOLATION IN GENERAL.**

**1.** The meaning of this Gospel we have often heard elsewhere, the only trouble is, its language is not altogether understood as having the meaning of things, with which we are familiar. Therefore we will expound it a little, in order that it may be seen that the same truth lies in these words as is contained in almost all the Gospels.

**2.** It is a part of that beautiful discourse, Christ the Lord, delivered after the last supper he had with the disciples. His special object is to console, his beloved disciples in view of his departure, because he is now about to

die and to leave them alone in danger and distress, in the hostility of the world, in persecution and death for his sake. And so with many words he announces to them that they would be put under the ban, and they who killed them would boast that they had offered unto God a service. It was a grievous and terrible thing for them to hear this, and on account of it they became very sorrowful, both because they were to lose their dear Lord and because they were to be left in such misery and distress. Therefore it was needful to console them against all this, as indeed Christ does throughout these three Chapters of his last discourse with all diligence and faithfulness. And the sum of it is this: in view of the loss caused by his departure, he promises to send the Holy Spirit, who shall comfort and strengthen their hearts, and then first establish the kingdom of Christ and extend it throughout the world; and he tells them plainly what is to be the nature of his kingdom, wherein it is to consist, and what the Holy Spirit shall accomplish in the world through them.

**3.** Therefore he says to them first: I know and plainly see, beloved disciples, that you are in great fear and sorrow on account of what I have told you, that I am about to go away from you. But this shall be your comfort: I tell you the truth, it is much better for *you*, that I go away. My departure shall bring you abundant joy, for you shall have instead the comforting of the Holy Spirit, and in addition the power, that he will accomplish through you what I, now present with you, am not able to do. For I am required by this mission in the flesh to suffer and die, and so to make my journey to the Father, and afterwards to send the Holy Spirit, who will do through you much greater things than can be done now through me, and who will bestow upon you a great and excellent office and work, by which my kingdom shall be extended in the world.

## **B. CHRIST'S KINGDOM OF WHICH THIS SERMON TREATS.**

**4.** So then he first shows them what is to be the nature of his kingdom on earth, in order to take away from them their old deeply-rooted delusion of an external worldly dominion and government over the Jewish people and the world generally in this life. For against this he says plainly enough and in many words, that he would go away, leave the world, and not be seen any more. But if he dies and leaves the world he cannot rule and govern after the manner of the world, externally and visibly, like a king and emperor on earth. He indicates this still more clearly by announcing to them in so many words both before and after this text, how they shall fare

after his departure, namely, that they shall be hated, persecuted, put under the ban and even killed by their own people; moreover, that they shall weep and lament and have tribulation in the world, which on the contrary shall be merry and joyful. All this by no means agrees with the thought that they should have a worldly kingdom on earth, for which to hope; they must expect the very contrary. Nevertheless they are to know that he will have and preserve his kingdom in the world; wherefore he promises the Holy Spirit.

### **C. THE CONVICTING OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

**5.** What kind of a kingdom is it, and how is it governed? This he indicates in the words: “The Holy Spirit will convict the world.” It is not to be a government constituted and organized in worldly fashion by human wisdom, power and might, but a government of the Holy Spirit, or a spiritual kingdom, in which Christ rules invisibly and not with external, bodily power, through the Word alone, which the Holy Spirit will preach and thereby work in the hearts of men. For the Holy Spirit, he says, will convict the world. That does not mean to coerce with armor and weapons and worldly power, but to use an oral word or an office of preaching, called the Word of God, or of the Holy Spirit, sent by Christ. This Word is to pass through the world and to attack it, so that it can be called a convicting of the world, not only of a few, of one or two races and countries, but of both Jews and Gentiles, the learned, the wise and saints, who in their own government have the most beautiful and laudable organization.

**6.** For by “world” he does not mean the humble common folk, the populace, but that which in the world is best and most excellent, and in external government blameless; especially those who claim to be holy above all others, like the Jews, who were called God’s people and had the law of Moses, of whom Christ said before, that they hate him and his own without cause, as is written in their law.

**7.** Herewith Christ bestows upon his apostles power and authority, nay more, even command over the whole world. It is to be subject to their preaching and to hear the apostles. Although their office shall be despised in the world and have no reputation, because they are plain, ordinary people, and even apart from this they must be hated and oppressed and must suffer in the world, when with their convictions they run counter to it,

till he strengthens and comforts them with the assurance that their office shall nevertheless have power, force and efficacy. Those in the world will be compelled to hear it and to allow it to have course, unsubverted and unforbidden, regardless of their raging and storming against it with persecution, ban and death, and all power and force not only of the world, but also of the whole kingdom of hell.

**8.** Therefore, says he, you have good reason not to be terrified and cast down, because I am going away from you bodily. For thereby I will give you something better than you have had while you were with me, and you shall accomplish much greater and more glorious things than can now be done; namely, the Holy Spirit shall effect through you far more gloriously and mightily what pertains to my kingdom than you now think. Then you will no longer, as now, seek and aspire to become lords upon earth and to have great kingdoms under you. For these are transitory things, which God does not care for, and which have always produced more rogues than good men. But he will set you in a government, where you shall judge all men's consciences; and what is highest in the world, namely its wisdom and holiness, shall be subject to you. You shall pronounce judgment upon it, convict and condemn, and nobody will be able to escape sin, death and hell, nor get to heaven, who does not hear and obey your word.

**9.** He shall also give you such comfort and courage, that you shall no longer be filled with terror and deadly fear, as now, at the world's threatening, fury and raging against your preaching; but you shall boldly go forward and convict regardless of what the world and the devil can do to prevent it by persecution, murder and all the violence of hell.

**10.** This is the province of the work, which the Holy Spirit is to begin in the kingdom of Christ. It is the teaching office of the apostles, which is to be of such a character that it must convict the world, as it finds it outside of Christ, and nobody is to be excepted, great, small, learned, wise, holy, of high or low condition, etc. This means in short, to bear the world's anger and to begin strife, and to be struck in the mouth for it. For the world, which rules on earth, will not and cannot endure its course to be disapproved; therefore persecution must arise, and one party must yield to the other, the weakest to the stronger. But, as the office of the apostles is to be only a teaching office, it cannot use worldly power and the world retains its external kingdom and power against the apostles. But, on the other hand, the apostles' office of conviction of the world shall likewise not

be suppressed, because it is the office and work of the Holy Spirit, but shall overcome all and triumph; as Christ promised to them: “I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand.” <sup><215></sup>Luke 21:15.

**11.** The Holy Spirit indeed convicted the world by preaching before from the beginning (for Christ ever rules, and is the same Christ “yesterday and today, and for ever,” <sup><388></sup>Hebrews 13:8) through the holy fathers, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist, and this conviction was upheld by divine power. But now the true beginning is to be made, and Christ will institute a public conviction, which is to be extended not only over the Jewish people, but over the whole world until the last day. This is to be much more efficacious and shall prevail, and hearts shall be pierced and wounded by it, even as is said in <sup><427></sup>Acts 2:37 of the first sermon of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, that they were pricked in their heart by the preaching of the apostles, and so were enlightened and converted from their blindness. But if they will not accept this preaching, it shall be efficacious to their condemnation, and they shall stumble, fall and plunge into eternal ruin. So it shall prove a power unto life and salvation to believers, and a preaching and power unto death to others, as St. Paul says in <sup><426></sup>2 Corinthians 2:16.

**12.** However, in respect of what shall the Holy Spirit convict, and concerning what shall he teach? This he tells us plainly in the words:

*“And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”*

**13.** This certainly means biting off a good deal and assuming a big load: the poor beggars, the apostles, are to interfere in the world in this way and to reprove and convict everything it does. They must needs have strong backs and a good reserved force. For he shows here that this convicting is to be no farce, nor is it to be in respect of small, trifling matters, nor even of sovereignty, countries and property, but in respect of the highest thing, by which the world’s government exists, namely, the reputation of wisdom, righteousness, and its judgment or convicting, especially in the high matters, which concern the service of God and what is good in the sight of God.

**14.** For as to the earthly government of property and wealth, this does not concern the Holy Spirit and Christ. In regard to that he allows the world’s

wisdom, law and order to stand as they are; for in this sphere it is commanded to the world to rule and to judge what is praiseworthy and what is punishable. Likewise he does not convict the offices and different classes in the world, which are God's creation and order. But for this he convicts the world, that is, the people, who in their own government rule excellently, because with their reason and wisdom they also seek to interfere in God's affairs and government, and presume to decide and judge, how God shall be served, and imagine that whatever they assert, must also be right and acceptable in the sight of God.

**15.** This is what the conviction of the Holy Spirit is directed against. It breaks in not piecemeal on certain works and actions, but reduces to nothing and condemns everything that reason and worldly wisdom propose. In short, he convicts and censures them in and for the very things they do not wish to be convicted in, but rather praised and lauded, as teaching and doing well and right.

He puts them to sin and shame with all their glory and openly charges them with knowing nothing of these things nor being able to teach how sin is to be known and gotten rid of, righteousness is to be attained and wrong is to be permitted. How much good is left now, when all this is laid low completely as by a thunderbolt? He himself explains the three particulars, and shows what each means and how each is to be preached. First he says:

*“Of Sin, because they believe not on me.”*

**16.** The world itself must confess that it understands none of the things, which Christ here says of these three thoughts. For whoever heard this before among the wise and learned of the earth, or by what understanding was it produced, and in what books is it written that sin is not to believe on this Jesus of Nazareth? ‘Does not Moses himself and all the world call that sin, which is done contrary to the law, by commission or omission, by word or deed or even by thought? Well, the child is named, and the article concluded and fixed by the Holy Spirit, that this is the sin of the world that it does not believe on Christ. Not that there is no sin against the law besides this; but that this is the real chief sin, which condemns the whole world even if it could be charged with no other sin.

**17.** Thus this preaching of conviction is now to begin, if people are to be brought to right knowledge and to salvation. And the first thing shall be this: it makes all men, learned, high and wise, sinners; and sinners for this

reason, because they do not believe on Christ. Hence God's wrath is declared, and the judgment of condemnation and eternal death (for this is what convicting in respect of sin means) is pronounced upon those who in the sight of the world are irreproachable, who even strive with earnestness to live according to the law and the ten commandments. Such were Paul before his conversion, and Nicodemus at first, and many others of like character among the Jews, to whom St. Paul also bears witness that they had a zeal for God, and followed after righteousness, but did not attain to righteousness (~~408~~Romans 9:31). So then this word "sin" briefly comprehends all life and conduct without and apart from faith in Christ.

**18.** Here you will say: How is this? Is it sin to live according to the ten commandments obediently, honorably and chastely, not to kill, not to break the marriage tie, not to steal, not to lie and deceive? Answer: Surely not. But that is not enough, and the ten commandments are not kept, if only they are not violated externally by works. For God's law demands not merely outward form and appearance, but goes to the heart and demands its perfect obedience. Therefore it also judges man not only by his outward walk and conduct, but by the depths of his heart. But the world does not understand and regard this; for it recognizes only public external sins, such as murder, adultery, robbery and what the jurists call and punish as sin. But it neither knows nor sees the true offenses and their root, such as contempt of God, inborn inward impurity of the heart, and disobedience to God's will: which things nevertheless are and remain in all men, who are not sanctified by Christ. For everybody, however pious he may be, if he will only confess it, finds in himself, what true saints earnestly lament, that even if he would gladly keep God's law, his flesh and blood, that is, his whole nature, including his heart and all his members, resist it; as St. Paul says in ~~412~~Romans 7:23: "I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members." Much more is this true of those, who are without grace and the Holy Spirit, who live irreproachably outwardly, solely from the fear of punishment or on account of reputation and vain honor; but still would prefer to do the contrary, if they did not fear hell or disgrace and punishment. For the heart is ever hostile to the law and resists it with inward disobedience.

**19.** Now because this is the case, that no man fulfils the commandments of God and can be without sin before God, and therefore all men are under the wrath of God and sentenced to eternal condemnation by the law: God

has found a remedy for this evil, and he resolved to send his Son into the world, in order that he might become a sacrifice for us and make satisfaction for our sins by the shedding of his blood and his death, and take away from us the wrath of God, which no creature could reconcile, and bring forgiveness of sins and moreover bestow upon us the Holy Spirit, so that we might obtain and receive all this, begin to become new men, and come out of sin and death to righteousness and eternal life.

**20.** This he has now done and has commanded to preach it through the Gospel, and he demands of all men (as we heard in the Easter sermons) repentance, that is, true knowledge of sin and earnest dread of God's wrath, and faith, that in such repentance God will for the sake of his Son forgive their sins. He that believes this preaching, has by this faith forgiveness of sins and is in the grace of God: and although he has not satisfied the law, still the remaining sin is not imputed to him, but is included in the forgiveness. Together with this faith the Holy Spirit is also given, so that he acquires love and delight to do the good and to resist sin. Therefore he is no longer condemned by the laws as a sinner, although he has not fulfilled it in every respect; but he is accepted by God through grace and forgiveness, and regarded as if he had no sins.

**21.** But on the other hand, he who has not faith, cannot be rid of sin nor escape the wrath of God. For he has no forgiveness and abides under condemnation, even if he is very zealous to live according to the law; for he cannot fulfill it. Besides, he does not accept Christ, who brings forgiveness and bestows upon believers his own fulfillment, and also gives power to begin to keep the law from the heart.

**22.** Therefore, whereinsoever this preaching is not accepted, there sin and condemnation must remain. Indeed, this unbelief then becomes the chief sin. For if faith in Christ were present, all sins would be forgiven; but now since they will not accept this Savior by faith, they are justly condemned in their sins. And it avails them nothing, that they do many works of the law and outward divine services, and judge according to reason, that, as they sinned by works, they will pay by works, that is to say, put away sin and merit God's favor. For in so doing they simply undertake to blot out sin by sin, indeed, to atone for great sins by little ones, or to do great sins in order to lay aside others. For in addition to the fact that they continue in disobedience and sins against God's commandments, and are so blind that they neither see nor regard it, but without repentance and fear of God's



wrath have the presumption and pride to expect to please God by their own works and merits: above all this they proceed not only to despise this preaching of Christ, which admonishes to repentance and faith, but even to persecute it. This alone would be enough to bring eternal wrath and condemnation upon them, even if they had no other sins and fulfilled the whole law.

**23.** Therefore the Holy Spirit rightly and justly convicts, as sinful and condemned, all who have not faith in Christ. For where this is wanting, other sins in abundance must follow: God is despised and hated, and the entire first table is treated with disobedience. For if one does not know God in Christ, he cannot trust him for any good thing, nor call upon him from the heart, nor know his word; but he is entangled in the devil's lies, persecutes and blasphemes true doctrines, and continues in obstinacy and hardening, even to the degree of slandering the Holy Spirit. In consequence of this he also disobeys the other commandments in his life, and station, so that he does to nobody what he ought to do, and has in his heart no true love, kindness, gentleness, patience, no delight in chastity, righteousness, faithfulness and truth; but practices the contrary, except where he has reason to fear disgrace or punishment.

**24.** Lo, how the dragon's-tail of the devil and all hell must follow unbelief! The reason is, that he who does not believe in Christ, has already turned away from God and quite separated himself from him. Therefore he cannot have the Holy Spirit, nor originate good thoughts, nor have a true, hearty pleasure in living according to God's will; notwithstanding he may outwardly assume a different appearance, like a hypocrite, and act so as not to be rebuked or chastised. Just like a bad, ill-behaved servant, who is inimical to his master, and does what he hates to do, only because he is compelled, and as opportunity arises, does evil. Such are the beautiful, precious fruits, produced by this fountain and stem, if Christ is not accepted and heard as the Savior, presented to us by God in order to blot out our sin and to take from us God's wrath.

**25.** Hence you see pictured here what the world is, nothing but a great company of wicked, stubborn people, who will not believe Christ, but despise God's Word, praise and accept the seduction of the devil, and defiantly run counter to all of God's commandments. They receive all the favors and benefits of God only to repay him with ingratitude and blasphemy. And yet in all this they are unwilling to be convicted or

reproved, but wish to be called excellent, pious and saintly people. Such were the Jews, who crucified Christ and persecuted his apostles, and yet wished to claim the glory of having done God great service. Therefore the Holy Spirit must resist this and strive with the world and ever exercise his office of conviction with divine power and might until the last day.

**26.** For he has not begun to convict with the intention of ceasing and allowing his mouth to be closed. On the contrary he must continue his work of conviction in the devil's kingdom, because there is nothing good in it, and he must drive it altogether under God's wrath and condemnation, in spite of the rage and fury of the devil, if perhaps by this conviction some be brought to repentance and faith, which indeed is the object of this preaching. But the others, who will not be convicted, must at least be convinced and condemned by this preaching. For all flesh and blood must be convicted, either for salvation or for condemnation, and the sentence, which Christ commanded to be preached to all creatures, must stand: "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." Let this be enough of the first point in the preaching of the Holy Spirit. The second is this:

*"Of righteousness, because I go to the Father,  
and ye behold me no more."*

**27.** Not only is the world convicted because it has sin, but also because it does not know how to become pious and what righteousness or piety is. But he is not speaking here of the righteousness, which philosophers and jurists discuss, which consists in observing civil or imperial laws and in doing what reason teaches; but of the righteousness, which is valid before God or which he regards as righteousness. Now what kind of righteousness is this, or wherein does it consist? This is it, says he, that "I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more." This is strange and to the world ridiculous language. If the first particular was unusual and obscure, that this is the world's sin, that it does not believe on him; then this is far more strange and incomprehensible, that this alone is righteousness, that he goes to the Father and is seen no more.

**28.** What shall the whole world say to this? They are all striving after righteousness and claiming to be pious before God, Jewish, Turkish and papistic saints, who stumble at this as an offensive, nay, foolish doctrine, just as if all good works, devotions, pious intentions, fine obedience, severe and strict life on the part of so many men are to be nothing before God?

And why does he give such an odd and absurd definition, that being pious before God consists in this that he goes to the Father and yet is not seen? How does it fit together, being righteous by what one cannot see nor feel?

**29.** Well, you learn here, that he concludes emphatically and vigorously, that alone is righteousness which he calls righteousness, and the world is convicted by it, because it does not possess it. It is as if he said: Of what use is it, for you to dispute much about good works, holy living and what you think is the way to righteousness? If you do not have this, that I go to the Father, it is all nothing and worth nothing before God. Even if you should seek and strive, think and study to death, and pursue after righteousness with all-your powers, you will never think it out or attain to it. Another righteousness is necessary, different from what you understand and propose, where one is to take up the law, and be obedient to it and live according to it. Something far and high above all that is necessary, where there is no law, or commandment, or human work and life, but only what I do, namely, that “I go to the Father” etc.

**30.** How now does it come to pass? Answer: In the first part of this discourse we heard that all men are convicted in respect of sin. From this it follows, as has been explained, that nobody fulfils the law or the ten commandments. For if anybody fulfilled them, he would certainly not be convicted as a sinner, but by this obedience and fulfillment of the law he would be righteous, as St. Paul says in ~~<40E1>~~Galatians 3:21-22: “If there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been by the law. But the scripture shut up all things under sin.” Since no man can fulfill the law, we have no righteousness from the law of and in ourselves, with which we can stand before God against his wrath and judgment. But, if we are to come to God, we must have the righteousness of another, which God regards and accepts.

**31.** For the conviction in respect of sin extends over all human life on earth. Even saints and Christians must still suffer this conviction to pass upon their best life and work, and confess that they have sin, which would be wrong and worthy of condemnation, if it should be judged according to God’s commandment and before his tribunal; as also the prophet David, saintly and full of good works as he was, prays and confesses: “Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight no man living is righteous, ~~<19E302>~~Psalm 143:2; and St. Paul (~~<40E1>~~1 Corinthians 4:4): “I know nothing against myself; yet I am not hereby justified.” But that they are not

condemned like the others, is due alone to this difference: they accept this conviction, confess and lament that they have sin, and believe on Christ and seek forgiveness of sins through him. In this way they have the righteousness of another, which is entirely the work, power and merit of Christ the Lord. He calls it: "Going to the Father."

**32.** For these words: "because I go to the Father," embraces the whole work of our redemption and salvation, for which God's Son was sent from heaven, and which he performed for us and still performs until the end; namely, his passion, death and resurrection, and his whole reign in the church. For this going to the Father signifies nothing else than that he offers himself as a sacrifice by the shedding of his blood and his death in order to pay for sin; that afterwards he triumphs in his resurrection and brings into subjection to himself sin, death and hell, and seats himself alive at the right hand of the Father, where he reigns invisibly over all things in heaven and earth, and gathers and extends his church by the preaching of the Gospel; and that he intercedes for those, who believe, with the Father as an eternal mediator and high priest, because they still have weaknesses and sins remaining in them, and gives the power, and strength of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin, the devil and death.

**33.** Lo, this now is the righteousness of Christians before God, that Christ goes to the Father, that is, suffers, and rises for us, and thereby reconciles us to the Father, so that for his sake we have forgiveness of sin and grace. It is not at all by our work or merit, but solely by his going, which he does for our sake. This is the righteousness of another, for which we have done nothing and have merited nothing, and are unable to merit anything, freely given and appropriated to us to be our righteousness, whereby we please God and are his dear children and heirs.

**34.** But that this freely bestowed righteousness is in us, and that we can comfort ourselves with it as our treasure and chief possession, comes by faith alone. For it must be received and accepted by us. Now it cannot be apprehended otherwise than with the heart, which clings to the departure of Christ and firmly believes that for his sake it has forgiveness and redemption from sin and death. For this righteousness is not an external thing, which can be effected by human works, ordinances or exercises; but a lofty, hidden treasure, not to be seen with eyes nor comprehended by our senses: as he himself says: "Ye behold me no more." It must simply be believed.

**35.** Here now is abolished and cut off at one stroke all that the world is seeking, disputing and inquiring about without end, namely, how a man may become pious before God. Everybody says something different; one teaches this, another that; and yet none has ever arrived at it, although they may have heard, learned and practiced every doctrine of the law and good works. One ought justly to ask this master Christ also and to be glad to hear what he says; as indeed everybody would wish to do, if this preaching were not at hand, and would gladly run to the ends of the earth for it. But, of course, everybody hopes that he will say something to the point, what should be done and something higher and better than all others have taught.

**36.** But what does he say? Not a word about our doing and living: on the contrary he says, that all this is not the righteousness, which is valid before God. But if you wish to become pious and righteous before God, something else is necessary, something that neither you nor any man is and can do, namely this: "I go to the Father." In other words, nobody will become righteous before God except by and on account of this, that I die and rise again. My departure alone is the cause, why God graciously accepts a man and counts him righteous, if he clings to Christ in faith.

**37.** Therefore these words are to be carefully noted, in which Christ proves himself such an adventurous man in speaking against the understanding and ideas of all men, especially, of the wise and saintly, who all, if the discussion be concerning what it is to be pious and righteous, know nothing else to speak of than what they call *justitiam formaletto*, that is, such virtue as is in us or as we ourselves do, that is to say, our work and obedience.

**38.** Again you say: What about the doctrine of good works? Shall this amount to nothing, or is it not a beautiful, praiseworthy thing, when a man endeavors to keep the commandments, and is obedient, chaste, honorable and truthful? Answer: Yes, surely; all this is to be done; it is also a good doctrine and life, provided it is left in the place where it belongs, and the two doctrines are kept distinct, how a man becomes pious and righteous before God, and how and to what end he is to do good works. For although it is necessary to teach the doctrine of good works, at the same time, nay, even before this also must be carefully taught (so that the doctrine of the Gospel and of faith be kept pure and unadulterated), that all our works, however good and holy they may be, are not the treasure and

merit, by which we become acceptable to God and attain everlasting life. But it is this alone, that Christ goes to the Father and by his departure merits this for us, and gives and communicates to us his righteousness, innocence and merits; and so begins in us a kingdom that we, who believe in him, are redeemed by his power and Spirit from sin and death, and shall live with him forever. It must not be a righteousness that continues only here upon earth and then ceases; but a new righteousness, which endures forever in the life beyond with God, just as Christ lives and reigns above forever.

**39.** For this reason I have often said, that in order to speak and judge correctly of these matters, a careful distinction must be made between a good man (what the philosophers call *bonum virum*) and a Christian. We also commend being a good man. There is nothing more praiseworthy on earth, and it is a gift of God just as well as sun and moon, corn and wine, and all creatures. But things must not be mixed and confused. Let a good man have his praise before the world, and let it be said: A good man is doubtless an excellent, precious man on earth, but for that reason he is not yet a Christian; for he may be a Turk or a heathen, as in ages past some were very famous. Indeed it cannot be otherwise than, that among so many wicked people, occasionally a good man should be found. But however good he may be, with such godness he is and remains a child of Adam, that is, an earthly man under sin and death.

**40.** But when you inquire about a Christian, you must go much higher; for he is another kind of a man. He is not a child of Adam, and has not father and mother upon earth; but he is a child of God, an heir and nobleman in the kingdom of heaven. He is called a Christian because he clings with his heart to this Savior, who has ascended to the Father, and he believes that for his sake and through him he has God's grace, and everlasting salvation and life. This is neither achieved nor apprehended, attained nor learned by our life, virtue and work, from which we are called good men on earth; nor by righteousness according to the law and ten commandments. These, as has been said, are also necessary, and are found in every Christian; but they do not attain by far to this chief thing and this righteousness, of which Christ is speaking here and which he calls righteousness.

**41.** For, although a man has exercised himself in this during his whole life much and long, and has done everything that he was able to do; nevertheless he cannot thereby attain to certainty that God is pleased with

it and is truly gracious to him. Hence in every such life the heart always remains uncertain and in doubt. All experienced consciences give evidence of this, and even the monks bear testimony to it in their books, in which they teach openly, that one must doubt, for no man can know whether he is in a state of grace, and it would be presumptuous in a high degree to make this boast with reference to one's self.

**42.** From this it must follow: because a man is in such doubt, he can have no true confidence in God, nor turn to him and call upon him from his heart; but he is timid and flees from God, and must at last fall into hatred of God and despair. For when the real struggle comes and he is to stand before the judgment, then he feels and sees, that with his life and works he cannot abide the wrath of God, but with it all must sink into the abyss.

**43.** If now in such distress we are to be saved from despair and to prevail, we must have another foundation than our righteousness or that of the law, namely, this eternal righteousness of Christ, which stands there, where the devil cannot overthrow it and the judgment of God can bring no charge against it, that is, at the right hand of the Father. The devil can overthrow me, whenever he wills, with all my life and works by presenting God's judgment and wrath. All this can blow away as the wind blows a little feather. But when I direct him from myself and my works to the right hand of the Father, where Christ, my Lord, is seated, who bestows upon me his righteousness, for which he has gone to the Father, he will not overthrow him, nay, he will not even dare to attack him.

**44.** Therefore Christ acts like a faithful, good Savior, when he draws all this from us and all men to himself alone, and grounds and builds our righteousness entirely on his departure to the Father. So we can know, where we are safe against every onset and assault of the devil and the gates of hell. For if it depended upon us and upon our worthiness, that we had made sufficient satisfaction and had done enough good works, our heart never would have rest and finally could not exist.

**45.** From all this it is manifest what a shameful, cursed doctrine the monks and the whole papacy have hitherto taught, whereby they have misled the world. They not only taught no word of Christ and faith, but they even claimed with impudence, that their monkery is a much higher, nobler and more perfect life than that of ordinary Christians, which ought to be an abomination to all Christians to hear. For one may exalt and extol the life and piety of all men, the chastity of virgins, the discipline and asceticism of



hermits, the laudable deeds and virtues of great, excellent and pious lords and rulers, and whatever may be described to pious people, as high as one pleases; it never can equal a Christian, that is, one who has this Lord, sitting at the right hand of God, and his righteousness. We will gladly let that also stand for what it is worth and praise it as a precious gift; but a Christian is to be extolled as a lord far and high above all that, as one that has this eternal possession and inheritance in the kingdom of heaven at the right hand of God with Christ, his brother.

**46.** He that understands and knows how to distinguish this, can also teach and judge correctly of all life, and go safely in all matters and guard himself from error. For he judges and measures everything by this rule and standard, which Christ teaches here, that the righteousness of a Christian is not the righteousness that has grown in us, like the other called the righteousness of the law and of man, but it is a heavenly and divine righteousness without and above us.

**47.** Therefore, if anybody comes and tries to make a fool of you, makes much ado and tells you wonders about great exceptional holiness, and directs you to live after the example of this or that great saint, in order thereby to please God and become a Christian, you can say to him: Dear sir, I grant all that is good and I also would like to be pious, do according to God's commandments, and keep myself from sin; but you shall never persuade me, that in this way I become a Christian or attain to greater and higher things. They also, who fasted, labored and suffered so much, did not become Christians by that. For this were to encroach upon my dear Lord Christ, so that he would have gone away in vain and human work would be placed on equality with his. But I wish to be called a Christian, as he taught me and all saints have had to do, if they wished to stand before God, because I cling to this Savior and, as St. Paul says in <sup><COR></sup>Philippians 3:9: "Be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law," but his, which he gained for me by this departure, by which he overcame my sin and death, and which he announces and grants to me through the preaching of the Gospel. When you once have this, then go and do as many good works as you can; however, do it according to the commandment of God, for without this and before him you will be able to do nothing good, because you are still in unbelief, and have and know not Christ, and therefore are under sin with all that you do; as we have heard in the first part of this discourse.



**48.** Behold, this is speaking according to the manner of Christ and with his words of righteousness, which he esteems righteousness. It is not an external human thing upon earth, but something incomprehensible and invisible in this life. It is not found in us men on earth, nor attained through men, but a new heavenly righteousness, which he alone has created and founded by his death and resurrection, and which we must apprehend in faith, because we do not see it, and which has for its goal an everlasting, unending life and being, where he rules in a new, heavenly state.

**49.** For this life will not reach up to it, because it is altogether corrupted by sin and death, and finally shall be destroyed. Therefore the Son of God from heaven has founded this kingdom, which is not concerned with external, worldly affairs and government, as the Jews and the apostles imagined, nor with the poor, beggarly righteousness of this life. Its purpose is, on the contrary, to create a new, everlasting righteousness, by which all nature shall be transformed and renewed, and in it shall be no sin or death any more, but a purely perfect, divine work and life. This is the work, which he has begun by going to the Father and in his own person has already fully accomplished. This kingdom he is evermore promoting in this life by the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers until the last day. But in the life to come it shall be lived and found completely and perfectly in us.

**50.** This is the meaning, he intends to say, of the words: “I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more.” I am not speaking of this temporal life and existence upon earth, which in this corrupt nature cannot be without sin and death. Therefore there can be no perfect righteousness and life in it. Nor shall my kingdom consist of this transitory nature. Things must become different and arrive at the pass, that you behold me no more, because I reign eternally outside of this bodily, visible existence, and I shall bring you thither, where purely new and perfect righteousness and eternal life exist. This kingdom I now begin in Christendom by the preaching and work of the Holy Spirit.

*“Of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged.”*

**51.** In the first two thoughts Christ spoke of doctrine and included the whole sum of the Gospel. First, that all human nature, power, doing and life are sin and under God’s wraths, because they do not believe in Christ. Secondly, that we become righteous, that is, we are redeemed from sin and death, and we please God and have eternal life, solely because Christ goes

to the Father. Now follows the third, including both how the world conducts itself towards this preaching, and how contrariwise the Holy Spirit shall press forward with his preaching.

**52.** Of this he says, he will convict the world further in respect of judgment. This is also somewhat strange and obscure language in the ears of us, who are not accustomed to the Hebrew speech. The word “judgment” means nothing else than (as we also speak of it) the action and decision between two parties at variance, which is right or wrong; and it embraces at once both elements, which must always enter into a proceeding of judgment, favor and anger, or aid and punishment, on the one hand, that the innocent party be acquitted and helped to his rights; on the other, that the guilty be condemned and punished. However, the word is generally used for the latter element of judgment or the legal sentence, namely, for condemnation and its consequence or execution.

**53.** In this sense Christ also uses it here, and he intends to indicate that when the Holy Spirit shall pursue the two themes of his preaching in the world and shall convict it in respect of sin and righteousness, the world will not receive it, nor be willing to be convicted of being in sin and without righteousness, nor be moved to allow the righteousness of Christ to be offered to it. But it will set itself against this teaching and convicting of the Holy Spirit, and condemn and persecute it. It will claim to be right in doing so and to be obliged not to suffer its wisdom and righteousness, which it considers divine gifts and service of God, to be reduced to nothing. Contrariwise the Holy Spirit must continue to convict in respect of this judgment and also press the sentence of condemnation, and tell the world that it with its judgment is condemned, together with its prince and head, the devil.

**54.** Then arises the conflict and one judgment runs contrary to the other. For the world also sets up this teaching, not only because it does not proceed from its wisdom nor from the great, distinguished men of the world, but also because it is preached by poor, lowly people. It opens its mouth wide against it, and says: Why, what more is it than that some vagabond beggars wish to oppose established authority and by everybody, aye, was instituted by God himself? So it condemns, interdicts and curses both the doctrine and the preachers. Moreover it proceeds to shut up their mouths by threats of its power, resorts to severity and the sword, and will absolutely have its error and idolatry unassisted and unproved, nay,

preserved and defended against God and Christ as wisdom and holiness, and the preaching of the Gospel uprooted and exterminated.

**55.** But Christ says on the contrary, that the Holy Spirit shall retain the superior judgment and prevail with his convicting of this sentence of the world until the last day. But in consequence of this, Christians get into straits between door and hinge, and the cross and persecution begins. For, because the kingdom of Christ, as we have heard, is not of this world, but spiritual and at present invisible on earth, the power and might, which the world has upon earth, are directed against the church with condemning, persecuting, harassing, torturing, killing and murdering by sword, fire, water and every means. The world is also incited and strengthened by the bitter, fierce anger and hatred of the devil against Christ, who desires and seeks to blot out and exterminate the church. And so to the eyes of the world and also of Christians it looks as if, in consequence of this persecution, cruelty and murder, practiced on the Christians who confess and maintain this preaching of the Holy Spirit, the church would altogether perish.

**56.** In this part of discourse then Christ first prophesies, how this preaching shall be received by the world and what would happen to the apostles on account of it; namely, in the first place the world shall despise them, because they come along without any public authority and command from it and introduce a new doctrine in opposition to the regular government, priesthood and teaching office, instituted by God, and convict and reprove all it maintains as of no validity before God; in the next place, because they wish to continue and not to cease their preaching, the world will proceed and issue judgment against them and also execute it, as against people, who are neither sent by God nor preach God's word, but are the emissaries of the devil, and who, having been proved and declared to be blasphemers of God, disobedient and rebellious to God's law, God's people and God's service, are guilty of death and not worthy to live. So the Jews cried out against St. Paul (<sup><422></sup>Acts 22:22): "It is not fit that he should live," and they assign the reason (<sup><423></sup>Acts 21:28): "This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place."

**57.** Secondly, Christ gives comfort against this hatred of judgment and persecution of the world. They are to know that he will nevertheless maintain his preaching and preserve his church against the anger and rage of the world by his divine power and strength. The devil and his kingdom

shall be subdued by him and compelled to yield and not be able to execute against his church what in his fierce, mad wrath and hate he would like to do. Therefore, although Christians on account of this preaching must be exposed to the devil and the world, this word shall nevertheless remain undestroyed and finally triumph and hold the field, and make manifest to all the world its unjust judgment against the Gospel. In the end they shall be made to feel ashamed of themselves and to acknowledge of themselves, that they condemned and persecuted the Gospel unfairly and with injustice; just as the judges of Christ, aye, even his betrayer, in his passion had to bear witness to his innocence. The reason, he says, is this: this king Christ by going to the Father has overcome both the world and the devil; and now he causes this to be proclaimed that he is the Lord of all and has power and might to condemn and to punish, with everlasting hell fire, everything that opposes him, including the devil and his angels.

**58.** This is what he says, that this conviction shall continue against the world that persecutes the Gospel, and finally prevail over it, so that its judgment and condemnation shall be overpowered, and in turn be condemned and put to shame; and not only the world, but also its God, the devil, who incites the world against Christ. For he is, says he, already judged, and the sentence of condemnation has already been pronounced upon him, and the only thing still wanting is its execution, that the punishment be inflicted upon him in eternal hell fire: just like a thief or murderer, sentenced by the judge, upon whom the wrath and judgment of blood has already passed and who has been given over to death, so that he only flees to be led away and to receive his due.

**59.** So here this judgment proceeds by power and might of the Lord Christ, sitting at the right hand of the Father; and this judgment is publicly proclaimed by the office of preaching, that the prince of the world with all his adherents is already finally under condemnation, and shall accomplish nothing against Christ. He must let him remain the Lord, under whose feet he shall eternally lie and suffer his head to be trodden down. And Christ causes this to be preached in all the world, that whoever will not believe on the Lord, shall be condemned with the devil, however high, mighty, learned or holy he may be, regardless of how he dares to condemn this doctrine or to suppress and extirpate it, be his name Roman or Turkish emperor, king and lord over all.

**60.** If now meanwhile the world goes its way and despises this judgment, which is already pronounced upon the devil and all his members, and makes a jest of it, because it does not see it come to pass visibly, just as it also condemns the first and second part of this preaching. Christ nevertheless ever proceeds and cheerfully allows himself to be despised. But at the same time he also shows the devil and the world that he is the Lord, who can break and restrain the wrath and raging of the devil, and hurl down his enemies, as Psalm 110, I says of him, until he makes his enemies his footstool. For the ax is already laid at the tree, and already chains and bonds are thrown upon him, as ~~Gal 2~~ 2 Peter 2:4, says, with which the devil is bound unto everlasting darkness in the fire of hell. Nobody shall believe this except the Christians, who take their Lord's Word for truth and know his power and kingdom; the others shall have no other reward than what they seek with their lord, the devil. Plunged into the abyss of hell in everlasting darkness, they must be overthrown and perish on account of their raging against Christ. This is the first division of this Gospel of the kingdom of Christ and the preaching of the Holy Spirit in the world. Now follows:

## II. SERMON ON THE TEACHING OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.”

**61.** This part: also belongs to the promise of the Holy Spirit and his office in the church. But he breaks off here, what he had begun to say of the doctrine and had summarily comprehended in few words concerning what the Holy Spirit shall preach; and he directs them to the truth, that the Holy Spirit himself shall come and teach them these things, so that they shall well understand them and experience them in their work. For it is not yet time, he will say, to speak much of the doctrine, because he is about to pronounce his farewell and to comfort them in view of his departure. Moreover, even if he should speak of it at great length, they are not yet prepared to comprehend and understand rightly, how it shall be in his future kingdom. For they are yet too deeply immersed in the thought and hope of an external, temporal kingdom and worldly glory, so that they

cannot adapt themselves and take into their hearts, what he says to them of his spiritual kingdom and office, which he shall fulfill through the Holy Spirit. For they are able to think only in this way: If he is to be a king, he must be present himself, and win the world to himself either with his preaching and miracles, so that it will voluntarily render him obedience and accept him as lord, or if it is not willing of its own accord, compel it by external force and punishment. But if this, which he now says shall happen, and he goes away from them and is not seen any more, that is, dies, it is no longer to be hoped that he will be a king and execute such great things. Therefore they are, and until after his resurrection they remain, quite bewildered, so that they do not understand what he told them beforehand, and besides they already feel the misery, sorrow and persecution of the world, which he here announces to them.

**62.** This is what he says: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” It is too heavy for you to bear, what has been said and still is to be said of this; for it is all quite contrary to your thoughts and hopes. For if you understood it, you would thereby take comfort and be of a joyful heart; as he also said before: “If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father.” But now what I tell you for your comfort about my glorification, ascent to heaven, and the glorious kingdom, which I will begin through you, only fills you with fear and sorrow. It is indeed true: “Ye cannot bear them now.” Therefore I must reserve it, until the time comes, when what I tell you now beforehand, shall come. He must teach it to you himself, and lead and guide you out of your present erroneous thoughts and misunderstandings into the truth and right knowledge.

**63.** For, he says, his office shall be to glorify me, that is, to declare of me the revelation and testimony that I, raised out of suffering and death to glory, seated at the right hand of the Father, am Lord over all, and announce to all the world, that this was the counsel of the Father. Therefore the Holy Spirit shall be sent in order that the world may know this and so be brought to my kingdom. When now this takes place, and I am taken from you and the Holy Spirit comes, he himself shall doubtless teach much better than you now think and understand; and in your own experience shall be found what I have now spoken to you and, if I were to explain and elucidate it further, would have to speak much more fully. In this sense he also afterwards concludes this chapter, as we shall hear in the Gospel for next Sunday, and says: “These things have I spoken unto you in

dark sayings,” that is, what I have hitherto told you of my passion, resurrection, and your sufferings and how in the midst of them you shall ask the Father in my name, all these are now strange, dark and hidden sayings, which you do not understand. But the time shall come, “when I shall speak no more to you in dark sayings, but shall tell you plainly of the Father,” namely, when I have ascended to heaven and shall send to you the Holy Spirit. Then you shall experience, what now is nothing but dark sayings to you, as I tell it to you. This is the true, simple meaning of the text: “I have yet many things to say unto you.”

**64.** But these words have had to serve our papists and still must serve them, and allow themselves to be twisted and interpreted, in order to strengthen their frippery, and to be laid as foundation of what they pretend and exhortate, that much more must be believed and kept than what the Gospel and the Scriptures teach, namely, what the fathers and the councils have said and ordained. For Christ has promised here that the Holy Spirit shall tell them much more than he has said, and guide them into all the truth. Just as if the apostles had very well understood, what Christ says to them here, whereas they themselves prove the contrary by the work of their unbelief in regard to his passion and resurrection. Or as if this were ever so easy to understand, that the Holy Spirit was not necessary, whereas until this day no pope understands anything of it, as I know from experience. For their art I have also learned; and by their books they give evidence enough, that they understand nothing of this. Therefore it is necessary to reply to these fools, in order to break down their tissue of lies.

**65.** First you hear now that Christ says: “I have yet many things to say unto you.” Who are these “you”? Or to whom is he speaking? Without doubt the apostles, to whom he also says: “Ye cannot bear them now;” and “The Holy Spirit shall guide you into all the truth.” Therefore, unless Christ lied, this word must have been fulfilled at the time that the Holy Spirit came. He must have accomplished in them and through them all that the Lord here says, and have guided them into all the truth. How now will it be inferred from this that Christ did not tell all to the apostles, nor did the Holy Spirit, but left much untold, which the councils should teach and determine? Whereas, according to their claims, the contrary should follow, that the Holy Spirit has told all to the apostles; and Christ is pressing towards this conclusion, that he will explain all to the apostles and will introduce into the world through them, what they have learned from the Holy Spirit. How then does their juggling agree, that what is to be known, believed and done

in the church, is only to be told, taught, decided and ordained after the apostles at the end of the world.

**66.** Furthermore, if what the councils have taught and decided after the apostles is to be taken as truth, revealed anew by the Holy Spirit, the apostles themselves did not come into all the truth, much less they to whom they preached. And together with them the church would be deceived by Christ, when he promises them: The Holy Spirit shall guide you into all the truth.

**67.** Secondly, Christ says plainly: “I have yet many things to say unto you.” He does not say: I have many other things to say unto you, and the Holy Spirit shall teach and explain to you other things than! have told you. This is their own addition, which they daub on the words of Christ, and so pervert them, that teaching many things (*multa*) is to mean teaching other things (*alia*). We would wish them well to the word “many,” if only they had the grace of the Holy Spirit to teach many things; but it is not to be endured, that under the guise of the word “many” they also wish to introduce and to have power to teach other things. For they impudently claim that the church by inspiration of the Holy Spirit appointed and ordained many things after the apostles, which must be observed; among others the article of one form in the Sacrament, celibacy of priests, and the like. This is not teaching more or further, but altogether different things, aye, contrary things against the clear ordinance and command of Christ, which they themselves must acknowledge is right. Nevertheless it is to be heresy and wrong to act contrary to their law according to the command of Christ; for the church, they say, has ordained differently. If you ask, on what ground, they answer: “Christ says: “I have yet many things to say unto you;” indeed, even that which is contrary to his own Word and command.

**68.** Truly, that would be a fine church, which could arrogate to itself the power, as the Antichristian church of the pope does, to teach contrary to Christ whatever it wished, and to change his ordinances, and then would prove and confirm it with this saying: “I have yet many things to say unto you.” Whereas he says distinctly of the Holy Spirit, and so puts limit and measure upon him, that the Holy Spirit shall glorify Christ and not speak from himself, but take and proclaim of his own, that is, of that which is the Word and command of Christ. Therefore the company that teaches



otherwise, cannot be from the Holy Spirit, nor the church of Christ, but must be the sect of the hateful devil.

**69.** For the Christian church and the Holy Spirit himself abide by that which Christ said and commanded. They may make more of it, that is, elucidate it in length and in breadth, but they do not make something different of it. For this saying “many things” consists in discussing one point in manifold ways and yet always saying one thing. For instance John the Evangelist wrote many more things than Christ said here; but yet always holds to the one thing, discussing thoroughly the article of faith on the person, office and kingdom of Christ, of which also Christ speaks, and his scope or main point always looks to this Lamb of God. Likewise St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans and almost throughout that to the Galatians treats of and enforces the righteousness of faith.

**70.** Doubtless this is to preach much and to say more than Christ said in these few words but yet always one thing and not something different. For it is the quality of a good preacher, that he is able to take a subject and briefly comprehend it and sum it up in two or three words, and afterwards, if there is need, also to elucidate and explain it with sayings and examples and make out of a flower a whole meadow: just as a goldsmith is able to bend one piece of silver together solidly into a lump, and again beat it broad, crooked and curly, and into thin foil; and so it becomes a long or a short sermon, but always the same and not contradictory. For God’s Word is to dwell in us richly, says St. Paul (<sup><SIBIG></sup>Colossians 3:16), so that we may be powerful in the Scriptures and able to prove the right doctrine by them. The Epistle to the Hebrews does this which for the most part speaks of the priesthood of Christ, and spins a long sermon out of the saying in the 110th <sup><HID></sup>Psalm 5:4: “Thou art a priest forever,” adducing many more sayings, texts and examples; and yet, viewed as a whole, it amounts to nothing more than this one point, that Christ is the only eternal priest. This indeed means that much more is said than David says in the psalm mentioned, but still nothing different. So since the beginning of Christianity much more has been taught and preached, through the Holy Spirit, than Christ did, and more may be taught still every day and expounded most abundantly and in every manner, as more is revealed to one than another, or as it falls and is given to one to speak more copiously than another; but still in such a way, that when it is all finally brought together, it all refers to one Christ. And how many things can be adduced as illustrations from the whole Bible, aye,

from all creatures, which all agree with the teaching of the Gospel, none of which Christ has taught or said, and yet it is the same doctrine!

**71.** St. Paul also speaks of this when he refers to the gift of prophecy or the interpretation of the Scriptures, and lays down a measure and rule by which it is to be governed: “Whether prophecy, let us prophecy”, says he in <sup>6</sup>Romans 12:6, “according to the proportion of our faith,” that is, in harmony and agreement with the doctrine of faith. For instance, if one wished to adduce the example of Abraham, who took his son Isaac upon the mountain to sacrifice him there, but left his servants and the ass below at the foot of the mountain; this example can be interpreted for and according to the faith, or against the faith. The Jewish preachers and teachers did the latter, when they set forth that whoever would allow himself to be sacrificed and killed in the same manner, he would do the loftiest work and would immediately ascend to heaven; wherefore kings, who desired to be distinguished saints, sacrificed and burned to God their own children alive. Similarly our monkish saints interpret it. If one wishes to come to God, he must leave servants and beasts below at the foot of the mountain, that is, put away the five senses and have nothing to do with outward, worldly affairs, but separated from all this, live in spiritual contemplation. This can be called interpreting and teaching not in proportion to and according to the faith, but against it. But you may interpret it in this way: Whoever wishes to come to God, must rise above human understanding and thoughts, so that he may have God’s Word, to learn to know and apprehend God from it, and there offers before him by faith (if the conscience is to stand before God) the sacrifice, given for us as a sacrifice by God, Christ, the Son of God, and meanwhile lets the ass with the servants remain below, that is, what is of our own work and doing. In this way I have adduced this example. This is the same teaching that the Gospel contains everywhere, and is not against, but for the faith; although this also is not the real, sure interpretation of this history.

**72.** Our papistic asses, swine and simpletons will not regard this, but wish to persuade us to accept everything that is put forth and taught in the name of the church or the councils, as if the Holy Spirit taught it, irrespective of how it agrees and corresponds with the teaching of the Gospel; and all is to be confirmed by the saying: “I have yet many things to say unto you.” No, dear fellow, that will not pass, although he has more to say; you cannot for this reason say whatever you please, or what every monk has dreamed, or what every bold papist wishes to be observed. This I willingly grant you,

that you may spread these words of Christ and be a copious preacher, and out of one word make a thousand, in order that it may become clear, bright and lucid, and everybody may understand it; but only in such a way that the one pure, uncorrupted doctrine remains. But if, contrary to this, you bring up and put forth a new doctrine, for instance, if anybody becomes a monk, he has a new baptism and becomes as pure as a young child, just baptized then not the Holy Spirit, but the devil teaches you to speak, and it is not teaching more, but something quite different from and contradictory to what Christ says. Therefore a Christian must be prudent in this matter and, as St. John teaches, be able to prove the spirits according to the Word of God, and be on his guard, lest he allows himself to be told another teaching, be it much or little, and led and guided upon another way.

**73.** Thirdly, he says: “Ye cannot bear them now.” You observe here, that he is speaking of excellent, great things, which are too difficult for them, and for this reason alone he is unwilling to say more about them now, because they are too imperfect and weak. He refers, of course, to the same things and none other, than he began to speak of, namely, his kingdom, how it should progress in the world; how he must die the most shameful death and become a curse, and yet be believed on as the Savior, the Son of God and the Lord over all. Furthermore, that they should be persecuted and killed by the world, and nevertheless the Gospel should prosper, and by it the whole Jewish people, their priesthood, temple, service of God and all their glory, should fall to the ground. At that time they were able to understand none of these things, even if he had preached to them for many years, until they were taught by the Holy Spirit through experience in their office of preaching.

**74.** But tell me, in comparison with these things what is all that has been ordained and appointed later, after the apostles, by councils and popes? Is that such a difficult thing, that it cannot be understood or endured without special revelation and power of the Holy Spirit? How this or that order and monastic rule is to be kept; shall black or gray hoods be worn; on Friday no meat is to be eaten; only one form of the sacrament is to be used; should not the apostles have been able to understand and bear such things, which every unlearned, wicked rascal can well understand and do? Ah, they were much higher things, which the apostles could not bear, and a higher art than these good-for-nothing babblers dream of. I certainly think that what the apostles were not able to understand and bear, that you also will not be able to understand and bear with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. For

the doctrine of faith is difficult to grasp and is not so easily learned, as inexperienced spirits dream; namely, that a man must go out of himself, out of his own life and works, and with his whole mind fasten to that, which he neither sees nor feels in himself, namely, that Christ goes to the Father. O, it is a difficult art, to despair thus of one's self, and to let go whatever one has of his good or bad life, and to cling to the Word of Christ alone and to give body and soul for it. What power of reason can search out or teach this, if the whole world be searched over? Only try it with earnestness and in the real conflict of conscience, and you will experience it. For the devil and our own nature, and so many sects and false doctrines fight against it too hard. Let this be said against the lies and asinine art of the papists, with which they defile and bedaub this beautiful text, in order to confirm their lies.

**75.** But the meaning of this, that Christ calls the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of truth”, belongs to the explanation of other Gospels, and is elsewhere fully expounded. But it is said here advisedly, “The Spirit of truth” and, “*He shall guide you into all the truth,*” that is, into the true, pure doctrine, which preaches of me and, as he afterwards says, shall glorify me. For he sees far ahead here, that the spirit of lies, the devil, will stir and put himself forward even in the church, and set forth his own with great plausibility and approval; and he would fain say: O, how many sects shall arise, all of whom shall boast wonderfully of great mind, and yet they will only seduce people away from Christ and the truth into error and perdition.

**76.** Therefore he describes the Holy Spirit, and gives to him the true token, by which he can be known and tested: “He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine.” It is he alone, who elucidates Christ, as he has made himself known through his word; so that it may be known, that whoever teaches anything different, and yet pretends to be a Christian and adorns himself with the name, is not of the Spirit of Christ. For he shall teach no other thing, but adhere to the same teaching of Christ, except that he spreads it more and makes it clearer and plainer; wherefore he says: “He shall glorify me.”

**77.** Furthermore, when he says: “He shall not speak from himself,” he again distinguishes between the false and the true Spirit. For the others all come of themselves, and speak from themselves, what they have thought out. Now he says, this is not the quality of the Holy Spirit, but of the devil. “When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the

father thereof.” ~~John~~ John 8:44. Therefore he wishes to say: If a spirit is heard, who speaks from himself, he is certainly a liar. But the Holy Spirit shall not speak from himself; but what he receives from me and as he shall hear me and the Father speak with each other.

**78.** This is truly an incisive text for the article of the three persons in the divine Being, that the Son of God is the Word of the Father in eternity, whom no one hears speak except the Holy Spirit; and he not only hears, but also testifies and proclaims it in the world. And in short, it all tends to this. that it is God’s purpose that the Holy Spirit shall teach and pursue only the article of Christ, how we become righteous before God for his sake. Therefore he concludes: “He shall glorify me: for he shalt take of mine;” that is, he shall indeed say more than I, and speak and explain more clearly: but he shall take of mine, and speak of me and not of men and their holiness and works. This is to be his true office and work, by which he shall be known, and which he shall carry on until this Christ is well known. When you have learned this, you may seek for another Holy Spirit; but I hope we shall all remain the disciples of this Master and Teacher until the last day.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER (ROGATE) OR PRAYER SUNDAY.

The first edition of this sermon appeared in pamphlet form under the title: “A sermon for the fifth Sunday after Easter, John 16, Martin Luther, Wittenberg, 1525.” At the end are the words: “Printed at Wittenberg by Hans Weiss, 1525.” Another edition was printed at Augsburg by Ottmar.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:155; Walch Edition, 11:1239; St. Louis Walch, 11:919.

*Text: ~~1623~~ John 16:23-30. And in that day ye shall ask me no question. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name. Hitherto have ye asked for nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full.*

*These things have I spoken unto you in dark sayings: the hour cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in dark sayings, but shall tell you plainly of the Father. In that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father. I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father. His disciples say, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no dark saying. Now know we that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.*

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## SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL:

- 1.** In this Gospel we have a promise and Christ does not only promise, but he even swears that our prayers shall be heard; but through himself as mediator and high priest.
- 2.** We should pray that we may have peace through faith, which St. Paul says, is a true and perfect peace.
- 3.** When Christ says: “These things have I spoken unto you in parables (dark sayings), it is as much as to say, hitherto you have been unable to understand my Word, it all appears to you dark and hidden; but the time will come, when I send the Holy Spirit, that I shall speak plainly by my Spirit, that is, publicly in your hearts, of the things that belong to my father. So the sum and substance is, that without the Spirit one does not understand the Word.
- 4.** But when the disciples said: “Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no dark saying,” that is presumption and no reason, they do not know what he desires to teach in this discourse.
- 1.** We are accustomed to read today’s Gospel on this Sunday because it treats of prayer and this week is called Rogation (Supplication) week, in which we give ourselves to prayer and to processions with crosses. Those who first instituted it, no doubt, meant it well, but it has proven to work harm. For, in the processions heretofore, many unchristian things have been practiced, and there has been no praying at all or very little; so that the processions were rightly abolished and discontinued. Often have I admonished that we should persevere in prayer, for there is great need of it. Since the outward prating and muttering of prayer is done away with, we no longer pray in any way. This is a good indication that we heretofore, notwithstanding our many prayers, never prayed.
- 2.** The Lord points out here five things necessary to constitute true prayer. The first is God’s promise, which is the chief thing and is the foundation and power of all prayers. For he promises here that it shall be given us if we ask; and besides he swears: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name.” He promises that we might be sure of being heard in prayer; yea, he censures the disciples for the reason that they are lazy and have not therefore been



praying. As if he would say: God is ready to give more quickly, and to give more than you ask; yea, he offers his treasures if we only take them. It is truly a great shame and a severe chastisement for us Christians that God should still upbraid us for our slothfulness in prayer, and that we fail to let such a rich and excellent promise incite us to pray. We let this precious treasure lie there, and seek it not, nor exercise ourselves to receive the power in such a promise.

**3.** So God himself now founds our prayer upon his promise and thereby encourages us to pray. If it were not for this promise, who would have the courage to pray? We have hitherto resorted to many ways of preparing ourselves to pray — ways with which the books are filled; but if you wish to be well prepared, take the promise and lay hold of God with it. Then your courage and desire to pray will soon grow, which courage you will never otherwise get. For “those who pray without God’s promise, imagine in themselves how angry God is, whom they wish to propitiate by means of their prayers. Without faith in the promise, there is then, neither courage nor desire to pray, but mere uncertain delusion and a melancholy spirit; there is, therefore, no hearing of prayers, and both prayer and labor are lost.

**4.** By these words Christ now chastises the unbelief of those who, by reason of their foolish worship, consider themselves unworthy to pray, and gauge the worthiness of their prayer according to themselves and their own ability, and not according to the promise of God. There is then, to be sure, nothing but unworthiness. However, you should, by all means, be conscious of your own unworthiness, taking confidence not from your own doings, but from the promise of God, and be so completely conscious, that if you were all alone, and no one else in the world prayed, you would nevertheless pray, because of this promise. For you can point me to no true saint who prayed, depending upon his own worthiness, and who did not rely only upon God’s promises, be he Peter, Paul, Mary, Elijah, or any one else. All of them have been unworthy. I would not give a nickel for all the prayers of a saint if he prayed because of his own worthiness.

**5.** The second requisite of true prayer, following that of God’s promise, is faith — that we believe the promise is true, and do not doubt that God will give what he promises. For the words of the promise require faith. But faith is a firm, undoubting confidence in God’s promise that it is true; as James says: “But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who

giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” <sup><3006></sup>James 1:5-7. Moreover, he who doubts and yet prays, tempts God; for he doubts in respect to God’s will and grace. Therefore, his prayer is nothing and he gropes after God like the blind for the wall. John also speaks of this assurance of faith in <sup><6164></sup>1 John 5:14-15: “And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth: and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.” John describes with these words how a truly believing heart is disposed in prayer, namely, that it is concerned about nothing else than that its prayer be heard, knowing that it has even then obtained its petition. That is also true. Such faith and definite assurance, however, the Holy Spirit must impart; therefore, without the Holy Spirit, surely no prayer will be offered.

**6.** Try it, now, and pray thus. Then you will taste the sweetness of God’s promise. What courage and consolation of heart it awakens to pray for all things! It matters not how great and high the petitions may be. Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves; yet when he prayed, it did not rain for three years and six months, and when he again prayed it rained. 1 Kings, 17:1; 18:45. Notice, here you see a single man prays and by his prayer he is lord of the clouds, of heaven and earth. So God lets us see what power and influence a true prayer has, namely, that nothing is impossible for it to do.

**7.** Let everyone now ask his heart how often he has prayed during his whole life. Singing Psalms and saying the Lord’s Prayer is not called praying. These are instituted for children and untutored people, as exercises, to make them athletes in the Scriptures. Your prayer, however, no one but yourself sees and feels in your heart, and you will truly know it, when it hits the mark.

**8.** The third requisite of true prayer is, that one must name definitely something that he brings to God or for which he prays; as for strong faith, for love, for peace, and for the comfort of his neighbor. One must actually set forth the petitions; just as the Lord’s Prayer presents seven petitions. This is what Christ means by the words: “If ye shall ask anything of the Father.” “Anything,” that is, whatever you are in need of. Besides, he himself interprets this “anything” and says: “That your joy may be made

full.” That is, pray for all things you need, until you have acquired even all and your joy is made full; and his prayer will first be fully answered on the day of judgment.

**9.** The fourth element in true prayer is; that we must desire, or wish that the petition be granted, which is nothing but asking; as Christ says, “Ask.” Others have called this “Ascensum mentis in Deum,” when the soul ascends to God and desires something from him, and sighs from its depths, saying: Oh, that I had this or that! Such sighing St. Paul praises in <sup><BIB></sup>Romans 2:26. It is an intercession of the Spirit that cannot be uttered. That is, the mouth wants to, but cannot speak as rapidly and strongly as the heart desires; the yearning is greater than any words and thoughts. Hence it is, also, that man himself does not feel how deep his sighing or desire is. When Zacchaeus sought to see the Lord, he himself did not feel how strongly his heart wished that Christ might speak with him and come into his house. However, when his desire was fulfilled, he was very happy, for he had succeeded according to all his wishes and prayers; he had received more than he had dared to ask by word of mouth, or desire. <sup><BIB></sup>Luke 19:2ff. Moses, likewise, cried so that God spoke to him: “Wherefore criest thou unto me?” <sup><BIB></sup>Exodus 14:15, and yet his mouth kept silence; but his heart, in its extremity, sighed deeply and that was called crying unto God. In like manner St. Paul writes to the Ephesians: “God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. <sup><BIB></sup>Ephesians 3:20. Now, temptation, anxiety and trouble induce this sighing; they teach us what true sighing is.

**10.** The fifth requisite of true prayer is, that we ask in the name of Christ. This is nothing more than that we come before God in the faith of Christ and comfort ourselves with the sure confidence that he is our Mediator, through whom all things are given to us, without whom we merit nothing but wrath and disgrace. As Paul says to the Romans: “Through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” <sup><BIB></sup>Romans 5:2. It is praying aright in Christ’s name, when we thus trust in ‘him that we will be received and heard for his sake, and not for our own sake. Those, however, who pray in their own name, who presume that God will hear or regard them, because they say so many, such long, such devout, such godly prayers, will merit and obtain nothing but wrath and disgrace; for they wish to be people whom God should regard without a mediator. To them, Christ here is of no consideration, nor is he of any service.

**11.** We observe that all five requisites of prayer may be complied with in the heart, without any utterance of the mouth. The oral part of prayer is really not to be despised, but it is necessary to kindle and encourage prayer inwardly, in the heart. The additional conditions, however, of which I have written enough elsewhere, should and must be omitted that we specify to God the time, person, place, and measure. We must leave all that to his own free will, and cling only to asking; we must not doubt that the prayer is heard, and that what we petitioned is already ordered — that it will be given — as certainly as if we already had it. This is pleasing to God and he will do as he here promises: “Ask, and ye shall receive.” Those, however, who set the time, place and measure, tempt God, and believe not that they are heard or that they have obtained what they asked; therefore, they also receive nothing. The Gospel lesson continues:

*“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name.”*

**12.** It may be that they knew, as yet nothing of such prayer, and of this name; besides they felt no need that urged them to pray in this name. They imagined that so long as Christ was with them they needed nothing and had enough of everything. But, now that he is to separate from them and leave them, trouble immediately comes and they will have reason enough to move them to pray.

*“These things have I spoken unto you in parables (dark sayings).”*

**13.** When he says, “these things,” he means that which he had just before spoken: “A little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see me;” and, “Because I go to the Father;” also, the parable of the woman in travail. For these were nothing but parables, that is, dark-obscure sayings, which they did not understand. John calls these dark, hidden sayings “parables,” although the German language does not designate them so, but calls them enigmas or veiled sayings. We are accustomed to say of one who has uttered an enigmatical saying: “That is a covered dish or a covered meal,” when the words have a meaning not on the surface. In parables, the meaning to be conveyed is expressed in a way that not everyone understands. Of this nature were all the sayings of Christ, which he spoke to his disciples on the night of his farewell and his going to the Father; they could understand nothing of them. They thought his going would not be dying and coming into another existence; they thought of it as a pleasure walk and that Christ should return in the body, as one journeys to another country and returns. Therefore, although he spoke

plainly and clearly, yet going and parting were a “covered meal” to them. Hence, he adds:

*“The hour cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in dark sayings (parables), but shall tell you plainly of the Father.”*

**14.** That is, what I now speak to you, while in the body, and my parables ye understand not, which I will thoroughly explain to you through the Holy Spirit. I will plainly speak of my Father, that you may then understand who the Father is and what my going to the Father means. You will clearly see how I ascend through suffering into the Father’s life and into his kingdom; that I sit at his right hand and represent you and am your mediator; that all this is done for your sake, that you may likewise come to the Father. “I shall tell you plainly of the Father” is not to be understood to mean that he will tell us much about God’s divine nature, as the sophists fancy; for that is unnecessary and the divine nature of God is incomprehensible. But Christ will tell us how he goes to the Father, how he takes upon himself the kingdom and government of the Father; as a king’s son returns to his father and assumes the government of the kingdom. Christ says further:

*“In that day ye shall ask in my name.”*

**15.** For then, in your many tribulations, you will have not only reason to pray, but will also know and perceive what my name is and how you should esteem me. Then will you be taught by praying itself what you now do not at all understand, and that hitherto you have never prayed. Therefore, he adds:

*“And I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father.”*

**16.** How, then? Will Christ not be our mediator? Shall we not pray in his name? How lovingly and sweetly the Lord can speak, and woo us to himself, and, through himself, to the Father! Here he, himself, explains how it will be when we pray in his name: “Ye,” he says, “have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father.” That is, ye love me and know me; have me and my name and are in me as I in you. For Christ dwells in us, not because we can think, speak, sing or write so much about him; but because we love him and believe in him. We know that he is come from the Father and returns to the Father; that is, how he emptied himself, in his passion, of all his divine glory and returned again to the Father in his

kingdom, for our sake. This faith brings us to the Father, and thus all then is done in his name.

**17.** So we are sure that Christ needs not to pray for us, for he has already prayed for us. We, ourselves, may now approach through Christ, and pray. We no longer need a Christ who prays for us. This one Christ is enough, he who has prayed for us and accomplished this work. Therefore, he says: “The Father himself loveth you.” It is not your merit, but his love. He loves you, but for my sake, because you believe on me and love me, that is, he has regard for my name in you. Hence, thereby have I fulfilled my office, and you are now brought, through me, to where you may yourselves, in my place, appear in his presence and pray. It is not necessary that I still pray for you. These are marvelous words, that we, through Christ, become like Christ and are his brethren, and may glory in being children of his Father, who loves us for Christ’s sake. He says in ~~John~~ John 1:16, ‘Grace for Grace,’ that is, God is gracious unto us, because he is gracious to Christ, who is in us and we in him.

**18.** And here we also see that to “believe in Christ” does not mean to believe that Christ is a person who is both God and man; that does not help any one. But that this same person is the Christ; that is, that he went forth from the Father and came into the world, and again leaves the world and goes to the Father. The words mean no less than that this is Christ, that he became man and died for us, rose again and ascended to heaven. Because of this office of his, he is called Jesus Christ, and to believe this concerning him, that: it is true, means to be and to abide in his name. There follows further in this Gospel:

*“His disciples say, Lo, now speakest thou plainly,  
and speakest no dark sayings.”*

**19.** Here you see that to speak “plainly” (“frei heraus”), or to speak in clear terms, means to speak without parables, or without dark and covered words. And the good disciples think they understand very well what he tells them, that Christ Comes from the Father and goes to the Father; but they do this as good, pious children of Christ. They are easily able to understand it, and in love they tell him so. In ordinary conversation, people sometimes say to one another Yes or No, or give assent, saying, It is so, and in a sense one understands, even though he is still far from the meaning of another’s words. In such case the conversation is without hypocrisy and in true simplicity. The Evangelist hereby shows what a beautiful, plain,

friendly and loving life Christ led with his disciples, since they were so very able to understand him. Then the disciples say further:

*“Now know we that thou knowest all things,  
and needest not that any man should ask thee.”*

**20.** That is, you anticipate and explain yourself and speak no more in parables, concerning which we must question you; for you know in advance where we are lacking in understanding. All this reverts to the fact that they wished to ask what the “little while” meant, and he noticed it and explains by saying that he must go to the Father; which they still did not understand, and yet it was clearer than his words: “A little while and ye will not see me.” Now, because he saw their thoughts — that they wished to question him — they confessed that he comes from God and knows all things, so that we need not to ask him, for he himself sees very well where the trouble is.

# FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER (ROGATE).

## SECOND SERMON. ~~1623~~ JOHN 16:23-30.

This sermon on prayer is in part a repetition of the preceding sermon.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:165; Walch Edition, 11:1251; St. Louis Walch, 11:927.

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- I.** THE FIRST REQUISITE — THE PROMISE OF GOD TO MAN 1.
- II.** THE SECOND REQUISITE — FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISE 2.
- III.** THE THIRD REQUISITE-FAITH THAT OUR PRAYER WILL BE HEARD 3.
  - \* He who doubts that he will be heard commits a double sin 3-4.
- IV.** THE FORTH REQUISITE — A SENSE OF OUR UNWORTHINESS 5-6.
- V.** THE FIFTH REQUISITE - THAT WE DO NOT LIMIT GOD IN ANY WAY 7-9.

## A SERMON ON PRAYER.

**1.** First we note that in order for a prayer to be really right and to be heard five things are required. The first is, that we have from God his promise or his permission to speak to him, and that we remember the same before we pray and remind God of it, thereby encouraging ourselves to pray in a calm and confident frame of mind. Had God not told us to pray, and pledged himself to hear us, none of his creatures could ever, with all their prayers, obtain so much as a grain of corn. From this, then, there follows that no one receives anything from God by virtue of his own merit or that of his



prayer. His answer comes by virtue of the divine goodness alone, which precedes every prayer and desire, which moves us, through his gracious promise and call, to pray and to desire, in order that we may learn how much he cares for us, and how he is more ready to give than we are to receive. He would have us seek to become bold, to pray in a calm and confident spirit, since he offers all, and even more, than we are able to ask.

**2.** In the second place, it is necessary that we never doubt the pledge and promise of the true and faithful God. For even to this end did God pledge himself to hear, yea, commanded us to pray, in order that we may always have a sure and firm faith that we will be heard; as Jesus says in <sup><102></sup>Matthew 21:22: “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” Christ says in <sup><219></sup>Luke 11:9-13: “And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” With this and like promises and commands we must consolingly exercise ourselves and pray in true confidence.

**3.** In the third place, if one prays doubting that God will hear him, and only offers his prayers as a venture, whether it be granted or not granted, he is guilty of two wicked deeds. The first is, that he, himself, makes his prayer unavailing and he labors in vain. For Jesus says: “Whoever will ask of God, let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” <sup><306></sup>James 1:6-7. He means that the heart of such a man does not continue stable, therefore God can give it nothing; but faith keeps the heart calm and stable and makes it receptive for the divine gifts.

**4.** The other wicked deed is, that he regards his most true and faithful God as a liar and an unstable and doubtful being; as one who can not or will not keep his promise; and thus through his doubt he robs God of his honor and of his name of truth and faithfulness. In this, such a grievous sin is committed that by this sin a Christian becomes a heathen, denying and

losing his own God, and thus he remains in his sin, and must be condemned forever, without comfort. Moreover, if he receives that for which he prays, it will be given, not for his salvation, but for his punishment in time and eternity and it is not for the sake of the prayers, but because of his wrath that God rewards the good words which were spoken in sin, unbelief and divine dishonor.

**5.** In the fourth place, some say: Yes, I would gladly trust that my prayer would be heard, if I were only worthy and prayed aright. My answer is: If you do not pray until you know and experience that you are fit, then you will never need to pray. As I have said before, our prayers must not be founded nor rest upon ourselves or their own merits, but upon the unshakable truth of the divine promise. Where they are founded upon anything else, they are false, and deceive us, even though the heart break in the midst of its great devotions and we weep drops of blood. The very reason we do pray is because of our unworthiness; and just through the fact that we believe we are unworthy and confidently venture upon God's faithfulness to his Word do we become worthy to pray and to be heard. Be you as unworthy as you may, only look to it, and with all earnestness accept it as true, that a thousandfold more depends upon this, that you know God's truth and not change his faithful promise into a lie by your doubting. Your worthiness does not help you, but your unworthiness is no barrier. Disbelief condemns you, and trust makes you worthy and sustains you.

**6.** Therefore, be on your guard all through life that you may never think yourself worthy or fit to pray or to receive; unless it be that you discover yourself to be a freebold character risking all upon the faithful and sure promises of your gracious God, who thus wishes to reveal to you his mercy and goodness. Just as he, out of pure grace, has promised you, being so unworthy, an unmerited and unasked hearing, so will he also hear you, an unworthy beggar, out of pure grace, to the praise of his truth and promise. This he does in order that you may thank, not your worthiness, but his truth, by which he fulfils his promise, and that you thank his mercy that gave the promise, that the saying in ~~1278~~ Psalm 25:8-10 may stand: "Good and upright is Jehovah: Therefore will he instruct sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in justice; and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of Jehovah are loving kindness and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." Loving-kindness or mercy in the promise; faithfulness and truth in the fulfilling or hearing of the promises.

And in another Psalm he says: “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” <sup><B850></sup>Psalm 85:10. That is, they come together in every work and gift we receive from God through prayer.

**7.** In the fifth place, one should so act in this confidence of prayer as not to limit God and specify the day or place, nor designate the way or measure of the prayer’s fulfillment; but leave all to his own will, wisdom and almighty power. Then confidently and cheerfully await the answer, not even wishing to know how and where, how soon, how *long*, and through whom. His divine wisdom will find far better ways and measures, time and place, than we can devise, even should we perform miracles. So, in the Old Testament, the children of Israel all trusted in God to deliver them while yet there was no possible way before their eyes, nor even in their thoughts; then the Red Sea parted and offered them a way through the waters, and suddenly drowned all their enemies. Exodus 14.

**8.** Thus Judith, the holy woman, did when she heard that the citizens of Bethulia wished to deliver the city to their enemies within five days if God, in the meantime, did not help. She reproved them and said, Now who are ye, that have tempted God? They are not designs by which one acquires grace; but they awaken more disgrace. Do you wish to set a time for God to show you mercy, and specify a day according to your own pleasure? Judith 8:10-12. Then the Lord helped her in a wonderful manner, in that she cut off the head of the great Holofernes and dispersed the enemies.

**9.** In like manner, St. Paul says that God’s ability is thus proved, in that he does exceeding abundantly above and better than we ask or think. <sup><B900></sup>Ephesians 3:20. Therefore, we should know that we are too finite to be able to name, picture or designate the time, place, way, measure and other circumstances for that which we ask of God. Let us leave that entirely to him, and immovably and steadfastly believe that he will hear us.

# DAY OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN.

This sermon, which is not found in edition c, dates from the year 1523 and appeared in three pamphlet editions in the same year under the title: "A sermon by Dr. Martin Luther on the last chapter of St. Mark. While the eleven were sitting at meat Christ manifested himself and reproved them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, 1523."

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:169; Walch Edition, 11:1256; St. Louis Walch, 11:931.

*Text: ~~4164~~ Mark 16:14-20. And afterward he was manifested unto the eleven themselves as they sat at meat; and he up-braided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. And these signs shall accompany them that believe; in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

*So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed.  
Amen.*

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## THE SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL:

**1.** This text is explained contrary to the narrative of this Gospel, at which some take offense. They think that Mark omitted much here. But they are mistaken and do not take the pains to examine it; for Mark describes the total of all that happened from the time Christ arose from the dead until the Gospel began to be preached in all the world.

**2.** Therefore we must correctly understand some words in this Gospel, as when he says, "Afterward," not on the day of his ascension, but on the evening of the day Christ rose from the dead, after he appeared to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. Likewise that the Evangelist says, "And he said unto them", did not occur this day, but later, on another day upon Mount Tabor in Galilee, whither Jesus had directed them, as Matthew says. For the words in ~~4:18:18~~ Matthew 28:18ff agree with these, "all authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." Also, when the text says: "After he had spoken unto them," namely, forty days afterwards, as is recorded in ~~4:00:3~~ Acts 1:3. Likewise, when the Evangelist says: "And they went forth," is to be understood when they had visibly received the Holy Spirit etc.

## SECOND SUMMARY:

- 1.** The slowness to believe and the imperfections of the beloved saints are a great and strong consolation for us.
- 2.** The apostles should preach the Gospel and nothing else; to all creatures and not only to the Jews, but also to the heathen, to princes and subjects, so that there may not be a place in the whole world where the Gospel is not heard.
- 3.** But it is all in vain to hear the Gospel, if you do not believe it. Therefore all must be taught by God.
- 4.** Unless you are constantly baptized with fire and the Holy Spirit until the end of your life, you will fall back again into unbelief.
- 5.** For the sake of the unbelievers are the signs given, in order that thereby they might show the world, that what was preached to them was the Word of God. For the text speaks thus: "The Lord working with them, and confirming the Word by the signs that followed."
- 6.** The signs have already been performed, and therefore we consider the apostles of God holy; hence signs are no longer needed, by which we should know that their words and preaching are God's Word.
- 7.** But we should hearken to the answer given to the rich man: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." ☞ Luke 16:29
- 8.** The signs here mentioned shall be performed also in a spiritual sense even unto the end of the world. For by means of the Gospel the prince of darkness with all his serpents will be crushed as is taught in ☞ Genesis 3:15. A new confession is heard from those who are converted. If unbelief at any time enter our hearts or spring up before us, we can soon banish it through the Gospel, so that we may learn not to trust in ourselves. Besides this believers will patiently bear with the infirmities of others, try to help them, heal them and do all for them they can. These signs the disciples did, could be done in a literal sense at the present day if it were necessary.
- 9.** Christ in his bodily, visible form departs; for this was the best way to teach them that his kingdom did not consist in human ordinances. Therefore St. Paul says to the Colossians: "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject

yourselves to ordinances?” <sup>(12)</sup>Colossians 2:20. Christ did this in order to rule in the hearts of believers, and be a high priest forever with the Father.

**1.** We are to consider today the article of faith in which we say: “I believe in Jesus Christ, who ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father.” Our Gospel lesson briefly reviews the story of this ascension. But Luke treats the matter at greater length and writes, The Lord gathered all the disciples together, fully forty days after his resurrection, just as he had often shown himself to them, and spoke with them and gave them commandment what they should do, and as they were assembled together and spoke with him out at Bethany, whither he had led them, some asked him, saying: “Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And he said unto them: “It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” And when he had said these things, he blessed them and bade them good night and departed from them and was taken up while they beheld him and a cloud received him out of their sight. And as they stood there, gazing after him, gaping at the heavens, behold, there came and stood hard by them two men in white apparel, who said: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.” Hereupon they returned from Bethany, from the mount of Olives, to Jerusalem and assembled in the upper room of the house where they were abiding, and continued with one accord in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus. This is the story of our Lord Jesus Christ’s ascension. Now let us consider the Gospel.

**2.** In the first place, there are in this Gospel two parts: one where the Lord commands the apostles to preach the Gospel in all the world; the other, treating of his ascension. We shall pass over the beginning of the text, where the Lord reproves their unbelief and hardness of heart, and take up the part where he says: “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.” Here you have in English what the Gospel really is, to wit: “He that believeth and is baptized, is saved.” In these words all is comprehended; he that has them, has the Gospel.



## I. CHRIST'S MISSIONARY COMMISSION TO HIS DISCIPLES TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

**3.** We have often said 'heretofore that the Gospel, properly speaking, is not something written in books, but an oral proclamation, which shall be heard in all the world and shall be cried out freely before all creatures, so that all would have to hear it if they had ears; that is to say, it shall be preached so publicly that to preach it more publicly would be impossible. For the Law, which was of old, and what the prophets preached, was not cried out in all the world before all creatures, but it was preached by the Jews in their synagogues. But the Gospel shall not be thus confined; it shall be preached freely unto all the world.

**4.** There is no need, therefore, of commenting on the text as some have done, and saying that *omnis creatura* (every creature) means a man. For there is no indication in these words that the Gospel shall be preached to men alone, but it shall be cried out before the whole creation, so that earth shall not have a nook or corner into which it shall not penetrate before the last day. Such is the counsel of God, wherein he has decreed that even they who cannot read and have not heard Moses and the prophets shall, nevertheless, hear the Gospel.

**5.** What is the Gospel? It is these words which the Lord speaks: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

We have often said — and I think we ought to thoroughly understand it by this time — that the Gospel cannot suffer us to preach works, however good and great these may be; for it seeks to pluck us down from our presumption and to set and plant us solely upon God's mercy, that his work and grace alone may be extolled. Therefore, it suffers us not to rely upon our works. For one of these two must perish: if I stand upon God's grace and mercy, I do not stand upon my merit and works; and, vice versa, if I stand upon any works and merit, I do not stand upon God's grace. For, "if it is by grace," says St. Paul, <sup><5106></sup>Romans 11:6, "it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." I cannot say that God owes me a reward, but I must confess that he has given it to me entirely as a free gift.

**6.** Hence, he that would preach the Gospel must cast aside all works that are calculated to make men just, and suffer nothing to remain but faith, or I must believe that God, without any merit of mine and regardless of all my

works, has granted me his grace and eternal life, so that I am constrained to thank him and say: I rejoice, praise and thank God that he has freely and out of pure grace given me this most excellent boon. Likewise that the Gospel is, as Scripture says, nothing more nor less than a declaration of the honor, praise and glory of God. As we read in ~~<900>~~ Psalm 19:1-2: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.” Therefore, we must preach in a way that the glory and praise will be given to God and not to ourselves. Now, there is no greater praise and glory that we can give to God than this, that we confess that he, out of pure grace and mercy, takes away from us sin, death, and hell, and gives his beloved Son for us, and all his treasures to us. Such a confession must give glory and honor and praise to him alone.

**7.** And this is the trend of all those passages in the prophets where God boasts that he will establish a preaching that will show forth his praise; as when he says in ~~<240>~~ Isaiah 43:21: “The people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise.” As if to say: You hypocrites do no more than praise yourselves in your hearts and thus my praise must perish; for you make me a stern judge and an unfriendly God, so that secretly the people hate me and think within themselves: Ah, if we but had another God, one that would not require so much of us; such a one we would love. Therefore, I will form for myself another people, which shall know me and love me. When they see that I will not regard their works but will give them every good thing freely, their hearts will teem with joy and will never weary of my praise.

**8.** Therefore, beware of glossing the text and seeking to improve upon the words of Christ. Our doctors and colleges have tried to better them and have said these words must be understood thus: “He that believeth” (understand: and doeth good works), “shall be saved.” Who authorized them to make that insertion? Do you think the Holy Spirit was too stupid to make it? Thus they have utterly obscured, yea, perverted, this precious statement with their insertion. Therefore, take heed and let no one make an insertion for you, but abide by the text as it reads and understand it thus: “He that believeth shall be saved” without his merit, without any works. Why? For this reason: because God has caused to be preached and proclaimed unto us that he had his Son Jesus Christ come and take away sin and all evil. For he saw that we were not able to do it, that it was an impossibility for us to blot out sin with our works and powers. Otherwise

he could have saved himself the trouble and expense of delivering up his own Son to suffer and die; and he has this preached to us in the Gospel.

**9.** Now what does such preaching call for? It calls for this, that! believe in it, for in no other way can! apprehend it. If you write it in a book, it will be of no use to any man, though you indulge in much thinking about it. Again, you may preach and speak about it, or hear it; it will be to no purpose. You must believe it and confidently rely upon it that the thing is as the Gospel says, that not your works but the Lord Jesus Christ's death and resurrection takes away your sin and death. This you can not attain to except by faith.

**10.** Again, Christ says: "He that disbelieveth," even though he be baptized, "shall be damned." These words, too, you must allow to remain just as they are. For he does not say thus: He that disbelieves and does evil works besides; but, without any varnish he says: If thou hadst the chastity of all virgins, the sufferings of all martyrs, and, to be concise, if thou hadst all the works that ever were done by all the saints — if thou hadst all these in a heap, yet, if faith were lacking, all would be lost.

**11.** Therefore, this is the passage whereby all cloistery, priest-craft, monkery and nunnery is overthrown; for it is a lost case. Do what you will, the sentence is already passed and the decree is already gone forth: If thou disbelieve thou art condemned already. Thus heavily and mightily do these two sentences butt against all doctrine and doing that are founded upon the works and powers of man.

**12.** Now, place the two side by side, and you can rightly conclude: Where there is faith, there cannot be so many sins, but they will surely be swallowed up and exterminated by faith; where there is unbelief, you will never be able to do good works enough to blot out the least sin. Little, therefore as sin can stand in the presence of faith, so little can good works abide with unbelief. Therefore, nothing is needed, in order to do good works, but faith; and nothing more is required, in order to do sin and evil works, than unbelief. Thus it follows that he who believes has no sin and does nothing but good works; on the other hand, he who does not believe, verily, does no good work, but all he does is sin.

**13.** Therefore I say, however, you cannot have committed so many sins, neither is Satan such an invincible enemy of yours, but that all is taken away and forgiven as soon as you begin to believe. For through faith you

have Christ as your own treasure, who was given to you for the very purpose of taking away sin; and who will be so bold as to condemn Christ? For this reason, no sins can remain, however great they may be, if you believe. Thus, you are then God's dear child and all is well, and whatever you do is all right. If you do not believe, you are damned, all you may do to the contrary notwithstanding; for since you have not Christ, it is impossible for you to blot out a single sin.

**14.** Now, since there is no other means for taking away sin than Christ, you might ask: How is it then, that we are nevertheless required to do good works; if as you say, all depends upon faith? I reply: Where faith is genuine it cannot exist without good works. Just as, on the other hand, where there is unbelief there can be no good work. Hence, if you believe, there must necessarily follow from your faith naught but good works. For, as faith brings you salvation and eternal life, so it also brings you good works; they cannot be restrained. Just as a living person cannot refrain from moving about, eating and drinking and laboring, it being impossible that such activities should cease while he lives, no one need command and drive him to do such works but — spare his life and he'll do them; just as all this is true in the physical life, so nothing more is required, in order that good works may be done, than faith. Only believe, and you will do all of your own accord.

**15.** Thus, there is no need of your demanding good works of him who believes, for faith teaches him all that; and, being done in faith, all he does is well done and all are good and precious works, however insignificant they may seem. Faith is such a noble thing that it ennobles the whole man. Now, it is not possible for a man to live on earth and not have anything to do. Hence all such works as are done by faith are precious works. On the other hand, where there is unbelief a man cannot be without works, either; therefore, such works are likewise all sin. Christ is not there, therefore all is lost. Hence, the statement of St. Paul to the <sup><51></sup>Romans 14:23: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." As though he would say, on the contrary: Whatsoever is of faith is all grace and righteousness; that is a foregone conclusion. Hence, there is no need of asking whether good works shall be done, for they come of themselves, unbidden. Such is also the sense of the Psalmist, <sup><9250></sup>Psalm 25:10: "All the paths of Jehovah are lovingkindness and truth." That is to say, when God works and creates faith in us, all that we do is lovingkindness, and all is truth; that is, all is done sincerely and not from hypocrisy. It follows, however, on the other

hand, that all the ways of men are not lovingkindness but sheerest wrath, not truth but mere sham and hypocrisy, because they spring from unbelief.

**16.** Beware, then, lest under any circumstances you gloss the text, and say: Faith alone is not sufficient; works, also, are necessary in order to justify. For it is sufficiently clear from what we have said that works contribute nothing to this end. Nothing does any harm but unbelief. Works are not sufficient. If faith were present, all would be well. Therefore, as works contribute nothing toward the evil in unbelief, so in faith they contribute nothing toward the good; but unbelief alone corrupts all works and faith makes all works good.

**17.** But there is still one more thing here, that Christ says: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Here you might say: I perceive, then, that baptism is also required. To be sure it is, but baptism is not a work that we do. It is to be coupled, however, with faith, because God would not have faith to be hidden in the heart, but would have it burst forth and manifest itself to the world. For this reason, he ordained such outward signs, by means of which everyone may show and confess his faith, to the end that we may come to the holy cross. For, if faith were to be kept as a secret, hidden in the heart, we would be pretty sure of not having to bear the cross or to follow Christ; if the world knew not that we believed, we would not be persecuted.

**18.** In the second place, we would never be the means of leading a soul to repentance and faith if we did not openly confess the Gospel and observe an external sign whereby men might know who and where the Christians are. Now, God has so ordained that our faith should be manifested before the heathen; hence, whosoever is a Christian and has received baptism, is in danger of his life among the heathen and unbelievers. It is necessary that we receive baptism if we are Christians; or, if that is beyond our reach, that we say, at least: I sincerely desire to be baptized.

**19.** Moreover, the sign of baptism is given us also to show that God himself will help us, and that we should be certain of his grace, and that everyone be able to say: Hereunto did God give me a sign, that I should be assured of my salvation, which he has promised me in the Gospel. For he has given us the Word, that is, the written document; and beside the Word, baptism, that is the seal. So faith, which apprehends the Word, may be strengthened by the sign and seal.

**20.** But you see no work of man in this transaction; for baptism is not my work but God's. He that baptized me stands in God's stead and does not the work of a man, but rather it is God's hand and work. God is the real worker. Therefore, I may and should say: God, my Lord, baptized me himself, by the hand of a man. Of this I may boast, and on this I am to rely, and say: God, who will not and cannot lie, has given me this sign to assure me that he is gracious to me and willing to save me and has through his Son given me all that he has. Thus, on our side there is nothing but faith alone; and on his side, only the Word and the sign. But we have dwelt upon this matter often enough and there is no need of enlarging upon it now.

**21.** The following portion of our text speaks of the signs that shall accompany them that believe. We will not discuss these either at present, but pass on to the other part that we have chosen to consider, and that treats of Christ's ascension.

**22.** In passing, be it said, however: We must not suppose that the signs here mentioned by Christ are all the signs that believers will do, neither must we imagine that all the Christians will do them; but Jesus means: All Christians can and may do the signs. Or, if I believe, then am I able to do them; I have the power. Through faith I obtain so much that nothing is impossible to me. If it were necessary and conducive to the spreading of the Gospel, we could do easily the signs; but since it is not necessary, we do not do them. For Christ does not teach that Christians practice the spectacular, but he says they have the power and can do these things. And we have many such promises throughout the Scriptures; for example, in James 14:12, where Christ says: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do." Therefore, we must allow these words to remain and not gloss them away, as some have done who said that these signs were manifestations of the Spirit in the beginning of the Christian era and that now they have ceased That is not right; for the same power is in the church still. And though it is not exercised, that does not matter; we still have the power to do such signs.

## II. CHRIST'S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN.

**23.** Now we must consider the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the first place, it is easily said and understood that the Lord ascended into

heaven and sits at the right hand of God. But they are dead words to the understanding if they are not grasped with the heart.

**24.** We must, therefore, conceive of his ascension and Lordship as something active, energetic and continuous, and must not imagine that he sits above while we hold the reins of government down here. Nay, he ascended up thither for the reason that there he can best do his work and exercise dominion. Had he remained upon earth in visible form, before the people, he could not have wrought so effectually, for all the people could not have been with him and heard him. Therefore, he inaugurated an expedient which made it possible for him to be in touch with all and reign in all, to preach to all and be heard by all, and to be with all. Therefore, beware lest you imagine within yourself that he has gone, and now is, far away from us. The very opposite is true: While he was on earth, he was far away from us; now he is very near.

**25.** Reason cannot comprehend how this can be. Therefore it is an article of faith. Here one must close his eyes and not follow his reason, but lay hold of all by faith. For how can reason grasp the thought that there should be a being like ourselves, who is all-seeing and knows all hearts and gives all men faith and the Spirit; or that he sits above in heaven, and yet is present with us and in us and rules over us? Therefore, strive not to comprehend, but say: This is Scripture and this is God's Word, which is immeasurably higher than all understanding and reason. Cease your reasoning and lay hold of the Scriptures, which testify of this being — how he ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of God and exercises dominion. Let us examine some Scripture bearing upon this matter.

**26.** In the first place, ~~1884~~ Psalm 8:4-6 says of Christ: "What is man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him but little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honor. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." Here the prophet speaks to God concerning a man and marvels that God humbled, for a time, that man, when he suffered him to die, humbled him to the extent that it seemed as if God were not with him. But after a little while God exalted him, so that all things must obey him, both in heaven and on earth. To these words we must hold, to these words we must cling, in these words we must believe; for reason will not submit nor adapt itself to them, but says they are lies. Now, if all things are to be subject to this being and to fall at his feet, he must sit where he can look into the whole

world, into heaven and hell and every heart; where he can see all sin and all righteousness, and can not only see all things, But can rule accordingly.

**27.** Hence, these are majestic and powerful words. They afford the heart great comfort, so that they who believe this are filled with joy and courage and defiantly say: My Lord Jesus Christ is Lord over death, Satan, sin, righteousness, body, life, foes and friends. What shall I fear? For while my enemies stand before my very door and plan to slay me, my faith reasons thus: Christ is ascended into heaven and become Lord over all creatures, hence my enemies, too, must be subject to him and thus it is not in their power to do me harm. I challenge them to raise a finger against me or to injure a hair of my head against the will of my Lord Jesus Christ. When faith grasps and stands upon this article, it stands firm and waxes bold and defiant, so as even to say: If my Lord so wills that they, mine enemies, slay me, blessed am I; I gladly depart. Thus you will see that he is ascended into heaven, not to remain in indifference, but to exercise dominion; and all for our good, to afford us comfort and joy. This is one passage.

**28.** Furthermore, in the second Psalm, verses 7 and 8, we read that God says to Christ: “Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possessions.” Here you see again that Christ is appointed of God a Lord over all the earth. Now, if he is my friend and I am persuaded that he died for me and gave me all things and for my sake sits in heaven and watches over me, who then can do ought to me? Or if any man should do ought, what harm can come of it?

**29.** Furthermore, David says again in the 110th Psalm, <19B001>Psalm 110:1: “Jehovah saith unto my lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” And further on, in <19B005>Psalm 110:5, 6, 7: “The Lord at thy right hand will strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He will judge among the nations, he will fill the places with dead bodies; he will strike through the head in many countries. He will drink of the brook in the way; therefore will he lift up the head.”

**30.** Again in still another Psalm, David says (<19B018>Psalm 68:18): “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led away captives; thou hast received gifts among men, yea among the rebellious also, that Jehovah God might dwell with them.” And all the prophets took great pains to describe Christ’s ascension and his kingdom. For, as his sufferings and death are deeply founded in the Scriptures, so are also his kingdom, his resurrection and



ascension. In this manner we must view the ascension of Christ. Otherwise it will afford us neither pleasure nor profit. For what good will it do you if you merely preach that he ascended up to heaven and sits there with folded hands? This is what the prophet would say in the Psalm Christ is ascended on high and has led captivity captive. That is to say, not only does he sit up there but he is also down here. And for this purpose did he ascend up thither, that he might be down here, that he might fill all things and be everywhere present; which thing he could not do had he remained on earth, for here in the body he could not have been present with all. He ascended to heaven, where all hearts can see him, where he can deal with all men, that he might fill all creation. He is present everywhere and all things are filled with his fullness. Nothing is so great, be it in heaven or on earth, but he has power over it, and it must be in perfect obedience to him. He not only governs and fills all creation (that would not help my faith any nor take away my sins), but also has led captivity captive.

**31.** This captivity some have interpreted to mean that he delivered the sainted patriarchs out of the stronghold of hell; but that interpretation does not benefit our faith any either, for it is not particularly edifying to faith. Therefore, we must simply understand the matter thus: that he means that captivity which captures us and holds us captive. I am Adam's child, full of sin and foully besmirched; therefore, the law has taken me captive, so that I am lettered in conscience and sentenced to death.

**32.** From this captivity no one can free himself, save only that one man Christ. What did he do? He made sin, death, and Satan his debtors. Sin fell upon him as though it would vanquish him, but it lost the day; he devoured sin. And Satan, death, and hell fared the same way. But we are unable to do this unless he be present to aid us. Alone, we must needs perish, But he, since he had done no sin and was full of righteousness, trod under foot Satan, death and hell, and devoured them, and took everything captive that fain would capture us, so that sin and death no longer can do harm.

**33.** This, then, is the power he causes to be preached, that all who believe in him are released from captivity. I believe in him by whom sin, death, and all things that afflict us, were led captive. It is a pleasing discourse, and full of comfort, when we are told that death is taken away and slain, so that it is no longer felt. However, it affords pleasure and comfort only to those who believe it. You will not find release from captivity in your works, fastings, prayers, castigations, tonsures, and gowns, and whatever more

things you may do; but only in the place where Christ sits, whither he ascended and whither he led captivity with him. Hence, he who would be freed from sin and delivered from Satan and death, must come thither where Christ is. Now, where is he? He is here with us, and for this purpose did he sit down in heaven, that he might be near unto us. Thus, we are with him up there and he is with us down here. Through the word he comes down and through faith we ascend up.

**34.** So, we see everywhere in the Scriptures that faith is such an unspeakably great thing that we can never preach about it sufficiently nor reach it with words. It cannot be heard and seen, therefore it must be believed. Such is the nature of faith that it feels nothing at all, but merely follows the words which it hears, and clings to them. If you believe, you have; if you believe not, you have not. In this wise must we understand this article of faith, that Christ is ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God.

# DAY OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN.

## SECOND SERMON. ~~<1164>~~ MARK 16:14-20.

This sermon, which likewise is not found in edition c., dates from 1522, and appeared in four pamphlet editions under the title: "A sermon preached on the last words of St. Mark, by Dr. Martin Luther, in which is included the duty of preaching the truth, 1522."

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:184; Walch Edition, 11:1277; St. Louis Walch, 11:945.

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**1.** In today's Gospel there is again presented to us the essence of a Christian life, namely faith and love; just what you constantly hear in all the Gospel lessons. Since the Gospel ever holds up before you this theme, we must continually preach and discuss it; for Jesus says to his disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." We will consider the thoughts of this Gospel text in order.

## I. CHRIST UPBRAIDS HIS DISCIPLES WITH THEIR UNBELIEF.

**2.** First, Christ upbraids his disciples with their unbelief and hardness of heart, and reproves them for it, and shows them their faults. He does not reject them, nor deal too severely with them, but reproves them; just as we would say to a person: Are you not ashamed that you dared to do such a thing? Meaning thereby to bring him to a knowledge of himself and make him blush with shame, that he may desist from his wicked intent or deed, though we do not reject him, nor turn our love from him.

**3.** However, it is not an insignificant matter here that the Lord rebuked the disciples; for unbelief is the greatest sin that can be named. Christ tells them the cause of their unbelief when he says that their hearts are hardened, yet he deals mildly and gently with them.

**4.** This is given to us all for our comfort, lest we despair when, lacking in faith, we doubt, stumble and fall; it is to help us to rise again, to strengthen our faith and lift up our hearts to God, that we may grasp and hold fast the confidence of God, who does not deal with us severely, but can indeed bear with us and overlook much. And whoever believes him to be thus, shall find him so; if we hold him to be a merciful God, he allows himself to be found merciful, and shows himself thus to us; but a bad conscience and an unbelieving heart have no such trust in God, but flee from him, and deem him a harsh judge, which he, therefore, is found to be.

**5.** So should we also deal with our neighbor. If we see him fall from the faith, or err and sin, we should not strengthen him in his wickedness, nor justify his cause, but admonish him, and in meekness reprove his faults, yet neither hold enmity, nor turn our love from him. Thus St. Paul speaks to the Galatians: Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who

are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. ~~ROM~~ Galatians 6:1. But our lord pope, the bishops, priests, monks and nuns allow no one to reprove them when they do evil; they are never willing to acknowledge that any fault is theirs, but always that of their subjects, and their policy toward subjects is one of strictness and severity.

**6.** To sum up all: We should expose and reprove what is wrong, and exercise truth and love toward everybody; we should be plain-spoken, not letting ourselves be silenced, for none of us, since we are flesh and blood, will so live as to be found without blame in all things. I in this, you in that. We all see, that even the apostles were lacking in the chief things yet they were corner stones, the foundations and the very best part of Christendom.

**7.** But let no one think that the apostles were altogether unbelieving; they believed what was written in the Law and the prophets, although their faith was not yet perfect. There was a faith there and yet no faith; they did not yet believe all things, although they believed that God created heaven and earth, and was the Maker of every creature. So the apostles were not altogether without faith, for they had faith in part. Faith is a thing that always grows. It is with faith as with a man who is ill and begins to get well — is increasing in strength. Therefore the Lord shows where they did not believe, and what they lacked; it was that they did not believe the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Although they believed the other things, they were still lacking in this. I hold that they believed that they had a gracious God. Yet this was not enough; they must believe also the resurrection of Christ. The Lord upbraided them with their unbelief, reprov'd them and said that in spite of all they had seen, they were not believing, they still lacked in a certain article of faith, namely the article on the resurrection. Hence Christ's words to them at the Last Supper: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." ~~SHO~~ John 14:1.

**8.** What does it mean, then, to believe the resurrection of Christ, this thing which is so important, and concerning which the disciples were called unbelieving and faithless, and without which nothing else that they believed would help them? To believe the resurrection of Christ, is nothing else than to believe that we have a Mediator before God. Who is Christ, who makes us holy and acceptable to God the Father. For man's possessions, by birth and nature, are but sin and corruption, by which he brings down upon himself the wrath of God. But God is eternal righteousness and purity, and therefore, from his very nature, hates sin. Hence there is always enmity

between God and the natural man, and they cannot be friends and in harmony with one another.

**9.** For this cause, Christ became man and took upon himself our sins and also the wrath of the Father, and drowned them both in himself, thus reconciling us to God the Father. Without this faith, we are children of wrath, able to do no good work that is pleasing to God, nor can our prayers be acceptable before him. For thus it is written in ~~1984E~~ Psalm 18:41: “They cried, but there was none to save; even unto Jehovah, but he answered them not.” Yea, even our noblest deeds, by which we had thought to obtain from God mercy, help and comfort, are counted to us for sin; as the prophet says, <19A907>Psalm 109:7: “Let his prayer be turned into sin”; seeing God could not be reconciled by all our strength, for there is truly no strength in us.

**10.** Therefore Christ must come, that he might go before the Father’s face, reconcile us to him, and obtain for us everything we lacked. Through this same Christ we must ask of God all we need. You have heard in last Sunday’s Gospel that the Lord says: “If ye shall ask anything of the Farther, he will give it to you in. my name.” Whatever we obtain from God, we must receive through this Christ, who has gained for us a merciful Father. For Christ is our support and refuge, where we may hide ourselves, like the young chickens hide under the wings of the mother hen. Through him alone is our prayer acceptable before God and through him is it answered, and we obtain the favor and mercy of the Father; for Christ has made atonement for our sins, and an angry judge he has changed into a gracious and merciful God. To believe in the resurrection of Christ means, then, to believe, as I said, that Christ has taken upon his head our sins and the sins of the whole world, also the wrath of the Father, and thus drowned them both in himself, whereby we are become reconciled with God and altogether righteous.

**11.** Now, observe for yourselves how few Christians there are who have this faith, by which alone man is freed from his sins and becomes entirely holy; for they believe not in the resurrection of Christ, that their sins are taken away through Christ, since they attempt to become holy through their own works. This one runs to a cloister, that one becomes a *nun*, one does this, another that, in order to be free from sin; and yet they always say they believe in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, notwithstanding that their works prove the contrary.

**12.** The apostles have insisted upon and preached this article more than any other; thus St. Paul speaks to the Corinthians: “If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain.” ~~<6154>~~ 1 Corinthians 15:14. And shortly, after in verse 17 he says: “If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” What sort of a conclusion is this? What is its logical analysis? This: If Christ be not risen from the dead, then sin and death have devoured and slain him, and we cannot get rid of our sins ourselves. Jesus Christ took them upon himself, so that he might tread under foot sin, death and hell, and become their master. But if he be not risen, then he has not overcome sin, but has been overcome by sin. Also, if he has been overcome by sin, then he is not risen: if he be not risen, then he has not redeemed you; then you are yet in your sins. Likewise Paul speaks to the Romans: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt he saved.” ~~<6109>~~ Romans 10:9. There to all the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments agree.

**13.** Now, it is not enough that we believe the historic fact of the resurrection of Christ; for this all the wicked believe, yea, even the devil believes that Christ has suffered and is risen. But we must believe also the meaning — the spiritual significance of Christ’s resurrection, realizing its fruit and benefits, that which we have received through it, namely, forgiveness and redemption from all sins; we must believe that Christ has suffered death, and thereby has overcome and trodden under foot sin and death, yea, everything that can harm us, and is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven as Almighty Lord over sin and devil, death and hell, and all that harms us, and that all this took place for our good. This the wicked do not believe.

**14.** You see how much depends upon this article of faith on the resurrection. We can better dispense with all the other articles than with this one. What would it avail if we believed all the other articles, as that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, died and was buried, if we did not believe that he arose again? It is to this subject that God has reference in ~~<6105>~~ Habakkuk 1:5, when he says: “I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you.”

**15.** The importance of this subject is also the reason that Paul has urged and preached it, and in all his epistles has treated of no work or miracle of Christ so frequently as of his resurrection. He is silent concerning the many



works and wonders of Christ, and preaches and teaches emphatically the benefit and the import of the resurrection of Christ — what we have received from it. No other apostle has portrayed Christ to us in the light that Paul has. Christ did not without meaning say of him to Ananias: “He is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” <sup><4015></sup>Acts 9:15-16.

**16.** Now, no good work will help those who do not have this faith in the resurrection, let them play the hypocrite as they will. To virgins, their virginity or purity is no help; nor to monks, their long prayers. Here it avails nothing to preach of works, they are not even named; but everything must be obtained of God through Christ, as you have heard. So David prayed in <sup><1849></sup>Psalms 84:9: “Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.” This is enough on the first part of this Gospel. Now follows in the text the words:

*“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.”*

## II. THE MISSIONARY COMMISSION CHRIST GIVES TO HIS DISCIPLES.

### A. THE CONTENTS OF THIS COMMISSION.

**17.** What shall they preach? Nothing else, he says, than just that I am risen from the dead and have overcome and taken away sin and all misery. He that believes this, shall be saved; faith alone is sufficient for his salvation. Therefore, the Gospel is nothing else than preaching the resurrection of Christ: “He that believeth shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” Here all works are abolished. Here you see, also, the nature and character of faith. Faith will compel no one to accept the Gospel, but leaves its acceptance free to everyone and makes it a personal matter. He that believes, believes; he that comes, comes; he that stays out, stays out.

**18.** Thus you see that the pope errs and does the people injustice in that he ventures to drive them to faith by force; for the Lord commanded the disciples to do nothing more than to preach the Gospel. So the disciples also did; they preached the Gospel, and left its acceptance to those who would take it, and they did not say: Believe, or I will put you to death.

**19.** A question arises about this passage, “Go ye into all the world,” as to how it is to be understood, since the apostles certainly did not visit all the world. No apostle came hither to us; and many a heathen island has since been discovered, where the Gospel has never been preached. Yet the Scriptures say: “Their sound went out into all the earth.” <sup><5018></sup>Romans 10:18. Answer: Their preaching went out into all the world, although it has not yet come into all the world. This going out has been begun and continues, although it is not yet completed; the Gospel, however, will be preached ever farther and wider, until the judgment day. When this preaching shall have reached all parts of the world, and shall have been everywhere heard, then will the message be complete and its mission accomplished; then will the last day also be at hand.

**20.** The preaching of this message may be likened to a stone thrown into the water, producing ripples which circle outward from it, the waves rolling always on and on, one driving the other, till they come to the shore. Although the center becomes quiet, the waves do not rest, but move forward. So it is with the preaching of the Word. It was begun by the apostles, and it constantly goes forward, is pushed on farther and farther by the preachers, driven hither and thither into the world, yet always being made known to those who never heard it before, although it be arrested in the midst of its course and is condemned as heresy. As we say, when one sends a message, the message has gone forth, although it has not yet arrived at its destination, but is still on its way; or as we say that the emperor’s message is sent to Nurenburg, or to the Turk, although it has not yet arrived so we are to understand the preaching of the apostles.

## **B. THE PROMISE ATTACHED TO THIS COMMISSION.**

**21.** But there arises here another question from this passage of today’s Gospel, “He that believeth, shall be saved:” whether faith is sufficient for salvation, and alone saves; or whether we must also do good works in order to be saved. Here our highly learned doctors have desired to control the Holy Spirit, to sharpen his tongue, and to place a little stick under his tongue, as if he could not speak plainly, and have forced and strained this passage, and so worn it out and rent it that no marrow nor vitality remains in it. They have said that good works are necessary to faith, and that faith is not sufficient for salvation. This is not true. Faith alone, of itself, without any works, as the Word of God here clearly says, brings us salvation, and works help nothing at all toward righteousness or salvation. We must let

this passage stand pure and unadulterated, and without any addition. If the Holy Spirit had so desired, he could easily have said different words thus: “He that believeth and doeth works, shall be saved.” But he did not do this, therefore we should and will leave it as it is.

**22.** This I say to the end that you may fortify yourselves with such passages, holding to the true meaning of the words. Though there are many passages in Scripture teaching that faith alone saves, yet they have been so covered over and obscured, so shaken to pieces and stretched, by the sophists and scholars, that their right meaning has suffered. St. Paul says to the Galatians: “If righteousness is through the Law, then Christ died for naught.” <sup><812></sup>Galatians 2:21. That is to say: If we can be saved in any other way or work out our salvation, then Christ has died in vain; for to presume to be justified by the Law means to think that man can become righteous through his works.

**23.** Therefore to conclude: The chief righteousness is faith; the chief wickedness is unbelief. There is also no sin so great that it is able to condemn man; unbelief alone condemns all who are condemned. And again, only faith saves every one; for faith alone deals with God, no works can appear before him. For works have to do only with man, and man lets his works be made use of as he has made use of Christ’s. They make no one holy; they are only the distinguishing marks of a man that has already become righteous through faith, which alone makes the heart pure.

**24.** I can easily assent to the saying: Works do not make you pious, but show that you are pious; or when I hear it said: He that believes, serves his neighbor, I admit that it is so. But that the explanation of this text should be, Faith is not sufficient for salvation, we must also do good — this is a liberty which the text can stand just as little as this church could stand that I should pull down its pillars. There follows further in the text:

*“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”*

**25.** God has always accompanied his Word with an outward sign to make it the more effective to us, that we might be strengthened in heart and never doubt his Word, nor waver. Thus he gave Noah the rainbow in the heavens as a sure sign that he would keep his promise and not destroy the world by another flood. The rainbow is, so to speak, a seal or sign to Noah and to us all, just as a seal upon a letter certifies the document. And just as a nobleman has his own coat-of-arms of a particular device or color, by

which he is known, so has God evidenced his words for us with signs, as with a seal, that we should never doubt. To Abraham he gave the rite of circumcision, to show that Christ should come and bless the world. Thus has he done here, adding to this promise of his — “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” — an outward sign, namely baptism, and also the sacrament of the bread and the wine, which was especially instituted for use in times of temptation, and when death draws near, that by it we might strengthen our faith, and remind God of his promise, and hold him to it.

**26.** A man can believe even though he be not baptized; for baptism is nothing more than an outward sign that is to remind us of the divine promise. If we can have it, it is well; let us receive it, for no one should despise it. If, however, we can not receive it, or it is denied us, we will not be condemned if we only believe the Gospel. For where the Gospel is, there is also baptism and all that a Christian needs. Condemnation follows no sin except the sin of unbelief. Therefore, the Lord says: “He that disbelieveth shall be condemned”; he says not: He that is not baptized. He is silent concerning baptism; for baptism is worth nothing without faith, but is like seals affixed to a letter in which nothing is written. He that: has the signs that we call sacraments, and has no faith, has only seals upon a letter of blank paper.

**27.** Here you see also what is the office of the apostles, to which all the bishops, and those that call themselves ministers, should conform, inasmuch as they boast that they are the successors of the apostles in preaching the Gospel. For the Lord says here, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel.” Therefore, we should not listen to those who do not preach the Gospel. Now our papists come along and quote the passage in <sup><2016></sup>Luke 10:16: “He that heareth you, heareth me.” This verse has hitherto been the pope’s sword, by which he has swayed the whole world, and none has rightly understood this passage, which means that teachers are to be obeyed only when they preach the Gospel. So the Lord here inspires the apostles to speak the Gospel, which is his Word. Christ alone is to be heard, and the apostles are but messengers and instruments for this word of Christ. Therefore, here again are condemned pope, bishops, monks and priests, and all who preach something else than the Gospel.

**28.** But what is meant when the Lord says: “Preach the Gospel to the whole creation”? Shall I preach also to trees and stones, mountains and waters? What would that profit? St. Gregory preached on this text and said

that “all creation” means man; that man is one with all creatures — with the angels in understanding, with the animals in sensibilities, and with the trees in growth. We must, therefore, not misuse the text nor make its meaning too literal, for so we shall misconstrue it. The meaning is that the Gospel should be publicly and universally preached, given to all; it should hide in no corner, but be preached freely in all places, as is written in ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 19:3-4: “There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world,” The beginning and going forth has been fulfilled by the apostles, but the work is not yet finished; the Gospel has not yet reached its limit, for I know not whether Germany has ever heard the Word of God. The pope’s word we have surely heard.

**29.** The Lord here says to the apostles: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation,” for the reason that this Gospel may be published to everyone, so that even trees and stones might hear if they had ears, and might bear witness that we have heard the Gospel; and that pillar there might say, I have heard the Gospel preached to you. Thus generally and publicly shall it be proclaimed, and preached in all the world, being withheld from no one, till it reaches the ends of the world, as the Psalm records. So it has now come to us, who are dwelling at the end of the world, for we live close to the sea. This Paul has in mind when he says to the Ephesians: “And he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” Ephesians 4:11-13. Next, the text speaks of the signs that shall follow faith, and names five signs, one after the other, thus:

“And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; THEY shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any! deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.”

**30.** How shall we proceed here that we may preserve the truth of the passage: he that believeth shall have power also, and be able to show these signs? For the Lord says all these signs shall accompany them. Now we know that the apostles did not present all the signs, for we read of no other that drank poison than John the Evangelist, and there are no other

individual instances. If the passage shall stand literally, then few believers will be cleared and few saints be entitled to heaven; for these signs, one and all, have not accompanied them, though they have had power to work signs, and have exhibited some of them.

**31.** Some rush on here and explain these signs as spiritual, so as to preserve the honor of the saints; but it will not do to strain the words. They do not carry such meaning, therefore they will not bear such an explanation. It puts upon the Scriptures uncertain construction for us.

**32.** Others, with equal heedlessness, say that though not every individual has the power and does the wonders mentioned, yet the church as a whole, the multitude of Christendom, has; one may drive out devils, another heal the sick, and so on. Therefore, they say, such signs are a manifestation of the Spirit; where the signs are, there is also the Christian Church, and so on.

**33.** But these words do not refer to the Church as a whole, but to each person separately. The meaning is: If there is a Christian who has faith, he shall have power to do these accompanying miracles, and they shall follow him, as Christ says, in <sup><B142></sup>John 14:12: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do,” for a Christian has equal power with Christ, is a congregation, and sits with him in joint tenure. The Lord has given Christians power, as is written in <sup><A018></sup>Matthew 10:8, also against the unclean spirits, that they might cast them out and heal every disease. Thus it is written in <sup><B913></sup>Psalms 91:13: “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under foot.”

**34.** We read also that this has been fulfilled. There was once a patriarch in the wilderness, who, when he met a serpent, took it in both hands and tore it in two, and thought no more about it, but said’ O what a fine thing it is to have a clear and guiltless conscience! So, where there is a Christian, there is still the power to work these signs if it is necessary. But no one should attempt to exercise this power if it is not necessary or if need does not compel. The apostles did not always exercise it, but only made use of it to prove the Word of God, to confirm it by the miracles; as is written here in the text’ “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word by the signs that followed.”

**35.** But since the Gospel has now been spread abroad, and made known to all the world, there is no need of working miracles as in the apostles' times. If need should arise, and men were to denounce and antagonize the Gospel, then we verily should have to employ wonder-working rather than permit the Gospel to be derided and suppressed. But I hope such a course will not be necessary, and that such a contingency will never arise. For another example: That I should here speak in new languages is not at all necessary, since you all can well hear and understand me; but if God should send me where the people could not understand me, he could easily grant me their speech or language, that I might be understood.

**36.** Then, let no one, without pressing need, undertake to work wonders, For we read of the patriarchs' children that they once brought a large number of serpents in their cloaks, and shook them out at their parents' feet; whereupon their parents reproved them for tempting God unnecessarily. In like manner, we read of many signs that believers have done. It happened once upon a time that one of the fathers by chance got hold of a basilisk. He looked at it, and thereupon exclaimed: O Lord, I must die, or this reptile must! for the basilisk kills by its looks. At once it bursted and flew into pieces.

**37.** I know not what I shall say about those who venture to do signs where they are not necessary. For example, some drive out demons. But I know that it is a dangerous undertaking. The devil, indeed, lets himself be driven out, but he does not intend to suffer for it; he allows it only that he may strengthen the sign-worker in such error. I would not like to trust him. We have many such instances in our times. I know also of many that happened not long ago.

**38.** There was a sexton who wished to learn alchemy from the devil, that is, the art of separating gold from sand, and of making gold from other metals. The devil agreed to come to him at the hour of eleven, but the sexton should have on a gown and chasuble. See with what fool's work the devil goes about! As though he cared much about the chasuble. The sexton went and reversed the hour-glass and noted the hour. At eleven he put on the chasuble. The devil came and knocked. The sexton was afraid and asked who was there. The devil said that the sexton should come at once to the parson and attend the Sacrament. The sexton threw off the chasuble and ran out in haste, but found no one. Then the devil the second time demanded of the sexton to come out. The third time the devil came and

said that the parson was awaiting him impatiently; he should come without delay. The sexton then went out, but by this time the hour was past, and the sexton had not on the chasuble. Then the sexton saw for the first time that it was the devil, and wished to hurry back to the house and get the chasuble. The devil, however, would not allow this, but said: No, my dear fellow, the time is past. He seized the sexton, broke his neck and threw him to the ground. Such occasions the devil seeks, and acts. So much for this Gospel.



# DAY OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN.

## THIRD SERMON. ~~<41164>~~ MARK 16:14-20.

This sermon is found in edition c. in place of the two preceding sermons.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:202; Walch Edition, 11:1296; St.. Louis Walch, 11:958.

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## I. THE DISCIPLES' HARDNESS OF HEART.

**1.** In few words, St. Mark sums up in this Gospel all that Christ did during the forty days after his resurrection, until he ascended into heaven. Not all the words of Christ, as here recorded, were spoken at the same time. Some

persons have doubted the authenticity of this chapter because it does not seem to harmonize with the other Gospels. It relates the incident of the Lord's upbraiding the disciples for their unbelief, and that of his commanding them to preach the Gospel, as though the two utterances were spoken at the same time, while the other Evangelists inform us of many things occurring between these two incidents. They tell us that he appeared to all of his disciples, not only once, but often, and that, during these forty days, he ate and drank with them that they might no longer doubt his resurrection. The upbraiding of the disciples took place shortly after his resurrection, between Easter and the eighth day following. After they had all seen the risen Savior he took leave of them, ascending from the mountain where he had commanded them to meet him.

**2.** In upbraiding the disciples with their unbelief and hardness of heart Christ charges them with no small measure of weakness. He tells them that they are not only unbelieving but also stubborn to the extent that they obstinately doubt what they have heard from eye-witnesses, namely, that the Lord has risen. On the other hand, Christ shows great forbearance and kindness toward those who are not only disbelieving, but even obstinate. He does not reject or despise them for their hardness, but is patient with them. Eventually he makes them preachers of that which they, until then, did not believe themselves. He knows that, for this very reason, their testimony for him will be the stronger. They were themselves to have the experience of preaching not only to the ignorant and unbelieving, but also to the hardened, and even to their persecutors. Thus from their own experience they were to learn to bear with others, who might be likewise stubborn, though not with those who should willfully and maliciously rage against the acknowledged truth.

**3.** The beloved disciples had, however, cause for their hardness of heart, which others could never have. They were Jews, and the Jewish teaching was that at Jerusalem alone should be founded that kingdom which is called the kingdom of God and of Christ. For this belief they thought they had proof and evidence from the prophets, wherein was stated, in many passages, that Christ should forever reign at Jerusalem, in the house and on the throne of David. The heathen had no promise whatever of such a kingdom.

**4.** Therefore, it seemed ridiculous to the Jews and incredible, yea, even offensive, that Christ should disregard Jerusalem, the priesthood and

everything pertaining to the Jewish nation, and, altogether unmindful of these, send a few poor disciples who had neither a name nor fame out into the world to preach, intending thus to fulfill the glorious prophecy of nearly all the prophets, that, as <sup><4981></sup>Psalm 68:11 says, from Jerusalem should go forth the great message and the great hosts of messengers of the Gospel into all the world. This must surely be fulfilled and become true. As Christ himself when he bade them farewell, charged his disciples not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, as St. Luke says in <sup><400></sup>Acts 1:4-8, “until ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you.” And recently on Easter Christ said: “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” <sup><4246></sup>Luke 24:46-47. It was universally believed that when the time should come for Christ to proclaim his message to bring the world into his kingdom, he would surely consult the great men, the high priests, the rulers and the council at Jerusalem, and would do nothing without them; for was it not by the Law of Moses that the nation had its very existence? But Christ ignores the representative heads of the nation in calm assurance, and calls to himself a handful of strangers and beggars, brings them to Jerusalem and commissions them to do these things. That was offensive enough to the Jews in general, and even to the disciples; it seemed incredible that Christ should use such lowly means for so exalted a purpose and with such indifference to the opinions, the knowledge and the assistance of Jewish officials.

**5.** However, the disciples knew, or might have known from the Scriptures, that Christ should not come from the priesthood, but from the house of Judah; so that the religious leaders of Jerusalem need not have looked to the priestly ranks. Nor did the Scriptures mention a citizen either at Jerusalem or at Bethlehem of whom Christ should be the son. Therefore, the Jews should have given God the honor, and thought: we ought to look for him to come not from our own tribe or from any other tribe than the tribe of Judah, from the house of David. They knew the prophecy well enough and upon it had based their records and calculations. We read that the blind man by the wayside (<sup><4183></sup>Luke 18:39), and the Canaanitish woman (<sup><4152></sup>Matthew 15:22) cried out, saying: “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.” How did this poor beggar and this alien woman know that Christ was the son of David, if it had not been well known among all the

people that the Messiah should come from no other house than that of David?

**6.** Though Christ did not belong to the house then ruling at Jerusalem, yet the Jews knew that he belonged to the house of David, and had been brought up in Nazareth, and for this reason they should have accepted him, especially since they heard his teachings and saw his miracles. For all had to confess, that no one else could preach with such power and do such mighty works as he did. They also knew that the time to which the prophets pointed was at hand. The prophet Zechariah had clearly stated that Christ should be lowly, that is, from the ranks of the common people, without great pomp and power, honor and wealth.

**7.** But as they disregard all this, and will neither hear nor know him, he proceeds to fulfill the Scripture. He gathers a little flock and establishes his kingdom through them, while neither priests nor council in Jerusalem are aware of it. They are left, as it were, gazing and thinking that when Christ should come and establish his kingdom, he would doubtless make them the chief instruments therein. This he does not do. He establishes his kingdom at Jerusalem and charges the disciples to tarry there until the sending of the Holy Spirit upon them, who should continue the same work among them, convincing and compelling them to believe that the predictions of the prophets have been fulfilled.

**8.** But the apostles are weak and slow to believe this; they do not realize that Christ has appeared in just the manner in which they and all the Jews had hoped and expected. The disciples wondered why, if he really were the Christ — as they considered him — he did not so convince all the people at Jerusalem and organize, prepare, establish and confirm his kingdom so that the entire nation would flock to him, and the whole world sing and proclaim the great power and glory of this king through whom all humanity would be honored, and obtain wealth and salvation. Since he proceeds in a manner so contrary to their expectations, permits himself to be crucified, and dies on the cross, and after his resurrection shows himself to only a few persons, they can never believe that through him the marvelous things of the new kingdom should be accomplished those things which they had learned from the writings of the prophets.

**9.** Christ has to bear with such hardness of heart in them, though he upbraids them and instructs their ignorance. As they are gathered together and he is about to depart from them, he tells them how his kingdom is to

be entered upon, and how he will accomplish its beginning through them. It shall not be by the help and advice of the officials at Jerusalem, nor with their knowledge. It shall not be with temporal force nor power, but shall be felt solely through the message and commission of the ministry with which he charges them, saying:

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.”

## **II. CHRIST’S MISSIONARY COMMISSION TO HIS DISCIPLES TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE CREATION.**

### **I. THE COMMISSION ITSELF.**

**10.** These are words of the sovereign Ruler, words that are becoming his majesty — commissioning these poor beggars to go forth and proclaim this new message, not in one city or country only, but in all the world, in principalities and kingdoms and to proclaim it publicly and cheerfully; to speak before all creatures, so that all humanity might hear the message. That certainly means, to stretch forth the arms and gather unto Christ a great multitude. Indeed, it is such a mighty commission, that the like of it was never issued in the world.

**11.** The command of a temporal ruler goes no farther than to the confines of his own kingdom; likewise that of a father to his own household: but this commission of Christ concerns all kings, princes, countries and people, great and small, young and old, simple and wise, sinners and saints. With this one message he claims all dominion and power, all wisdom, holiness, majesty and the right to rule on earth with unlimited authority. What else can the world think and say about it than this: What! this one man and his eleven poor beggars dare to assume authority over Moses and all the prophets, yes, even over all people? Even Moses was sent only to Pharaoh and his people in Egypt. Is this man, then, to have the whole world for his field? He is in relation to it no more than a common laborer!

**12.** It must be a master of no mean authority who dares to exercise the right to send forth messengers not only to one or several crowned heads, but to all rulers throughout the world. Christ does all this as though he possessed full power and authority over them as his subjects, charging his disciples that they should fear no one, no matter how great and powerful

he might be, but should cheerfully go forth, continuing to the remotest parts of the world, and preach the Gospel, with the assurance that they could not fail to be heard and that no one was able to hinder them.

**13.** Thus was it fulfilled. “Beginning at Jerusalem,” the kingdom touched the whole world. No other kingdom ever had such power. There never yet lived a ruler who achieved supremacy over even one-half of the world. How is it then, that from Jerusalem to the remotest corners of the earth all men know of this king who is called Christ? And all this was accomplished without a single sword-thrust and without military power; simply through these poor beggars, whom Christ sent forth into so many kingdoms and principalities that resisted them with the sword, with fire and water and with their whole might. If the apostles had been dependent upon their own power, they would have miserably failed before crossing their own thresholds. They had been afraid of their own people, the Jews, and had hidden themselves behind bolted doors. But later on, upon the strength of this commission, they boldly went forth, not only among their own people, but in all kingdoms, through all principalities, and in the face of all the powers and resistance of the world and the devil.

**14.** Whence did they obtain such courage and strength? Surely not from any king of Persia nor emperor of Rome, Turkey or Tartary. No, it was from the Lord alone, who ascended into heaven and commanded them to go and preach to the whole creation. And as Christ began to set up his kingdom, so it will continue till the end of the world. Certainly he is not Lord in any temporal sense. He is the one to whom all authority in heaven and on earth is given, as he himself declares in ~~4188~~ Matthew 28:18. To him must be subjected both angels and men, and all creatures, as God also saith to him in ~~4088~~ Psalm 2:8: “Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” This is the reason why we know and believe in him. Only Christ could have brought the world everywhere to believe in one who was apparently a simple Jew.

**15.** These words of his command are marvelously powerful. Therein he shows that he is greater than all emperors, kings and rulers on earth, by his own power subjecting unto himself all creatures. He does not commission his disciples to convey his greetings or to ask favors of certain rulers on earth, but in full authority he issues to all rulers a command that they shall accept his message and obey his orders. It is evident, too, that this



commander is mightier than any angel. Angels are, indeed, mighty and powerful beings, sent by God to do his bidding with reference to certain of his servants; as, for instance, we see Moses leading his people out of Egypt by an angel. But Christ issues his own command, that shall reach all the world, yea, even all creatures, intimating that all belongs to him. Such authority is given to none else but this son born of the Virgin. He must, therefore, be the one Lord over all things, over angels and men, the only God and Maker of all creatures.

### **III. THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL ENJOINED IN THIS COMMISSION.**

#### **A. THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL IN ITSELF.**

**16.** Now this is the commission: “Go ye and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.” Christ looks far into the future. He does not want his message hidden in a corner. He does not wish them to have any fear concerning it, neither to go about it secretly nor deceitfully. He wants it proclaimed so publicly that even the sun in the heavens, yea forests and stones might hear it if they had ears. And so it has been proclaimed, though the world has opposed it for so many centuries. It has steadily advanced. There never has been in the world a like force and power; nothing of equal sway and authority. This message, then, must be of divine power. (It pertains not to insignificant, vain, or sinful things of the world, such as robbing, stealing, lying, deceiving, murdering, violence, oppression and tyranny, but to pure, heavenly and divine things. Thus it cannot be of human origin but is God’s own message. Both word and work, then, harmonize and openly testify to Christ’s authority before all creatures under heaven, on land and sea.

**17.** Christ thus sends forth, not a decree to stir up rebellion in the world, or to overthrow the legal power of kings, princes or other temporal authority, but he simply puts his word and command into the mouths of the disciples that they may carry into effect his own power by their speech and ministry. They shall speak not of worldly institutions, worldly authority or earthly riches, nor of the glory of the Jewish people, their laws, religious rites and priesthood — though it was the expectation of all Jews that these should be world-honored but the import of the message shall be to teach nobler things, namely how we may be reconciled to God, how be redeemed from sin, death and all evil, and be saved; how to obtain everlasting righteousness, life and glory.

**18.** This, indeed, was a new message, of which the world knew nothing. It differs greatly from all other preaching and teaching. Yes, heaven raises it above all that can be taught on earth. All other teaching must give way to it, for it alone ministers the power to be saved. When Christ says, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation,” he desires none to be excluded; but he shows that the whole world knows naught of his doctrine: In spite of all its wisdom, it is blind concerning these things, no matter how learned and holy it pretends to be. His own people, the Jews, though they have not the light and knowledge of salvation to which the prophet Zecharias refers in his Benediction, ~~<B177>~~ Luke 1:77: “To give knowledge of salvation unto his people in the remission of sins.” If the Jews had known this before, or could have discovered it for themselves, it would not have been necessary to preach it to them. Christ would not have had to descend from heaven and send forth his servants into the whole world with the message.

**19.** All the world is here sent to school, to hear and learn of Christ’s kingdom and confess that it did not know anything about it. Men may know well how to build, how to care for their property, to rule, to be outwardly pious, and how to lead a decent, honest life, and they may be able to teach others what they know; but of things pertaining to God’s kingdom, and how to escape sin and death, they know nothing. Christ sets aside all teachings, even that of Moses, and of the ten commandments. The order is given to the disciples to go forth and tell all men what they do not know — that all must hear and accept, by God’s command, this message, if they would be saved.

**20.** The meaning of this message Christ plainly shows. In the first place, he gives it a worthy name, calling it Gospel-preaching. No doubt he gives it this peculiar new name for a special reason, to distinguish it from all other teaching and preaching. It is something different from the Law of Moses and the teachings of men. A new name would impress itself upon the minds of the disciples. For the word “Gospel” means a new message — a good message bearing joyful tidings, proclaiming something, that one gladly and eagerly hears. Not a law or a commandment, forcing or demanding from us and threatening punishment and condemnation if we do not obey it. Such a message none like to hear. Even if we, to our utmost ability, both teach and obey the law, yet no consolation and joy will result from it; because we can never so perfectly comply with its demands that it will cease to smite and accuse us. Therefore, if we were to be rescued, God had to send us,

through his Son, a different message than the Law from which to derive consolation and peace.

**21.** As to what the Gospel is, and the difference between the Law and the Gospel, enough has already been said. However, we here observe how Christ himself gives the definition, and shows what the Gospel teaches, saying:

*“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;  
but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.”*

**22.** This indeed is a kind, friendly and consoling message, and is rightly called a Gospel; here, in one word, you hear *salvus erit, i.e.*, he shall be saved — the gates of heaven opened, hell closed, the Law and judgment set aside, sin and death destroyed, and life and salvation granted to all the world if they only believe the message. Oh, if one could thoroughly learn these words: Believe and be saved! They are spelled in few letters yet they are a sermon of such power that the world cannot grasp the glorious grace and unspeakable treasure given us through this message. And all this without any merit on our part since we have done absolutely nothing to earn it, we have not known anything about it. If the world had really believed it, they would, I am convinced, out of pure love have overwhelmed the preachers of the Gospel, particularly the apostles, and come in great multitudes and joyfully kissed their feet and borne them on their hands, praising and thanking God for their having lived to hear a Christian Gospel preacher.

**23.** The Gospel is faithfully taught and practiced in our day, yet it will continue to be necessary, as here, for Christ to upbraid his disciples with their unbelief and hardness of heart. Unbelief is still too strong in us, and our hearts are too narrow and too weak to grasp these wonderful words. We are controlled too much by our own desires and feelings when sin troubles us and God’s wrath startles and terrifies us, though we desire to be saved. We seek and strive to discover how we may save ourselves by our own works; we try to find within ourselves that, by which we may justify ourselves before God.

**24.** We must, therefore, constantly learn, preach and exhort about this message of salvation, though it cannot at once enter the hearts of men — that is impossible. But day after day, year after year, the Gospel may the more and more be grasped, to the limit of our comprehension here on

earth. ‘the promise is dependent upon the condition. We cannot separate these two things; they must remain together just as Christ joins them and says: “He that believeth shall be saved.” As to one part, namely, shall be saved, there is indeed nothing wanting, nor is it uncertain; this is surely a promise in the Word, which is God’s unchangeable truth. But as to the other part, our believing, there is indeed much lacking. We do not firmly believe; we do not accept and adhere to God’s word of promise. As I have said, the grace and the spiritual treasures offered are so great that the human heart is astonished and overwhelmed when it realizes that the high and eternal majesty opens the gates of heaven so wide, and that he causes his grace and mercy to shine over all the sins and misery of the whole world, and that this great store of grace and spiritual riches is given us through the Word alone.

**25.** However, this passage stands here and declares both what the Gospel is, — a message concerning faith in Christ, — and what power it has, namely to save him that believeth. The Jews have waited until this day for the coming of their Messiah to restore the city of Jerusalem and its temple, and so exalt the Law of Moses that it may be accepted by all the world. But what happens? At the very place and at the very time when their temple services are most glorious, and their best, noblest and wisest men most strenuously observe the Law, the Son of God himself pronounces judgment upon them, commanding his disciples to go and preach throughout all Jewry and all the world that not the temple service nor the Levitical priesthood, not circumcision nor the Law and its observance, which God indeed had given them, will save, but he that believeth shall be saved, be he Jew or gentile. There is no distinction (~~⚡~~ Romans 3:23), nor one possessing any special privileges. This Gospel shall be preached to the whole creation.

**26.** This, surely, was tearing a dreadful hole in the Jewish expectations and ideas — proclaiming himself as alone having authority and that to him all must submit — for neither Moses nor any of the prophets would have dared to do so. They all had to be circumcised and to observe the Law under penalty of loss of body and soul. And now this man Jesus with full authority interferes, and even indifferently sets aside the Law, as though he would know nothing about it. He commands, in few simple words, his disciples thus: You shall not tell the world, in whatever part of it you may be, that the people must go to Jerusalem, or must keep the Law of Moses etc., but you shall tell them all that if they would be saved, which

everybody desires (especially the Jews at that time), then they must believe this message of mine, and thereupon be baptized etc. Commence this kind of preaching among my people who desire to be saved by their Law and its temple service, and go forth through the entire Roman empire, and to all the corners of the world. Those that trust in their idols, reprove and condemn, one and all, and tell them that this is the command that I, the Lord of heaven and earth, give them, that they shall believe in me. This is my message; it shall go through all the world unhindered and unmolested. No matter if the Jews disbelieve and are offended by it, and put you under the ban, consigning you to the devil, and fret not if the heathen endeavor to suppress it by force.

**27.** This is also a ,consoling message to us, because we, too, are included in these words of Christ when he says: Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. Herein are inclosed all who hear this message, wherever they may live, be they few or many. “All the world” does not mean one or two parts of it, but everywhere within it wherever people may dwell. Therefore, the Gospel had to be proclaimed according to the command, as it is yet being proclaimed today. Although it is not steadily triumphant in every place, yet it is destined to reach to the ends of the earth and to resound in all places and corners of the world. As it is a general command to preach the Gospel everywhere, to all men, so it is also a general injunction and the Lord’s command that all shall believe this message.

**28.** It was essential for Christ, in his command, to emphasize “all the world.” The Jews, who wanted thus to silence the rest of mankind, boasted that they alone were God’s people, to whom the fathers and the prophets were given, and that Christ was promised to come from their seed. This boasting Christ had to kill, otherwise they would have overcome us gentiles and compelled us to become Jews and accept circumcision. Directly opposed to their claim is the fact that Christ commanded that the Gospel be preached to all creatures. Christ says, He that believes, belongs to God’s people and is saved, be he Jew or gentile, Greek or barbarian, priest or layman, male or female etc. True, God did not give any other nation than his chosen people, the Jews, those special honors and blessings that were theirs in their God-given and mighty leaders and in the miracles he wrought for them, and in the fact that to them first were given the divine promises and the Scriptures.

**29.** But now we are made one people in the sight of God. None have any preference or privilege to boast of. Christ would have none despised nor rejected. The injunction reads, To all creatures, the disciples shall preach and proclaim it. The greatest, the most powerful, the noblest born, the most learned and the holiest person is not a whit better than the humblest, simplest, most despised on earth. All are brought into one company and fellowship. No one is preferred above another. No partiality is shown. No one is pictured or separated to special honor or advantage; but everything hinges entirely on “He that believeth.” It matters not what people, nation or rank or what station in the world they may occupy. There must, of course, be a difference in the physical life of the various inhabitants of the earth, as the creatures are and are called each according to its nature and each is different from the other; sun from moon, man from woman, master from servant.

**30.** Therefore, as in the world every country and people have their own special laws, rights and customs, so, like in outward temporal appointments, there must also be a difference in the preaching. Every station and office must be responsible and taught in its appointed sphere. But though duty be beautifully and faithfully performed, all Jews perfect in temple service, all temporal government faultlessly administered, all discipline and obedience observed and rendered in the matter of laws and customs — yet all of this is not sufficient to insure salvation to the doer. In this kingdom of Christ all humanity is brought to the same place — all are made into one bread (kuchen) — all must meet the one condition. Not this or that person, who lives in a certain manner, and is doing a certain thing, shall be saved, but: “He that believeth shall be saved.” Here you have it all. No matter if you are Jew or gentile, master or servant, virgin or husband, monk or layman, if you believe, says Christ, then you are in my kingdom, saved and redeemed from sin and death.

**31.** By this message, Christ’s kingdom is clearly distinguished from all other kingdoms of the world. In earthly kingdoms, he who obeys the laws and precepts, does not rob, steal and kill, shall not be punished, but shall be commended, honored and protected as an obedient citizen of the kingdom. It will not do to say: He that believes shall have honor and riches in this temporal kingdom. Such honor and riches would mean temporal, visible requisition. He who is pious and good in the eyes of the world and leads a perfect life, is not, because of that, in the kingdom of God. Something higher and better is necessary. He must believe in Christ, who ascended

into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God. A temporal kingdom knows nothing of the spiritual matters of faith. It does not deal in nor control these' things. And yet the blind world dares to attempt that which it is not able to understand nor rightly to judge.

**32.** On the other hand, Christ's kingdom has nothing to do with the kingdoms of men. He permits them to continue in their own observances. Christ commands that the disciples should preach the Gospel to all creatures. The creatures existed before the Gospel came to them. Governments are instituted, and laws formed, by men, through God-given reason and wisdom. St. Peter calls them human ordinances in [1 Peter 2:13](#). They are also called ordinances of God in [Romans 13:2](#). In such things, Christ would establish no change; he permits them to remain as they are, in fact and in name. But instructs the world concerning his own eternal kingdom; how it is possible for one to be freed from sin and eternal death, how all, without difference, shall be subject unto him, and acknowledge him, through faith, as their Lord.

**33.** We must examine and rightly understand the words, "He that believeth," in order not to pervert or mar them by additions and glosses. With such the papists becloud and nullify this sublime and powerful passage, attaching to it their sermons, and, saying that here must be understood "good works" with the word "faith," so that it must read: He that believeth, and also does good works, shall be saved. These are the highly learned masters that take Christ to school, correct his language and teach him how to speak, babbling in their blindness whatever they please, though they know not what and whereof they speak concerning these sublime things. But we shall do Christ the honor to keep his Word pure and undefiled. He well knew how to express these things and what he would have the disciples speak when he commanded them to preach his message to all the world.

**34.** Christ intentionally made the statement thus plain: "He that believeth, and is baptized" etc., in order to set right the delusions and pretensions of the Jews and of all the world regarding salvation by man's own works. On faith and baptism, not on our own but on his works, he bases all. In opposition, the Jews, and the world in general, wish to consider their own pride and glory. They boast of their own holiness, unwilling to be censured and condemned in respect of it. The Jews, because they observe circumcision, the Law and many temple services, these, in their own



estimation, sufficient to secure them salvation, will, therefore, not consent that the heathen, who observe none of these, should be considered their equals, be called God's people and be saved, until they also conform to these practices and become Jews. Just so the false apostles, and many of those who became Christians, with great pretense fought over these things and argued against the teachings of the apostles.

**35.** What have the heathen, who had not the Word of God nor the true knowledge of him, ever done of themselves, yet they would neither hear nor accept the Gospel for the very reason that they did not wish to forsake their idolatry. They claimed that they also served the true God with their offerings and religious rites. They would not listen to condemnation of these things.

**36.** All who depend on good works, and teach the people salvation through the same, are alike in error. They cannot endure disregard of their works in the matter of salvation. They cannot endorse such a doctrine as Christ here states to be true: "He that believeth shall be saved" etc. Although they receive the Gospel and wish to be Christians, as do our papists, they will not accept this doctrine in its purity but must defile the same with their additions and glosses, claiming that it must be understood thus: He that believes, and does also good works, shall be saved. Their interpretation means that one obtains salvation, not by faith alone, but also by good works. Just so the false apostles and disciples from among the Jews also made additions to this doctrine, pretending that not faith alone secures salvation, but the law of Moses must be kept also. They said: "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved." ~~Acts~~ Acts 15:1. Thus they confused the true disciples and Christians, and the apostles at Jerusalem had to reject this statement publicly.

**37.** But you may say: Indeed, you yourself teach that a Christian must do good works; God himself commanded to do them, enjoining the keeping of the Law, and Christ also says: "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments," ~~Matthew~~ Matthew 19:17. Now, faith alone does not justify and save. This message must be understood as not excluding good works; but Christ here, in addition and beyond good works, also demands faith, which the Jews and heathen did not exercise. Our papists also hold that good works are not sufficient unto salvation for those who have no faith, but that faith and good works must go together. Nor do they mean by "works" the observance of the law of Moses, of circumcision and the Jewish temple



service, which are now obsolete; but they mean the works demanded by the ten commandments, which teach the obedience all men owe to God.

And in order to prove that these words must be thus understood, the papists refer to ~~418B~~ Matthew 28:19-20: “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them,” etc. and “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you.” These last words, they say, also belong to the command Christ here gave to the disciples; therefore, this text must be interpreted to mean that it demands not faith alone, but also good works.

**38.** We answer: All this, as I have said before, is mere babbling, false and perverted comment of blind sophists who understand nothing of this text and of the glorious doctrine of the Gospel. They know not what they say, concerning either faith or good works, nor do they know how properly to distinguish between the two. We also confess, and have always, better and more forcibly than the papists, taught that good works must be done; that they must follow faith, and that faith is dead if good works be absent. Therefore, this doctrine of faith does not denounce good works; it does not teach that they should not be performed. Nor is it the question here, whether or no good works are requisite. But faith and good works differ, and it must be taught with discrimination what is the value of each for and by itself. Each must be considered in its proper relations that we may understand both what faith accomplishes and receives, and why good works are necessary. This distinction is everywhere taught in the Gospel and was preached by the apostles. It is, therefore, but blindness, if not intentional malice, that these papal sophists, without here making any distinction, in a swine-like manner misconstrue and pervert these passages so that neither of them can be clearly understood.

**39.** We, therefore, insist that these two passages — this one and that written in Matthew — be properly interpreted in the light of their actual wording and arrangement. In our teachings it is right that we instruct men to observe all that Christ commanded. But we cannot disregard that which Christ here says concerning faith. We must always observe the place and order which Christ gives his words. Now, we find in this text, ~~418B~~ Matthew 28:19-20, that Christ first commands the eleven to go and make disciples of all nations, and to baptize them into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That is, they are to preach to them the teaching of the Gospel, how they must be saved — which, as yet, neither the Jews nor the heathen

knew — and in this knowledge to baptize them, making the people disciples or Christians. These are the first essentials and thereto the words agree: “He that believeth and is baptized” etc. Then comes the other part, which must follow the teachings of the Gospel, namely, what those who believe and are baptized shall do. These, Christ says, ye shall teach to observe all things that I commanded you, so that all things shall be according to my Word, and not according to the Jewish law and ceremonies, or any man-made laws pertaining to self-chosen works or religious services.

**40.** Therefore these two, faith and good works, must not be confused. They must be clearly distinguished from each other. Faith and baptism, as the chief part and foundation of our salvation, must stand first. The other part follows. Both must be taught, but each in its proper relation. As I have often stated, and as is also clearly self-evident, there is a vast difference between the efficacy of our own works and of that which Christ has accomplished for us. In our teaching, the latter must be exalted and made infinitely superior to the former. Now, in these words of Christ: “Teach all nations and baptize them” etc.; and “He that believeth and is baptized” — it is evident that he holds before us not our unworthy works and the demands of the Law, but his own merits and his gift; these we can accept in no other way than by faith. These are the treasures by which we are saved, which were neither earned nor procured by us, but were graciously presented to us by him. For we may never dare to boast that we merit the gift of Christ in whom we believe, or that the baptism which we receive in his name is of our own doing or has been instituted by any human being.

**41.** To prove my statements, consider this: Christ says plainly and clearly; “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;” as though he would say: If you would know how you can be saved, then this shall be considered the chief and essential condition — to believe and be baptized. The question is not whether or no we must do good works. There is no dispute about that. But there is something more important. The point is not what we are doing ourselves, but where shall we seek with the certainty we shall find that by which we can be saved from sin and death, and can obtain life and salvation? Here Christ clearly explains what shall be the chief doctrine of the Gospel. He bases it entirely on faith and baptism, concluding that we shall be saved for the sole reason that we have Christ by faith and baptism.

**42.** Believing means: To hold to be true, and with all the heart to depend on, that which the Gospel and all the articles of faith say about Christ; that he has been sent to us by God the Father, that he suffered, died and rose again and ascended into heaven for the sole reason that we may obtain from God the Father forgiveness of sin and life eternal in his name. That our faith may grasp and hold this the more firmly, he gives us holy baptism, by this visible sign to prove that God the Father will accept us and unfaillingly give us that which is offered to us in the Gospel.

**43.** Now, if I am to believe this, then I must not adulterate my faith with belief in my own works. I must not depend upon my own merits, daring to offer them to God, as do the monks and self-righteous Jews. There are two doctrines that will not agree and can never hold combined, namely, the belief that we, for Christ's sake and without our merits, obtain God's grace; and the belief that we obtain God's grace by our own works. For if we could obtain this grace by our own merits, then we should not need Christ in addition. Such confusion and detestable patchwork of the sophists cannot be tolerated — the claiming that Christ, indeed, atoned for original sins and for sins done aforesaid and that he opens the door of heaven, but that we ourselves, by our own good works, must now also atone for sins and merit grace in order to fully obtain salvation. This is to rob Christ of his honor; yea, to set him, his death, resurrection and ascension aside, as if his merit were not sufficient for us, and as if his sufferings and blood are not able to atone for sins. But St. John says he is the only propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. ~~¶~~1 John 2:2,

**44.** And that the passage we are considering and similar ones must be thus understood, St. Paul teaches in his epistles, especially in that to the Romans, where he proves that we are freely justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood ~~¶~~Romans 3:24-25. Here he plainly mentions the word *gratis*, i.e., freely, without our merits, and not for the sake of our works. Thus, we may have a sure consolation, and not doubt God's grace and salvation though we are truly unworthy and still have remnants of sin in us. If the people be taught thus: If you desire forgiveness of sins and a merciful God, you must do enough good works and possess sufficient merits to overcome and remove your sins — then faith is already nullified. Christ is then of no efficacy, conscience is robbed of all consolation, and man is driven to despair, because he seeks help by and in

himself and dares to attempt to accomplish himself that for which Christ was sent and which only he could do for us. Christ came to fulfill the Law, and to earn for us, by his obedience, grace and life eternal.

**45.** So, our passage on faith, and others like it, must be understood in this light; not perverted and marred by misleading comments and additions, for the purpose of belittling faith and contradicting Christ's meaning. Such error will surely result if the teaching of good works is confused with that of faith; if distinction is not made between the chief doctrine of Christ's Gospel, appropriation by faith alone, and the teaching of the Law concerning good works. As I said above, these two doctrines cannot stand side by side; they are directly contradictory. To believe that for Christ's sake alone grace and eternal life are granted, and yet at the same time to seek and claim to obtain them by our own merits, is absurd.

**46.** I repeat, Christ would, with these words, condemn the pretensions of the Jews and of all the world, their boasting of their law and works, and would declare that no one will be saved by works, but alone by faith in the Lord. It is written that Christ alone has conquered sin and death, and is now sitting at the right hand of God, etc.

**47.** From all this explanation you are now enabled to clearly distinguish between these two passages from Matthew and Mark — which the papists, by reason of their ignorance, confound with each other — so that both are vindicated. By the text: "He that believeth and is baptized" etc., our own works and doings, in so far as they are considered as a merit, are not considered with faith but are excluded when we speak of man's justification and salvation before God. Not that good works have no place in a believer's creed, but he must be conscious that by his own worthiness he cannot be saved, that his own works and deeds do not merit for him grace and life eternal; that this has been merited for him through Christ alone, granted him for Christ's sake, and must be apprehended by faith. Then this text, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," is rightly understood.

**48.** When one understands and believes this text, then the teaching of the other text should follow, namely, that we should also do good works. Yet good works must accompany faith and depend upon faith, which always clings to Christ and pleads before God that he will graciously and for Christ's sake accept and be pleased with the supplicant's life and works, and not impute to him that which might be imperfect and sinful in him.

Hereupon follows properly the text, <sup><183></sup>Matthew 28:20: “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you.” Fail not to observe the first and essential condition; for if faith is absent, all our good works and upright life count for naught before God. Indeed, it is not possible to do truly good works without faith. Christ says in <sup><655></sup>John 15:5: “For apart from me ye can do nothing” etc.

**49.** Observe, by making this distinction you can rightly understand this passage. Learn how to apply it and to derive from it consolation in the struggle with a conscience, terrified by sin and death. Only in the experience of such agony can one know the power of faith. This truth is apparent even among the papists and all sectarians, for they also preach these words, although in a superficial and indifferent manner as if they were of no importance. They thus show, by their besmirching additions, that they understand nothing about the subject. Alas, exclaim the papists, that you preach nothing but faith, notwithstanding we are neither unbelievers nor Turks. Well, my good man, if it is so easy, then try it once and see how you will fare in the hour when death overtakes you, or when Satan terrifies and disheartens you, and when your reason and all your senses feel nothing but God’s wrath and the anguish of hell.

**50.** If you are a Christian, as you claim, then you must, indeed, believe and never doubt the statement that Christ died for you, and through his resurrection and ascension conquered for you sin, death and hell; yes, destroyed and swallowed them up. Why is it, then, that you still fear death, flee from God and dread his judgment? This surely is an unmistakable sign that you lack faith, inasmuch as he that has faith cannot be troubled nor terrified by death or hell. Where faith is, there it strengthens and delivers the heart from fear, so that we can cheerfully say: What do I care for sin, death and the terrors of Satan, for I have a Lord and Savior who sits in heaven at the right hand of God the Father, and rules over all in heaven and upon earth, and who gives me his righteousness and life? Can you thoroughly learn the art to do this? Then I will say, you are a doctor of all the doctors. However, you will certainly experience, like all others, even the greatest saints, that you are woefully deficient when it comes to a real test and trial.

**51.** The reason the world cares naught about the preaching of faith is that it lives in false security and in carelessness, having neither knowledge nor experience of the terrors of sin and a troubled conscience. But when death

and its horrors overtake it, then it knows of no help and plunges suddenly into despair. Then it will, indeed, having waited too long, realize what it is to have faith, of which it hitherto knew nothing. It will learn that faith is not a dead letter, not mere words of the tongue, a vague idea or a mere imagination, which the papists call faith, but a fearless and strong courage that, with all boldness of heart, relies on Christ, in defiance of sin, death and hell.

**52.** In such times, even the best of holy men deplore their weakness, and must confess that their faith is still insufficient, because they are sad and troubled by fear and anguish. As to these words, “He that believeth shall be saved” etc., there is, indeed, no doubt whatever that by them hell is closed, heaven opened, and eternal life and joy granted. But here the chief thing is lacking, namely, that you are not yet the person *qui credit*, i.e., who believes, or that you are still weak in faith. However, though you are not strong, if you only cling to Christ you will obtain the consolation, power and strength that overcomes all terror of death and hell, which all human power, works and merit cannot accomplish.

**53.** Here your conscience, burdened by the demands of the Law, will say: You still have sin, and have not kept God’s commandments, which under threat of eternal condemnation, you are bound to keep. Answer: All this I know, alas, only too well, and you must not speak to me of it. Wait with your demands of the Law as to what I must do, till I first possess this chief part of my salvation, namely, Christ and his righteousness, Christ who conquers sin and death for me. This, alone, I want to hear now, and it shall transcend the other in importance as much as the heavens are higher than the earth. For at present the question is not, how I must live and what! must do, but how I may overcome sin and death, or, as Christ here says, be saved. But, after having attained all this, and being, in spite of all that is called sin, death, hell, God’s wrath, Law and works, in Christ justified and saved, and made heir of life eternal, then I want to know also how I must live here on the earth. Then you may come and teach and admonish me, like a faithful schoolmaster, as much as you can, but never going further with your Moses than is right and necessary; not teaching me that thereby I can be saved, or can conquer sin and death.

**54.** Now, this is the message that Christ commands to be preached to all creatures. But that we may know that in his kingdom he would have this message supreme, so that we should never doubt it, nor expect something

else, but should altogether depend upon it and know that it shall stand as an irrevocable declaration of this Lord of all creation, Christ repeats the message once more, making it still stronger in the negative form, saying:

***“But he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.”***

**55.** Here you have the final judgment against the boasting pride and self-praise of the Jews and of all the world. As the first part of the text with one word opens heaven, closes hell and sets aside Moses and the threats of the Law for those who believe, so Christ here with one word, closes heaven, leaves open the jaws of hell, permits death to reign and Moses to be an intolerable tyrant for all that disbelieve. For this there is and shall be no help, though you, like the Jews, torment yourself to death in keeping the Law, even torturing and burdening yourselves, saying: Did I not do many good works and even suffer much? Alas, here you have the decision: “He that disbelieveth shall be condemned.”

**56.** Even though man accomplishes all that he possibly can, yet without Christ, everything has already been concluded under sin and God’s wrath; as we heard in the Gospel of St. John, that the Holy Spirit will convict the world in respect of sin, because they believe not etc. <sup><B16></sup>John 16:8. Here, in the text we are considering, the judgment of condemnation is already pronounced on the world, together with all its righteousness of the Law and religious service. No one on earth can escape this judgment, nor be rescued from condemnation, except by hearing and believing this message, which says that those who believe in this Lord and Savior shall not be condemned because of their sins, but shall, because of him, have forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

Christ says, in <sup><B16></sup>John 3:16, that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish” etc. “For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him.” <sup><B17></sup>John 3:17. Therefore, “He that believeth on him is not judged,” but “he that believeth not,” says he, “hath been judged already.” <sup><B18></sup>John 3:18. This judgment of condemnation remains upon him because of his disbelieving, imputing all sins to him, which cannot be forgiven. Thus he increases his sin and makes his condemnation the stronger; in addition to all ether sins, he also despises Christ by not believing in him.

## B. THE SIGNS CHRIST APPOINTED TO ACCOMPANY THIS PREACHING.

**57.** When Christ adds baptism to the first part, “He that believeth,” he has in view the established rite among the Christian people. We read in ~~the~~ Matthew 28:19, where he puts both parts together, “Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them” etc. He thus shows, first, that faith, which the Gospel preaches, must not remain concealed; it is not sufficient for each one to go his own way’ and believe for himself, after he has heard this Gospel message, deeming it not necessary to confess his faith before others. On the contrary, in order that it may become evident, not only where this Gospel is preached, but also where it is accepted and believed, ,that is, where the church and kingdom of Christ may be in this world, Christ wants to unite and hold us together by virtue of this divine sign, baptism.

If Christians were without such an ordinance, if they had no common bond in the way of seal or sign, the organization would neither be expanded nor preserved. Christ wishes to bind us together by a divine communion, to further the spread of the Gospel; that others through our confession, may be brought into the fold. Therefore, baptism is a public testimony to the Gospel teaching, and to our faith, by which the world may know where and within whom the Lord rules.

**58.** In the second place, Christ has especially ordained this sign to the end that, through the office of the Word and of baptism, we may be conscious of God’s work and mighty power in his church; that the Christian, in accepting baptism, might know that, Christ himself being witness, he is accepted by God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That is what it means to be baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in obedience to Christ’s command. Thus, baptism is a sign and seal, in addition to the Word or promise, that we have been called and brought into the kingdom of Christ, have become God’s children and heirs of eternal life, if, by faith we cling to Christ. This we have often taught elsewhere with reference to baptism.

**59.** It is, indeed, wisely ordained by Christ, that in his kingdom, which shall expand into all the world and among all nations, he instituted not many ceremonies, as was the custom among the Jews, nor a diversity of forms among the various countries and nations, peoples and languages; but he ordained only the simplest and most ordinary sign; it is everywhere



observed in the same way — just as the preaching of the Gospel is alike in all places, making all, adults and children, rich and poor, great and humble, one and all, in the world, equal before God. Hence, if a Christian from the uttermost parts of the world should come to us and observe our forms, he would have to say, They are the very same Word and sign that I have learned and received.

**60.** Among the various inhabitants that people our earth, each individual and each nation has its own characteristics. But Christians everywhere may be distinguished by their one doctrine, one language, one sign, even as they have one faith and one confession. Indeed, the kingdom of Christ everywhere is a kingdom of love, unity and peace. But it would be impossible for it to always withstand, steadfastly and in unity, the devils and their wiles, if Christ, by his divine power, did not preserve and protect it.

However, we see that although Satan causes many sects and factions to rise up, soon they war among themselves and disappear again. What countless cliques and fanatical tyrants Satan has produced to oppose the Gospel during these fifteen hundred years, endeavoring to rend and destroy the kingdom of Christ! And yet there remains to this day one and the same Gospel message, one faith, one baptism and all; even the world, if not willfully blind and hardened, might see and feel the strength and power of this Lord.

**61.** Christ deems it sufficient to say, in the first part of our text: “He that believeth and is baptized,” and in the other part: “But he that disbelieveth” etc., not further mentioning baptism. The reason, of course, is that the first part sufficiently enjoins the ordinance and that baptism is commanded elsewhere, namely, in <sup><41819></sup>Matthew 28:19: “Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father” etc. Hence, we have no authority in these for omitting baptism; no reason to hold that because one has faith he needs no baptism. If one becomes a Christian and truly believes, he will surely also gladly accept this sign. He will wish to have this divine testimony and confirmation of his salvation, for strength and consolation throughout life, and also to confess his faith publicly before the world. St. Paul makes plain the Christian’s duty when he says: “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” <sup><5100></sup>Romans 10:10. True, it is possible that one may

believe though he is not baptized; and again, that some may receive baptism though they do not believe.

**62.** This text, however, must be understood as commanding and confirming baptism: no one shall despise the ordinance but, as has been said, it is the duty of all to accept it. Yet the lines must not be drawn so closely that one should be condemned and lost for the failure to receive baptism if he could not obtain it.

**63.** As a summary, we derive from this text the following propositions:

1. Some believe, and are baptized, which is in accordance with the general command of Christ, the rule that is to be taught and observed.
2. Some believe, but are not baptized.
3. Some do not believe, and yet they are baptized.
4. Some do not believe, and are also not baptized.

**64.** This distinction is made by the text itself. (To the first two points belongs, as we have said, that part of this passage affirming and promising salvation, namely, "Shall be saved." Ed. 1546). It has always unanimously been believed that a person dying a believer is not lost, though he be not baptized; for it may happen that a true believer is suddenly overtaken by death before he can receive the desired baptism. (It also occurs that infants sometimes die before, during or immediately after their birth. These, having already been commended to the Lord by the faith and prayers of the parents or other Christians, without doubt Christ will accept, according to his words: "Suffer the little children to come unto me." But as to the other two points, namely, those who do not believe, whether God grant they be baptized or not, judgment of condemnation is pronounced over them. Ed. 1546). Concerning this it is not necessary to speak further.

**65.** But the troublesome Anabaptist sects speak contemptuously of holy baptism, claiming that no one should be baptized who does not first believe. Their intent is to abolish infant baptism. But since enough has been written against this error of the Anabaptists in former postils and elsewhere. we will not now dwell on this matter. It is enough to know that Christ and the apostles make a distinction between these two points, namely, teaching and baptizing. Baptism is administered but once. We would need many to perform the ceremony if baptism had to be

administered as often as we preach and teach. The teaching and preaching are of the most important and must be done constantly.

**66.** It is not stated here whether baptism should be administered before or after the teaching, but may God grant that the office of preaching should be exercised above everything else; then baptisms will follow. It is evident that he who receives baptism once, does not need this sign again. But the teaching of the Word, by which faith is kindled, strengthened and preserved, we need continually. For this reason, we observe, the office of baptizing was committed to people of much humbler station than was the office of preaching. Christ, himself, baptized no one, as we read in ~~404E~~ John 4:2, but commanded his disciples to do so. St. Paul says that he was sent, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, ~~4017~~ 1 Corinthians 1:17, and that he himself baptized but few people, though he preached the Gospel among all the heathen.

**67.** The sum and substance of the lesson, therefore, is, for us to give heed to the Word and teaching, and not to judge whether one truly believes or not. Where the Word is, there we shall also administer baptism, be the people young or old. For we are not commanded to accomplish the impossibility of looking into a man's heart to judge whether he believes or not. This must be left to Christ alone. Neither is it commanded us, in our office of preaching, to seek to know how each one may believe, or who accepts the Word and who does not. It will not do for you to say that you would preach only to those whom you could first know to be ready to believe and accept the Word. In that case you would never dare to preach at all. The same holds in baptism. You must not wait until you are sure as to who believes and who does not, but give heed to this: Wherever the Word is preached and heard, and baptism is desired, there you are commanded to administer baptism, both to young and old. Where the Word, the all-important thing, is rightly preached, the other will naturally follow. And, again, where the teaching of the Word is in error, all else is in vain; because there is neither faith nor Christ. It is the Word that brings us everything, the sacraments with their power, peace of conscience and even Christ himself; for it is his power and strength, or, as David calls it: "The rod of his strength out of Zion," <19B002>Psalm 110:2; or, as St. Paul says, "The power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth," ~~4016~~ Romans 1:16.

**68.** Preaching is, then, the chief work that Christ and all the apostles performed and commanded us to do. Christ gives the commission: “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation” etc. The other work, being inferior in importance, can, indeed, be performed by those who are not charged with the greater responsibility of preaching. It will be recalled that both Christ and the apostles sent many to lay hands on the sick. We may safely assume that, in {he instance when, by the preaching of the apostles on Pentecost and afterwards, the number of believers who received the Word and were baptized increased to five thousand, not all of this multitude were baptized by the apostles alone. The apostles had to attend to their office of preaching, as commanded. Baptisms were accomplished by the assistance of others who accompanied the apostles. St. Paul, having already been called to the apostle-ship, was baptized by the disciple Ananias. ~~4098~~Acts 9:18.

**69.** Therefore, it depends not on the person, whoever it may be, that administers baptism or that receives it; who it is that preaches the Word or hears it. They may be saints or sinners, believers or unbelievers; if only the Word is preached and taught in its purity, then the ministry is also right, no matter who the minister may be. The office of preaching being first observed, then Christ speaks to you and me who hear the Word and desire to be Christians, admonishing us with this passage: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

**70.** The Christians filling this office and possessing the talent that must bear interest, are commanded to preach wherever possible, and, together with the preaching, administer also baptism. But as to who may believe or disbelieve, this you must commit to Christ himself, for it is not in the preacher’s power to save or condemn, but in the power of Christ alone. He is Lord over life and death, and may, therefore, grant it or withhold it from whomsoever he will.

**71.** However, Christ is not silent upon the point, to whom will he grant salvation. He says: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” And again: “He that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” Naught else can help or hinder; no difference of person or station avails; one being is as dear to him as another. Only that one believes and desires baptism, will avail to save. All who are disciples or hearers of this message must so learn.

**72.** Preachers and teachers must see to it that they preach and teach faithfully, and, as St. Paul says, shrink not from declaring the whole

counsel of God, ~~407~~ Acts 20:27, that the hearers may know what God demands and has decreed concerning them. All the world has always desired, searched and sought to know this, but no one ever attained such knowledge, till it was revealed from heaven through Christ. It is embodied in this message. We should no longer seek nor expect any other revelation. Here it may be clearly perceived that the Gospel itself is witness that the Word of preaching and the sacraments are the means by which you may know God's decree concerning yourself. If you believe the message, you shall be saved. But if you do not believe, then it is also decreed that you shall come under the judgment of condemnation, no matter how earnestly you may have sought, by your works and deeds, to obtain salvation. Though you had accomplished all the works and wonders of angels and men, it would be unavailing. The whole world is hereby divided into two classes, entirely separated from each other, the one for heaven and the other for hell. On the last day no other judgment shall be pronounced than that in accordance with this message, namely, the reward of belief or disbelief.

**73.** Therefore, we ought to thank God that we belong to those who shall be saved. For we are among those called God's creatures, to whom he commands this message to be preached. And we are, also, thanks to God, baptized into Christ, and have preached and confessed him 'before the world as the Lord that is sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and is ruling over all the world. Our preaching, faith and confession is, indeed, pure and true; God grant that our lives be according to our faith and confession.

All this is said concerning the preaching of the Gospel, which Gospel Christ commanded to be proclaimed in the whole world after his ascension into heaven. Now follows the last part, namely:

*“And these signs shall accompany them that believe.”*

**74.** Here the sectarians have brooded over the question of signs, vainly asking why they do not accompany our preaching and whether they no longer can be expected. It is enough to know, that these signs followed as a testimony to, and public confirmation of, this Gospel message. They were especially necessary in the beginning, to further the spread of the Gospel. But with the preaching of the Word in all lands and tongues accomplished, their prevalence became less frequent, and their testimony less necessary.

**75.** Yet it is true that the same power and efficacy of Christ remains in Christendom. If it were necessary, such signs could even now be performed. It often took place, and still does, that devils were cast out in Christ's name; likewise the sick are healed by prayer in his name, and many receive help in great distress of both body and soul. The Gospel is now being preached in new tongues, where it was unknown before. Signs are given to all Christendom, as Christ says — to those who believe. True, we do not always observe this gift in every Christian believer, and even the apostles did not do these wonders with equal power.

**76.** These signs are inferior and very insignificant in comparison with the really great wonders that Christ unceasingly works in the world through his divine omnipotence. He makes frequent allusions to them. These are truly great wonders: That Christendom is defended and preserved on earth; that God's Word and faith, or even a single Christian believer, remains on earth in spite of the devil and his angels; that he protects us against so many tyrants and sects, so many false and unthankful people among the Christians, yea, even against our own flesh and blood — all of them raging against Christ's kingdom. Yet the devil, with all his power and the help of all his servants, will never be able — though he has attempted to do so in his great wrath and still attempts it through the pope, the Turk and all his hosts — to remove the baptismal font from the church, the Gospel from the pulpit, to extirpate Christ's name or destroy from out his kingdom in the world the little flock that clings to him. This great wonder, the power of Christ, is prophesied of and to it praise is given, in [Psalm 110:2](#): "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies," who are indeed so wroth and bitter that, if they could, in one moment, they would pervert and overthrow all that lives and moves in Christendom. And yet, one single Christian believer, by his preaching and prayer, can be the means of salvation to uncounted multitudes. In spite of Satan's hatred and desire to hinder, many people hear the Gospel, receive baptism and become teachers of the faith; and through the influence of the Gospel, the sacredness of home and country are preserved.

**77.** This good work may well be called by believing Christians, casting out devils, taking up serpents and speaking with new tongues. Those visible wonders were only signs to the ignorant unbelievers, as Paul says in [1 Corinthians 14:22](#), and for the purpose of bringing them to Christ. But why should we, who know this and believe the Gospel, need such signs? And if they were necessary, we can easily believe they were done, We see that

through Christ greater wonders are done among us; the power of Satan and the terrors of sin and death are overcome in our hearts, and many Christians, both young and old, cheerfully die in Christ and by their faith tread Satan under foot. The marvelous power of Christ's kingdom is constantly the theme of St. Paul and the other apostles, and Christ himself lauds it above all other signs and wonders in ~~2009~~ Luke 10:19-20, saying: "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall in any wise hurt you," etc. "Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" etc.

**78.** Thus, even in our day, are great signs and wonders upon wonders. Here is an example: In a great city a little flock of Christians is kept in the knowledge of God and in true faith, notwithstanding that more than a hundred thousand devils are turned loose upon them and the world is filled with sects, with scoundrels and tyrants. In spite of the opposition of all these, the Gospel, baptism, Lord's Supper and confession of Christ are still preserved. We can see that, for the heathen, outward, tangible signs were necessary. Christians, however, behold spiritual signs, in comparison with which the former ones are but earthly. We need, therefore, not wonder that they are no longer in evidence now that the Gospel reigns throughout the world and among those who aforesaid could not comprehend God until he had brought them into the fold by visible signs, as little children are persuaded with apples and pears.

**79.** Moreover, we should marvel at and extol the great and glorious miracles that Christ is daily accomplishing in his Christendom, wherein Christians conquer the power of the devil and snatch so many souls from the jaws of death and hell. Against their work the devil daily battles in the world and fumes in his awful wrath and rancor. Yet he must flee from the Christian. What though he be cast out of one poor heart, in which he has raged? The whole world still remains helpless in his power unless it is brought to the knowledge of Christ. But wherever a Christian, in spite of the terrors of sin, death and hell, with cheerful heart dies in Christ, there Satan has been truly cast out from his dwelling-place, and deprived of his power and kingdom.

**80.** The wicked world shall not see nor heed such signs and wonders, but with open eyes and hardened hearts shall pass by and blaspheme them, just as it always despises God's works, blaspheming even the public and

indisputable miracles of Christ and the apostles. The world would but the more despise such signs, were they done by us. God must withhold them, since the Gospel is now revealed everywhere, giving the world only those other signs, by which it is offended and therefore is overthrown and destroyed by the power of God. The Jews so fared when they despised the signs by which Christ manifested his proffered help and blessings. They looked for and demanded other signs. Then he refrained and would give them no other sign than the sign of Jonah, lying, after his crucifixion, for three days in the grave in weakness and death. Afterward he came forth from death and the grave, demonstrating his power by his resurrection and ascension. Now he mightily rules over all the world, and will overthrow and destroy it, together with all its power and glory.



# SUNDAY AFTER CHRIST'S ASCENSION. (EXAUDI).

The following sermon, which is not found in edition c., appeared in seven pamphlet editions in 1522, 1523 and 1525. The first bears the title: "A sermon on the Sunday after the Ascension of the Lord Jesus, the Gospel of John 15. "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you' etc. Preached by Dr. Martin Luther, Wittenberg." (1522).

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:238; Walch Edition, 11:1343; St. Louis Walch, 11:992.

*Text: ~~John~~ John 15:26-16:4. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

*These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be caused to stumble. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God. And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I spoken unto you, that when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you. And these things I said not unto you from the beginning, because I was with you.*

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## SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL:

1. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth, because he makes us true, upright men, without whom all men are liars. <19B611>Psalm 116:11. What is now the free will of man, and what can human teachings accomplish? The prophets and apostles spoke under the influence of the Spirit of God, as St. Peter says: "Knowing this, first that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation, for no prophecy ever came by the will

of man; but men spoke from God, being moved by the Spirit.” <sup><600></sup>2 Peter 1:20-21.

**2.** The same Spirit of truth, says Christ, shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness. The Spirit within, but you outwardly in your words. St. Paul also says the same to the Romans: “For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.” <sup><605></sup>Romans 8:15-16.

**3.** The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians treats of the offense of the cross and the foolishness of Christians.

**1.** Beloved, you have heretofore heard much about faith. Today you hear also of the witness of faith and of the cross that follows. Paul says to the Romans, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” <sup><500></sup>Romans 10:10. If one be pious, he must begin in his heart and believe. That serves only unto godliness; it is not enough for salvation. Therefore, one must also do what the Christian life requires, and continually abide in that life. Hence, Paul adds: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, thou shalt be saved,” It is these two things that constitute our salvation, faith and the confession of faith. Faith rescues from sin, hell, Satan, death and all misfortunes. Now, when we have this we have enough. We then let God live here that we may reach a hand to our neighbor and help him. Besides, God desires to have his name praised and his kingdom developed and extended. Therefore, we must praise his name, confess our faith and win others to do the same, so that God’s kingdom may be extended and his name praised.

**2.** Thus, faith must be exercised, worked and polished; be purified by fire, like gold. Faith, the great gift and treasure from God, must express itself and triumph in the certainty that it is right before God and man, and before angels, devils and the whole world. Just as a jewel is not to be concealed, but to be worn in sight, so also, will and must faith be worn and exhibited, as it is written in <sup><600></sup>1 Peter 1:7: “That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire,” etc.

**3.** Now, by confession I must take upon myself the load of Satan, hell, death and the whole world — kings and princes, pope and bishops, priests and monks. By faith, everything falls that reason can or ever has devised for the salvation of the soul. It must chastise the apish tricks of the whole

world, and its jewel alone must be praised. The world cannot endure this, therefore it rushes in, destroys, kills, and says: “It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not,” as Caiaphas says in <sup><B15></sup>John 11:50. Thus, the confession must break forth, that God alone is the Savior; and the same confession brings us into danger of losing our lives. As the Lord says later to the disciples: “They shall put you out of the synagogues.”

**4.** One cannot paint the cross differently than it is here painted; that is its true color. But the cross of illness — to lie in bed at home ill — is nothing compared with the cross of persecution. The first is indeed suffering; but the suffering is golden when we are persecuted and put to death with ignominy; when our persecutors have the praise; when right and honor apparently are on their side, while shame, disgrace and injustice are on our side, compared with the world that wishes them thereby to have God’s honor defended, so that all the world says we are served right and that God, the Scriptures and all the angels witness against us. There can be no right in our cause, and without trial we must be banished and isolated in shame and disgrace. So it also was the lot of Christ — they put him to death in the most scornful and disgraceful way, and crucified him between two thieves or murderers; he was regarded as chief of sinners, and they said, with blasphemous words: Aye, he called himself God’s Son; let God help him now, if he wills it differently. Since he does not, God and all the angels must be against him. So Christ says in our Gospel, “They will kill you,” and not in an ordinary way, but in an infamous manner, and all the world will say that they thereby offer God a service. It is, indeed, hard to hold and confess that God is gracious to us and that we have a Savior who opposes all the world, all its glitter and shine. But, let the struggle be as hard and sharp as it will, faith must express itself, even though we would like to have it otherwise.

**5.** Faith must expect all this, and nothing follows its confession more surely than the cross. For it is certain to come to us, either in life or at death, that all our doings will appear to be opposed to God and the Scriptures. It is better that it be learned during life, from the people, than from the devil at death; for the people cannot force it further than into the ears, but Satan has a pointed tongue that pierces the heart and makes the heart tremble. Satan torments you until you conclude that you are lost and ruined, that heaven and earth, God and all the angels, are your enemies. This is what the prophet means in <sup><B17></sup>Psalm 6:7-8, when he says: “I am weary with my

groaning; every night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye wasteth away because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine adversaries.” It is hard to endure this. Now you see how weak you are who are permitted to bear witness of this faith. One fears his wife, another his children and riches, and a third fears himself.

**6.** Faith is in vain where it does not continue steadfast to the end. Christ says in ~~4002~~ Matthew 10:22, and 24:13: “But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. Hence it is better to experience persecution here than punishment at the end. If one flees persecution, there is no faith in his heart — only a dead knowledge or erroneous belief, without sap and strength, marrow and bone; but where there is a true, living faith, it presses forward through sword and fire. Let us now notice how the Lord comforts his disciples. He says:

*“But when the Comforter is come.”*

## I. CHRIST’S SERMON OF COMFORT.

**7.** That we may, under no circumstances, despair, Christ says, I will send you a Comforter, even one who is almighty. And he calls the Holy Spirit here a Comforter; for although both my sins and the fear of death make me weak and timid, he comes and stirs up the courage in my heart, and says: He, cheer up! Thus he trumpets courage into us; he encourages us in a friendly and comforting manner not to despair before death but’ to cheerfully go forward, even though we had ten necks for the executioner, and says: Aye, although I have sinned, yet I am rid of my sins; and if I had still more, so that they overwhelmed me, I would hope, that they should do me no harm. Not that one should not feel his sins, for the flesh must experience them; but the Spirit overcomes and suppresses diffidence and timidity, and conducts us through them. He is powerful enough to do that. Therefore. Christ says further:

*“Whom I will send unto you from the Father.”*

**8.** For he, the Father, is the person that takes the initiative: I am the Son; and from us the Holy Spirit proceeds. And the three persons are one, and one essence, with equal power and authority, as he better expresses it when he says:

*“The Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father.”*

**9.** That is as much as to say: He who will comfort you is almighty and Lord over all things. How can the creatures now harm us, if the Creator stands by us? Notice how great the comfort of the Holy Spirit is. Now let all the Turks attack us. As long as he is our guard and rearguard, there is no danger. John also says in his first Epistle, ~~1~~ 1 John 3:19-20: “Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him; because if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” Likewise, in the following chapter, verse 4, he says: “Ye are of God, my little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.” So the Lord now says, Him will I send unto you, so that nothing can harm you. Is not that liberal comfort? Who would not be fearless and cheerful in view of this? And Christ calls him “The Spirit of truth;” that is, where he is and comes there is a rock foundation through and through, the real truth. Neither falsehood nor hypocrisy is there, for the Spirit is not hypocritical. But wherever he is not, there is nothing but hypocrisy and falsehood. Therefore, we fall when the test comes, because the Spirit of truth is not present. Christ now further says:

*“He shall bear witness of me.”*

**10.** That is, if he is in the heart he speaks through you, and assures and confirms you in the belief that the Gospel is true. Then, as a result, the confession of the Gospel springs forth. What, then, is the Gospel? It is a witness concerning Christ, that he is God’s Son, the Savior, and beside him there is none other. This is what Peter means when he says: “Ye are a royal priesthood, that we are elected thereto, that we preach and show forth the excellencies of Christ.” ~~1~~ 1 Peter 2:9: Hence, there must always be witnessing. Witnessing loads upon itself the wrath of the whole world. Then the cross follows, then rebellions rise, then the lords and princes and all who are great become angry; for the world cannot hear, nor will it tolerate, this kind of preaching. Therefore, the Gospel is hated and spoken against.

**11.** Reason thinks: Aye, one can, nevertheless, easily preach the Gospel in a beautifully simple and plain way, without a revolution in the world, and then it will be heartily welcomed. This is the utterance of Satan; for if I believe and say that faith in Christ alone does and accomplishes all, I overthrow the monkey play of the whole world; and that they cannot

allow. Therefore, Christ's teachings and man's teachings cannot stand together; one must fall. Priests and monks, as they are at present, are dependent in name, character and works upon human institutions, which the Gospel thrusts to the ground. Hence, they dare not accept the Gospel, and they continue as they are.

**12.** Thus, I say that the Christian faith is founded upon Christ alone, without anything additional. The priests will not permit their affairs and institutions to fall; in consequence, seditions and rebellions follow. Therefore, there must be dissension where the Gospel and the confession of Christ are; for the Gospel opposes everything that is not of its own spirit. If the teachings of Christ and the priests were not antagonistic, they could easily stand together. They are now pitted against one another. As impossible as it is for Christ not to be Christ, so impossible is it for a monk or priest to be a Christian. Therefore, a fire must be kindled. The Lord himself, in <sup><408></sup>Matthew 10:34 and <sup><425></sup>Luke 12:51 says: "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Then follows in our text:

***"And ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me  
from the beginning."***

**13.** Yes; then, first, when you become certain of your faith through the Holy Spirit, who is your witness, you must also bear witness of me, for to that end I chose you to be apostles. You have heard my words and teachings and have seen my works and life and all things that you are to preach. But the Holy Spirit must first be present; otherwise you can do nothing, for the conscience is too weak. Yes, there is no sin so small that the conscience could vanquish it, even if it were so trifling a one as laughing in church. Again, in the presence of death the conscience is far too weak to offer resistance. Therefore another must come and give to the timid, despairing conscience, courage to go through everything, although all sins be upon it. And it must, at the same time, be an almighty courage, like he alone can give who ministers strength in such a way that the courage, which before a rustling leaf could cause to fear, is now not afraid of all the devils, and the conscience that before could not restrain laughing, now restrains all sins.

**14.** The benefit and fruit of the Holy Spirit is, that sin will be changed to the highest and best use. Thus Paul boasts to Timothy, when he was converted, that whereas he had lived such a wicked life before, he now held his sin to be so contemptible that he composed a hymn and sang about

it thus, in ~~SOME~~ 1 Timothy 1:12-17: “I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service; though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief: howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his long-suffering, for an example of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

## II. CHRIST’S SERMON OF WARNING.

*“These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be caused to stumble.”*

**15.** Now that Christ had comforted and strengthened his disciples, he warns them of their future sufferings, in order that they might be able to bear them valiantly. He is an especially good friend who warns one; and the evil visitation is much easier borne when one is prepared beforehand for it. Christ says:

*“They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God.”*

**16.** You will certainly experience this; therefore, arm yourself and be prepared. The most of all will be that, when they have treated you in the most shameless manner, they will think they did a good work in doing so, and it will appear to them as if your God had taken stand against you, and they will sing over it a *Te Deum laudamus* (Lord God, we praise thee), as if they had done God’s will and offered unto him a service. Hence, he arms them here, that they may be of good courage when it comes to pass; and he concludes with the thought that they shall have God’s favor, although at the time there shall be no signs of it; for God does stand on the side of his disciples. He adds:

*“And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor me.”*



**17.** Therefore, be patient, be prepared, be firm. See to it that ye, by no means, take offense at me. Remember that I told you before that they have known neither the Father nor me; and therefore they will heap upon you dishonor, shame and persecution. You should never forget this, for it will give you great comfort and make you bold, cheerful and undismayed. Therefore, Christ concludes the admonition by saying:

“But these things have I spoken unto you, that when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you. And these things I said not unto you from the beginning, because I was with you.”

**18.** Who, now, has been considered to be worse than he who told the pope that he knew not the Father? The pope would, of course, declare the contrary and say: Aye, Satan has commissioned you to speak that. Now, they all say that they know the Father. The Turk also says that he does. In like manner, they declare they believe God and the Scriptures. But there are two kinds of knowledge. The first for example, such knowledge as one might have of the Turk from his noise and reputation; the other the knowledge one would have of the Turk through his deeds were he to capture and occupy Rome. In this latter sense we do not know the Turk.

**19.** It is this first kind of knowledge that some people have of God. They know very well how to say of him: I believe in God the Father, and in his only begotten Son. But it is only upon the tongue, like the foam on the water; it does not enter the heart. Figuratively a big tumor still remains there in the heart; that is, they cling somewhat to their own deeds and think they must do works in order to be saved — that Christ’s person and merit are not sufficient. Thy work is nothing, thy wisdom is foolishness, thy counsel is nothing, thy truth also amounts to nothing, neither does the mass avail anything before God. Then they reply: Aye, the devil has prompted you to speak thus. They say, Christ has truly died for us, but in a way that we, also, must accomplish something by our deeds. Notice how deeply wickedness and unbelief are rooted in the heart. The puffed-up pride of the heart is the reason why man can know neither Christ nor the Father.

**20.** But to know Christ in the other and true sense is to know that he died for me and transferred the load of my sin upon himself; to so know this that I realize that all my doings amount to nothing. To let go all that is mine, and value only this, that Christ is given to me as a present; his sufferings, his righteousness and all his virtues are at once mine. When I become

conscious of this, I must in return love him; my affections must go out to such a being. After this I climb upon the Son higher, to the Father, and see that Christ is God, and that he placed himself in my death, in my sin, in my misery, and bestows upon me his grace. Then I know also his gracious will and the highest love of the Father, which no heart of itself can discover or experience. Thus I lay hold of God at the point where he is the tenderest, and think: Aye, that is God; that is God's will and pleasure, that Christ did this for me. And with this experience I perceive the high, inexpressible mercy and the love in him because of which he offered his beloved child for me in ignominy, shame and death. That friendly look and lovely sight then sustain me. Thus must God become known, only in Christ. Therefore, Christ himself says to his disciples: "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." ~~4117~~ Matthew 11:27.

**21.** On the other hand, those who parade their own works, do not know Christ. Neither do they know what the Father has done through Christ. Nor do they know that God is not interested in their good works, but in his Son alone. Thus, they do not know the Father, neither do they know what they have received from the Father, through Christ. Therefore, they must fall and perish, and behold God in his severest aspect — as a judge. They try to silence the judgment with their good works, but they find no good work that is sufficient to do this, and then they must finally despair. When people see that they, themselves, are nothing, and establish the foundation of their hearts upon Christ, esteem him as the highest good, and know God as a Father in death and life — this is to "know God." Enough has been said on this Gospel. We will pray to God, to give us grace to know him and his Christ aright. Amen.

# SUNDAY AFTER CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

## SECOND SERMON. ~~LECT.~~ JOHN 15:26-16:4.

In place of the preceding sermon edition c. gives the following.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:251; Walch Edition, 11:1354; St. Louis Walch, 11:1001.

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**1.** The first part of this Gospel, referring to the Holy Spirit, we will reserve for consideration on Pentecost, at which time it is appropriate to state why Christ calls the Holy Spirit the Comforter and the Spirit of truth; also, how he distinguishes him from the Father and the Son, namely: He is the person who proceeds from, or is sent by, the Father and the Son; therefore, the Holy Spirit is called, at the same time, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, that is, of Christ, as St. Paul and St. Peter respectively call him in

Galatians 4:6, and 1 Peter 1:11. It is here also testified that Christ is truly eternal God with the Father when he states that he and the Father send forth the Holy Spirit and bestow the same upon the Christian Church. This is stated more fully in the explanation of chapters 15 to 17 of the Gospel of St. John.

## I. THE COMFORT CHRIST IMPARTS TO HIS DISCIPLES.

**2.** But the Lord Jesus Christ speaks these words, and all of the discourse of these three chapters, before his departure and ascension, in order to comfort his beloved disciples, and not only the disciples but all Christians to the end of time, concerning all that shall happen to them in the world after he shall have left the world and gone to the Father; to comfort them when he is no longer visibly present with them, and when he rules, not temporally but spiritually. He says these things that we may be strengthened and comforted through faith in his Word, to withstand the great and serious trials which confront Christians on earth, as we shall further hear.

**3.** He often announced to them how the world would array itself against them because of their office. He plainly told them, in order to forewarn them, that the world would not agree with them nor accept their doctrines. They had hitherto hoped that all the world, and more especially his own people, would gladly accept him. Now he tells them that the world will not only despise their teaching and regard their words as vain assertions of foolish men who preach about simply a crucified man, but will, for the sake of himself, hate and persecute them. In a word, he told them that they should not expect friendship and kindness of the world; he wished them to learn that his kingdom is in no respect a temporal one.

**4.** But Christ would not have them be dismayed by his words and think: What shall be the outcome of this? Shall we preach if no one will hear us — if even our own people are to become our enemies if we open our mouths to speak, not to think of what others will do? Let us be silent and let the world go its own way; let it believe and live as it chooses, rather than that we should speak only to be compelled, with shame and amid mockery, to remain silent. We should not be able to accomplish anything,

for what are we and what can we poor, despised few do against so many, against the wisdom, power and might of the world? He would not discourage them; therefore he comforts and strengthens them beforehand with these words:

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me.”

**5.** Be it so, he says, even though they hate and persecute you for my name’s sake, and though the devil, who is responsible for such hatred, aims thereby to prevent you from speaking; nevertheless they shall not be able to stifle and nullify your preaching, for after my departure, when they think that I am forever dead, another shall come whose mouth they shall not be able to shut. He will publicly testify of me and will speak before all the world, whether the world smile or be angry. This one, he says, shall be the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and is sent by me. If I now go to the Father, through suffering and death, and begin to reign in divine power and majesty, then I shall speak through him; not, as now, personally and with my weak human will, in this small corner of the world, but publicly and before all the world. For I will send him in such form that he shall be in you, and he shall be your Comforter, since you will obtain no comfort from the world. He shall give you courage and strength to withstand the enmity of the world and the fear of the devil, enabling you to confidently and publicly testify of me. This testimony of yours shall be called and be the testimony of the Holy Spirit, given by you in your official capacity. He shall be sent to you by the Father and by me, and you may know, and the world will be compelled to see, that what the Holy Spirit shall say through you is by my power and authority, and according to the will and command of the Father.

**6.** This is the consolation which Christ gives the disciples to strengthen their faith. They would have need of it in their coming work for him. This promise is a promise to his whole Church that, after his resurrection and ascension, the word and teaching of the Holy Spirit shall at all times, so long as Christ sits at the right hand of the Father, testify through the apostles and their successors, and that this testimony shall remain in the world, no matter who hears it or hears it not. For the disciples were not to be concerned as to who did or did not hear and receive their testimony, but they should know, because it is the testimony of the Holy Spirit, that he

would be present and working with them, to the end that some might believe. Nor should the world be able to hinder or prevent this, though it should rage against it with its hatred and persecution. Yea, even if no person on earth received their teaching, nevertheless the world should be reprov'd through the preaching of his Word. He says: The Holy Spirit will reprove the world, which will thus receive the judgment of its condemnation because it heard the preaching but nevertheless would not believe it and therefore has no excuse; as he said afterwards: "If I had not come and spoken unto them," and "had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin."

**7.** Now, when he says: "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning," he thus presents the apostles as special examples for all preachers and confirms their preaching so that all the world is bound to their word, to believe the same without contradiction, and is assured that everything the apostles teach and preach is the true doctrine and the preaching of the Holy Spirit, heard and received from himself; as ~~600~~1 John 1:1-2 testifies, saying, "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we have beheld and our hands have handled concerning the Word of life...declare we unto you." No other preachers on earth have testimony like that of the apostles; all others are commanded to follow in the footsteps of the apostles, to remain in the same doctrine, and to teach none other.

**8.** In addition, the true criterion is given by which the preaching of the Holy Spirit may be tested, when he says, "The Holy Spirit shall testify of me;" that is, he will preach nothing except concerning this Christ, not concerning Moses, Mohammed, or our own works. St. Peter says, in ~~400~~Acts 4:12, "and in none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved," except through this crucified Christ.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God."

## II. THE PROPHECY OF THE WORLD'S HATRED AND PERSECUTION OF BELIEVERS.

### A. HATRED AND PERSECUTION ANALYZED.

**9.** He pointed out clearly enough what should happen to them in the world as a result of their preaching. He mentions two sources of opposition to the Gospel, than which none could be stronger: One, that the preachers should be excommunicated and put to death; the other, that the persecutors would regard this as rendering a service to God. Who can withstand such persecution? or who will or can preach if those who testify of Christ shall be thus abusively treated and slain? Nevertheless, he has said that the Holy Spirit should testify of him and that they also should bear witness; and he assures them that their testimony shall not be effaced by this rage and persecution of the world. He gives them this assurance beforehand for the very purpose that they may know and be prepared against these same abuses.

**10.** Now, it is a strange and almost incredible thing to hear that not only the world shall oppose, with its bitter hatred and rage, Christ, the Son of God and its Savior, but that also the apostles themselves must be offended at such judgment of the world, Who could ever conceive that Christ and his Gospel should be received in this manner among his own people, to whom he had been promised by God, and from whom they were to expect nothing but that which is good, as indeed they have received from him? But here you are told that the Gospel is a teaching which, according to human judgment, gives nothing but offense; that is, men regard it, not only as a great error or folly and justly mocked and despised of the world, but as a thing unworthy to be heard or tolerated — to be condemned as if it were the very devil's most dangerous gift from hell.

**11.** The kingdom of Christ on earth shall so come that it must be apparent to all that it is not an earthly kingdom, after the manner of men. But the world shall refuse to recognize its nature. It shall not be called the kingdom of Christ or of God, but a destruction and subversion of all good government, both spiritual and temporal. It is well nigh inconceivable that the Son of God should be so received by those who are called the people of God and who are regarded as the most irreproachable in the world; for he speaks here not of open, malicious, wicked knaves and godless men, but



of those who are regarded as the most eminent, the wisest, the most holy, and, as he here says, the servants of God.

**12.** Hitherto no one has understood these words, nor can any one among the papists interpret the expression, “They shall excommunicate you” etc. They can say nothing else of this passage than that it is now an old and, in fact, a dead thing, referring to the Jews, who were a wicked and hardened people, that would not endure Christ and his apostles. It is hard to believe that even now there can be such wicked people on earth among Christians or in the Church as those who would excommunicate their brethren. But it cannot be Jews nor Turks who are meant; they have nothing to do with the Church. Nor has it ever been known that among the papists any one of them was excommunicated or persecuted or killed for the sake of the Gospel or the knowledge of Christ. Then, of course, this sermon does not concern them, and gives them neither instruction nor comfort.

**13.** But we, thank God, have been compelled, by our experience as preachers of the Gospel, to learn something of Christ’s meaning here and why he has spoken these things. We discover, in connection with the controversy concerning doctrine which we carry on with our adversary, that the papacy with its numerous adherents has been and still is composed of the tender, pious, holy people of whom Christ here speaks, who excommunicate his Christians for the Gospel’s sake and think that thereby they are rendering service to God. They certainly did this when by force they suppressed the Gospel and compelled submission, the Church accepting and obeying their mandates, and when, if anyone dared a single opposing word, he was promptly burned at the stake.

**14.** To exterminate the accursed heretics and enemies of God was called doing a holy work for God. In our time, also, they have shown this spirit in many examples and still show it in their treatment of numerous pious people whom they foully put to death, solely on account of their confession of faith in Christ and God, and will not consent to spare their lives even were they willing to recant. Therefore this passage does not need many annotations other than that we learn from it the difference between the true and the false Church, and thereby receive strength and comfort in our hour of a similar persecution. In view of this, let us briefly examine the words of the Gospel.

**15.** The words, “they shall excommunicate you,” are to be understood, as the Greek text clearly sets forth, in the sense of banishment and exclusion

from the synagogue or the assembly of God's people and virtual separation from all fellowship of the Church, the offender being committed to the devil, to be cast into the abyss of hell, never to have any part in the kingdom of God, of grace and of everlasting salvation. This is, indeed, a severe and terrible word, at which every pious heart must be greatly affrighted.

**16.** It is an incontrovertible truth that God has given such authority and power to the Church that whoever is excommunicated by it is truly excommunicated by God; that is, is placed under the wrath and curse of God and deprived of all fellowship with the saints, as Christ says in <sup><B187></sup>Matthew 18:17-18: "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," and again, "If he refuse to hear the church let him be unto thee as the gentile and the publican." What fate more terrible could happen to a man than to have the curse and imprecation of God and of all men pronounced upon him, and to be forever deprived of all comfort and salvation?

**17.** When, therefore, this ban and curse are pronounced, these other words of Christ must follow: "Whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service to God." This is the punishment and execution which the world thinks it must carry into effect upon those who are publicly excommunicated — that they should, without any mercy, be exterminated from the earth. This penalty is to apply especially to such as oppose God's people with a new teaching and faith; just as the apostles were accused of preaching against the Law, the temple, and the people of God. Indeed, God specifically commanded in the Law that those who are guilty in these matters should not be permitted to live, but should be condemned without mercy, and that no one should favor his nearest friend nor brother, his son nor daughter, if an offender. <sup><B138></sup>Deuteronomy 13:8. This, Christ says, shall also happen to you — you will be not only excommunicated by your own people and be put under the curse of God, but they will also carry out the sentence of punishment upon you as the enemies of God, and think that they can render no service more praiseworthy than to exterminate such accursed people, to the praise and glory of God. Thus, the disciples of Christ shall fare even as their Head and Lord himself fared; they shall be regarded as such evil, dangerous, corrupting, accursed people that everyone is in duty bound to assist in exterminating them from the earth; he who does this has performed a good work, one acceptable to God in heaven, and can render him no better obedience.

## **B. WHAT MOVED CHRIST TO PROPHECY OF THIS HATRED AND PERSECUTION.**

**18.** Behold, should not this persecution prove too heavy to be borne by the disciples? Christ tells them later that it shall be their lot to personally see and suffer such treatment, not only with reference to their Lord, in whom they believe, but also for themselves; that they, for Christ's sake, must be shamefully cursed and put to death by those who are called the people of God, and who possess the authority of the Church and command the honor and respect of men for not only doing right, but for serving God most zealously, as pious and holy people, ardently promoting the honor of God. What great tribulation must be in store for the rest of the little flock of Christ's Church, if these things happened in its beginning and first planting, when the Holy Spirit so powerfully manifested himself in miracles before the whole world! What better things could they later expect from idolatrous heathen, if they are to suffer these at the hands of their own brethren and friends, the Jewish people?

**19.** Christ's words, then, mean that the Church is to be established in a most wonderful manner, beyond and inconsistent with all human understanding. Who has ever heard that this is to be the way in which God will introduce Christ's kingdom upon earth, establish his Word in all places, and gather his Church, if it is to begin in such an inconsistent manner and to meet with such opposition that the dear apostles must, in shame and disgrace, yield up their lives and not they, with their few followers, but their adversaries, bear the name of God's people and God's Church? This ought to be sufficient to drive out of the hearts of the disciples the erroneous delusion they had held concerning the temporal kingdom of Christ, and to teach them not to expect from it worldly and temporal good and honor and power and peace, but to perceive that he meant to give them something else, since he permitted them to suffer shame and death.

**20.** With this word of consolation, Christ prepares his disciples, and future Christians, assuring them that the Holy Spirit will testify of him in the face of so much discouragement, as was greatly needed. That the disciples could understand his words, must be due to the revelation of the Holy Spirit. How otherwise could they believe that this crucified, accursed and condemned Jesus, represented by his disciples and pupils, could be the true Son of God, the Lord of life and of eternal glory?

**21.** There is presented to us in this text a picture of the reception accorded this kingdom of Christ in the perverse, opposing kingdom of the world, concerning which prophesied in the earliest promise of his Word — the promise in which the Church had its first beginnings — where God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise (crush) thy head, but thou shalt bruise his heel.” <sup>GENESIS</sup>Genesis 3:15. This enmity, then, must continue in the world, an unending enmity and contest; as soon as Christ comes, teaching the Word, he meets the serpent, which immediately becomes venomous and at every opportunity attacks and bites with its poisonous fangs, for it fears the loss of its head. But in spite of all efforts, it has not yet gained anything and is still under the feet of the Seed of the woman, who tramples on its head, until its venom and wrath against him shall have been spent in vain and its power utterly destroyed.

**22.** We have the comfort of this victory of Christ — that he maintains his Church against the wrath and power of the devil; but in the meantime we must endure such stabs and cruel wounds from the devil as are necessarily painful to our flesh and blood. The hardest part is that we must see and suffer all these things from those who call themselves the people of God and the Christian Church. We must learn to accept these things calmly, for neither Christ nor the saints have fared better.

**23.** It was also a bitter and hard thing for our first parent, Adam, to learn to understand the fulfillment in his own children of this same truth, “I will put enmity between thee” etc., when his first born and God-given son murdered his own brother because of his offering to God and his obedience to him. The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and others who, for the time being, were the true Church, had to pass through the same experience when brothers who had learned from the same father one and the same faith, Word and worship of God, became enemies and one received persecution at the hands of the other. We ought not to be surprised, then, if a similar experience must be ours, not alone at the hands of the papists, from whom we have already received condemnation and whose disposition toward us is plainly apparent; but also at the hands of those who are still among us as evangelical Christians, and who yet are not upright.

## C. THE CAUSE OF THIS HATRED AND PERSECUTION.

**24.** This is the first part of this Gospel and prophecy of Christ. The second part now follows, explaining how it is that such worthy people, the best, the wisest and most holy among God's children, who earnestly seek to serve and honor God, should so bitterly and mercilessly persecute Christ and his people.

*“These things will they do unto you,  
because they have not known the Father nor me.”*

**25.** There you have the reason. Christ tells what moves them to such hatred and persecution of Christians. It is, he says, because you preach concerning me, whom they do not know; for they jealously regard their own office of teaching and preaching in the capacity of chief-priest and scribe (and in this day of pope, bishop, etc.) repudiating all doctrine that differs from that of Moses and the Law. They rigidly follow the command of Moses in <sup><613></sup>Deuteronomy 13:6ff. How, then, shall the apostles be permitted to promulgate this utterly new doctrine concerning an unknown Messiah, one, too, whom they reject as a false prophet, yea, whom they have crucified as a deceiver and blasphemer? Who, in opposition to all recognized authority and intelligence, would acknowledge as Christ this executed victim? These so-called people of God boast to the apostles of their authority, saying, in <sup><413></sup>Acts 5:28: “Did we not straitly charge you not to teach in this name?”

**26.** That they do not know this Christ is true without a doubt. Their own confession and deeds prove it. It is plainly evident in what high esteem they hold themselves as being the people of God, who possess the Law, and the promise, the priesthood and worship of God (even as our people possess the Scriptures, baptism, the sacrament and the name of Christ); yet they are blind and without the true knowledge of God and of Christ, and consequently have become hardened, opposing God and his Son with their acts of ban and murder, under the very appearance and with the boast of thereby serving God. But Christ strengthens and comforts his own people that they may not fear harsh judgment, nor be intimidated by jealous authority from preaching and confession, but may say to their adversaries as the apostles answered the chief-priests and the council at Jerusalem, in <sup><413></sup>Acts 5:29: “We must obey God rather than men.”

**27.** In this connection Christ fixes the standard of judgment and points out the difference between the true and the false Church. The Church is not to

be judged by name and external appearance; but insight must be had and the identifying mark be forthcoming, by which the holy Church and the true people and servants of God may be recognized. Reason and human wisdom cannot furnish the necessary qualifications for the true Church. The actual test is in ascertaining who have the real knowledge of Christ and who have it not. Judgment cannot be passed in this case according to mere external appearance and name, according to the office and authority and power of the Church; in all these externals the Jews excelled the apostles and the papacy excels us by far.

**28.** Accordingly, we concede to the papacy that they sit in the true Church, possessing the office instituted by Christ and inherited from the apostles, to teach, baptize, administer the sacrament, absolve, ordain, etc., just as the Jews sat in their synagogues or assemblies and were the regularly established priesthood and authority of the Church. We admit all this and do not attack the office, although they are not willing to admit as much for us; yea, we confess that we have received these things from them, even as Christ by birth descended from the Jews and the apostles obtained the Scriptures from them.

**29.** In view of these prerogatives, they make their perverse boast against us and censure and curse us as obstinate and recreant apostates and enemies of the Church. It is unpleasant to suffer such reproach, and for this reason the devil easily terrifies the hearts of some of the ignorant and overwhelms men with the thought: Alas! the Church has pronounced the ban and it really possesses the office; this is certainly a thing not to be made light of, for Christ says in ~~DISB~~ Matthew 18:18: "What things soever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven." Therefore whom the Church excommunicates is undoubtedly also condemned by God. Most assuredly they do not excommunicate in the name of the devil, nor of the pope, but in the name of God the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, by the authority of Christ etc., embellishing the ceremony with appropriate and high-sounding and solemn words.

**30.** It is necessary to a thorough understanding of the matter that we understand what Christ here says concerning the two Churches: One is the Church which is not recognized by the world, but is robbed of its name and exiled; the other, the Church that has the name and honor but persecutes the small flock of believers. Thus we have the opposing situations: The Church which is denied the name is the true Church, whilst the other is not

the reality, though it may occupy the seat of authority and power, and possess and perform all the offices conceded to be offices and marks of the holy Church and yet we are obliged to suffer its ban and judgment.

**31.** The reason for the difference in the two Churches is contained in Christ's saying: "Because they have not known the Father nor me;" that is, the false Church regards itself as superior to the teachings of Christ, when a knowledge of Christ is the very basis of distinction between the true and false Church. It is not enough merely to have the name and the office of the Church since these could be unlawfully assumed and abused; the second commandment and the second petition of the Lord's Prayer indicate that the name of God is often abused, not hallowed but blasphemed and dishonored. Hence, we must not be too ready to endorse the declaration: I say or do this in the name of God or of Christ, and at the command and by the authority of the Church. But we should reply thus: I accept the name of God and of the Church as they are dear and precious to me; but I do not concede to you that in this name you should prescribe and sell whatever you please.

**32.** Thus we say to the papists: We grant you, indeed, the name and office, and regard these as holy and precious, for the office is not yours, but has been established by Christ and given to the Church without regard for and distinction of the persons who occupy it. Therefore, whatever is exercised through this office as the institution of Christ, and in his name and that of the Church, is at all times right and proper, even though ungodly and unbelieving men may participate. We must distinguish between the office and the person exercising it, between rightful use and abuse. The name of God and of Christ is always holy in itself; but it may be abused and blasphemed. So also, the office of the Church is holy and precious, but the person occupying it may be accursed and belong to the devil. Therefore, we cannot decide according to the office who are true or false Christians, and which is the true or false Church.

**33.** But the basis of distinction shall be: to know Christ or not to know Christ; that is, to know the doctrine and faith of Christ and to confess him. It is evident, as supported by Christ's own statement, that some know neither him nor the Father; it is determined by him that they are not the Church of Christ, rather that those constitute the Church who bear the name of Christ and have his truth, yet are persecuted by the others. Under authority of this conclusion, Christians are to be undaunted; they are not to

be concerned even though they may be denounced as heretics and be cursed, but are to regard it as a comforting sign that they are the few who belong to Christ, when they are excommunicated by the majority in power. For excommunication certainly is not exercised among members of the false Church for the sake of the knowledge of Christ and of faith; their policy is to stand approved and unchastized, yea, they dare even to denounce crowned authority to the extent of curse and ban, protected as they are by the name and sanctity of the Church.

**34.** Now, what does it mean to know Christ and the Father? The papists, forsooth, boast of such a knowledge, even as the Jews boasted of being able to recognize the Messiah when he should come, Indeed, who should so well know the Messiah as the same Jews who possessed his Law and promises, his temple, priesthood etc., and who worshiped the true God, creator of heaven and earth and promisor of the Messiah? But here you learn that an intellectual knowledge of God is not sufficient — the Law and temple service cannot avail; he who wishes to know God truly, must know him in this Christ, that is, in the Word, in the promises which the Scriptures and the prophets have spoken concerning him. The teaching and preaching of the Gospel is nothing else than that Christ is the Son of God, sent by the Father as a sacrifice and ransom for the sin of the world, by his own blood, that he might appease the wrath of God and effect reconciliation for us, redeeming us from sin and death and securing for us righteousness and everlasting life. It must follow, then, that no one, by his own work and holiness can atone for his sins or appease the wrath of God, and that there is no other way to attain the grace of God and eternal life than by the faith which thus apprehends Christ.

**35.** This teaching points out the true Christ and the real knowledge of him. He who thus knows Christ, knows the Father also; for the knowledge of Christ teaches him that, for the sake of his Son, God will be gracious to us and will save us, that no one shall come to God except through him. who is the bearer of our sins and is our mercy-seat, and that all this and nothing else is the eternal counsel, desire and will of God the Father.

**36.** This knowledge is the article of faith by which we become Christians, and it is the foundation of our salvation. Whenever, therefore, we have the knowledge of Christ, we must cease trusting and boasting in self-righteousness, in works and in worship of the God of the Jews merely performed according to the Law, and we must place no confidence in all



the trumpery of the papal self-ordained juggling and baubles; for if Christ alone shall bear my sins, I cannot at the same time atone for them by my own works and my own pretended worthiness.

**37.** The former Jewish saints would not, nor will our present papists, accept nor believe this preaching of Christ; they testify, then, by their own deeds that they do not know Christ nor the Father who sent him. The Jews meanwhile set up their own God, who has regard for their holiness — a holiness consisting in the Law, the priesthood and temple-service — and they set up a Christ who, when he comes, will be highly pleased with such holiness and, because of it, promote them to positions of great honor and glory before the whole world. If they hear the apostles preach that no one can be justified before God by the works of the Law, and that no other name is given whereby we can be saved than that of this crucified Christ, they will not suffer the doctrine, but must bitterly persecute its advocates, pronouncing the ban and condemning and slaying the apostles and the Christians.

**38.** Even so do the papists; they will not endure the teaching that we, for Christ's sake and not by our own works, may be accounted righteous before God and be saved. Even though they retain the name of Christ and of faith, yet they rob Christ of his work and power, justify the erroneous doctrine of human merit, and admit only that faith and Christ are indeed of some help if love and good works be present. This means simply that Christ does not count so much as our own works; but whatever merit he confers is because of our works, as they teach in the schools: *Propter unum quodque tale* etc., and as they publicly say: Faith, which must always believe in Christ, is useless, void, yea, dead, does not avail, if it is not clothed and made alive by love, which is the soul and life of faith. They say that therefore Christ and faith may be found even in a person who is impenitent and lives openly in mortal sin. This is nothing else than to make Christ a mere empty husk or container and to make out of works the grain and the gold; to regard Christ as a dead body but our works as the soul. When works are added to faith, they say, faith becomes a living body, a full container. This is a shameful and blasphemous interpretation of Christ, that his merit and power must be dependent upon our works, that he must receive his ability from them, and become a beggar of us for that which he should give us.

**39.** From these two convictions — that they do not know him and that they persecute and slay his advocates — Christ now passes the judgment that the so-called Church is not the Church. He then concludes that with their false doctrines and persecutions they are both liars and murderers of God and of Christ and of all his saints.

**40.** From the analysis given, you may decide for yourself in which group you are to be found; for you must be on one side or the other, and it is useless to wait for human council in this matter. It has already been unalterably determined that the two divisions can never agree. The larger body, which has the recognized authority, will always persecute the minority, even to the extent of excommunication and murder, as practiced from the beginning. Those who know Christ — the true Christians — will accept Christ's classification and be numbered with the minority, who have the Word and the knowledge of Christ, and they will suffer persecution for the faith rather than, for the sake of the friendship and honor of this world, to belong to those who, condemned by Christ, are the bitterest foes of God and of the Church, and who cannot see the kingdom of God, nor be saved.

**41.** In this article of faith, distinction must be made between the true Church and the false; for it is the command of God and of Christ that one shall not be confused with the other. Therefore, we must separate ourselves from the papal Church, regardless of the fact that they trust in their Church authority and condemn us as apostates.

**42.** If they excommunicate and persecute us because of our evangelical preaching and our knowledge of Christ, we already have the decision of Christ that they are not the true Church, and their office and all the authority of which they boast cannot avail against us; that rather our teaching and judgments against them shall avail before God in heaven. We are certain, by reason of the test which Christ here applies, that the true Church is with the few who know Christ and are united in doctrine, faith and confession of him. And where the true Church is and abides, there remain, also, the offices of the Church, the sacraments, the keys and all things given to it by Christ; it needs neither to ask nor to receive them from pope or council. In the true Church, not only is the office pure in itself, but those who exercise it use it lawfully.

**43.** We admit that the papists also exercise the appointed offices of the Church, baptize, administer the sacrament etc., when they observe these things as the institution of Christ, in the name of Christ and by virtue of his

command (just as in the Church we must regard as right and efficacious the offices of the Church and baptism administered by heretics), yet if they attempt to pervert the right use of these offices by exercising them against us, we may, by virtue of the judgment of Christ, declare their action void and regard themselves as apostates of the Church of Christ.

# PENTECOST, OR THE FESTIVAL OF THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

This sermon, which is not found in edition c., appeared in three pamphlet editions in 1522 and 1523. The title of one is: "A sermon on Pentecost, Martin Luther, Wittenberg, 1523." Compare the 15th sermon in the 8th vol. of the Erlangen edition with its first part.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:269; Walch Edition, 11:1379; St. Louis Walch, 11:1018.

*Text: <sup>41423</sup>John 14:23-31 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my Word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.*

*These things have I spoken unto you, while yet abiding with you. But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you. Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful. Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe. I will no more speak much with you, for the prince of the world cometh: and he hath 'nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.*

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### SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL:

1. From the passage, “If a man love me, he will keep my word,” every one may consider and conclude whether he believes or not; for love and faith cannot be separated from one another.
2. In that, Christ says, “We will come unto him, and make our abode with him,” e see, that believers are the temple of God. and anointed by the Holy Spirit, as is written in ~~4169~~1 Corinthians 6:19; ~~1918~~Psalm 45:8; ~~4121~~1 John 2:20-27.

- 3.** Christ's Word is not carnal, but the power of God, as Paul says to the Romans "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." ~~6016~~ Romans 1:16.
- 4.** The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, teaches and not the external preaching, which is only a handmaiden of the Spirit.
- 5.** Therefore many papists dream that the Holy Spirit will reveal many more things to the world, besides the Gospel of Christ; but the Lord says here: "He will bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you."
- 6.** The peace that comes to us who are justified by faith in Christ, the world and the prince of the world must attack.

But since the Lord says: "And now I have told you, before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe," is in other words: when I go away temptations and persecutions will be your lot, then these my words shall be your comfort.

- 1.** Before we explain this Gospel lesson we must first say a few words about the festival of Pentecost and its history, or the event we celebrate on this day. St. Luke records it in the Acts of the Apostles, second chapter, verses 1-41, in the following words: "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
- 2.** "Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galilaeans? And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judaea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our tongues

the mighty works of God. And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

But others mocking said, They are filled with new wine.

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spoke forth unto them, saying:

**3.** “Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is but the third hour of the day; but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel:

And it shall be in the last days, saith God I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams: Yea and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days Will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above, And signs on the earth beneath; Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the day of the Lord come, That great and notable day: And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

**4.** “Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David saith concerning him,

I beheld the Lord always before my face; For he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou madest known unto me the ways of life; Thou shalt make me full of gladness with thy countenance.

**5.** “Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne; he foreseeing this spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses.

**6.** “Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the. Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself,

*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.*

Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him booth Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.

**7.** “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. They then that received his Word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

**8.** This is the history of the day. The festival we call Pentecost originated thus: When God led the children of Israel out of Egypt, he had them to celebrate the Easter festival the same night, and commanded them to celebrate it annually, as a memorial of their exodus out of Egypt. Counting from that day, they journeyed in the desert for fifty days, to Mount Sinai, where the Law was given to them by God, through Moses. Hence they celebrated the festival we call Pentecost. For the little word “Pentecost” is derived from the Greek *Pentecostes*, signifying the fiftieth day; the Saxons say *Pingsten*. It is to this festival that Luke has reference. When the fifty



days after Easter were past and the disciples had celebrated the event of God's having given the people the Law on Mount Sinai, then the Holy Spirit came and gave them a different law. We celebrate the festival, not because of the old, but because of the new, event, because of the sending of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we must offer a little explanation and show the difference between our Pentecost and the Jews' Pentecost.

**9.** In the first place, the Jews celebrated the festival because the Law had been given them in writing; but we ought to celebrate it because God's Law is given to us spiritually. St. Paul aims to make this plain. In the second Epistle to the Corinthians, chapters 3 and 4, he speaks of two kinds of preaching. And just as there are two kinds of preaching, so also there are two kinds of people.

**10.** First, the written Law is that which God has commanded and embodied in writing. It is called "written" because it proceeds no further and does not enter the heart, nor do any works follow, except mere hypocritical works; the Law has only an outward significance. The people also, in this sense, remain altogether written. Since the Law has existed only in writing, in letters, it has been dead, and its influence has been deadening. It has ruled a dead people, for the hearts were dead which did not willingly do God's commandment. If every man were allowed his own free will, to do as he pleased without fear of punishment, none would be found who would not rejoice in exemption from the Law.

**11.** Man's nature is to follow his desire, but he is compelled to do otherwise. He thinks: God will punish me and cast me into hell if I do not keep his commandment. Since it is his nature to obey reluctantly and with displeasure when his will is opposed, man becomes hostile to God because of the penalty; he knows that he is a sinner and not in harmony with God, that he does not love God, yea, rather he would there were no God. Such hatred of God is hidden in the heart, no matter how finely nature adorns herself outwardly. Hence we see that the Law, as long as it is merely written, a Law in letters, makes no one righteous, for it enters not the heart. On this theme we have preached and written a great deal.

**12.** The other Law is spiritual. It is not written with pen and ink, nor spoken by word of mouth like the Law on the stone tablets handled by Moses, but, as we see in Luke's narrative, the Holy Spirit falls from heaven and fills all the company assembled together, manifesting itself upon them in cloven and fiery tongues, causing them to preach boldly and with a

power they had not before, so that all the people were pricked in their hearts and marveled. The Holy Spirit streams into the heart and makes a new man, one who now loves God and gladly does his will. Such is the Holy Spirit himself, or rather the work he does in the heart. He writes in fiery flame on the heart and makes it alive, causing it to find expression in fiery tongue and active hand; a new man is made, who is conscious of a reason, heart and mind unlike he formerly had. Everything is now alive: He has a live reason; he has light and courage and a heart which burns with love and delights in whatever pleases God. This is the real difference between the written and the spiritual laws of God; and such is the work of the Holy Spirit.

**13.** Therefore, the great art is to preach aright concerning the Holy Spirit. Hitherto it has been preached concerning him that he alone produced and inspired what the councils decreed and what the pope commanded in ecclesiastical law, whereas the whole papistical law is only outward in effect, commands only outward observances and rules in material things. Their claim is simply nonsensical, the reverse of their claim being true. For they turn the work of the Holy Spirit into a written, dead law, whereas it is essentially a spiritual and living law, and they make of him a Moses and a human weakling. The reason is, they do not know what the Holy Spirit is, why he is given, and what his office is. Therefore let us learn and understand well what he is, in order that we may define his office.

**14.** Here you learn that he comes down and fills the disciples, who before sat in sorrow and fear, and renders their tongues fiery and cloven; he so kindles them that they grow bold and preach freely to the multitude, and fear nothing. You see very clearly that the Holy Spirit's office is not to write books nor to make laws, but freely to abrogate them; and that he is a God who writes only in the heart, who makes it burn, and creates new courage, so that man grows happy before God, filled with love toward *him*, and with a happy heart serves the people. When the office of the Holy Spirit is thus represented, it is rightly preached. Do not believe those who picture it otherwise. Now, you perceive that when he comes in this manner he abolishes the letter of the Law and desires to liberate the people from their sins and from the Law; the latter is no more needed, for he, himself, rules inwardly in the heart. They who oppose this doctrine, however, criticize him for compelling the people, like Moses, and above all for making new laws.

**15.** What means does he use and what skill does he employ thus to change the heart and make it new? He employs the proclamation and preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ; this Christ declares in ~~4153~~ John 15:26: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me.” Now, we have often heard that the substance of the Gospel is this: God has proclaimed to everyone that no man can become just by means of the Law, -but rather is thereby condemned. That therefore he has sent down his dear Son to shed his blood and die, since men could not, by their own power and works, cancel their sins and get rid of them.

**16.** But in addition to what is thus preached, something else is needed; for even though I hear the preaching, I do not at once believe Therefore, God adds his Holy Spirit, who impresses this preaching upon the heart, so that it abides there and lives, It is a faithful saying that Christ has accomplished everything, has removed sin and overcome every enemy, so that through him we are lords over all things. But the treasure lies yet in one pile; it is not yet distributed nor Invested. Consequently, if we are to possess it, the Holy Spirit must come and teach our hearts to believe and say: I, too, am one of those who are to have this treasure. When we feel that God has thus helped us and given the treasure to us, everything goes well, and it cannot be otherwise than that man’s heart rejoices in God and lifts itself up, saying Dear Father, if it is thy will to show toward me such great love and faithfulness, which I cannot fully fathom, then will I also love thee with all my heart and be joyful, and cheerfully do what pleases thee. Thus, the heart does not now look at God with evil eyes, does not imagine he will cast us into hell, as it did before the Holy Spirit came, when it felt none of the goodness, love, or faithfulness of God, but only his wrath and disfavor. Since the Holy Spirit has impressed upon the heart that God is kind and gracious toward it, it believes that God can no more be angry, and grows so happy and so bold that, for God’s sake, it performs and suffers everything possible to per form and to suffer.

**17.** In this way you are to become acquainted with the Holy Spirit. You may know to what purpose he is given and what his office is, namely, to invest the treasure — Christ and all he has, who is given to us and proclaimed by the Gospel; the Holy Spirit will give him into your heart so that he may be your own. When he has accomplished this, and when you feel Christ in your heart, you will be constrained to cry: Is this the idea, that my works are of no avail but the Holy Spirit must perform all? Why

then do I punish myself with works and the Law? Thus all human works and laws vanish, yea, even the law of Moses; for such a being is superior to all law. The Holy Spirit teaches man better than all the books; he teaches him to understand the Scriptures better than he can understand from the teaching of any other; and of his own accord he does everything God wills he should, so the Law dare make no demands upon him.

**18.** Therefore, we need books only for the purpose of demonstrating that it is written even as the Holy Spirit teaches. We must not confine faith to ourselves, but must let it break forth into action; and to confirm and establish it, we must have the Scriptures. Therefore, be very careful to consider the Holy Spirit in no way a law-maker, but as one who abrogates the Law and frees man, so that no written letter remains, or that it remains only for the sake of preaching.

**19.** In all this, however, we ought to exercise sense and wisdom, understanding that a man receiving the Holy Spirit is not at once perfect, insensible to the Law and to sin, pure in all respects. For we do not preach, concerning the Holy Spirit and his office, that he has completed and finished his work, but that he has only begun it and is now constantly engaged in it, and that he is ceaselessly progressing; consequently, you will not find a man who is without sin and without sorrow, full of righteousness and full of joy, and so perfect that he is never needlessly concerned about anything, and who serves everybody freely. The Scriptures indeed tell us that the office of the Holy Spirit is to redeem from sin and fear; but that does not say that this is altogether accomplished.

**20.** Therefore, a Christian must at times feel his sin and the fear of death, and be concerned about all else that troubles a sinner. Unbelievers may be sunk so deeply in their sins that they do not feel them; but believers do feel them, yet they possess a helper, the Holy Spirit, who comforts and strengthens them. However, if he had finished and made an end of his office, they would experience none of these fears.

**21.** Therefore, I say that we must be wise and take care that we do not boast of the Holy Spirit too confidently and joyously, that we may not become too secure and imagine that we are perfect in all respects. For a pious Christian still is flesh and blood like other people, but he fights against sin and evil lust and feels what he would rather not feel —

<8715 Romans 7:15ff. The unbelievers are indifferent and make no such fight.

**22.** It makes no difference that we feel evil lusts if we only battle against them. Therefore, the Christian must not judge according to his feelings, believing because of them that he is lost, but he must labor all his life with the remaining sin of which he is conscious and must permit the Holy Spirit to work, groaning without ceasing, to be rid of sin. Such groaning never ceases in believers, but is more profound that can be uttered, as St. Paul declares to the ~~the~~ Romans 8:26. But there is a precious listener, the Holy Spirit himself, who deeply feels our longing and also comforts our consciences.

**23.** The two must always be mingled, in our feelings — the Holy Spirit and our sin and imperfection. Our case must be like that of a sick man who is in the hands of the physician; presently he will be better. Therefore let no one think: Such a one possesses the Holy Spirit, consequently he must be altogether strong, without infirmities, and do only precious works. No, not yet. The Gospel is not a proclamation for everybody. It is a proclamation exceedingly gracious, but a coarse, hard heart may hear it without receiving any good; rather are such made more audacious and careless, imagining they need not war against the flesh, because they do not feel their sin and misery. The Holy Spirit is given to none except to those who are in sorrow and fear; in them it produces good fruit. This gift is so precious and worthy that God does not cast it before dogs. Though the unrepentant discover it themselves, hearing it preached, they devour it and know not what they devour. The hearts which receive it with profit are such as feel their evil lust but are unable to escape from it. There must be struggling if the Holy Spirit is to abide in the heart, and let no one dare think it will be otherwise.

**24.** This is what we find in the narrative before us. The dear disciples sat in fear and terror, and still uncomforted and without courage. They were filled with unbelief and ready to despair, and it was with much effort and labor that Christ cheered and established them again. Their only difficulty was, they were afraid the heavens would fall upon them, and the Lord himself could scarcely comfort them until he said to them 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon you from heaven' he will imprint me upon your hearts so that you will know me, and through me the Father; then will your heart rejoice. And so it happened. When the Holy Spirit came they were comforted and strengthened and full of joy.

**25.** Thus I have described to you the Holy Spirit. Now let us see in this Gospel lesson what we have discussed so far. Christ declares:

*“If a man love me, he will keep my Word: and my Father will love him.”*

**26.** This text raises a question’ Why does Christ speak as though we must be first to love, when it is certain that the opposite is true, that God must first love us? This question I have before solved and in the following manner’ Several passages read as if we begin the work and others as if God begins it. Now, God must always lay the first stone. He makes the start, and receives me into his grace, so that I stand in his favor. But it does not follow that I at once feel his work of grace, although it is already there.

**27.** We saw that when the Holy Spirit came, he came with a rushing sound, even frightening the disciples until they knew not whither to go. But when he comes in this manner he is very near, and then he kindles the heart so that it feels love; when it feels love, it also begins to love. This is what Christ means. He is speaking not of our beginning the work, but of what we afterwards feel, and of the love that follows feeling. The import of his words is’ If a man love me, he will keep my Word, and my Father will love him; that is, when I have caused a man to feel my love, he will begin to love me in return etc. Therefore, the words refer to the realization of love, not to the beginning of love. Now, if a man love me, says Christ, he will keep my Word, and my Father will love him, that is, he will feel that he loves me and will do everything that pleases me, and he will perceive how I and the Father come to him and dwell with him. And, furthermore, Christ declares:

*“He that loveth me not keepeth not my Words.”*

**28.** Here we see it is plainly declared that they who have not the Holy Spirit do not keep one letter of the Law. Therefore I say, if all the preachers arise and preach the Law, attempting thereby to make people godly, what do they accomplish? They accomplish nothing. For, briefly, there must first be love in the heart, otherwise nothing is accomplished in keeping the Law. Do you accordingly teach first of all how to obtain love, then men will be able to keep the Law. The Holy Spirit is given, as we have stated, for the purpose of abrogating the Law. Hence, Christians are not to be governed by laws. Those, however, who are not Christians must be controlled by laws, and be subjected to executioners and governed by the sword, in order that they be compelled not to do evil with the hand,

although they are thereby not made better in heart. Now, Christ does not want us to keep his Word with outward observance, like a finite law, but with the heart, with joy and love. But who will give us this joy and love? The Holy Spirit gives it and no one else, Now, the next words read:

“These things have I spoken unto you, while yet abiding with you. But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.”

**29.** Here Christ calls the Holy Spirit a Comforter. If the Holy Spirit is to retain this name he must exercise his office only where there is no comfort and where comfort is needed and desired. Consequently, he cannot comfort the hard heads and audacious hearts, for these have not tasted of struggle and despair, and have never been in distress; he can accomplish nothing except with sorrowful, comfortless and discouraged hearts.

**30.** What, however, is he to do? He is to teach and bring to remembrance. Here our learned men have come and declared: All that we are to believe, to do and omit to do is not in the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit is to teach us many things which Christ did not teach. Such declaration is altogether contrary to the Holy Spirit, and even contradictory. For Christ says: “He shall teach you and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you;” that is, he will beautifully explain (glorify) what I now say to you, better than I am able to teach with words, so that you will need no further words. You are to know it now beforehand and have a sign, so that when it comes to pass you may believe it the more fully. Now the learned men declare, He shall not say what Christ says. How can we suffer the pope and the bishop to proceed with their declaration that the Holy Spirit teaches what they determine? We here see that Christ wants to establish his Word with the Holy Spirit, who is with us, for the purpose of bearing witness to Christ and of reviving in our hearts what he has taught, that we may understand and believe it. Therefore, wherever anyone teaches otherwise than the things Christ taught, or wants to direct you to another comfort than he speaks of, do not believe that it is the Holy Spirit. Now, the Lord says furthermore:

*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you:  
not as the world giveth give I unto you.”*



**31.** Here we see clearly the Holy Spirit's office, that he is bestowed only upon those who are sunk in affliction — and misery. For this is the import of the words when he declares: You must not think that I give you peace such as the world gives. The world considers that peace means the removal of trouble or affliction. For instance, when one is in poverty he esteems it a great affliction, and seeks to be rid of it, fancying that riches means peace. Likewise, one who feels death near thinks: If I could live, and vanquish death, I would have peace.

**32.** Such peace, however, Christ does not give. He allows the affliction to remain and to oppress; yet he employs different tactics to bestow peace: he changes the heart, removing it from the affliction, not the affliction from the heart. This is the way it is done: When you are sunk in affliction he so turns your mind from it and gives you such consolation that you imagine you are dwelling in a garden of roses. Thus, in the midst of dying is life; and in the midst of trouble, peace and joy. This is why it is, as St. Paul declares to the ~~<1017>~~Philippians 4:7, a peace which passeth all understanding. This art no man can achieve with his understanding, nor fathom with his senses. Christ alone bestows it. He says to you' Just pass down into the valley of death; there shall the Holy Spirit come to you and make you so courageous and joyful that you will not know death, yea, it will be sweet to you. The reason for this peace is that the Holy Spirit teaches one to know the great goodness and grace of Christ, making those who believe in him lords, like himself, over sin, death and all things. Therefore a Christian must possess the ability to be joyful in good or in evil fortune, whether it be sweet or bitter. Some possess it in greater degree than others, for we are not all perfect, yea, none will become so perfect as never again to experience a struggle.

**33.** I speak of the office of the Holy Spirit, what he is to do and how he is constantly to continue what he has begun, so that you may now begin to despise death. But you must continue and abide in this confidence, and work on, that you may constantly have less fear. You are not to be discouraged though you still shudder at death, and are not to think: I am told that the Holy Spirit makes the heart joyful so that it does not feel death, yet I am frightened at it; consequently I see plainly he is not in me. Other thoughts of this kind may come to your mind. All these thoughts we must drive away, despising them. For the Holy Spirit's office is not one that is finished, but is in process of fulfillment from day to day, and continues as long as we live, in such manner that sorrow is ever mingled



with peace. If there were no sorrow, the Holy Spirit could not comfort us. The closing words of this Gospel lesson are especially comforting:

*“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.”*

**34.** These words give further hint of the work of the Holy Spirit. Again we see with whom the Holy Spirit deals, namely, they who are filled with sorrow and affliction. Because of the fear and trouble which oppressed the disciples, Christ made effort to comfort them, although the moment when they should fully realize his comfort had not yet arrived. In effect he declares ‘ I say to you now, with words, that you are not to be troubled, but this does not as yet help you; you do not now rejoice. I tell it to you, however, that when the Holy Spirit comes and comforts you, then you may realize my comfort and be glad. He concludes by declaring:

*“Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If ye loved me, y would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe.”*

**35.** I am human, he says, and shall now die; but I come to you again, through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if you loved me you would rejoice that I go to the Father. To love Christ is to love in him the humanity obedient to the sacred cross and which speaks only of suffering. No one can do this until the Holy Spirit comes; he alone creates this love in the heart. Christ’s meaning is ‘ When the Holy Spirit comes you will be glad that I went to the Father. Now you cannot understand my sacrifice and therefore you cannot appreciate it; but when I go to the Father, you will love me because I have ascended to the Father and have given you the great blessing of the Holy Spirit. My suffering and death will be comforting to you when you see that I live again and that! come to help you and to make you partakers of all the treasures I have. Therefore, we Christians are to become lords over all God’s creation, and to boastfully say of Christ: My Lord Christ, who takes my part, is lord over all things; what shall harm me? For the Father in his infinite power has made him lord over all creatures, and all things must lie at his feet.

**36.** Thus you perceive how this Gospel lesson constantly refers to the office of the Holy Spirit, in order that we may rightly understand that he is given to us to comfort us and to bring us to love Christ. See, then, that you

do not permit yourself to be deceived and to receive other teaching concerning the Holy Spirit than you have here heard.

# PENTECOST, OR FESTIVAL OF THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

## SECOND SERMON. ~~1523~~ JOHN 14:23-31.

This sermon, which is also not found in edition c., appeared in pamphlet form under the title: “A sermon on Pentecost, the Gospel of John 14. ‘He that loveth me, keepeth my Word.’ Preached by Dr. Martin Luther, Wittenberg,” (1522). Another edition was issued in 1523.

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# I. THE INTRODUCTION TO THIS SERMON OF COMFORT, TREATING OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

**1.** In today's Gospel Christ says plainly and bluntly: "If a man love me, he will keep my Word; he that loveth me not, keepeth not my words." The text stands there clear; whoever loves God keeps his commandments, and on the contrary, whoever does not love God, does not keep his commandments. Christ here simply casts out of his kingdom all who do not keep his commandments with pleasure and love. Let us thoroughly understand this. It is briefly pictured to us here who are and who are not Christians. No one is a Christian unless he keeps Christ's Word, as he here says. And no one can keep it, unless he first loves God. God had tested the plan of making people godly by means of force. For, in olden times, God dealt severely with his people, so that they were forced to keep his Word, and not to blaspheme God; to observe the Sabbath and to obey all the other commandments. To this end he threatened to afflict and punish them,

severely, as is written in ~~CR34~~ Leviticus 26:14ff. Thus, God from without coerced the people to be pious by means of the fear of punishment; but their hearts were not obedient. The result is the same in the present *day*. Therefore, to keep God's Word is a thing that can be accomplished only by divine love.

**2.** Accordingly, in the New Testament, God ceased to punish and only administered the Word; for the means must yet come to the point that the divine love be present. Neither the stake, nor bulls nor bans help in the least. Where this love is not, all amounts to nothing, do as we will. If one were to take all the swords in the world in his hands, he would not bring a single heretic to the faith. The people may, indeed, appear to accept the Word, but in their inward hearts there is no faith. Hence God has abolished the sword in this matter and his plan of salvation aims to possess the heart. The bishops are commanded first to take the heart captive, so that it may find love and pleasure in the Word, and the work is then accomplished. Hence, he who wishes to be a true bishop, arranges all his administration to the end that he may win souls and develop a love for and a delight in God's Word and be able to oppose the false babblers with sound teaching, and to stop their mouths. ~~CR34~~ Titus 1:2. This will never be accomplished by means of commandments, bans and bulls.

**3.** Thus the true spiritual leaders fight. They strike Satan dead and rescue souls from him; for to pierce Satan to death is nothing else than to rescue from him a human being whom he has taken captive by deceitful teaching. And that is the right kind of spiritual tactics. But in case people will not outwardly obey the Word, their parents should educate their children, and the civil government its subjects, to obedience. However, by this method, none are yet brought to believe. For it is affirmed in our text: "He that loveth me not keepeth not my words." Thus you hear what a Christian life is, namely to love God; it is not to storm about, eat flesh, destroy pictures in churches, become monks or nuns — neither a married nor a single life avails here. It means to love, and they do this who keep his Word.

**4.** Now, what is God's Word? It is that we love one another as Christ loved us, and that we believe on him. If one truly possesses the Word, it must break forth out of the heart from pure love. One may possess the words and commands of man, even if he does not love; he may receive the command of a superior and execute it. But the only thing that will keep God's commandments and Word is love. Therefore, observe how foolishly

our princes and bishops act, in that they coerce and constrain the people to believe by means of force.

**5.** How does one now acquire this love? The human heart is so false that it cannot love unless it first sees the benefit of loving. When, in the Old Testament, God struck blows among the people as if among dogs, and he dealt severely and fearfully with them, they naturally had no love for him. Then God thought: I must show my love to you and be so affectionate that you cannot help but love me. Then he took his Son and sent him into our filth, sin and misery, pouring out his mercy so freely and fully that we had to boast of all his treasures as if they were our own. He thus became a loving Father, and he declared his mercy and caused it to go forth into all the world that whosoever believes this and lays hold of it with his heart shall have a gracious and merciful God, who never becomes angry nor deals blows, but who, instead, is kind and affectionate. Now, where a heart believes and experiences this, and gets glimpses of so much, then it must place all its confidence and affection in God, and deal with its neighbor as God has dealt with itself. As a result the Word of God goes forth out of the heart, and his *commandments* will be kept with pleasure. Thus, first, there is no other God; secondly, man calls upon the name of the Lord; and thirdly, he lets God reign — God can do as he will, and he possesses his soul in quiet and observes the Sabbath. In this way, the commandments of the First Table are fulfilled. Henceforth, he is kindly and humbly disposed toward all persons, he honors his father and mother and serves his neighbor as his highest pleasure and with all the love of his heart. His thought is ever this: I will do to my neighbor, as God has done to me. Thus love alone is the fulfillment of the Law, as Paul says to the ~~SEK~~Romans 13:10.

**6.** Now, no man can bring this love into the heart. Therefore, God struck in among the people with the Law that man might experience and feel that no human being could love the divine, righteous, just and holy Law. In view of this he gave us his Son, thus graciously poured, out his greatest treasures, and sunk and drowned all our sins and filth in the great ocean of his love, so that this great love and blessing must draw man to love, and cheerfully be ready to fulfill the divine commandments with willing heart. In no other way can the heart love or have any love; it must be assured that it was first loved. Now, man cannot do this; therefore, Christ comes and takes the heart captive and says: Learn to know me. Then the heart replies: Aye, who art thou? I am Christ, who placed myself in your misery to drown your sins in my righteousness. This knowledge softens your heart, so that

you must turn to him. Thus love is awakened when one learns who Christ is.

**7.** And a Christian should glory in this knowledge, as God says in ~~2023~~ Jeremiah 9:23-24: “Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who exerciseth lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah.” So also, Peter in his Second Epistle (~~GRIS~~ 2 Peter 3:18) says: “But grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” In all the prophets and especially the Psalms and in many places in the Bible there is much written about this knowledge. It is this knowledge of Christ that must convert or it will never be accomplished. No one is so hardened that he will not be converted and made tender if once his heart knows Christ. And the same knowledge causes one to steadfastly live a godly life. Isaiah says, The time will come when this knowledge shall flow forth like a deluge. This came to pass in the time of the apostles. Therefore, whoever loves God will keep his commandments, and that love brings a knowledge of God. Now Christ says, further, in our Gospel:

*“And my Father will love him.”*

**8.** It comes to pass in this way: I know first, that Christ has served me by his whole life, and that Christ is God; thus I see that it is God’s will that Christ should give himself for me and that the Father commissioned him to that end Thus, I climb to the Father through Christ. Then my confidence in him begins to grow, so that I esteem him as a loving Father. Christ here means to say: Man must begin with my love and then he will come to the Father; Christ is a mediator. Therefore, I must first be loved — must first feel the great treasure and blessing in Christ. Hence, God takes the very first step and allows his dear child to die for me, before I ask him to do so, yea, before I ever know him. Then a confidence in and love to God grow in me; this I must feel. Christ also says here: “And my Father will love him;” that is, the convert will feel that he is placed with me in the same kingdom and co-inheritance, and will, through me’ and with me and with my voice, say to the Father in comforting confidence: Dearly beloved Father. Then the text continues:

*“And we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”*

**9.** When I come to the point of knowing that God is my Father, then I let him rule in my heart according to his pleasure, and allow him to be all in all. Therewith, my heart becomes a quiet, humble abode of God. Thus, God is a co-laborer with me and assist me as he says in <sup><2361></sup>Isaiah 66:1-2 and in <sup><4474></sup>Acts 7:49-50: “Thus saith Jehovah, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest? For all these things hath my hand made, and so all these things came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my Word.” The heart must come to the point where it knows God’s glory. God’s power and God’s wisdom: and lets God rule in everything. It knows that all is God’s work; therefore, it cannot fear anything, cold, hunger, hell, death, Satan, poverty or any like thing. Then the heart says: My God, who has made his abode in me, is greater than Satan, death and all the powers of hell.

**10.** Thus there develops in man a confident defiance of everything upon earth, for he has God and all that is God’s. He does all that he is now required to do, and fears not. On the contrary, where there is no love of God, that heart does not keep God’s Word; and if the heart does not keep God’s Word, the hand never will. There God will never enter and make his abode. There the devil dwells, until the weak and despairing soul will even fear the sound of a driven leaf, as Moses says in <sup><1336></sup>Leviticus 26:36. Man cannot endure the gnawing of conscience. The conscience can never know any peace when oppressed by sin, nor can it experience a joyful confidence in God yea, it will sink lower than hell, while confidence is higher than the heavens. There is then nothing but despair and fear for that heart. All creatures are above it. Such is a picture of the kingdom of Satan. Christ continues by saying:

*“And the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me.”*

**11.** These words Christ speaks only in order to bring us to the Father, either in a gracious or ungracious way, either with pleasure and love or with fear, for all must lean and depend upon him. Hence, whoever will not understand these words scorns God. Then no teaching, no words nor anything else will help in his case. Now Christ comes and says:

*“These things have I spoken unto you, while yet abiding with you.  
But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send*



in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.”

## II. THE SERMON OF COMFORT.

**12.** Here Christ says, The Father will send you the Holy Spirit, who will bring to your remembrance what I told you, and the same Spirit will explain it to you. In other words: Your hearts are as yet rough and untutored and you cannot understand what I have spoken to you; but when the Holy Spirit comes he will make all so plain to you that you will experience the assurance that it is as I told you before. Thus, the Holy Spirit, and he alone, has explained the Scriptures and Christ, and made them clear. This knowledge, then, is sufficient for me and enables me to fulfill God’s commandments. Beyond this, however, I have no obligations. Christ courts his disciples further, and says:

*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”*

**13.** As if he had said: I shall now leave you. Farewell! It was a common greeting among the Jews, in the Hebrew language, when they met or parted, to say: Peace be with your That is as much as to say: Take good care of yourself, be of good spirits, hope you may prosper; as we in German say: God greet you (Gott grusze euch), or God bless you!

**14.** And the Lord adds the kind of peace he wishes them to have, and says: My peace I give unto you; not as the world is in the habit of giving peace. In plain words he distinguishes between his peace and the peace of the world. The disciples, however, did not understand it, just as they did not understand what it was to love and to keep God’s commandments. Now, it is the nature of the world’s peace that it consists only in outward things, in eating and drinking — and dancing; its pleasure is in the flesh. Christian peace, however, is in the heart, although at the same time the heart may suffer great persecution, fear, want and opposition. The Lord had told them of all these things in the words: “Ye shall weep and lament.” The world will persecute you, will reject your teaching, will scourge, banish and finally put you to death; but in the midst of all ye shall have peace and rejoice. Cling only to me and my Word!”

**15.** And his words were soon fulfilled. When they had received the Holy Spirit, Luke writes in <sup><4454></sup>Acts 5:41, Peter, John and the other disciples, though scourged and forbidden to preach, departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. But the disciples (lid not at this time understand and they were troubled because of the Lord's discourse. Therefore, he gives them further comfort and says:

*“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.”*

**16.** These are consoling words, but for the time they are not effectual. Be not afraid, he says, for you have my peace. No one will harm you; only cling to me. The words they indeed hear, as do we, but without seeing their significance. Therefore he says in clearer language:

*“Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you.”*

**17.** As if he said: Be not fearful because I said to you! go away from you: I will come again to you; yea, it is especially for your sake that I go away, that afterwards when! return to you, you may be the happier and be of good spirits. But neither did they understand this until the Holy Spirit later interpreted it to them. Just so it is with us in the time of temptation: we do not then understand what God intends to teach us; but later, when grace and comfort return, we understand it very well. The Lord says to the disciples:

*“If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father.”*

**18.** His words mean: The only failing you have is that you do not love me, or do not understand what it is to love. If ye loved me, ye would gladly let me go; yea, ye would laugh for joy, because I depart from you. And the more you are visited with ill-fortune and adversity, the happier you should be. But human reason does not understand this. It is certainly true that the more a Christian suffers persecution from without, the happier he is in heart, and the more peace he possesses. The reason is that he loves Christ. This St. Paul well understood from his own experience when he wrote to the Corinthians in the second epistle (<sup><4704></sup>2 Corinthians 4:4-10): We are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.”

And again, he says, in verses 16 to 18: “Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

**19.** This is the experience of the Christian heart when the Holy Spirit has entered it. St. Paul writes more about this later, in the sixth chapter of Second Corinthians. It made an impression upon the heathen when they saw the Christians thus hastening to death; they thought the Christians were foolish and intervened to spare their lives. The Gentiles did not understand what it meant; but the Christians very well knew whence it came. Therefore the Lord adds:

*“For the Father is greater than I.”*

**20.** Even if I should tell you many things, ye would not understand them; they reach no farther than the ears and never enter the heart. However, when I return to the Father, then I will take upon myself the power to send into your hearts the Holy Spirit, through whose help ye may understand all that I said to you. For the present I am in the service of my ministry upon earth; I only speak and preach the Word as it has been commanded me by my Father. The Arians paid no attention here to the words: “I go to the Father,” which means nothing more than, I go and receive the honor the Father has. It is as if the Lord had said to his disciples: I have two offices. At present I am upon the earth, where I am performing my office of preaching, for which I was sent by the Father. When I come to the Father I will fulfill the other office, namely, this. I will send the Holy Spirit into your hearts. The disciples could not understand this, and neither do we understand how he administers the gift. He concludes by saying:

*“And now I have told you before it come to pass,  
that when it is come to pass, ye may believe.”*

**21.** The meaning is: I know very well that you do not understand this now; but I tell you it now so that, when it comes to pass as I have told you, you may remember that I declared it to you before, and you can then say: It is true. In what follows now in this Gospel, the Lord speaks of the hour of his suffering, that it is at hand, and says:

“I will no more speak much with you, for the prince of the world cometh; and he hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”

### III. THE CONCLUSION OF THIS SERMON OF CONSOLATION.

**22.** In other words: The time of my suffering and death is at hand. The prince of this world, the devil, is present in his adherents, and will seize me. But he will accomplish nothing, for he will unjustly lay hold of me, desiring to ‘crush me. His tactics will fail; I will triumph over him, and I will do it justly.

**23.** One may reply: Did not Satan conquer Christ? Did he not put him to death? Christ himself answers this and says that he dies for the very purpose of satisfying the will of the Father. It is not due to the power of Satan that Christ dies, but to the will of the Father, who would blot out sin through the death of his only begotten Son. Hence, it does not rest in the power of the world nor of Satan to put to death either Christ or any of his followers. But it does rest in the will of the Father, who reveals his power through our weakness, before all his creatures; as St. Paul says in ~~1~~1 Corinthians 15:27. In view of this, Christ here says to his disciples: I will indeed die, but I will rise again. I die to the end that the world may know that I love the Father and that I do what my Father hath commanded me. I seek the Father’s glory in this, who wills that I should so do. And all this for the sake of your salvation and blessedness. Therefore, be of good cheer and let not your heart be troubled; for you will have great joy because of my death and my leaving you.

# PENTECOST, OR FESTIVAL OF THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

## THIRD SERMON. ~~4143~~ JOHN 14:23-31.

In place of the two preceding sermons this one is given in edition c.

German text. Erlangen Edition, 12:293; Walch Edition, 11:1402; St. Louis Walch, 11:1042.

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## THE FIRST PROMISE CHRIST GIVES IN THIS SERMON OF COMFORT.

1. Since pastors are expected on this day to preach on the Holy Spirit, it would be well to begin the Gospel lesson with the verses preceding, which it has been customary to read Pentecost evening, where Christ says: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth" etc. These verses are closely connected with today's text, and they contain the first promise of the Holy Spirit. to the apostles. It is Christ's intent in the promise richly to comfort the disciples in view of his bodily departure unto the Father, whither he was going, that he might there prepare a dwelling-place for them and receive them unto himself. He also assures them that while here upon earth they shall do much greater works than he has done, and that whatsoever they shall ask in his name, that he will do. Moreover, he promises them that the Holy Spirit shall not be with them for a time only, as he has been in his own short stay

in his bodily presence, but that the Holy Spirit shall continue with them for ever; that they shall have in him a Comforter whose ministrations shall exceed the comfort which they have hitherto derived from his own bodily presence.

**2.** This is a beautiful, glorious promise which Christ makes to his Church, that is, to the little company who believe on him, to whom he before said, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also.” This is a glorious promise, that the Holy Spirit should certainly be with them and in them. It means that he shall be given them, not only in their office, but also that he shall be given into their hearts, to rule, teach and guide them, to give them strength and courage, and to protect and sustain them in every danger and need against the devil and his power. He says: “I will not leave you orphans! come unto you.”

**3.** In the various instances where he describes the Holy Spirit, he does not designate him simply according to his nature, as he is and is called the Holy Spirit. The word would signify to them something not to be seen or felt; he would thus be incomprehensible to them. But, that he may be comprehensible and real in a bodily sense, Christ gives him a name signifying his office and work, which is the office of the Word. He thus conveys the idea of preacher, and he calls him the Comforter and the Spirit of truth, who is with them by means of the Word of preaching, and who allows himself to be heard and seen. The two offices, that of comforting and that of leading into the truth, cannot be exercised otherwise than through the Word, or through teaching.

Thus, we know how and where the Holy Spirit is to be found, and we need not be in doubt nor waver, gazing here and there for special revelations or illuminations. Each one should hold to the Word, and should know that through it alone, and through no other means, does the Spirit enlighten hearts and is he ready to dwell in them and to give true knowledge and comfort through faith in Christ. Where this is accomplished, where the Word concerning Christ is accepted by faith and the heart finds comfort in it, there we may know that the Holy Spirit is assuredly present and is performing his work, as has often been stated.

**4.** Furthermore, the two names, “Comforter” and “Spirit of Truth,” are very affectionate and consoling names. The word “Comforter,” which is here used instead of the Greek word *paraclete* or the Latin word *advocate*, or *patron*, designates a person who acts as counsel for one who is accused

or charged with some crime, and who in that capacity undertakes to defend him and win his case, to advise and aid him, and to admonish and encourage him as occasion may require. That, says Christ, shall be the office of the Holy Spirit when I have left you, and when ye shall find no comfort nor support in the world, when all the world shall be against you, and when the devil shall beset you and with his poisonous tongues of slander shall say the worst things about you, and shall pronounce you before all the world deceivers and rebels, and shall, furthermore, with the terror of God's wrath, with melancholy and gloomy thoughts of your own infirmities, alarm your consciences and fill your hearts with fear, so that ye might well despair if ye were left in that state without comfort and strength. The devil appropriately bears the name *Diabolus*, that is *calumniator*, a false, wicked slanderer, who accuses Christians before God day and night, as we find indicated Revelation 12 10.

**5.** Now, says Christ, to protect you against this slanderer and accuser,! will send you, from my Father and in my stead, the Holy Spirit, who shall be your counselor and defender, and who shall intercede for you before God. He shall comfort and strengthen your hearts, so that you need not despair because of the abuse and slander and the accusations and terrors of the devil and the world, but, on the contrary, you may possess fearless hearts and courage, and may boldly speak in defense of your cause, the faith and confession of Christ. He says, in <sup><2215></sup>Luke 21:15, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay."

**6.** This, we say, is portraying the Holy Spirit in the most friendly and comforting way. We are not to look upon him otherwise than as a kind and friendly comforter and helper, and we are to know that he was sent from God the Father and from Christ for that purpose; that he will certainly prove himself such through the Word, by showing us the pure grace, love and goodness of God. He shall assure our hearts that God, both the Father and the Son, is not angry with us nor does he condemn us, nor desire us to be filled with fear. The Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and Son to be a comforter, and has been commanded not to declare anything but what he has heard, as we have learned in the preceding Gospel.

**7.** Such comfort begets a fearless heart and courage a against the ravings of the world and the devil, and enables a Christian, whatever his outward sufferings may be, to endure it all, even with joy, and to conquer in the

end, as did the apostles and martyrs, and many weak women and young virgins. The Christians — and such were these mentioned — know that the Holy Spirit is present in our faith and confession; that he will stand by them, and will direct and carry on the conflict against the devil and the world, so that the Christians shall not suffer defeat, but shall conquer, and, in spite of opposition, complete his work.

**8.** In the second place, Christ calls him “the Spirit of Truth.” This he does for the comfort of those who believe the Gospel. They may know, through the witness of the Spirit, that the consolation of the Word is true and real; that it does not deceive, and that the courage and joy which it induces are genuine and enduring, steadfast through storms and terrors, even to the gates of hell. For this comfort is not based upon uncertainties, as is the consolation of the world, but upon the Word of Christ and the everlasting truth of God.

**9.** Christ gives this name to the Holy Spirit in contradistinction to the devil, who is also a spirit, but not a comforter and helper of Christians; he is their adversary and murderer. Neither is he truthful; he is the spirit of lies, who, by means of false fear and false comfort having the appearance of truth, both deceives and destroys. He possesses the art of filling his own victims with sweet comfort; that is, he gives them unbelieving, arrogant, secure, impious hearts — as was said in the Gospel for the third day of the Easter festival. He can even make them joyful; furthermore, he renders them haughty and proud in their opinions, in their wisdom and self-made personal holiness; then no threat nor terror of God’s wrath and of eternal damnation moves them, but their hearts grow harder than steel or adamant.

**10.** Again, with truly pious hearts, which in many respects are timid and tender, his practice is just the opposite. He tortures them with everything terrible that can be imagined, martyring and piercing them as with fiery darts, until they may find no good thing nor comfort before God. His object in both cases is to ruin souls by means of his lies and to lead them to eternal death. The first class, who, should they be terrified, might repent, he fills with false comfort and security, but in the end, when their last hour has come he abandons them to sudden terror and despair; the latter class he worries with unceasing torments and fear, and robs them of the comfort they should have in God, in order that they may despair of God’s grace and help.

**11.** We should therefore rightly learn to understand the Holy Spirit, and should know that he is a comforter and does nothing else than to truly comfort, through the preaching of the Gospel in Christ, sad and timid hearts that know their sins and are being terrified and distressed by the devil beyond measure. He exhorts them to be comforted and to be joyful in God's promised grace in Christ Jesus. He keeps them therein, so that they continue in this truth and their hearts come to know that all other teaching and comfort, though purporting to be of God, are not genuine. The Holy Spirit cannot be present in false teaching. All such is but the devil's work — lies and deception with which he seeks to effect his murderous designs. The Christian should allow no terror, threat or suffering possible on earth to force him from the real comfort of the Gospel.

**12.** Comfort and truth, when the product of the Holy Spirit, are concealed and deeply hidden in faith. Christians themselves do not at all times experience them, but in their weakness sometimes miss the presence of these. For the devil, through both the timidity within themselves and the wickedness of the world without, hinders and opposes believers to such an extent that it is often almost impossible for them to appropriate an atom of God's comfort; they find themselves in the same condition in which the great apostle Paul laments about himself (~~4005~~ 2 Corinthians 7:5), where without are rightings, within are fears. They cannot possess unalloyed comfort and joy, but the greater part of their experience proves to be sorrow and fear and deadly conflict. Paul says in ~~4041~~ 2 Corinthians 4:11: "For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus sake." Likewise in ~~4353~~ 1 Corinthians 15:13: "I protest by that glorying in you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." We also see many pious hearts that are always sad and downcast, tormenting and alarming themselves with their own thoughts, and being at the verge of despair because of the temptations of the devil. Where, say the world and our own flesh, do you find, under these circumstances, the *Holy Spirit* whom you Christians laud so much?

**13.** A Christian should be wise here, and should not judge and determine things according to his own thoughts and feelings, but, in spite of such temptation and weakness, he should keep to the Word and the comfort of the preaching which the Holy Spirit gives to all poor and distressed hearts and consciences. Christ says in ~~2300~~ Isaiah 61:1-2, concerning the office which he should exercise through the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good

tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; to comfort all that mourn.”

**14.** From this ye should learn — and you will find it everywhere in the Gospel — that God does not desire you to be sad or alarmed, but joyful, and comforted with the certain promise of his grace, which the Holy Spirit himself offers you. He declares that it is not the truth, but your false opinion and the devil’s deception that lead you to feel and think in your heart of the wrath and punishment of God, as if he would condemn you to hell. Therefore, let God’s Word be of more authority to you than your own feelings and the judgment of the whole world; do not give God the lie and rob yourself of the Spirit of truth.

## II. THE SECOND PROMISE.

**15.** Of this promise, this comfort, to allay our feelings and fears, Christ assures us in the words translated “desolate” he will not leave you desolate. The word translated “desolate” literally means “orphans.” By the use of this word Christ would intimate the condition of the Church. In the eyes of the world, and even in her own estimation, she has not the! appearance of a prosperous and well ordered organization; rather she is a scattered group of poor, miserable orphans, without leader, protection or help upon earth. All the world laughs at her and ridicules her as a great fool in thinking that she is the Church and comprises the people of God. Furthermore, each individual is so burdened and oppressed in his need and suffering as to feel that no one else lies so low or is so far from help as he.

**16.** Such misery and fears grow upon one under the influence of the devil’s power, when he pierces the heart with his bitter, poisonous, murderous thrusts. Then the heart feels that it is not only forsaken by all men, but also by God himself. So it altogether loses Christ and sees no end to its misery. Of this we have heard before in the Gospel where Christ says (John 16:20): “Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; ye shall be sorrowful” etc. To be left thus, that is, to feel that all things have conspired to leave us comfortless and helpless, is to be left orphans indeed.

**17.** As Christ has thus told his Christians beforehand of such suffering, so also does he wish to give this comfort and consolation beforehand, and desires to teach us not to despair because of suffering, but only to hold to

his Word, even if it does seem that help is being too long delayed. He desires to remind us of the promise that he will not leave us fast in misery, and that we should accord him the highest honor due to God, by holding him to be true and faithful. He says: It shall not continue forever, but only a little, a short time. And he says here: "I come unto you." Again: "A little while, and the world beholdeth me no more." That hour will seem to you an hour of sadness indeed, yea, an unending hour of death. "But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice."

**18.** This is a sufficient promise of friendship and comfort. But we need only to learn to believe it, and to experience the truth that in our greatest weakness he guides his Church by wonderful divine power and protects and upholds her, so that she shall endure in spite of all. Yea, it shall be that in the greatest sadness there shall be comfort; in the greatest misery and desolation, joy and help; in death, everlasting life; until these better things come to be our possession, and the heart, having overcome all evil and being filled with the unspeakable joy of salvation, hears the bold, joyful word of victory which Christ utters: "Because! live, ye shall live also," and as we beautifully sing in [Psalm 118:15-17](#): "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous. The right hand of Jehovah doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of Jehovah."

This is what St. Paul says in [2 Corinthians 4:10](#) concerning comfort and help for these poor orphans: "We are always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." And Christ says in [Luke 12:32](#): "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

**19.** Observe, this is the sublime wisdom and knowledge of Christians, which the Holy Spirit has revealed to them and of which the world knows nothing whatever. The world must confess that it knows nothing of this comfort, and that, further, it is impelled by the devil to despise and resist the Holy Spirit's preaching concerning such comfort. Therefore, Christ passes judgment upon it for the comfort of Christians: "Whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him." Oh, that is a fearful utterance, to be told that it cannot receive the Holy Spirit. It must follow from this that the world has no part in the kingdom of God; that it is forever separated from God and must remain in the power of the devil and in the bonds of hell. But it is also a just and well-deserved punishment upon

the world, for the world will not have it otherwise, since it so shamefully despises, blasphemes and persecutes Christ, the Son of God, together with his Word and the Holy Spirit. So much, then, on the office of the Holy Spirit, concerning which the chapter just before the text teaches. Upon this follows now the Gospel:

*“If a man love me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him.”*

### III. THE THIRD PROMISE.

#### I. THE OCCASION OF THIS PROMISE.

**20.** Just a moment before he began with almost the same words when he said: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.” Thereupon the pious apostle Judas asked: “Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?” For he, together with the other disciples, was still entangled in the Jewish notion that Christ would become a secular lord and king; they hoped that they, themselves, should become great and mighty lords over lands and people, and oft had they disputed and quarreled among themselves as to who among them should be the greatest.

Therefore, Judas is astonished at this saying of Christ and cannot restrain himself. He must come out with it and ask Christ what he means by saying that he will not manifest himself to any except to them alone. His thoughts must have been these: What kind of a king will he be if he will not show himself to anyone? If he who has hitherto gone about only as a servant though he has preached publicly and wrought wonders — if he now intends to begin his kingdom in such a private and secret manner and with such doubtful plans as not to allow himself to be seen or known by any but the few who love him, what kind of a king will he be? It seems to me, his thoughts were: You should now begin to manifest yourself fully, and let yourself be seen by all, even by your enemies, in order that all may be obliged to fall down at your feet. And what does it mean, that everything depends upon our keeping your Word? What shall we accomplish thereby if we do not add something else? And who are going to be your subjects if to know and love you is left simply to the choice of individuals?



**21.** But Christ answers in the same strain just for the purpose of rooting out their Jewish notions and of portraying his kingdom to them in the right light. No, my dear Judas, he would say, it will not be as you think. The world has honor and glory here on earth, and power and might. It is by means of these that the world rules in the kingdom of men; those things do not concern you and me. But it is essential that you love me and keep my Word. In such hearts I will rule, and to them alone can I manifest and show myself. For my government is not one of force and might, such as is necessary among the wicked men of the world, but I desire to rule men's hearts, and to have my subjects come to me cheerfully and of their own will. Those who do not believe on me, will not do this.

**22.** God had before, often and in various ways, tried governing the Jewish people simply by the Law and under punishment; the result was that almost the whole nation was exterminate in the wilderness, and afterward the people were smitten again and again, and carried away as captives, until finally they were completely annihilated. In no way could he bring them to obey him in sincerity and to keep his commandments.

And what should they keep? In the beginning, when God spoke with them and gave them the ten commandments, they were not able to endure nor to hear him, but prayed that he might permit Moses to speak with them; him they were willing to hear. And then when Moses came and brought the ten commandments, they were not able even to look upon his face, but made a veil for him; which veil, St. Paul says, is upon their hearts to this day, so that they cannot understand, much less experience in their hearts, what God asks of them — that they should love him with all their hearts and be obedient unto him.

**23.** If, now, God, in the case of his own people, whom he had selected and honored above all others, was not able to bring them to himself through Moses and the prophets, how should he be able to accomplish more in another case by means of man's instruments — law and force? If he would have loyal subjects upon earth he must employ different means in his dominion. He would not accomplish his purpose if he were simply to compel disobedient nature by means of terror and threats; although threatening may still serve a purpose in revealing the certain result of disobedience and sin, and teaching men to tremble at the wrath of God. But love and friendship must attract before love and longing toward God are begotten.

**24.** And only in this way can they be begotten: In place of the terror of God's wrath, which we have deserved by our disobedience, we must receive the Word of grace and the assurance that God is ready to withdraw his wrath and to pardon sin. Such assurances of friendship and grace Christ now gives in his Gospel. He begins his kingdom by leading hearts to learn of his love, and by teaching that he, through his suffering and death, has procured for us God's grace and mercy as a free gift, and in addition has given the Holy Spirit. He so rules us that we continue in this kingdom Of grace, the Holy Spirit working in us, so that we, on our part, begin to love God and to obey him willingly and cheerfully.

## **II. TO WHOM THIS PROMISE IS GIVEN.**

**25.** Concerning obedience he now says: "If a man love me, he will keep my Word." And just before he said: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." Keep his Word or commandment — that is what the soul must do who loves Christ, who understands and appreciates what he gets from Christ; no one else will love him. He speaks here not of Moses' word or the declaration of the Law, but of the proclamation of the love and grace which Christ has shown us by taking our sins upon himself and offering for us his body and blood, and by doing this from pure grace, that we might be comforted and thereby learn to know in real experience his love. And if we believe it, he requires nothing more of us than that we should be thankful for it and should continue in faith and confession, and out of love and honor to him seek the welfare of his kingdom by word and deed.

**26.** This loyalty to Christ's kingdom is now considered a simple thing by the presumptuous and inexperienced spirits who deem themselves so holy and so strong in the faith as to be able easily to do what they hear, and who think that the Word of God is something that is obeyed as soon as it is heard.

For everyone who has not yet had the experience of grace thinks, Who would be so wicked as not to love Christ, nor to keep his Word which speaks of the grace of God? Just so did the people of Israel in the wilderness when Moses told them all the words of the Lord (<sup><124B></sup>Exodus 24:3); they all cried out with one voice: "All the words which Jehovah hath spoken will we do." But when they were to do these words, their conduct was such that, on account of it, they were obliged to remain in the

wilderness forty years — until they all had perished. Yes, if Christ bestowed gold and silver by means of his Word, or conferred honor and reputation upon our holiness and wisdom, then everyone would cheerfully keep the Word and hold it fast. But it is none of those things for which a man on earth has any desire; on the contrary, he is such an unlovely figure that all the world is offended and flees from him.

**27.** Experience, therefore, teaches how difficult it is to keep this Word, for the holy cross has been laid upon it. Not only do our own flesh and the old nature resist, in accordance with its disposition, and prefer that which is easy and agreeable, but also, when one begins to confess the Gospel, then the devil, with all his followers and confederates, bears hard upon one and everywhere attacks him by means of the persecutions of the world and by all kinds of temptations. He opposes him inwardly, with unending conflicts and fears of the heart, and outwardly, with constant danger of body and life, until one must cry to heaven for help. Experience certainly teaches that it is not such an easy, simple thing to keep the Word of Christ as it is to observe the juggling of Jewish ceremonies, of a man-made divine service, monkery and the like.

**28.** Therefore, Christ says that the heart must cling to him and love him, for it cannot otherwise survive in the world, which is the devil's kingdom and is opposed to Christ. The Church upon earth must strive and contend with weakness, poverty, misery, fear, death, shame and disgrace. By necessity the Christian is driven to step out of himself and not to rely upon the advice, help or strength of men. He must love Christ in his heart, and must hold his name, his Word and his kingdom more precious than all things of the earth. Whoever does not do this, but seeks his own honor and glory, or the favor and friendship, the pleasures and enjoyments of the world, and who loves his own life more than Christ — to such a one it is useless to speak of these things. Jesus shortly afterwards says: "He that loveth me not keepeth not my Words."

**29.** Christians, to whom Christ here speaks as to those who know him and know what they have in him — they, I say, should be moved to this love by the love and friendship which he has shown us in delivering us from sin, condemnation and eternal death, laying them upon his own shoulders. He thus surely deserves that we should love him. Therefore, shortly before, he reminded them of this when he said: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments;" as if he would say: If ye know and feel that I have

deserved this at your hands, then in turn do me the favor of loving me and keeping my Word; for if ye believe this and consider it, then ye will surely also love me.

**30.** But “to keep his Word” does not mean simply “to love” with words; the living work and proof of love must be present. It is the love which battles and conquers. Such is the real nature of love that it does everything for the sake of the beloved, and nothing is too hard for it to suffer and bear, and do it even cheerfully; as we see also in the natural love which God has implanted in fathers and mothers toward their children, which is an image of his divine love toward us. Such love is spent altogether freely upon those who are undeserving and is impelled to do them good. So Christ, when he dwelt in divine majesty, eternal God and Creator, showed the highest love toward us — toward us poor creatures, when we as yet had no kinship with him and deserved nothing but wrath and condemnation.

**31.** Since love does these things for those from whom no love had been received and who had deserved no love, and since we, aside from this, would still be in duty bound to love him as our maker and God, even although he had not otherwise so greatly deserved it: how much more should we love ‘him because he so greatly loved us and loved us first. If we would take this inexpressible kindness to heart as we should, then, of course, nothing that we might be called upon to endure and bear for his sake would prove irritating or too hard for us, so long as we might continue in his love. This, then, would not only be hearing his Word willingly, but also holding it fast and conquering.

*“And my Father will love him.”*

### III. THE PROMISE.

**32.** There need be no sharp discussion here concerning the question why Christ speaks thus: “If a man love me” etc. — whether or no we had to love him first, It is certain that he first loved us, as is plainly stated in <sup>(GOD)</sup>1 John 4:10: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Yes, if he did not begin to love us, we could never begin to love him. For no one can love God unless he believes that he was first loved by him and that he is a merciful God; otherwise the heart flees before God and inwardly hates him, as if he would cast us into hell, as was stated above.

**33.** What Christ says here: “He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father” etc., is said concerning the manifestation of love. He indicates this when he says: I will manifest myself unto him; and again: We will come unto him. That is, if we continue steadfast in this love against the wrath, hatred and persecution of the enemies of Christ and the Church, namely, the devil and the world, then we shall experience the certainty that he will faithfully and firmly stand by us with his love, and will help us in such conflict and need and give us the victory. This is probation, or experience which comes from patience in suffering, as St. Paul says in ~~4:16~~ Romans 5:4. In such times, as has been said sufficiently, God’s love toward us so conceals itself that nothing but the opposite is felt; it seems as if God had altogether forgotten us and his grace and love had been changed into anger.

**34.** He that perseveres in these things and continues in this love, shall experience that God is true, and shall feel the comfort of divine love in certainty poured out into his heart, helping him to overcome all things. St. Paul again says in ~~4:16~~ Romans 8:37-39: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This is the victory and redemption through which we experience the truth of what we have believed — that he loves us.

**35.** Christ purposely uses the words: “My Father will love him,” in order that he may draw us upward and reveal to us the Father’s heart, portraying it to us in that tender way which poor, distressed consciences can greatly appreciate. It is exceedingly difficult for the human heart to expect with certainty everything good of God and to appreciate all grace and mercy. Indeed, it is altogether impossible except through Christ the mediator. Coarse and impious hearts may be very strong and haughty at this point, bearing themselves hard in much conceit, and thinking that what they do is all very precious in the sight of God. Yes, they may do this until they come upon the peril and terror of death, brought about through the clear revelation of the Law; then there are upon all the earth no people more dejected and despairing. When their hour has come, they go down suddenly and no one can raise them up again.

**36.** Much better and safer and more comforting, therefore, is the state of those who are constantly striving and struggling with terror and fear of

God's wrath, and who are so afraid that when they hear the name of God mentioned the world becomes too strait for them. Just for these has this comfort been uttered; yes, for their sakes God has at all times declared the promise of his grace and of the forgiveness of sins, and to that end has given his Son and all the good in the whole world, overwhelming it with blessings, in order that they, by all means, may learn to know his grace and goodness which, as Psalms 52 and 36 say, endureth continually, and reacheth unto the skies. The fact that a Christian lives and that he possesses a sound member is due solely to the visible grace and help of God. For the devil, in whose kingdom the Christians are, here upon earth, is such a wicked, malicious spirit that he aims at nothing else, day and night, than to murder and destroy them.

**37.** But however great, both in word and deed, God's promise of grace is toward those that fear him, yet they cannot lift up their hearts and joyfully look upon God. They are still constantly harassed with anxiety and fear lest God may be angry with them on account of their unworthiness and the weakness which is theirs. If they hear an angry word from God, or recall or learn of some fearful example of God's wrath and punishment, then they tremble and fear lest it strike them. The other class, on the contrary, who indeed should tremble before God, stiffly and proudly despise these things in their security, and comfort themselves with the carnal notion that God cannot be angry with them. Very difficult is it for the human heart to so balance itself that it will not become secure in success and prosperity, but remain humble, and again, in times of fear and misfortune, enjoy comfort and confidence toward God.

**38.** Christ, everywhere in his utterances, speaks of comfort, that he may show the Father's loving-kindness, and himself as a faithful, well-meaning and gracious mediator. Gladly would he impress this upon our hearts. No one may doubt it if only he feels love and longing for Christ and can hold fast to his Word and believe that he has borne our sins and freed us from all wrath, sin and death; and if he furthermore continue therein with a sincere confession that Christ, without doubt, possesses the true, fatherly divine heart, full of unspeakable and boundless love toward him, and that it is his earnest will and purpose that the Christian should fear and be terrified at nothing, but should expect from God everything that is best and most lovely.

**39.** It is, indeed, glorious comfort, in which you may well exult, as in the kingdom of heaven, and leap incessantly for joy — that Christ has assured and certified to you that, when for his sake and out of love for him you endure the persecutions of the devil or the world, it is pleasing to God the Father in heaven, and is the most acceptable thing that you can do for him. And such love from God toward yourself you will also experience in help and victory from above. This comfort Christians should know; they should call to mind the treasure that is theirs in the Gospel and in the knowledge of Christ, to the end that they may praise God for it and be thankful. This promise of love he continues to explain still further, and says:

*“And we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”*

#### IV. FURTHER ILLUSTRATION OF THIS PROMISE.

**40.** This will be a really glorious and new Pentecost and an excellent manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit; a heavenly assembly or council for the hearts which are enlightened and aflame with love to Christ through the Holy Spirit, wherein the love of Christ and the Father shines and beams upon them. God and man will cleave unto each other as friends, for the Holy Spirit himself prepares the heart of man and consecrates it as a holy house and dwelling, a temple and dwelling-place of God. What a glorious, noble, loving and precious guest and house-companion does man receive — God the Father and the Son and certainly with them also the Holy Spirit!

**41.** Great glory and grace is this for men, that they are accounted worthy of being such an honored dwelling, castle, hall, yes, Paradise and kingdom of heaven, in which God dwells upon earth — they who are such poor, dejected, timid hearts, who feel nothing but sin and death, and who fear and tremble at the wrath of God, thinking that God is farthest from them and the devil nearest. Yet, these are the people to whom such things are promised, and they may freely comfort themselves with the thought that they are the true house of God and the true Church, not anointed with the foul oil of the consecrating bishop, but consecrated by the Holy Spirit himself, where God desires to rest and remain. The prophet Isaiah says concerning these, in chapter 66:1-2, directing his words against those who were proud and puffed up in the thought of their own holiness and divine service: “What manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest? For all these things hath my hand made, and so all these things

came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my Word.”

**42.** And where else should God dwell? He finds no other habitation upon earth. Those self-constituted saints in their own estimation excellent, high and great, are much too proud, much too high, wise, prudent and holy. They have passed up through and far beyond heaven, so that they could not be his habitation upon earth, although they boast of themselves as being the only church and people of God. So also God is far too great and holy to dwell with such proud, ambitious saints as these, who, like the devil, their idol, wish to be equal with God and boast before him of their own holiness. Though they appear in all the pomp and glory and ornament of their fine self-made holiness, yet he does not do them the honor to look at them. He is found, however, in the humble cots of such as are poor and despised, who fear and believe the Word of Christ and would gladly be Christians, but who feel themselves to be very unholy and unworthy sinners.

**43.** This is, certainly, a sublime, beautiful promise, and, as St. Peter (~~6004~~2 Peter 1:4) says, one of the precious and exceeding great promises granted unto us poor, miserable sinners, that we through them should become partakers of the divine nature, and should be so highly honored as not only to be loved of God through Christ Jesus and to enjoy his favor and grace — as the highest, the most precious and sacred thing — but should even have the Lord himself dwelling completely in us. For it shall not, he would say, be love — simply that he turns his wrath from us and shows a gracious, fatherly heart toward us — but we are also to enjoy that love; otherwise, his love to us would be vain and useless, as says the proverb: To love and not to enjoy etc. We are to find great benefit and treasure in his love, which shall be assured to us in its manifestation of deeds and gifts.

**44.** These are the two things which Christians receive from God, namely, grace and gift, as St. Paul distinguishes them in ~~6155~~Romans 5:15. Grace takes away sin, secures comfort and peace for the conscience, and places man in the kingdom of divine mercy; the kingdom of loving-kindness, as it is called in ~~19B702~~Psalm 117:2: “For his loving-kindness is great toward us, and the truth of Jehovah endureth for ever.” But the gift or grant is this, that the Holy Spirit inspires new thoughts and creates a new mind and heart in man and grants him comfort, strength and life.



**45.** That is what he means here when he says: “We will make our abode with him.” The effect of God’s grace and love must be that it makes the heart of man a throne and seat of the divine majesty, better and nobler than heaven or earth; as St. Paul says in <sup><4187></sup>1 Corinthians 3:17: “The temple of God is holy, and such are ye;” likewise in <sup><4187></sup>2 Corinthians 6:17: “We are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them.”

These things are accomplished in this way: In addition to the grace by which a man begins to believe and to hold fast to the Word, God also rules in man through his divine power and agency, so that he constantly grows more and more enlightened, becomes richer and stronger in spiritual understanding and wisdom, and better fitted to understand all matters of doctrine and practice. He furthermore makes daily progress in life and good works, becomes eventually a kind, gentle, patient man, ready to serve everyone with doctrine, advice, comfort and gifts; is useful to God and man; through him and because of him men and countries receive benefit; in short he is a man through whom God speaks, in whom he lives and works, and such a man’s words, life and doings are God’s. His tongue is God’s tongue, his hand is God’s hand, and his word is no more the word of man, but God’s Word.

**46.** His doctrine and confession as a Christian are not of men, but of Christ, whose Word he has and holds. So also the office of a Christian which he exercises is not of man’s ability, but of God’s. He holds it by the command, authority and power of God; it is granted of God through the Holy Spirit, as St. Peter says. In all things, then, he does only good, even as he has received every good from God; and outwardly, also, his body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. <sup><4169></sup>1 Corinthians 6:19. A Christian, good and true, brings forth only good fruit — does good and profitable works — resisting and avoiding evil.

**47.** Observe now, what a worthy being the man is who is a Christian, or who, as Christ says, keeps Christ’s Word. A wonderful man, indeed, is he upon earth, who is of more value in the eyes of God than heaven and earth; yea, he is a light and Savior of the whole world, in whom God is all in all, and who in God is able to do all things. But to the world he is hidden; he is unknown. Moreover, the world does not deserve to know Christians. It holds them as its doormats, yea, like St. Paul says in <sup><4143></sup>1 Corinthians 4:13: “As the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things,” because of whom

the earth and inhabitants are cursed and must perish, and who, the sooner the better, should be executed, as a service to God and as purification of the world.

**48.** Oh, what mockery must it have been to the ears of the Jewish saints and priests and Pharisees when they heard the words that declare how God will make his habitation only with those who hear the words of this man! They were only a little handful of timid, poor, despised people. As if God did not have a better and more glorious habitation, becoming his majesty, in the saints and superior persons who were the bright lights and the eminent ones among God's people, in the holy city of Jerusalem! And the glorious temple and divine worship — did not the Scriptures and the prophets themselves call them the holy city and dwelling-place of God, the chosen place where God would rest, <19D214>Psalm 132:14, and that forever? Of this they boasted very haughtily, and claimed that their kingdom, their priesthood and divine worship, should never fail.

**49.** But here Christ ignores all these things as if he were totally indifferent to them, and utters the remarkable saying that the place of his own and his Father's abode — their habitation and their Church — is where a Christian is found, who keeps Christ's Word. Thus he discards the old habitation of Judaism and the temple of Jerusalem, and builds a new, holy, glorious Church and house of God, which is not Jerusalem or Judaism, but is spread abroad throughout the whole world, without distinction of person, place or custom. Jews, Gentiles, priests or laymen — it matters not. This house of God is not of stone or wood, made by the hand of man, but newly created of God himself, namely a people that loves Christ and keeps his Word.

**50.** It is true that up to this time God was still the master of the house among the Jewish people; he had his hearth and fire there, as he says in <sup>2319</sup>Isaiah 31:9, but this was for the sake of his Word, proclaimed through the prophets, which was still there and which was always believed in by a few, and for the sake of the true Church of God, the land and the city were preserved. But now, since Christ himself has come, and the people do not want to hear his Word, but they persecute his apostles and the Christians and drive them out of the land, until no Christian can remain there — now the temple, the city and the land of Judaism must be desolated and ruined, the priesthood forever rejected, never again to be restored. For Moses and the prophets had before declared unto them that if they did not keep his Word they should no longer be nor be called his people, and this city and

temple should no more be his city and temple. <sup><1521></sup>Deuteronomy 32:21;  
<sup><3009></sup>Hosea 1:9.

**51.** Here, now, you have the definition and the answer to the much-disputed question as to what the Church really is and whence is its power. We rightly and in truth say that it is ruled by the Holy Spirit. Christ says that the Father and the Son dwell with it, and what it says and does is said and done through them; everyone at the risk of his salvation is bound to hear the Church. So far are we agreed, as the basis of this and other promises, that there is a people upon earth which is called God's people, where he desires to be master in his house, prince in his castle, God in his Church; a people so precious and highly esteemed before God that he did not deem his very heaven above so great as to keep him from coming to his Church in this vale of sorrow and remaining with it until the end of the world. He would not have man to gaze up in vain and seek his Church in Paradise. He would have him find it here until the other life begins.

**52.** There is, therefore, no dispute as to whether or not there is a Church upon earth to which we owe allegiance. She is, as it were, the sovereign or queen through whom God speaks and works. But the disputed question is, who and what is the Church? To decide this question and to discover the one rightful Church, one must not, says St. Augustine, judge according to men's words and opinions. We become sure of the case when we hear how Christ the Lord, himself, portrays it in his Word. Now, he designates it as the little company that believes in Christ and keeps his Word, for thereby one knows and feels such love. The Word, which is called the Word of Christ, must be the rule and touchstone by which the Church is to be discerned and by which it must govern itself. There must be a certain rule by which the Church shall measure its conduct. It will not do for individuals to formulate their own ideas of conduct, act accordingly and then say that the Church is led by the Holy Spirit.

**53.** Therefore, Christ binds the Church to his Word and makes that the distinguishing mark by which must be measured the teaching, the preaching, the rule of conduct. Is all done out of the love of Christ? Where you find conformity to the Word in these things, there you have discovered the right Church, and you are in duty bound to obey it. You certainly have warrant for concluding that God dwells therein and speaks and acts through that Church.

**54.** St. Peter lays down this rule, as we have heard above in his epistle, where he says in ~~(1)~~ 1 Peter 4:11: “If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth.” That is, whatever a member of this household shall do or say, let him see that he does and speaks that which is God’s work and Word; otherwise, let him abstain from doing and speaking. Let him rule in his own house if he cannot measure his conduct by the rule of God’s house. Without this house, the world has its own word and work. Lords, emperors, princes, heads of families, each rules in his own dominion. In a rightly ordered household all things are guided by the will of the master of the house. Although the servants may in other things play the knave and be wicked, yet the master’s bidding must be done, and things are ordered as he commands, So, in this house where God is Lord and ruler, it is his desire to be supreme, to be in all things implicitly obeyed. Only his commands are to be regarded and his work executed. It is his intent that everyone may know his will and in certainty rely upon it.

**55.** This is the beautiful promise concerning the superabundant glory of Christians, namely, that God troubles himself so deeply for their sakes and comes so near to them; he does not manifest himself anywhere except in them and through their word and conduct. Thus God greatly distinguishes them from all other people. One single Christian, however lowly he may be, receives distinction and is more highly honored of God than all kings, emperors, princes and the whole world combined; for they have nothing of such reputation and honor. Moses says in ~~(2)~~ Deuteronomy 4:7: “For what nation is there that hath a God so nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is whensoever we call upon him?” There is reason, then, to look with favor upon the Word of the Gospel. We have every encouragement to cling boldly to it and for its sake leave everything in the world.

**56.** But we must remember, as I have said, that among Christians upon earth there is still weakness in the things of the Word and faith. Christians well have need to cry to God and pray for the help and strength of the Holy Spirit. A beginning has been made in Christ’s kingdom. Christians are indeed called and made the habitation of God, and in them God speaks and rules and works. But the work is not yet complete; it is an edifice on which God yet works daily and makes arrangement. It shall be completely prepared and perfected in his own good day. Wherefore, Christ here does not say, We shall find our abode prepared with him, but, “We shall make our abode with him.”

**57.** Christ brings with him all kinds of spiritual material that may be necessary for building, ornamenting and completing the dwelling. The Word and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are materials with which he builds. Though the dwelling is not altogether completed, yet through his grace and love it is accepted of God. Then the Christian becomes his house, and, through the operation of the Word and the Holy Spirit, is constantly being prepared and improved, growing stronger in knowledge, wisdom, faith, gifts and virtues. That which remains of the old birth, still rough and uncouth, is being hewn off, or mortified, through the cross, through temptation and suffering and there is constant progress in grace and in the work of the Holy Spirit.

**58.** Therefore, no one should despise a brother Christian nor despair concerning himself when he sees in another or feels within himself great weakness, enticement, inclination to unbelief, impatience etc., although at times he may even err and stumble, as did Peter when he denied Christ and was for that reason forsaken of God and rejected as a worthless instrument; but the Christian should again raise himself up through repentance and faith in the Word, and should comfort himself with the thought that he is of the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of grace, which is far mightier, than sin. ◀KING Romans 5:20. The Holy Spirit is given, not only as a means of imparting courage and strength, but also to comfort the stumbling one in weakness, and to make of him the habitation of God, in which God's love, which covers up such infirmities and imputes it not, constantly abides.

**59.** Accordingly, as the prophet Zechariah, in beautiful words, in chapter 12:10, says, the spirit of grace and of supplication is poured out in the kingdom of Christ. This is the Holy Spirit, who together with the Father and the Son, lives in believers, speaks and works through them, and gives them comfort and the power to remain steadfast against sin, death and the devil's power. This he does not through a mere demonstration of his almighty power; but, in their consciousness of sin and unworthiness, he bears with them, and shelters and comforts them with grace and forgiveness in Christ. Being conscious of great weakness in this conflict, they are moved by him to pray and cry for help and strength; thus, the Spirit, through such praying and crying, conquers in them. These things St. Paul declares concerning the Holy Spirit in ◀KING Romans 8:16 and 26: "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of

God;” and: “The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

**60.** Great saints often lament that they do not have enough comfort, joy and strength; they find that, in this state, they must comfort themselves with grace and sustain themselves through prayer and endeavor. St. Paul, himself, in many places complains of his weakness, as in ~~47117~~ 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, where he says that there was given him, through the messenger of Satan, a thorn in the flesh, which so pierced and tortured him that he could not feel the Spirit’s strength and power, and in anguish he besought the Lord three times that it might be taken from him. But he was told: “My grace is sufficient for thee.” His crying and prayers were indeed heard, yet he was not relieved of his weakness. The spirit of grace within him, however, comforted and sustained him in the conflict so that he should not sink under it to him was given the assurance: My power is made perfect, or overcomes, in the weak.

*“He that loveth me not keepeth not my words.”*

## V. CHRIST ADDS A DECISION TO THIS PROMISE.

**61.** There you have a short, vigorous decision, Whoever would be a Christian must love. To love means, cheerfully and willingly to keep God’s Word. Either do this or nothing. We must sincerely desire and love Christ, or else abandon him altogether. For he that seeks his own in Christ, and does not sufficiently love him to be willing for his sake to sacrifice his own honor and reputation and righteousness, and to abandon everything earthly, is of no value to Christ’s kingdom. It is not given to all to be Christians, though they may indeed boast of themselves in this respect. St. Paul says, ~~3182~~ 2 Thessalonians 3:2: “For all men have not faith;” for they have not yet known nor tasted his grace and love. Hence, they cannot love him nor obey the injunction of his Word, that they should be willing to risk or to leave anything for its sake.

**62.** From this decision now follows the opposite phase of the question. Christ speaks of the alternative course and its consequences. In words short and concise, he declares that whoever does not keep his Word, certainly does not believe in him; furthermore, he dare not presume upon any love from God, but is already disunited from the kingdom of grace, and continues under everlasting wrath and judgment. ~~4886~~ John 3:36 says: “He

that obeyeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

**63.** Such souls must suffer the loss of all things. They cannot be God’s habitation, nor have the Holy Spirit; they are not deserving of the grace that God should speak and work through them. Since they despise God’s Word, God also despises them, and they are thus left without protection from the devil, who drives them about according to his will. ‘In his wicked power, they can neither will nor do God’s pleasure, but, as St. Paul says in ~~5016~~ Titus 1:16, are “unto every good work reprobate.” They can only bring harm and misfortune into Christendom. It avails not how much they may claim for themselves in respect of holiness, divine service, good works etc., nor that they imagine themselves nearest and dearest to God.

Although they may otherwise be superior and highly endowed with wisdom, understanding etc., yet they have not the grace to effect anything good and pleasing to God or worthy of his blessing. All their attempts to work righteousness will be productive of evil. <19A907>Psalm 109:7, says: “Let his prayer be turned unto sin” etc. On the other hand, in the kingdom of Christ, although those who love him have some sins and weaknesses remaining, yet these very things shall be made to prove helpful, and all things must work together for the good of these, his children. Again ~~48724~~ Psalm 37:24 says: “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for Jehovah upholdeth him with his hand.”

**64.** Among the Jews, in Christ’s time, the most prominent class comprised such unhappy people. They were esteemed as most holy and wise, and made claims to be God’s people above all others. Afterwards, in the Church there were heretics, schismatics and false brethren, who likewise professed great spirituality, love of truth and holiness, and yet through them the devil introduced misery and ruin.

Such too, only worse in degree, is, at the present time, the whole rabble of popedom. They not only knowingly despise utterly God’s Word, but also without any compunction whatever, persecute its heralds and oppose its preaching. They are people completely possessed of the devil, and in whom neither God, Christ nor the Holy Spirit can dwell. Their lives are openly of such a character that they are nothing but scandals and stains of shame in Christendom, as testifies the epistle of Jude (verse 13). Yet they desire forcibly to silence those who have the name and honor of the Church.



**65.** That they are not the Church of Christ needs no further proof. It follows clearly enough from this saying of Christ that whoever does not love him does not keep his Word; whoever does not keep his Word, is no member of his Church, and has no part in his kingdom, as stated. That they do not keep Christ's Word nor love Christ is itself testimony against them, crying unto heaven. They continue in this evil until the present day, so blinded as not to heave one sigh of Christian repentance for the error and abomination of which they are convicted, and of which they must be conscious, and by which they have led so many souls into ruin. Nor are they at all anxious that for the future God's Word might be rightly preached and that poor souls find help. On the contrary they resist with might and main and would rather see the country and its people, yea, the whole world, drenched in blood than that they should correct even one of their errors. From all this it may be seen how completely they are in the power of the devil, and that God's wrath must eventually reach them.

**66.** Christians are set apart from all other people upon earth, not by certain outward signs or certain works which all non-Christians and hypocrites may likewise do, but only by this, that they love Christ and keep his Word. Therein faith and love to Christ are made manifest. Those who do not love Christ and keep his Word, and do not desire to, thus separate and cast themselves out. Love to Christ, as has been said, cannot remain secret and hidden, but it must manifest itself in word and deed. So, likewise, must unbelievers manifest themselves. Notice that it is not enough to hear the Word; it must be kept; that is, one must bear witness before all the world in deed and in confession, and must stand by the faith, even though it should mean the loss of everything on account of it. One's sincerity or hypocrisy will surely reveal itself.

**67.** Now it should be plain why Christ, at the beginning, said that he would manifest himself, not unto the world, but unto those who love him. The world has no inclination to accept Christ in the character he has shown himself on the cross and in his unattractive earthly form. He does not bring the things it desires — worldly power, honor and riches, and praise and approval of its own wisdom, its holiness etc. It is completely sunk and submerged in lust and love of riches. Wherever it does not find these things, there it perceives nothing further, and will not be attracted. On the contrary, it retreats lest it be robbed of its earthly treasures. Especially does it repel the suggestion that worldly reputation and honor, temporal



wisdom, virtues and holiness should be denounced and reduced to sin and shame before God.

**68.** Therefore, the kingdom of Christ must remain hidden to the world and the Gospel be concealed; the world's heart must be blinded by the devil. People of the world can know neither Christ nor the Father, and he can make no abode with them, that they might experience some comfort from his Word and some power from his work. So the Gospel and the knowledge of Christ certainly remain a revelation, and, as St. Paul says in ~~<5105>~~ Romans 16:25 and ~~<4112>~~ 1 Corinthians 2:7 — a mystery, a hidden, secret thing. Not that it has not been declared publicly enough to all the world and clearly brought to the light, but the world despises it, and deems it foolishness and an offense compared with its own wisdom. Hence, it is believed only by a few simple people, who are not offended at the unattractive figure of the cross of Christ, hidden under which are comfort, strength, victory, life and salvation, treasures which are theirs through faith. The others do not deserve to know about this Gospel, for they do not desire it. Christ says in ~~<4112>~~ Matthew 11:25: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes.”

*“And the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me.”*

**69.** Here, you see, he speaks of the oral Word, which they heard of him; and he so magnifies it that whoever despises and rejects it, has not despised the man who utters it but the divine majesty. Again, he comforts those who keep his Word with the assurance that thereby they are doing the will of God the Father. He does not want to let the matter rest with himself alone, but, as said, he wishes to draw us upward through himself to the Father. This he does everywhere in the Gospel of St. John, to shield us against great and dangerous temptation, wherein the devil is a master. It is in pious, suffering hearts that the devil labors most, that he may separate Christ from the Father. It is his intention that one who hears Christ's Word may yet, in thought, undertake to find the will and heart of God outside of Christ.

**70.** For the devil is content if one holds only to the man Christ and goes no further; yes, he is also willing that the word that Christ is truly God should be preached and heard. But what he opposes is, that the heart should unite Christ and the Father so intimately and inseparably as to be convinced that the Word of Christ and the Word of the Father are altogether the same

Word and heart and will. Uninstructed hearts think- Yes, I, indeed hear how Christ in friendliness comforts troubled consciences, but who knows how I stand before God in heaven? This is not believing God and Christ as one, but it is making for one's self another Christ and another God. It is missing the true God, who would be found nowhere except in this Christ. Christ says concerning this, to Philip, in ~~<B14D>~~ John 14:9: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

So, also, Christ says in ~~<B17G>~~ John 7:16: "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me." That is precisely what he says here: What you hear from me is assuredly my Father's Word and will, and you need not search any further, nor be anxious, as though God were angry with you or had evil thoughts toward you; but you are to be positive that God is gracious and favorable toward you, for he has sent me from heaven to declare this unto you.

**71.** Therefore, beware, by all means, of other thoughts or suggestions that may move you to doubt this, or that may direct you to look for another revelation of God's will concerning you, aside from this Christ. In such search you must surely fail, yes, even meet with harm and destruction, if you think of finding the divine majesty elsewhere. Or you may be deceived by the devil, who, instead of God, offers his own phantom. For he possesses the art of representing himself in the majesty of God, even as he did before Christ, inducing souls to worship and obey him. If this scheme fails, he confuses his victim with all manner of thoughts and imaginations, in an attempt to tear him away from this Christ. Against this, a Christian needs to be fortified, and skilled in wisdom; he must learn to bind his heart and his thoughts alone to the Word of Christ, that he may not wish to know or hear any other God than him. This I have elsewhere treated at length.

## THE OTHER PART OF THIS GOSPEL.

### IV. THE FOURTH PROMISE.

"These things have I spoken unto you, while yet abiding with you. But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you."

**72.** These, now, are closing words which Christ speaks to his disciples — a conclusion to his sermon, his utterances of comfort. He wishes to part from them; he thus takes his leave and directs them to further future comfort, when the Holy Spirit shall be given them, who shall teach them to understand all these things and to experience this comfort in very deed. As if he would herewith say: So far I have been with you, and have done for you what I should and could do. I have given you my Word, and have comforted you by word of mouth, to which you are to hold when I depart from you. It is true that the comfort of the words which I have spoken is indeed great and sublime; but while I am still with you, you do not take them to heart that you experience their sweetness and power. They remain only as the Word that I speak to you, and are as yet nothing more.

**73.** But they are not to continue simply as my words and speech, but are also to become a part of your own experience; not a mere empty sound or echo, but a living comfort in your hearts. This however cannot be so long as I am with you, for ye now possess only the bodily and physical comfort of my presence; therefore, I must be taken from you, in order that this comfort may become effective in you and that the Holy Spirit may teach you these things. When ye have lost me and are left alone in danger, need and fear, then, for the first time, ye will realize the need of comfort and of praying for it. Then will the Holy Spirit find you to be really teachable pupils. He will prove to be your helper and reminder. Through his aid you may perceive to what end I said these things. Then shall your hearts experience the comfort and power of the fact that I manifest myself and the Father unto you, and so abide in you that others may also learn of this comfort through your word.

**74.** And note well this text, how Christ here binds the Holy Spirit to his Word, and fixes his limit and measure, so that the Spirit may not go further than his Word. Everything which I have said he shall remind you of, publishing it further through you. Thereby he shows that in the future nothing else shall be taught through the Holy Spirit in all Christendom than what the apostles had heard from Christ, but which they did not yet understand, until the Holy Spirit had taught them. So the teaching may always proceed from the mouth of Christ, then be transmitted from one mouth to another, and yet always remain the Word of Christ. The Holy Spirit is thus the school-master who teaches these things and brings them to remembrance.

**75.** Secondly, it is shown here that this Word precedes or must be spoken beforehand, and that afterwards the Holy Spirit works through the Word. One must not reverse the order and dream of a Holy Spirit who works without the Word and before the Word, but one who comes with and through the Word and goes no farther than the Word goes.

**76.** Thirdly, the example of the apostles show how Christ rules his Church in her weakness; the Holy Spirit does not dwell in Christians at all times, nor so soon as they have heard the Word does he come with such power and effectiveness as to enable them to believe it all and rightly to understand and grasp it. And in our case there is a great difference between hearing the Word and feeling in it the power and effect of the Holy Spirit. For although the apostles are so far advanced — the Holy Spirit working so much in them — as to hear Christ's Word willingly and to have begun to believe, yet even they can not take these words of comfort to heart until the Holy Spirit teaches them after the departure of Christ.

**77.** So it is at present. We hear God's Word, which is in fact the preaching of the Holy Spirit, who is at all times present with it, but it does not always at once reach the heart and be accepted by faith; yea, in the case of those who are moved by the Holy Spirit and gladly receive the Word, it does not at once bear fruit. One may not, indeed, for a long time feel that he has been made any better or comforted and strengthened, especially where as yet he has experienced no fear and danger, but only peace and rest. This was the case with the apostles before Christ was taken from them; they thought of nothing more than of preserving bodily comfort. Therefore, it must, in our case, come to this: In need and danger we look about and sigh for comfort; then the Holy Spirit can perform his office of teaching the heart arm bringing to its remembrance the Word preached.

**78.** It is then profitable always to hear the Word and to train one's self there with, even if it does not at once reach the mark, in order that in time of need the heart may recall what it has heard, and may begin rightly to understand it, and to feel its power and comfort. As an illustration, the embers that have lain under the ashes for a time will burn again and kindle if one stir and blow upon them. One should, therefore, not look upon the Word as ineffective or as having been preached in vain, nor seek for another because its fruit is not at once apparent.

**79.** It is not worth while here to answer the papists, who, in this text "He shall teach you all things" etc., want to find support for their figment and

so foolishly say that Christ has not taught the apostles all that they needed to know, but has left and reserved much for the Holy Spirit to teach them. Such drivel is sufficiently destroyed by the text itself, which declares in clear, plain words: “The Holy Spirit shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.” So, also, before this, he directed them everywhere to his Word alone, as he says: “If a man love me, he will keep my Word.” Likewise, in <sup><B14></sup>John 16:14, he says concerning the Holy Spirit: “He shall not speak from himself but he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you.”

**80.** But it is a sin and a shame to hear and suffer such pretension in Christendom as this, that the Holy Spirit should teach — I will not say something adverse only, such as the pope, as the live Antichrist, with the open abominations of his doctrine, teaches, things directly against Christ, namely, those things which the pope urges most as merit of personal work, the offering of the mass, denial of the cup, celibacy, calling upon departed saints, lies of purgatory and fictitious power — but that he should teach something different and better than Christ the Son of God has taught, who himself is the teacher, sent from heaven for that purpose. Or that Christ should have omitted something more needful, which it was necessary to reveal and teach by means of the councils. Excepting the first councils, wherein the Scriptures established against the heretics the one doctrine concerning the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, the councils dealt only with the lesser matters of doctrine, which pertain merely to things of human arrangement and ordinances, for which the Holy Spirit’s power is not needed, either to promise or to give anything. Ah! he has much higher things to teach and to reveal, things concerning which human councils can neither order nor establish anything: how one may escape God’s wrath, conquer sin and death, trample the devil under foot. Christ alone teaches these things and he says that whoever would accomplish them must keep his Word.

**81.** If these perverted, shameful glosses of the papists were not otherwise faulty, one should condemn and curse them as the devil’s poison and lies because they tear hearts from the Word of Christ. If one thinks Christ has not taught everything, then eyes and ears are at once wide open to gaze and listen elsewhere and one thinks: Oh, there must be still something great, not taught by Christ, which the Holy Spirit is still to teach! Oh, if I could but hear and know this, then I should surely be saved!

**82.** The result of this is harm and mischief: one does not attach importance to the Word of Christ, and when he afterwards hears anything new, he deems it a precious thing and necessary unto salvation. Christ, in order to warn us against everything that is not his Word, as if against the devil's poison, not only binds the Holy Spirit to his Word, that he should not teach anything else, but he, himself, in his preaching appeals to his Father's command and says: It is not mine, but my Father's Word. How, then, can one sanction councils in teaching or ordering some new thing when they can never present any authority for such action? The apostles have the command from Christ and the Holy Spirit that they should teach nothing but the Word of Christ, as they, themselves, testify; hence; councils and all men are in duty bound to abide by the same command and to show that what they teach is the same doctrine.

*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you:  
not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”*

## V. THE FIFTH PROMISE.

**83.** This is bidding them a friendly good night. Christ was willing and able to speak with his disciples in the most loving manner. Well, I must away, he says, and cannot speak much more with you, therefore ye have my good night, and let it be well with you. I wish and give you nothing else but peace, that is, that it may be well with you. (For, according to the Hebrew language, “peace” means nothing else than to give and to bestow all good.) That is to be my last farewell. Ye shall suffer no hurt nor want because of my departure. I will richly repay you, for ye shall have from me, in my stead, the best that ye can wish, the peace and good of the fact that in my Father ye have a merciful God, whose thoughts toward you are those of a father's heart and love. And in me ye shall have a good, faithful Savior, who will do you all good, and not forsake you in any need, will defend and stand by you against the devil, the world and all wickedness, and in addition will give you the Holy Spirit, who shall so rule your hearts that you find in me true comfort, peace and joy.

**84.** That is what is meant when he says, My peace is given you and left with you. Not as the world gives peace; for it is not able to give such peace and blessing, all its peace and good being not only transient but also uncertain and changing with each hour. The world bases peace and comfort only upon transient things — gold, possessions, power, honor, the

friendship of men etc. When these are gone, then peace and confidence and courage are gone. Though it were in the power of the world to give and preserve all these, yet it has not, nor can it have, true eternal peace, so that a heart enjoys God's favor and is certain of his grace and of everlasting life.

**85.** But since this is not the world's peace, the holy cross is laid upon it; then, measured by reason and by our feelings, it means no peace, but distensions, anguish, terror, fear and trembling. Christ says in ~~John~~ John 16:33: "In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world;" that is to be your peace. Therefore, ye are not to think that ye will have a kingdom and power and ease in the world, or that men will receive your preaching, since ye do not proclaim and bring to it what it seeks and enjoys. But only hold fast to my Word, then ye shall have peace against the devil and the world. This they shall not take from you with their distensions.

**86.** Observe, thus Christ has secured and satisfied his Church with peace, a peace that abides in the midst of thorns and briars, that is, of tribulation and temptation. The devil and the world, for the sake of the Word and of confession of Christ, will sting, torture and plague you; so that, as the Word is a Word of grace, love and of the peace of God and Christ toward us, so is it here in the world a Word of wrath and trouble. Therefore, when the heart feels oppressed, in anguish and even terrified and as if a fugitive before God on account of the devil's suggestion, this peace must be fixed in faith, the heart may inclose and secure itself in the Word of Christ and say: I know, nevertheless, that I have God's pledge and the witness of the Holy Spirit, that he wants to be my kind Father and is not angry with me, but assures me of peace and all good through Christ, his Son If he is my friend, then let the devil and the world, so long as they do not want to smile, be angry and rave with their affliction.

*"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful."*

**87.** This is the real, friendly, personal voice of the faithful Savior; he would gladly write upon the hearts of his Christians that they should have and expect from him nothing else but peace and every good. He well knows how difficult it is to retain this peace and comfort of the heart, and how the devil opposes here; even if a man is courageous and able to despise and overcome the wrath and enmity of all the world, Satan tries to drive him into terror and fear before God. Yes, Christ knows this well — that natural flesh and blood shudders and that no one laughs when it goes ill with him,

when all that he has is taken and he is delivered to the hangman; much less when the devil actually seizes the timid heart and mangles it between the spurs, so that it can scarcely get its breath for anguish.

**88.** But hear ye well, he wishes to say, what I say unto you for the sake of my Father, that he does not want you to be fearful, nor are ye to be concerned about any affliction or fear. Ye are to know that it is only the miserable spirit of lies, the devil, who wishes to make you fearful, and who, under the name and appearance of God, wants to blind and deceive pious hearts. As a devil he does nothing publicly, for he knows that where he is known his cause is already lost. Therefore let not your heart be taken, but be only the stronger and the more undismayed, and this from love and obedience to my Father and myself, but for the confusion and vexation of the devil and the world.

**89.** If one could believe these words, and could see how they are the words of Christ the Lord, he would surely be comforted, and be able to despise what all hell may do to terrify him. For whom should he fear who knows that Christ, and God through him, together with the Holy Spirit, give him the pledge of grace and peace, and command him to be joyful and without fear? It is only because of our weakness that we are not able here to believe Christ, and that our flesh and blood, feeling their unworthiness, believe the devil and his false fears rather than the true and gracious Word, in which God if only we begin to believe on Christ, announces unto us forgiveness of sin and perfect salvation.

“Ye heard how I said unto you. I go away and I come unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father for the Father is greater than I.”

**90.** All is intended richly to comfort the disciples and to strengthen them in view of his departure; therefore he speaks very plainly with them, saying: “If ye loved me” etc., and yet he means it beyond measure most kindly, even as the dearest friend would feel toward another. I have told you, says he, and it is true, that I must leave you. Ye do not like to hear this, for ye know that, so long as I am with you, joy is your only portion in me. But, my dear disciples, if ye have heard the one message, then hear the other likewise, and listen to what is said, that I will again come to you with better and greater ‘comfort and joy than ye so far have had in me.



**91.** Yes, if ye rightly loved me, as ye think, ye should be glad that I now go away from you, for it is in truth to your best interest, and from the heart ye should be pleased, both for your sake and mine, and should not want to see it otherwise. For my departure does not mean that ye will lose me, or that I or ye shall suffer any hurt; but it is alone for your sake that I should enter into my glory, in my Father's kingdom, and, sitting at the right hand of the Father, should become a mighty Lord over everything in heaven and upon earth, where I can protect and help you against everything that seeks to injure you. This I cannot do now, upon earth, in my humility and littleness, where I have been sent to suffer and die.

**92.** For what he says — the Father is greater than I — is not said of the personal, divine essence of his own nature nor of his Father's as the Arians have falsely interpreted this passage, not wishing to see why or whereof Christ so speaks here; but concerning the difference between the kingdom which he shall have with his Father and his service or servile state in which he was before his resurrection. Now I am small, he wishes to say, in my work and station as a servant; as he says in ~~4118~~ Matthew 20:28: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." That is making one's self little, and, as St. Paul says in ~~1128~~ Philippians 2:8, humbling one's self, or casting one's self beneath all things and letting sin, death, devil and world tread upon one. But this littleness shall not continue, he says, for that would be a complete undoing; it shall only be a passageway, the way and means by which I come to the Father, where I shall no longer be little, but great and powerful, as he is, and where I shall rule and reign with him forever.

**93.** That this is the plain, simple meaning of this text appears from the fact that he is speaking here properly of that which he calls going unto the Father. It is not a change in his person or essence. In that sense we do not say of him that he goeth unto the Father, or that he went forth and was separated from the Father, for he is and remains one with the Father, in one divine essence, without beginning or end, to eternity; he dare not ascend higher nor grow greater. But he is speaking concerning the change of office, from his state of service to that of glory and eternal dominion.

**94.** Therefore, what is said here about going to the Father and about the Father's being greater, means nothing else than the glorification of Christ, and is said that it may appear what and who he is; not what he in his person should or could be, for that he was already and from eternity, though it was

not yet revealed and could not be known, since he was still in the servile, suffering, dying state. The Father was greater than he; not according to the essence of the two persons, by which God is Father and Christ is the Son, but according to dominion and glory. As the schools state it: not by the first act but by the second etc.

**95.** Therefore, he says, ye should much prefer to see me lay aside this little, humble state and this form of a servant and enter into my own dominion in the character of ruler, which I have enjoyed with my Father from eternity. For this present state upon which I entered through my incarnation of the virgin, necessitates suffering and abasement; but there I shall enjoy supreme authority, with all things under my feet.

**96.** Now this was said not alone to the disciples, but also to all Christians; for the experience of the apostles is that of Christendom at all times. Christians find themselves in fear and anguish, without comfort and help; with the apostles, such a state would be called a going away of Christ. Such going away grieves in truth; and doubtless the apostles were sorely hurt; they fell into such despair that they all denied Christ and were scattered. This is the hour of deep mourning, when laughter and joy are precious, and there is nothing but need and misery. Here, says Christ, we should rejoice and be glad. Yes, if any one could do it. Flesh and blood, of course, cannot. St. Paul confesses in ~~4005~~2 Corinthians 7:5, that in the flesh he had no rest even though he rejoiced in spirit and in faith and boasted o/f tribulation and of his weakness. And Christ himself says concerning this, in ~~4001~~Matthew 26:41: “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The flesh cannot judge nor think otherwise than it feels, and it prefers not to feel, but to get rid of all that oppresses and torments it.

**97.** If you would learn the art of dominating your feelings and living above them, you must listen, and hear and grasp the word which Christ utters: Dear Christians, do believe me, it will not be to your injury, but for your good. My departure does not mean that ye will be forsaken by me, but that I, through this going away, shall conquer, and that ye may experience my power and might as I, seated at the right hand of the Father, rule over your sin and over your enemies, the devil, death and hell; then none of these shall touch you by a hair’s breadth, except at my will, and shall not hurt you, but rather serve and benefit you.

Therefore, do heed my Word above your feelings. If I have told you the truth, saying that I shall go away, which ye shall now be able to prove, so

also will I not deceive you in the other matter of my coming again; ye shall be able to say: I did not believe that my Lord Christ would be so near to me and would have helped me in such a wonderful manner; now I could not wish that he had not gone from me.

**98.** Behold what comfort it is in the hour of greatest need, when Christ seems altogether lost, that one may have the victory if he still holds on to the Word of Christ as to a life saving plank, until he gets out of danger! Thus, he does not sink when the flood of trouble overwhelms horse and wagon. That is what it means, then, to rejoice over the departure of Christ; according to the flesh, altogether a weak and very secret joy. Yet, in so far as faith holds fast to the Word, it is nevertheless joy, until faith overcomes and the experience follows that Christ has not forsaken us, but, seated at the right hand of the Father, protects and helps us out. But none can know this except he experiences it. As the saying is, when the water runs into his mouth, he must learn to swim.

*“And now I have told you before it come to pass, that,  
when it is come to pass, ye may believe.”*

**99.** This, of course, is said concerning experience. I, indeed, say it to you now in words, but it does not at all enter into you, nor become effective, as yet. I say it in order that ye may, nevertheless, have a little comfort when ye think of it and recall that I had told you beforehand that thus it must be; when ye have once been helped, your faith will be strengthened and ye may also contend further and overcome.

*“I will no more speak much with you, for the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”*

**100.** Come, then, says he; now we must part. The devil is coming on. He will seize me and think that if he only gets me, then it will be a sorry case with you. As prince and lord of the world, he has destroyed so many that he thinks to continue lord and prince over you. He will also get me between the spurs and undertake to vanquish me. But he shall fail and shall find me to be another than he supposed. With others, he has indeed a claim upon them; he finds them in sin and guilty of eternal death. But in me he has no right of claim and thereby he passes judgment upon himself that,

with death and hell, he must lie at my feet, and, moreover, secure nothing from those who are mine.

**101.** Thus, in the hour of his greatest conflict, he gathers courage and boldness for himself from the strength of his innocence and his advantage over the devil and death, wherein they must meet their ruin by him and forfeit their claim upon those who believe in him and for whose sake he surrenders himself. Thus, by his blood and his death, he takes revenge on the devil for all other blood and death. This blood, which cries for vengeance, is, as the Epistle to the Hebrews says (<sup><8124></sup>Hebrews 12:24), far different blood from that of Abel, which cried to God against the murderer. That is a type of this blood which pronounces condemnation upon the devil and death for all the shed blood of his believers since the beginning of the world. Thus Christ seeks, not alone by his divine power, but also by the weakness of his suffering and death, to despoil the devil of his power and dominion over the Christians, so that he must be cast out, as he says in <sup><8123></sup>John 12:31, and leave him the prince and captain of salvation.

**102.** Why, now, does he do and suffer these things? The devil has no claim upon him and he could easily escape him or could vanquish him. But it must be done, says he, that the world may realize that I love the Father and fulfill his commandment. This is the comforting word by which he reveals to us the Father's will and heart, that we may see all this which he does and suffers for our sakes was so determined by the Father's good will; that thus he, as the true, faithful mediator, might appease all of the wrath and displeasure of God, and assure our hearts of his fatherly grace and love. For how should God yet be angry with or condemn us, since he has so earnestly commanded his Son to divest himself of all his divine glory and might and, for our sakes, cast them under the feet of the devil and of death? But oh, Christ says, if the world but knew and believed that I do not do this of myself, but out of great love, giving my body and life remains of the old birth, still rough and uncouth, is being out of obedience to my Father! Whoever can believe that, is saved already, rescued from the devil and death.

# PENTECOST MONDAY.

This sermon, which does not appear in edition e., appeared in eight pamphlet editions during 1522 and 1523. The title of the first edition was as follows: "A sermon on Pentecost Monday, the Gospel of John 3, 'God so loved the world' etc. Preached by Dr. Martin Luther, Wittenberg," (1522). Other editions were issued with the title: "A sermon preached at Wittenberg by Dr. M. L. on the subject, Through what means alone salvation is obtained." The reprint in the collection of 14 sermons contains variations worthy of note.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:338; Walch Edition, 11:1460; St. Louis Walch, 11:1085.

*Text: <sup><1516></sup>John 3:16-21. For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.*

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## SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL:

1. God the Father loved us in his beloved Son before the foundation of the world, ~~4008~~ Ephesians 1:4. Therefore, as Christ cannot perish, we cannot perish nor die, if we are in Christ and remain in him by faith, as St. Paul says to the Romans: “If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” ~~4818~~ Romans 8:31-32.
2. When John writes: “God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world,” it is to be understood as referring to the time Christ preached in mortal flesh and taught the true way to salvation because of the command of the Father. For after this it is not said that he is sent; but that he will come to judge the world, as is often found in the Evangelists and the Apostles.
3. The flesh knows nothing whatever of judgment; just as it does not understand the righteousness of God. It neither sees nor has it any intimation that it is already condemned.
4. From the passage, “This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light,” you readily understand the passage in ~~4818~~ John 16:8: “The Holy Spirit will convict the world in respect of judgment.”
5. Here you also see that good works are the fruits of the light, that is, of faith; but wicked deeds are the fruits of darkness, that is, of unbelief and hypocrisy.

## I. HOW CHRIST PRESENTS HIMSELF IN THIS SERMON AS MEDIATOR AND SAVIOR.

1. This is another of the true Gospel lessons, such as John is accustomed to write; for he writes in a way to make him alone worthy the name of an evangelist. Now, as you have often heard, the Gospel teaches nothing but

that one must learn to know Christ alone, and so the Holy Spirit teaches nothing ore. Therefore, examine Only the words themselves; they are weighty, precious and comforting beyond measure. First Christ says:

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.”*

**2.** Now, notice that Christ represents the Father to us as none else than the all-loving and magnetic one, and he brings us through himself to the Father. Everything Christ does tends to help us to acquire a loving confidence in the Father. To simply fear the Father confers no benefit; but to bear to him a companionable love of rare quality makes us blessed. Now, Christ says here, the Father so loved the world that he gave his beloved child for the world, and instituted for us a way to come to him; that way is Christ. I have often said that faith alone is not sufficient before God, but the price of redemption must also be in evidence. The Turk and Jew, too, believe in God, but without means and mediator.

**3.** What is now the cost of redemption? Today’s Gospel points this out. The Holy Spirit teaches everywhere that we do not possess the Father except through a mediator, and he will not allow us to approach the Father without one. Now, the schools teach us to approach the Father without a mediator, through our own good works. That means to reject Christ as a mediator, as Jeremiah tells us did the godless, who thought and said: Let us send wood to him as his food, and we will root him out of the land, and there will be no remembrance of his name. But their plans did not result as they intended they should. Therefore, let us never join them. It would be at the peril of our lives, for we should be despising the priceless sacrifice which the Father made for us. But let us thank the Father for ordering it as he has, and placing between us one who is God and equal with God, and also man, on a level with man; for we are human and he is God. Where God and man oppose each other, man meets with instant destruction, for he cannot stand against God. God has intervened by placing as mediator one who is alike true God and true man. Through him we are to come to the Father; with the price we can pay nothing is accomplished.

**4.** Now, the schools teach that man is to be saved by his own works; they say: Whosoever becomes a monk or nun, or repeats every day the little prayer of St. Bridget, shall be eternally saved; and all the books are full of like teachings. This is no less than saying: I will work enough to escape perdition; I will turn my sins into vapor, to disappear and open a way into



heaven. They wish to discover the sacrifice or price of salvation in themselves and to ignore Christ as mediator. But they must perish, since they fain would come to the Father without a mediator, without Christ, whom the Father holds up before us out of his gracious goodness. Christ teaches here that we are not lost, but have eternal life; that is, that God has so loved us that he allowed the ransom to cost him his only beloved child. Him he placed in our stead to suffer misery, hell and death, and let him drink our cup to the dregs. This is the way we are to be saved.

**5.** Now, if there were another way to heaven doubtless he would have made it known to us. There is no other. Therefore, let us cling to the words, firmly pilot our hearts along this way and keep within it, and let us close our eyes and say: If I had the merits of all the saints, the sanctity and purity of all virgins, and the piety of St. Peter besides, still I would not give a fig for all I call my own. I must have another foundation on which to build, namely, the words: God has given his Son, that whosoever believeth on him, whom the Father sent out of love, shall be saved. And let us defiantly boast that we must be sustained. Let us fearlessly establish ourselves upon his words, which neither Satan, hell nor death can overthrow, for the Father mightily writes his Word over these terrors and all that clings to them. Come what will, let us say: Here is God's Word; that is my rock and anchor; to that I cling and that abides; and where that abides, there I abide also. For God cannot lie; sooner would the heavens and earth perish than the smallest letter or tittle of his Word would fail.

**6.** Notice carefully now that man must have a mediator, and that mediator is Christ. Ascend upon him to the Father, and say: Although! cannot exist before thy majesty nor that of any angel — all must shake and tremble — yet I have here one, Christ, whom thou canst not fail to regard. I am under his protection and rely upon thy Word that thou wilt receive me through him. Thou wilt not reject me, for thou must reject him before thou dost reject me. In this way one must come to the Father through Christ, thereby gaining a beautiful and loving refuge in him.

**7.** This lifts up and cheers a timid, despairing conscience and gives it peace. Aside from God's Word nothing helps, neither cowls nor tonsures, neither the priesthood nor monkery. No human work, be it called ever so holy, is able to silence God's judgment and give peace to our hearts. God has, out of love, given us his Son, through whom we shall be saved; therefore, let no one make another way than this. Guard yourself against adding to it, for

so you would but render it valueless. He who adds to it, leads from the right road upon a branch road that goes into the wilderness. Hence, let not your conscience trust in any work, in any merit of saints, but alone in the Word of God. That will not lie to you, but its promise will be sufficient. Then you will lay hold upon God with his own words; upon them you can build; to them you can anchor your heart and confidence. Now follows, further, in this Gospel:

*“For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him.”*

- 8.** With these words one can apprehend God as he is to be apprehended. You do not seek him; rather he seeks you, and pictures his Son before you as a Savior and not as a judge. Thus there is developed for you a refuge in the Father.
- 9.** It is a common practice to represent the gracious Savior as a judge, and from this practice has sprung a dependence upon the merits of saints, causing us to turn away from Christ and take refuge in the saints. We fancy that the saints are more gracious and more kindly disposed to us than even God himself. Therefore, one says, St. Peter is my apostle; another says, St. Paul is my patron; and so on with St. Barbara, St. Erasmus and others. But God cannot permit this; the glory must belong to him. My conscience must rest upon the foundation, the eternal, all-knowing truth, else it is a failure. Now, God alone is the truth, and the conscience must rest upon him and nothing else.
- 10.** If I picture Christ as only a judge, I shall fear him. The result will be that soon I am constrained before him, grow afraid of him and then hate him, and my heart becomes corrupt and blasphemous. But when I know him as the Gospel pictures him, and long for him as the best friend that my heart can choose, then it is well; love soon follows. No friend can do as much for us as he has. I forget father and mother and love him; then I have a strong confidence in him. But if one simply fears *him*, then that one falls back on his good works and makes no recognition of Christ as mediator, thinking to run into the presence of God without him. In this way he works his own ruin. It is with him as the psalmist says of the fools and godless, ~~101~~ Psalm 53:5: “There were they in great fear, where no fear was.” And in ~~101~~ Proverbs 28:1 Solomon says: “The wicked flee when no man pursueth.” For their stubborn hearts are afraid before Christ, though he is still their

best friend, and they run when no one pursues, solely because of their stubborn and false conception of Christ.

**11.** Then learn from this lesson to know Christ aright and to hold him between yourself and the Father; let him alone be the sacrifice which shall secure heaven and salvation. Oh, when this passage comes to mind in the hour of death, when the test comes, what comfort to meditate on its message — how the Lord came not to condemn the world, but to save it. He who believes, cannot be lost, but will be saved, since it is true that naught accomplishes our salvation except Christ alone, who came to be our Savior. Then believe on him. In the words we are studying, he calls everybody, and even threatens as well as calls, concluding thus:

“He that believeth on him is not fudged: he that believeth not hath been fudged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

## II. THE JUDGMENT CHRIST PASSES UPON THE WORLD AND BELIEVERS.

**12.** When the learned schools would make people godly, they hold before them the judgment, making it as hot as they possibly can; in this way they lead men into terror, where they abandon them, never pointing out a way of escape. Here Christ also presents the judgment and threatens men, but at the same time he tells them how they may flee from wrath. This is his teaching: There will be a judgment, which no one can escape except those who believe without any ifs or ands. If you add anything thereto, you have entered upon the byway into the woods and are lost; for he that believeth not, is lost already. I am the only door that opens into heaven. The way is narrow; you must become small if you wish to pass through the rock. Those who are decorated with good works, like a workrighteous person with shells, can never force their way through. They must divest themselves and become small. One can meet the conditions only when he despairs of himself. If you come hampered with great burdens of good works, you will never be able to forge a way into heaven; you must lay them aside before you can enter.

**13.** From this it follows that where faith is, there sin does no harm; for faith makes us Christ's. But where faith is not, there is either fear and hatred of

God, or a profligate, sinful life. We met with this same truth when we learned that the Holy Spirit will convict the world in respect of sin because, as Christ says, they believed not on him. The only sin is unbelief. Faith roots out all sins. Unbelief is the only reason why man does not know God. Because of it he is in fear in the presence of God. When a man is in fear, he hates and blasphemes God, heaping up his sins and keeping none of the commandments. Now, Christ gives a reason for this judgment; he says:

*“And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil.”*

**14.** The light is Christ the Lord, manifest in the knowledge of him, as he is here pictured in this Gospel. As a glance into the sun, we may look into this Gospel and see what God is. This light is come into the world through the preaching of the apostles and has shone through the whole world. Man is its enemy only because of his evil works; the whole world is fast therein. Why do not the pope and bishops, the priests and monks, permit their deeds to be exposed and their manner of life brought to light? For the reason that their works are evil. Now, the light reveals to us that all our works amount to nothing and we must have Christ alone. When we apply the test of that light, they say: Nay, should I have fasted and prayed so long for nothing? Get out, you heretics! If men no longer believed in the efficacy of works, no one would attend vigils and the mass; then the monks’ kitchens would become small and their cellars empty. Since they cannot tolerate such a possibility, they must hate the light.

**15.** God has blinded them so that they build on stone and wood, overlooking the foundation of truth and failing to build upon Christ. The Gospel aims, however, to establish the heart upon the eternal foundation truth. Now, if one would overthrow their manner of building, the light must be brought and their works be made manifest, that they may be put to shame. They will never tolerate such inspection, however, but must protect their doings, with the consequence that they become enemies to this light. That is just what the Lord says:

*“For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest their works should be reprovèd.”*

**16.** They hate the light, says Christ; because they do evil; they lead a shameful life, at the same time believing it to be a godly life. The devil, also, would be a fine fellow. He is anxious to sit in a clean place, and not

lie before the door; he would come within the heart, but never to the light; he would wear the cloak of respectability, so that his injustice be not seen. Now, let us take the light of day as an illustration. The sun will not refuse to rise because I am lazy and would gladly sleep an hour or two longer. No, it goes forth in its course and does not hide its light, although it is not agreeable to me. Likewise will the Sun of righteousness arise; the evil-doers are unwilling to come into the light, but they cover and guard their sins and evil deeds. Thereby they merit the judgment; for they have not only done wickedly, but they wish to defend their action, which is a double sin.

**17.** But the righteous gladly approach the light, willing that all may pass judgment upon their works, and they even let the devil examine them. They have cultivated in good soil, because they possess faith, and they go forth in their faith to help the poor. These works are wrought in them by God, hence they cannot be evil. Thus a righteous person gladly permits all the world to act as judge upon his works. It is a beautiful thing when a believer, finding his work is rejected, says: Yes, there is no good at all in the works of my own doing, but the works that are wrought in me by Christ, my Lord, they are good. He desires no honor, but will ascribe all honor to God; will possess all in God that he should possess, and can, with a good conscience, go to the light and not be put to shame. That is what Christ means in his closing words:

*“But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.”*

**18.** Now we have heard what our consolation and our final and only refuge is, upon which we should lay our foundation and build. No person who professes to be a Christian dare undertake to do any work, imagining thereby to be saved; he is not saved except through Christ alone, whom it cost his all. We must come to salvation through him and his work, with nothing else added to it. If we build upon human works, we are reckoning directly against God’s grace.

**19.** On the other hand, we must not abandon works, saying as do the impudent: Aye, then I will do good works no longer in order to be saved. True, you dare do nothing with the intent of its being meritorious for salvation, for the forgiveness of sin and for the pacifying of the conscience; you have sufficient for these in your faith. But your neighbor has not sufficient; you must extend a helping hand to him. That you may perform

such service, God permits you to live; if not so, your execution would soon be called for. You live for the purpose of serving by your life, not yourself, but your neighbor.

**20.** Christ the Lord had also sufficient; what the world had was his. He might have passed us by, but it is not the nature of true life to do so. Nay, cursed be that life into perdition that lives for self; for to so live is heathenish and not Christian. Then those who have at present their sufficiency from Christ, must follow the example of Christ and with utter sincerity do good to their neighbors, as Christ did to us; freely, without the least thought of obtaining anything thereby, only with the desire that it be pleasing to God.

**21.** We Christians are like a child born in the father's house. It brings the title to the inheritance with it, in its flesh and blood; the title to the heritage belongs to it by virtue of its birth. A servant, however, acquires his merit, not in the family, but outside of it. When the child of the house is grown, it must, nevertheless, help to increase and improve the inheritance, making, it more valuable; but it does not, first of all, gain the inheritance by works, for that is acquired already by virtue of its birth. Just so, if we believe on God, then we are already heirs and need not to acquire inheritance by our works; yet we must be co-laborers with the Father to increase it. Paul speaks in like manner to the Philippians: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." <sup><045></sup>Philippians 2:5ff. That is: Lead such an outward life that it may be like the example of Christ, and help your neighbor with your life and property, thinking not of winning the birthright by your works. Guard your sonship, not by your own foolhardiness, but by faith, and be a colabore in extending the kingdom.

# PENTECOST MONDAY.

SECOND SERMON. ~~RBIG~~ JOHN 3:16-21.

## I. THE GLORIOUS GRACE AND GIFT IN CHRIST.

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#### CHRIST'S GRACE AND JUDGMENT.

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##### II. CHRIST'S JUDGMENT UPON THE WORLD AND BELIEVERS.

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1. This is one of the best and most glorious Gospel lessons, such as John particularly wrote. It is worthy to be written in golden letters, not upon paper, but if possible upon the heart; it ought to be made the daily lesson and meditation of Christians, who should repeat it to strengthen their faith and awaken their hearts to prayer. The words make the sad joyful and the dead alive, if the heart only firmly believes them.

2. It also gives instruction on the chief article of Christian faith, on the glory and liberty of Christians, whereby sin, the Law, God's wrath, death and hell are banished from believers and abolished, besides all human wisdom, righteousness and holiness are made futile in that which belongs to God's kingdom. He says: "Whosoever believeth on the Son of God should not perish, but have eternal life," death, the devil, the terror of the

Law, must be banished forever, our merit and worthiness doing nothing to that end. The excellent, great, eternal and divine treasure is thus portrayed here, which we should possess so as to be without fear before the judgment and condemnation of human nature through Adam's fall, and instead have salvation and victory, and every blessing besides. All this is offered and bestowed out of pure grace, and thus represented only as a gift that can be secured solely through faith.

## I. THIS GLORIOUS GRACE AND GIFT IN GENERAL.

**3.** In vivid and significant words the evangelist briefly sketches this grace and gift in Christ, that he may magnify it and portray minutely all concerned — the giver, the recipient, the gift, its fruits and benefits. All is so eloquently great that it is indescribable, and it is difficult to believe only because of its very greatness.

**4.** Before considering this, however, let us hear why and for what purpose Christ so speaks. He expresses it in the following words: "That whosoever believeth on him should not perish" etc. Here he would show the world the misery and helplessness in which it lies; that it is entirely lost, and would have had to remain lost eternally, had Christ not come with this proclamation; for all its wisdom, art, doctrine, law, and free-will would not avail in this respect; and in spite of all its teaching and endeavors, it is and will remain lost forever. For, from its very birth, it lies in sin, under the wrath of God, in the devil's kingdom, and under the-power of death, unable to help or free itself from this condition. Indeed it is so dazed and torpid that it would never have known nor realized its misery had this not been revealed to it through the Word.

**5.** Christ teaches the same truth at greater length in the declaration made to Nicodemus, just preceding this text, where he tells him plainly and clearly, that neither he nor any of the Jews of his kind, though they had the Law, and diligently performed works and outward divine services (which were at that time, indeed, the most commendable in the world), could thereby ever get to heaven, or see the kingdom of God. For such life and works are still but the works of man, who, in his natural descent from Adam, is but flesh without spirit, that is without true understanding and knowledge of the



divine will, and without genuine and heartfelt obedience to God; in short, it cannot convert itself to God, since it has wholly and fully turned away from God. Therefore, through the Law, man could never liberate himself from sin, the wrath of God and eternal death. Accordingly, if he would see the kingdom of God, he must be born anew, and have an entirely different nature, one that does not proceed from the flesh, as the old one did, but from the Spirit, and which is spiritual; and to this end another word and declaration must be received than that which they have in the Law, and a power beyond man's ability.

**6.** That we may become new men, he says, we must first be delivered from the curse of the old birth, that is, freed from sin and death. But since we still have flesh and blood, and live on earth, the old birth continues. Of itself, it must remain what it is by nature. Under its thrall, man, at death, must be damned, for no man is able to appease and remove the wrath and condemnation passed upon him; therefore, no one would ever see God, nor enter heaven. As Christ says: "And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven" etc. Hence another way had to be found. It could be only through some heavenly being, righteous and innocent in the fullest sense, pleasing and acceptable to God, who would adapt his perfection's to our human nature, so that the sin and condemnation that was its by birth might be taken away, and it might be reconciled to God and rescued from eternal death, and might turn to God and begin again rightly to know, love and obey him, and thus experience the beginning of the new birth, and eventually, through death, be thoroughly purified of remaining uncleanness of the old man, forever free from sin.

**7.** Now, the wrath of God against sin is so intense that no creature could have devised means to appease him or effect a reconciliation; the condemnation was so enormous that no angel was mighty enough to remove it, and reinstate life. Therefore, that one Person, even God's Son, had to take upon himself sin, God's wrath, and death, under which humanity helplessly lay, and make the sacrifice for them. Of this, Christ himself says, immediately before this text, that the Son of Man must be lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish". Here he adds the cause which moved God to accomplish this great work, when he says:

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."*

**8.** With these words he leads us directly into the Father's heart, that we may see and know that it was the great and wonderful counsel of God, resolved from eternity, that we should receive help through this Son. All had to be fulfilled, that God's truth might stand, even as he had promised afore-time in the Scriptures. It is thus apparent that God does not intend to cast us out, and to condemn us on account of our sins; but that he wills that, for the sake of this Savior and Mediator, if we fear his wrath on account of our sins, and keep in mind and firmly believe this eternal divine will, we should attain to the eternal grace of God and to eternal life.

## II. THIS GLORIOUS GRACE AND GIFT IN PARTICULAR.

**9.** Now, let us consider what significant and comforting words these are which depict in their every relation, and in manifold ways, this marvelous work of God, with its inexpressible treasure which is here freely offered us. In the first place, the Giver is not a man, an emperor or a king, nor even an angel; but is the exalted, eternal Majesty, God himself, compared with whom, all men, however rich, powerful and great they may be, are nothing but dust and ashes. Isaiah 40. How shall we describe him? He is incomprehensible, immeasurable, inexhaustible.

**10.** He is, then, no more a taskmaster, who simply makes demands upon us — as Moses calls him (<sup>400B</sup>Deuteronomy 4:24), a devouring and consuming fire — but a rich, overflowing, eternal fountain of grace and of all gifts, who justly deserves to be called Gebhard (a prince or champion of givers). In comparison with him, what are all emperors and kings, with their gifts, gold, silver, land and people? Here the heart should expand and increase with desiring, wishing and expecting that which the Lord God intends to give; for it indeed must needs be something great and valuable that could well become this exalted Majesty and rich God. Compared to such a Giver and gift, everything in heaven and on earth must be very small and insignificant.

**11.** In the second place, why does he give, and what incited him to it? Nothing but pure, inexpressible love. He does not give because it is a debt or duty, nor because any one has asked or pleaded, but he is moved to do

so by his own goodness as the Lord who willingly gives, and delights in giving gratuitously and without solicitation.

**12.** As there is no greater Giver than God, so there is no greater virtue, either in God or men, than love. One will sacrifice everything for what he loves, even his life. Patience, humility and all other virtues are nothing compared with it, or else are included in its essence. For whom I love, with him I will certainly never be angry, nor injure nor annoy him, nor make myself intolerable to him, but I will be ready to serve, counsel and help him whenever I see that he needs me. In short, I am his fully, as to my body, goods and all my possessions.

**13.** Accordingly, here, again, the heart shall grow and become strong against all sorrow, because such wealth of unfathomable divine love is set before us, flowing from a fatherly heart and having its source in the highest virtue, which is the fountain of all good, and which, therefore, makes the gift valuable and precious; just as the proverb deems a small gift valuable, when it says: It comes from a loving hand. For where there is love and friendship, one does not look upon the gift so much as upon the heart; it is love which adds great value to the gift. If God had given me only an eye, a hand or a foot, and I knew that he did it out of fatherly love, it would be much dearer to me than a thousand worlds. Now, since he gave us precious baptism, his Word, absolution and the Lord's Supper, they should be regarded as our daily paradise and heaven; not on account of the appearance of such gifts, which are not great in the eyes of the world, but on account of the great love from which they are given.

**14.** In the third place, consider the gift itself. It must, without doubt, be something excellent and inexpressibly great, that such a rich Giver gives us, with such sincere and generous love. What does he give? Not great kingdoms, not one or more worlds full of silver and gold, not heaven and earth with all they contain, not the entire creation, but his Son, who is as great as he himself. That is an eternal, incomprehensible gift, even as the Giver and his love are incomprehensibly great. He is the fountain and source of all grace, goodness and kindness; yes, the very essence of the eternal blessings and treasures of God. That is love, not with words, but in deed, in the highest degree, proven with the most precious goodness and wonderful work of which God himself is capable.

**15.** What more can he do and give? Since he gives his Son, what does he yet withhold, that he does not give? Yes, he gives himself wholly and

entirely, as Paul says, ~~HEB~~ Romans 8:32: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” Certainly, everything must have been given with him, who is his only begotten, beloved Son, the Heir and Lord of all creation; therefore, all creatures, angels, devils, death, life, heaven and earth, sin, righteousness, everything present and future, are subject to us. Paul says in ~~HEB~~ 1 Corinthians 3:22-23: “All are yours: and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s”; for this Son is all in all.

**16.** In the fourth place, how and in what manner is the Son given? Look upon him, in what he has done and suffered! For us he becomes man, is put under the Law, that is, under the wrath of God (on account of our sins). He is put to death, even the most ignominious death — lifted upon the cross and suspended in the air. He was condemned (even as Christ shortly before this had said), taking upon himself the wrath and fury of the devil and hell, and contending with them to such extent that it must be said that he was wholly abandoned. Yet he trampled the devil, sin, death and hell under foot, and obtained the victory over them through his resurrection and ascension. All this he gave us that it might be our own, that we might possess both him and all that he accomplished. And this he does in such a way that the gift may not be said to have been conferred upon us, either as wages or on account of merit, nor is it loaned, borrowed or for recompense, but freely given and bestowed out of purely benign grace. The receiver shall and can do no more in this case than to open his hand and take what God so graciously gives him, and what he truly needs, with love and thanksgiving.

**17.** In the fifth place he portrays the recipient, who is, in a word, the world. This is indeed a wonderful and peculiar case of loving and giving. Here the one loved is in strange contrast to the one loving. How can this love of God for the world be explained? What does he see in the world, that he is so ready to unbosom himself toward her? If it had been that he loved the angels, they are at least glorious and noble creatures, worthy of his love. But what, on the contrary, is the world but a great mass of people who neither fear nor love nor praise nor thank God, who misuse every creature, blaspheme God’s name and despise his Word, and are, furthermore, disobedient, murderers, adulterers, thieves, knaves, liars, betrayers, full of treachery and all malice; in snort, transgressors of every commandment, and in every particular refractory and obstinate, adhering to God’s arch-enemy, the abominable devil? Behold, this delicious and gracious fruit! He

bestows, as if upon a beautiful and beloved bride and daughter, his dear Son, and with him all things, whereas he would have had more than sufficient reason, at the very mention of the world, instantly to crush her with thunder and lightning to powder, and cast her into the abyss of hell. The word “world” is a sound hateful to God beyond expression; and this is a most strange paradox: God loves the world. Here two things that are in the highest degree antagonistic are combined. It is almost like saying: God loves death and hell, and is the friend of his most bitter eternal enemy, the accursed devil.

**18.** That is indeed a boundless proof of love, and makes the gift inexpressibly great, when the Giver and he to whom it is given are placed side by side, and God is represented as pouring out his whole heart to his hateful, hostile image, whereas he should have visited him only with anger, vengeance and damnation, and when he pays no attention to the fact that the world is full of contempt, blasphemy, disobedience toward God, and stupendous ingratitude for all the gifts he bestowed upon it heretofore, but swallows up all its vices and sins. Though the Giver be ever so great and beneficent, the wickedness and viciousness of the world, which is excessive and immeasurably great, ought to deter and repel him. For what man can even mark and sufficiently realize his own sin and disobedience? And yet this great love so overcomes God that he take away from the world all and every sin and transgression, and remembers them no more against it forever, so that they are dead and gone, and instead he gives his Son, and with him all things.

**19.** By this, the truths for which Paul and the articles of faith contend, have now been sufficiently and irrefutably demonstrated and proven; namely: That we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life, without merit or worthiness on our part, out of pure grace (*gratis*), and alone for the sake of his beloved Son, in whom God so loved us that this love has taken away and blotted out all our sins and the sins of the whole world; for there was nothing but sin in us, instead of which he has bestowed his love and forgiveness upon us, even as the prophet Isaiah (40:2) says concerning Jerusalem, and as we ought to preach in the Gospel: “Her iniquity is pardoned. that she hath received of Jehovah’s hand double for all her sins.”

**20.** Therefore, this gift — all of grace — is much greater, transcends and is mightier, than all the sins on earth, so that the unworthiness of any man, yes of all men together, aye the eternal wrath and condemnation which they

have deserved, cannot be so great that the greatness of this love and grace, or forgiveness, does not in every particular outweigh. yes, engulf them; as Paul says, <sup><4810></sup>Romans 5:20: “But where sin abounded, grace abounded more exceedingly;” and <sup><19A311></sup>Psalm 103:11:12: “For as the heavens are high above the earth...so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” For what else can that be than forgiveness of sin, when he loves the world while it yet lies in sin, abomination and blasphemy? If he could so love the world, his enemy and blasphemer, as to give so much, even himself, for it, how could he be angry with you and not be willing to forgive your sins, if you desire and seek his grace?

**21.** What heart would not cheerfully render all good things to him who has shown such love as to bestow his dear Son upon wicked and despairing people, that is, upon the whole world, which means all people, who never did anything good, but at all times have done that which was contrary to his commandments? How can people like these expect such great love and such inexpressible riches as a reward? To think of what I have done and what has been my experience in my monastic life, when I crucified Christ daily for fifteen years, and practiced all kinds of idolatry! and yet, notwithstanding the fact that I so sorely provoked him, he loves me so that he no more remembers all my wickedness but reveals to me his Son, and himself, with all grace. This, indeed, may be called incomprehensible riches of unfathomable love.

**22.** O Lord God, how little the world takes such great and sublime things to heart! Should we not all rejoice and be glad of heart that we have lived to see the time that we can hear such things, and love and praise our God therefor, and in gratitude, not only willingly serve him, but gladly suffer all things and even smile if we should have to die for the sake of his Word and obedience and to allow these bodies — worms of the dust — to be consumed by fire or sword, or suffer any other form of martyrdom? So little thankful is shameful, abominable unbelief, in its great and blind darkness, of which Christ himself later complains, that there are hearts so possessed, rigid and dead that they can hear such things and yet not believe!

**23.** In the sixth place, we have the final cause why and for what purpose he does all this, and what his intention is. Of course he has not bestowed it that I may have meat and drink from it, or inferior temporal benefit, riches, honor, power; nor has he given it that it may harm and poison; he has not

given his Word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper as poison, but that they might be of the greatest benefit to us. As he says, they are given that man may not be lost, but may have everlasting life. It is not for the purpose of giving me many golden crowns and kingdoms, for then I would still remain in sin and death: but that I might be free from hell and eternal death, and not be lost eternally. That is what this gift is to effect; for me hell is wiped out, and the devil cast under my feet, and out of a fearful, sad and humiliated heart a joyful and living one comes forth. In short, God has done all this that I might have an eternal, imperishable life in exchange for eternal destruction and death.

**24.** It must follow upon the reception of such a great and imperishable gift that, when the Son of God is rightly known and embraced with the whole heart, we have the victory over and are rescued from all evil, and enjoy eternal freedom, glory and happiness; for where he is, there everything must be good. Not that we have earned this, but in his great and eternal love God took pity on us in our misery and helplessness, and gave us his Son that we might be helped; otherwise we would have been lost and would have had to remain eternally lost, and notwithstanding all our work-righteousness and divine services, and never attained to eternal life.

**25.** He who would now puff up his heart, on account of these facts, has reason enough so to do. For what more glorious and better could heart desire, than that it should be told that eternal life shall be bestowed upon it; that it shall never see death; that it shall never experience want, distress, sadness and temptation, but have pure joy, and a perfect wealth of everything good, and have the assurance that we have a gracious God, and that all creatures will joyously smile upon us? From this it is very evident that it is not God's purpose and intention to deceive and destroy people, as the devil would make timid hearts believe, holding up to them the Law and their unworthiness; but that he would bestow life, and such life as is eternal and blissful. As a pledge and veritable testimony of this, he gives us his only Son, which he would never have done had he not loved us but was still angry and intended to condemn us.

**26.** This and similar glorious and comforting passages should be rightly treasured and valued by every Christian, above all else in the world, for they are words which no one can exhaust or fathom; and when they are rightly believed, they ought to make one a good theologian, or more — a strong, joyful Christian, who can speak and teach of Christ aright, judge all

other doctrines, advise and comfort anyone, and patiently bear all things that he may experience.

**27.** But here we must pray for the Holy Spirit to impress this upon our hearts, and must daily exercise ourselves in these things, so that we retire and rise with these words in our minds. But now, just as we regard them, so is their effect upon us. If they do not enter our hearts they cannot produce the fruit they ought to; they must bewail the ingratitude of the world, which makes them pass by our ears and hearts without affecting them, while it runs after perishable goods, honor and fame, thus losing this everlasting treasure; for this it will condemn and curse itself in hell eternally.

**28.** In the seventh place, and lastly, in what manner may we lay hold of such a treasure and gift, or what is the purse or safe in which it may be kept? It is faith alone, as Christ here says: "That whosoever believeth on him, should not perish" etc. Faith holds out its hands and opens the sack, and allows itself to be presented with good things. As God, the Giver, in love bestows this gift, so we are the recipients by faith, which faith does nothing more than receive the gift. For it is not our doing, and it cannot be merited through our work. It has already been bestowed and presented. All you need to do is to open your mouth, or rather your heart, hold still, and allow it to be entirely filled. <sup><8810></sup>Psalm 81:10. This can be done in no other way than by believing these words; for you observe that he here requires faith, and faith fully and perfectly appropriates this treasure.

**29.** Here you may see, also, what faith is and is called. Not simply an empty thought concerning Christ, that he was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, was crucified, arose, ascended into heaven, but a heart that grasps and embraces the Son of God, as expressed in these words, and positively holds that God gave his only begotten Son for us into death, and loved us so that, for his sake, we should not be lost, but have eternal life. Therefore, he plainly says: "That whosoever believeth on him." It must be a faith which does not look upon its own works, nor upon its own strength and worthiness, that is, its own quality or the inwrought and infused virtue of the heart, of which the blind sophists dream and imagine, but without dependence on itself, holds to Christ, embracing him as its own bestowed treasure, being assured that on account of him God was moved to love us, but not on account of one's own work, worthiness and merit; for these



things are not the treasure that God gave, that is, Christ, God's Son, in whom we must believe.

**30.** Of what benefit is the gift of faith if it is nothing more than such an empty vessel? Of what value unless one looks upon and comforts one's self in the thought of what is comprehended in it, and what alone makes it precious, so that one may say: Faith may be but a little and insignificant monstrance or pix or box, but in it, nevertheless, there is so precious a gem that heaven and earth cannot contain it.

**31.** Therefore we so teach from the Scriptures concerning faith — that through it alone we are justified and acceptable before God; because it is faith alone that grasps and retains this treasure, the Son of God. If I weigh this gift and my works in the same balance, the contrast and preponderance is so overwhelmingly great that the holiness of all men is nothing compared with the smallest drop of blood Christ gave and shed for us, to say nothing of all he did and suffered; therefore I can, in no respect, depend upon my virtue and worthiness.

**32.** And why should we boast so much about our efforts when we learn that we are so situated that we would all be lost forever had not this treasure been given for us? Thereby the glory is taken, not only from all human works, but from the entire Law of God; for, though one possessed it all, and according to his ability complied with all its demands, he still has not attained what is necessary to save himself from eternal destruction. What other purpose have these words: "That whosoever believeth on him should not perish" etc? They are a continual testimony that neither Moses (the Law) nor yet the holiness of all men, could redeem from death or give eternal life. Therefore, everything depends entirely upon this only Son of God.

**33.** Now, you may see what a sublime and significant matter is embraced in this passage, since the Giver, so great and mighty, the Creator of every creature, does not simply say: Good morning! and bestow a friendly smile; but he loves, yes loves, so sincerely that he does not simply give a beggarly gift of perishable goods, but his greatest and most precious treasure, his Son, who is also Lord of heaven and earth. This love he does not show his friends only, but his enemies, and no creature but the devil himself is less worthy this love than his enemies. For no other purpose did he give himself for them than that he might snatch them from death and hell, and render

them certain of eternal life. Of what wonder could one speak or think, that is more marvelous in every particular?

**34.** However great and unutterable all this is, that is still greater and more wonderful in comparison, that the human heart has been enabled to believe it all. That must indeed be a great heart which can embrace more than heaven and earth can hold. Hence it must be evident what a great, sublime and divine power and work faith is, which can do that which it is impossible for nature and all the world to do, and it is therefore no less a wonder than all the other miracles and works of God. It is even more wonderful than that God became man, born of a virgin, as St. Bernhard says. These things, as we have heard, namely the love of the Giver and of him who was given, and the unworthiness of the recipient, placed side by side, are incomparable as to greatness. On the one hand everything is so great, and on the other, man's heart is so small and narrow and weak that the in-finiteness of difference is startling and amazing.

**35.** Should I be told that God has granted to me, above all other men, the gift that I should live on earth several thousand years, in the enjoyment of peace and happiness, and all that my heart desired, I would answer: Nay, that cannot be God's word, it is too much to believe. Who am I, that God should give me such things? How much less can the heart of man realize that God gave him such a treasure, his Son, and with him eternal life and salvation! Who can express this amazing fact? How precious and excellent even this temporal life is! And who would give it for all the kingdoms, all the gold and possessions of this world? But the extent of this life compared to eternal life and its blessings is much less than a single moment. In short, eternal life is inconceivable; we can only try to conceive by subtracting from it, or contrasting it with the loss and misery that is called eternal loss.

**36.** Now, the Christian must eventually acknowledge that the honor belongs to God, and to Christ the Lord; that God's Word is the truth, and it must denounce man's own unbelief as a lie. Where this acknowledgement is made, the Holy Spirit has already begun with his power and work of faith, and the heart is opened, so that it can lay hold of this treasure, which is greater than heaven and earth; true, the heart proceeds in great weakness, and on earth it can never attain such faith as it should, and does not get beyond the longings and groanings of the spirit, for salvation is inexplicable to man, and the heart must cry out: Oh, that it were true! or: Oh, that one could believe it!

**37.** Nevertheless such sighs and little sparks of faith are of so much account that God recognizes them as complete faith and says: As thou believest, even so be it unto thee, and since thou hast believed it, thou shalt surely be saved. For this word is a power and strength that is mightier than all the terrors of sin and damnation, and this gift is so great that sin and death and hell are swallowed up by it as is a little drop of water in a glowing furnace, or as a little spark on a straw is extinguished when it falls into the great ocean. If only the heart, in temptation, could recall these words, neither devil nor hell could affright it, and it would joyfully say: Of what should I be afraid? Have I not the Son of God, given to me by the Father, in testimony of which he gives me the Word, which I know is his Word? That cannot lie to me any more than he could lie and deceive me, even though I, alas! cannot believe it as firmly as I should:

**38.** You say: Yes, I would gladly believe it if I were like St. Peter and St. Paul and others who are pious and holy; but I am too great a sinner, and who knows whether I am predestinated? Answer: Look at these words! What do they say, and of whom do they speak? “For God so loved the world”; and “that whosoever believeth on him.” Now, the world is not simply St. Peter and St. Paul, but the entire human race taken collectively, and here no one is excluded: God’s Son was given for all, all are asked to believe, and all who believe shall not be lost etc. Take hold of your nose, search in your bosom, whether you are not also a man (that is, a piece of the world) and belong to the number which the word “whosoever” embraces, as well as others? If you and I are not to take this comfort to ourselves, then these words must have been spoken falsely and in vain.

**39.** And surely, this has not been preached to any other than to humanity. Therefore, beware lest you exclude yourself and give place to the thought: Who knows whether it has been given to me? For that would be accusing God of falsely speaking in his Word. But, on the contrary, make a cross for yourself with these words, and say: If I am not St. Peter or St. Paul, I am, nevertheless, a part of the world. Had he intended to give it to the worthy only, then he would have had it preached to the angels alone, for they, are pure and without sin. He could then not have given it to St. Peter, to David, or to Paul, for they were sinners as well as I. No matter what I am, I know that God’s Word is true; and if I do not accept it, then I am committing, above all other sins, this sin also, that I blaspheme the Word of God and the truth, and charge God with lying.

*“For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world;  
but that the world should be saved through him.”*

**40.** In these words you hear even more forcibly and clearly what are the will and intent of God concerning the world, that is, concerning those who are in sin, and who, therefore, are already under judgment and sentence of condemnation. He takes away everything that would terrify us on account of our sins. He says plainly and clearly that Christ was sent, and his kingdom established, not for the purpose of judging and condemning. Such judgment and sentence have already come upon all men through the Law, because all are born in sin, and are, therefore, consigned to death and to the executioner, and there is nothing lacking but for the sword to be drawn. Now Christ steps between, according to God’s command, and orders both judge and jailer to halt, rescues the condemned and sets him free. This is the reason why he comes to help the world, which he found already under condemnation. This is also proved by the words he spoke: “But that the world should be saved through him.” These words show very clearly that the world was under condemnation, for why, otherwise, was salvation necessary?

**41.** But at this time salvation was preached to the Jews, and had not yet been heard by the world generally; but they did not believe that they were in such a condition that Christ had to come and save them, a lost and condemned people; they looked for a Christ who should commend and honor them on account of their Law and their holiness, therefore they could neither believe nor accept his proclamation. In ~~ERR~~ John 8:33, when he told them that the Son of God should make them free, they retorted: “We are Abraham’s seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man;” as though they would thereby object: “How dare you say that you have been sent to save us? We are not a condemned people, as the heathen are.

**42.** But now we hear that Christ has been sent to save those who are judged and condemned; that we should know that he has come to save us. who acknowledge and realize this. For there must some be saved, so that he shall not have come in vain. These are none other than those who are oppressed and terrified on account of their misery and condemnation; to them the friendly words are addressed: “For God so loved the world”, that is, those who feel not love, but only wrath and condemnation. And God sent his Son, not to judge, but to save those who are already judged, etc. To those who do not believe that they are sinners and condemned, the

Gospel is preached in vain: for much less will they believe that. they are saved through Christ alone.

### III. JUDGMENT UPON BELIEVERS AND THE WORLD.

“He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

#### I. JUDGMENT UPON BELIEVERS.

**43.** Here is the verdict which makes the distinction between the saved and the damned. It does not depend upon how worthy or unworthy you are, for it has already been determined that all are sinners and deserve to be condemned; but it depends upon whether you believe in this Jesus Christ or not. If you believe, then you are acquitted, and the judgment and condemnation taken away: if you will not believe, the judgment will remain upon you; yes it will only become greater and heavier than before, because you simply augment sin by not accepting Christ, who is to free you from judgment and condemnation.

**44.** And this, again, is a comforting passage with which to oppose the temptation and terrors of timid consciences which sigh for consolation and long to know how they stand in the sight of God. Such should hear and take these passages to heart; to them they are addressed, that they should know that God sent his Son not to judge but to save, and that God has already decreed that whosoever believeth in his Son shall not be judged, and shall have no reason to fear any judgment and condemnation, but is freed. The Law's judgment and condemnation are taken away from him, and God's grace and eternal life are promised and bestowed upon him through Christ, if he only believes these words.

**45.** On the contrary, a fearful judgment is passed upon those who do not believe this proclamation, but undertake to appear before God and be saved on the basis of their own holiness and merits; for they are at once denied and cut off from all grace, and included in condemnation, from which they shall find no relief so long as they do not believe, even though they may have done many great and important works and walked

apparently in eminent holiness. Christ's condemnation is not waiting them, simply, but they have already been judged through the Law of God, because they did not acknowledge their sins and that, by nature, they were under God's wrath. What is still worse, they try to make themselves appear beautiful and pious before God; moreover, they oppose him with the sin of despising the Son of God, who was given for their reconciliation and redemption. Hence, the eternal wrath and curse must come upon them, because they do not seek forgiveness of their sins in Christ, but increase and confirm them by their contempt. This is what John the Baptist also says, <sup><RB></sup>John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

**46.** Christ gives the reason for this: "Because he hath not believed," he says, "on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Because everyone is already guilty, being under sin and condemnation, therefore God will not liberate any one, nor receive him, except through this Son, whom he gave and set apart for reconciliation; and that means, therefore: Believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, that is, in the Word which the Son preached of him. For faith cannot see what he here gives, neither can it be grasped and realized with the senses; it apprehends no more than the name which has been given him, and the oral Word, heard with the ears. To this he would hold and bind us, that by faith in it we should escape judgment, and be saved. The rest are justly damned, not because they have sin, but because they despise the Son and will not believe in the name that has been proclaimed to them for their salvation and eternal bliss. For to this name, wherever it is preached and believed, all creation and sin and death must yield, and by it the, devil and all the gates of hell shall be frightened and flee away.

## II. THE JUDGMENT UPON THE WORLD.

*"And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil."*

**47.** Here the contention begins about this name and proclamation of Christ, and the verdict of condemnation against the unbelieving is manifest, because they do not receive this saying, but, on the contrary, oppose God, and wickedly adhere to their own conceit and arrogance in direct opposition to the clear Word of God and the revelation of his will. This can

be nothing but darkness, because it is contrary to the light of his Word, which shines publicly before all the world, bringing believers to the knowledge of God and salvation, but uncovering and revealing the thoughts of others, as the aged Simeon prophesied concerning Christ, <sup><4135></sup>Luke 2:35, showing that they are not what they make themselves appear to be before the world when they deck themselves with a false appearance of holiness, but they are contemptible, poisonous worms, pernicious and accursed people.

**48.** From this contrast which Christ makes above in verse 16, you may see what the world, is; I mean the tender, pious, holy hypocrites and eminent servants of God. They are people who are not only in darkness, that is, in error and ignorance (which could be pardoned), but they at the same time love these things; that is, they uphold and defend and adhere to them, to the displeasure of God and his Word. And so perverse and steeped in Wickedness are they that they bitterly hate both God the Giver and the great and precious Gift, his beloved Son, rejecting this divine love and Gift, notwithstanding their unworthiness. These are, forsooth, loving, pious children, who cannot bear and endure the truth, but hate and reject their own salvation.

**49.** What shall we say of such wickedness of the world? Who could believe that people on earth could be so wicked and possessed of devils, that even when they hear and see the light of such inexpressible divine love and benefaction, which would bestow upon them eternal life through his Son, nevertheless will not endure this proclamation, but look upon it as the most harmful poison and heresy, against which everybody should close his ears? Yea, though this light is so plain that they can. say nothing against it, but must confess that it is the truth, yet they are so bitterly angry that they neither can nor will accept it, but knowingly oppose it. That, I say, no human heart could believe if Christ had not said so; yea, no one would understand these words if facts and experience had not taught and proved them. It should ever be regarded an accursed, hellish wickedness not only never to inquire in the least about God's Word, to despise his love and grace, and not to honor the truth, but, in addition, knowingly to love and seek his own damnation; as Paul says in <sup><4136></sup>Acts 13:46, concerning the Jews, that they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life.

**50.** That is what they do who call themselves God's people, and are the most holy and pious before the world, full of so-called good works and

services before God. They will not suffer in the least that their life and works should be called wicked, as Christ does here. Since the Holy Spirit would show them their sins, and lead them to Christ, that they might be redeemed from their sins and condemnation and be saved, they accuse this doctrine of forbidding and condemning good works, and say that it ought not, therefore, to be tolerated. And so God and his Word must bear the blame of their wickedness, although he would correct them and very willingly help them to lead a godly and blessed life. He has done enough for the world, everything that is necessary to do, in that he has permitted his light to shine for it and offered and certified to it his love and eternal life in Christ. What reason can it now offer why it should not be justly condemned according to its own judgment, and on account of its own guilt?

“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be revealed. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be manifest, that they have been wrought in God.”

**51.** Thus it is proved that their works are evil, because they hate the light and will not suffer themselves to be placed openly in the light, that they may be tried, and that it may be manifest whether they are upright or not, but they seek only to appear well and to shine before men. Just so the world acts in its affairs, even as Christ says, and everyone does as he pleases and desires, and yet does not want to be regarded as having done wrong, but would be considered faultless and pious by all. Although a man in his acts is exceedingly rude in the presence of people, yet he seeks to screen and cover his deeds. That is why no one can be condemned unless he be publicly convicted and confuted. Everyone comes before the court to prove himself to be right and his opponent to be wrong; therefore, in order to get at the truth, his conduct must be exposed through public testimony and proof.

**52.** Indeed, it is in itself sufficient evidence of the fact that there is something wrong, when one will not allow himself to be taken to task, and is afraid of and resists being brought publicly before the light, or will not suffer information to be given and justice to be done. Even as he who lies nude in bed resists and rages before he will allow the covers to be removed; yes, squirms, wriggles and resorts to whatever expedient he can devise that his nakedness may not be exposed; so every wretch, murderer



and adulterer, however wicked he may be, even though his own conscience condemns him, wants to be called a man of honor. Much less will the world submit to be judged in the things which reason does not condemn or censure, and when the devil adorns and veils himself with a most beautiful demeanor and appearance. And so everyone who does that which is wicked wants to be considered pious, pure and holy, and therefore persecutes the Gospel, because it chastises him.; wherefore, God must continue with his light until it may finally become manifest whose fruit they are who persecute Christ, who would help them and all the world. God's Word, which brings them all grace and blessedness, they blaspheme and reject; pious, innocent people, who confess his Word and love Christ, they exile and murder.

**53.** This, also, is one of the fruits of the Gospel, that it rebukes and convicts evil, and exposes the devil, who formerly reigned in pomp, unhindered, and in the appearance of God himself. Now, however, he raves and rages because he is so exposed that his presence is apparent to all. Now, it must become manifest which is the true and which the false Church. and who are the true, pious children of God, and who are the devil's children and hypocrites, liars and murderers.

**54.** "But he that doeth the truth," says Christ, "cometh to the light" etc.; that is, he who through the Word of God is brought to a knowledge of his sins, seeks grace and loves Christ, and is also made manifest. Yea, he, himself, comes to the light, holds fast to God's Word, honors the truth, and is willing that all his doctrines, deeds and his disposition may be made manifest; he defies all devils and men, and openly and fearlessly lets himself be seen and heard, proved and persecuted. Even so, God be praised! through our Gospel, pious Christians do, in their confession and in their lives; whilst others, on the contrary, cover their doings and try to justify themselves with lies and deceit, and all kinds of knavery, that they might, notwithstanding that they have been put to shame by the light of our doctrines and teachings, give their doings some coloring. Therefore, by their works and manifestations it may be known who is upright, and who in truth performs such works as are done in God, according to his Word and will, and are pleasing in his sight.

## PENTECOST TUESDAY.

This sermon, which is not found in edition c., the edition of the Church Postil edited by Creuziger in 1543, appeared in a pamphlet edition under the title: “A sermon for the third festival day of Pentecost on the Gospel of John 10, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, is a thief and a murderer.’ Preached by Luther at Wittenberg, 1522,” and in 1523 it was printed in four editions of the little book, “Three beautiful sermons preached by Dr. Martin Luther at Wittenberg. Illustrated. The first Gospel there treated was, How there shall be one flock, and one shepherd. The other two sermons were those for the 5th and 4th Sundays after Trinity on Peter’s draught of fishes, Luke 5, and “Be ye merciful, even as your father is merciful,” Luke 6.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:373; Walch Edition, 11:1503; St. Louis Walch, 11:1114.

*Text: <sup><800></sup>John 10:1-11. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up by some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him, the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spoke Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spoke unto them.*

*Jesus therefore said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that come before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture. The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.*

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### SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL:

1. Christ alone is the good shepherd, the door, the porter. He has the word of life and reveals to us the Father.
3. Christ's sheep know only Christ's voice and follow it.
4. God knows well who are his as Paul says in ~~<5119>~~2 Timothy 2:19: "Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." It is not a congregation of Christ that strives for the honor of this world and desires to be esteemed great in the eyes of the world.
5. Christ calls his own sheep by name, that is, some he calls thus, but others differently; each according to his own gift, by means of which he serves others. ~~<5116>~~Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12.

### I. TRUE PREACHERS OF THE WORD MUST BE REGULARLY CALLED.

1. This Gospel treats of the office of the ministry, how it is constituted, what it accomplishes and how it is misused. It is indeed very necessary to know these things, for the office of preaching is second to none in Christendom. St. Paul highly esteemed this office, for the reason that through it the Word of God was proclaimed, which is effective to the salvation of all who believe it. He says to the ~~<5116>~~Romans 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." We must now consider this theme, since our Gospel lesson presents and includes it. It will, however, be a stench in the nostrils of the pope! But how shall I deal differently with him? The text says:

*"He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber (murderer)."*

2. This verse has been explained as having reference to those who climb, by their presumption, into the best church livings through favor and wealth, recommendations or their own power, not obtaining them by regular

appointment and authority. And at present the most pious jurists are punishing people for running to Rome after fees and benefices, or after ecclesiastical preferment and offices. This they call simony. The practice is truly deplorable, for much depends upon being regularly called and appointed. No one should step into the office and preach from his own presumption and without a commission from those having the authority. But under present conditions, if we should wait until we received a commission to preach and to administer the sacraments, we would never perform those offices as long as we live. For the bishops in our day press into their offices by force, and those who have the power of preferment are influenced by friendship and rank. But I pass this by, and will speak of the true office, into which no one forces his way (even though his devotion urge him) without being called by others having the authority.

**3.** True, we all have authority to preach, yea, we must preach God's name; we are commanded to do so. Peter says in his first Epistle, <sup><411></sup>1 Peter 2:9-10: "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." Nevertheless, Paul establishes order in <sup><440></sup>1 Corinthians 14:40 and says: "In whatever you do among yourselves, let everything be done decently and in order." In a family there must be order. If all the heirs strive for lordship, anarchy will reign in the family. If, however, by common consent, one of the number is selected for the heirship, the others withdrawing, harmony will obtain. Likewise, in the matter of preaching we must make selection that order may be preserved. But since all who are Christians have authority to preach, what will be the outcome? for women will also want to preach. Not so. St. Paul forbids women to put themselves forward as preachers in a congregation of men, and says: "They should be subject to their husbands." For when a woman will not submit to being led and governed, the result will be anything but good. These are, however, the words of Paul in <sup><411></sup>1 Timothy 2:11-12: "Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness." If it happened, however, that no man could be secured for the office, then a woman might step up and preach to others as best she could; but in no other instance.

## II. PREACHERS OF THE WORD TO PREACH NOTHING BUT THE WORD.

**4.** So much for the call into the office. But Christ is not speaking of that here; for something more is required, namely, that no rival or supplementary doctrine be introduced, nor another word be taught than Christ has taught. Christ says in <sup><413B></sup>Matthew 23:2-4: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe: but do not ye after their works; for they say. and do not. Yea, they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger.” Although these of whom Christ here speaks were regularly appointed, yet they were thieves and murderers; for they taught variations from Christ’s teaching. Christ reproves them in another place, in <sup><415B></sup>Matthew 15:3, where he holds up before them their traditions and tells them how, through their own inventions, they have transgressed the commandments of God, yea, totally abolished them. We have also many prophets who were regularly appointed and still were misled, like Balaam, of whom we read in Numbers 22; also Nathan, described in <sup><407B></sup>2 Samuel 7:3. Similarly many bishops have erred.

**5.** Here Christ says: He who would enter by the door must be ready to speak the Word concerning Christ and his word must center in Christ. Let it be called “coming” when one preaches aright; the approaching is spiritual, and through the Word — upon the ears of his hearers, the preacher comes at last into the sheepfold — the heart of believers. Christ says that the shepherd must enter by the door; that is, preach nothing but Christ, for Christ is the door into the sheepfold.

**6.** But where there are intruders, who make their own door, their own hole to crawl through, their own addition. different from that which Christ taught, they are thieves. Of these Paul says to the <sup><5167></sup>Romans 16:17-18. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.” Paul does not speak of opposing or antagonistic doctrines, but of those placed beside the true doctrine; they are additions, making divisions. Paul calls it a rival doctrine, an addition, an occasion of

stumbling, an offense and a byway, when one establishes the conscience upon his own goodness or deeds.

**7.** Now, the Gospel is sensitive, complete and pre-eminent: it must be intolerant of additions and rival teachings. The doctrine of earning entrance into heaven by virtue of fastings, prayers and penance is a branch road, which the Gospel will not tolerate. But our Church authorities endorse these things, hence they are thieves and murderers; for they do violence to our consciences, which is slaying and destroying the sheep. How is this accomplished? If only I am directed into a branch or parallel road, then my soul is turned from God upon that road, where I must perish. Thus this road is the cause of my death. The conscience and heart of man must be founded upon one single Word or they will come to grief. “All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.” <sup>2316</sup> Isaiah 40:6.


**8.** The doctrines of men, however admirable, fall to the ground, and with them the conscience that has built upon them. There is no help nor remedy. But the Word of God is eternal and must endure forever; no devil can overthrow it. The foundation is laid upon which the conscience may be established forever. The words of men must perish and everything that cleaves to them. Those who enter not by the door — that is, those who do not speak the true and pure Word of God, without any addition — do not lay the right foundation; they destroy and torture and slaughter the sheep. Therefore, Christ says further in this Gospel:

*“But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.  
To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice.”*

### III. A TRUE PREACHER SHOULD FIRST USE THE LAW ARIGHT AND THEN PREACH THE GOSPEL.

**9.** The porter here is the preacher who rightly teaches the Law — shows that the Law exists and must reveal to us our helplessness; that the works of the Law do not help us, and yet they are insistent. He then opens to the shepherd, that is, to Christ the Lord, and lets him alone feed the sheep. For the office of the Law is at an end; it has accomplished its mission of revealing to the heart its sins until it is completely humbled. Then Christ comes and makes a lamb out of the sheep — feeds it with his Gospel and

directs it how to regain cheer for the heart so hopelessly troubled and crushed by the Law.

**10.** The lamb then hears Christ's voice and follows it. It has the choicest of pastures, and knows the voice of the shepherd. But the voice of a stranger it never hears and never follows. Just as soon as one preaches to it about works, it is worried and its heart cannot receive the teaching with joy. It knows very well that nothing is accomplished by means of works; for one may do as much as he will, still he carries a heavy spirit and he thinks he has not done enough, nor done rightly. But when the Gospel comes — the voice of the shepherd says: God gave to the world his only Son, that all who believe on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Then is the heart happy; it feeds upon these words and finds them good. The lamb has found its satisfying pasture; it wants none other. Yea, when it is given other pasture, it flees from it and will not feed therein. This pasture always attracts the sheep, and the sheep also find it. God says in the prophecy of Isaiah: "So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish all in the things whereto I sent it."  Isaiah 55:11.

"And he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his owns, he goeth before them and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers."

#### IV. THE HEARERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXAMINE AND JUDGE A SERMON.

**11.** In this text there are two thoughts worthy of note: the liberty of faith, and the power to judge. You know that our soul-murderers have proposed to us that what the councils and the learned doctors decide and decree, that we should accept, and not judge for ourselves whether it is right or not. They have become so certain of the infallibility of the councils and doctors that they have now established the edict, publicly seen, that if we do not accept what they say, we are put under the ban. Now, let us take a spear in hand and make a hole in their shield; yea, their resolutions shall be a



spider's web. And you should, moreover, use upon them the spear which, until now, they have used upon us, and hold before them its point.

**12.** Remember well that the sheep have to pass judgment upon that which is placed before them. They should say: We have Christ as our Lord and prefer his Word to the words of any man or to those of the angels of darkness. We want to examine and judge for ourselves whether the pope, the bishops and their followers do right or not. For Christ says here that the sheep judge and know which is the right voice and which is not. Now let them come along. Have they decreed anything? We will examine whether it is right, and according to our own judgment interpret that which is a private affair for each individual Christian, knowing that the authority to do this is not human, but divine. Even the real sheep flee from a stranger and hold to the voice of their shepherd.

**13.** Upon this authority, the Gospel knocks all the councils, all the papistic laws, to the ground, granting to us that we should receive nothing without judging it, that we have besides the power to judge, and that such judgment stands until the present day. The papists have taken from us the sword, so that we have not been able to repel any false doctrine, and, moreover, they have by force introduced false teachings among us. If now we take the sword from them they will be sorry. And we must truly take it, not by force, but by means of the Word, letting go all else that we have, saying: I am God's sheep, whose Word I wish to appropriate to myself. If you will give me that, I will acknowledge you to be a shepherd. If you, however, add another Gospel to this one and do not give me the pure Gospel, then I will not consider you a shepherd, and will not listen to your voice; for the office of which you boast extends no farther than the Word goes. If we find one to be a shepherd, we should receive him as such: if he is not, we should remove him; for the sheep shall judge the voice of the shepherd. If he does not give us the right kind of pasture, we should bid farewell to such a shepherd, that is, to the bishop; for a hat of pearls and a staff of silver do not make a shepherd or a bishop, but rather does the office depend upon his care of the sheep and their pasture.

**14.** Now the papists object to judgment being passed upon any of their works; for this reason they have intruded and taken from us the sword which we might use for such a purpose. Also, they dictate that we must accept, without any right of judgment, whatever they propose. And it has almost come to such a pass that whenever the pope breathes they make an

article of faith out of it, and they have proclaimed that the authorities have the right to pass such laws for their subjects as they desire, independent of the judgment of the latter. These conditions mean ruin to the Christians, so much so that a hundred thousand swords should be desired for one pope. This they know very well, and they cling hard to their laws. If they would permit unbiased judgment, their laws would be set aside and they would have to preach the pure Word; but such a course would reduce the size of their stomachs and the number of their horses.

**15.** Therefore, be ye aroused by this passage of Scripture to hew to pieces and thrust through everything that is not in harmony with the Gospel, for it belongs to the sheep to judge, and not to the preachers. You have the authority and power to judge everything that is preached; that and nothing less. If we have not this power, then Christ vainly said to us in <sup><4075></sup>Matthew 7:15: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.” We could not beware if we had not the power to judge, but were obliged to accept everything they said and preached.

## V. PREACHERS ARE TO FORCE NO ONE TO BELIEVE.

**16.** The second thought is, no one shall be forced to believe; for the sheep follow him whom they know and flee from strangers. Now, Christ’s wish is that none be forced, but that they be permitted to follow from willing hearts and of their own desire; not out of fear, shame or strife. He would let the Word go forth and accomplish all. When their hearts are taken captive, then they will surely come of themselves. Faith does not go forth from the heart unless it has the Word of God.

**17.** Our noblemen are now mad and foolish in that they undertake to drive people to believe by means of force and the sword. Christ here wishes the sheep to come of themselves, from their knowledge of his voice. The body may be forced, as the pope, for example, has by his laws coerced people to go to confession and to the Lord’s Supper, but the heart cannot be taken captive. Christ wants it to be free. Although he had power to coerce men, he wished to win them through his pleasing, loving preaching. Whoever lays hold of Christ’s word follows after him and permits nothing to tear

him from it. The noblemen wish to drive the people to believe by means of the sword and fire; that is nonsense. Then let us see to it that we allow the pure Word of God to take its course, and afterward leave them free to follow, whom it has taken captive; yea, they will follow voluntarily.

**18.** By this I do not wish to abolish the civil sword; for the hand can hold it within its grasp so that it does no one any harm, but it holds it inactive. It must be retained because of wicked villains who have no regard at all for the Word; but the sword cannot force the heart and bring it to faith. In view of its inability, it must keep silent in matters of faith; here one must enter by the door, and preach the Word and make the heart free. Only in this way are men led to believe. These are the two expedients — for the pious and the wicked: the pious are to be drawn by the Word, and the wicked to be driven by the sword to observe order.

## VI. THE MARKS OF FALSE PREACHERS.

**19.** Now, Christ interprets his own words. He says that he is the door to the sheep, but all the others who came before him, that is, those who were not sent by God as the prophets were, but came of themselves, uncommissioned, are thieves and murderers; they steal his honor from God and strangle human souls by their false doctrines. But Christ is the door, and whoever enters by him will be saved, and will go in and out. and find pasture. Here Christ speaks of the Christian liberty. which means that Christians are now free from the curse and the tyranny of the Law, and may keep the Law or not, according as they see that the love and need of their neighbor requires. This is what Paul did. When he was among the Jews, he kept the Law with the Jews; when among the gentiles, he kept it as they kept it, which he himself says in ~~4199~~ 1 Corinthians 9:19-23: “For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the gospel’s sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof.”

**20.** That the thieves and murderers, the false teachers and prophets, never do, they accomplish nothing but to steal, strangle and destroy the sheep. But Christ, the true and faithful shepherd, comes only that the sheep may have life and be fully satisfied. This is enough on today's Gospel for the present. We will conclude and pray God for grace rightly to lay hold of it and understand it.

# PENTECOST TUESDAY.

## SECOND SERMON. ~~800~~ JOHN 10:1-11.

This sermon is found only in edition c., the edition of the Church Postil by Creuziger, edited in 1543.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:385; Walch Edition, 11, 1517, St. Louis Walch, 11:1125.

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**1.** This Gospel lesson presents to us in a picture and parable that which is elsewhere taught concerning Christ’s kingdom and the office of preaching in the Church. The same topic, is continued in the Gospel of the good shepherd immediately following our text. Both portions distinguish the different kinds of teaching that claim to point to heaven; and from these words we may correctly judge which are the true teachings of the Holy Spirit. There are three distinct kinds of teaching here considered. Only one of them can save the soul. The first is the teaching of those whom Christ calls thieves and murderers; the second, that of the porter of the sheepfold; the third, that of the true shepherd, to whom the porter opens and whom he permits to enter. John says that the disciples did not rightly understand this parable until Christ explained that he himself, and he alone, was the

door of the sheepfold and that he was likewise the shepherd. We, too, would not understand it if he had not shown us the interpretation.

## I. THE FIRST CLASS OF PREACHERS — THIEVES AND MURDERERS.

2. It is a fact that these three classes are always found in the Christian Church. Herein is danger, and the need that the people be warned to be on their guard and to protect themselves well against teachers who spread heresy and destruction, and whose only object, wherever they appear among the sheep, is to steal from them the true pasture of pure doctrine and God's Word, and to destroy their souls also. Therefore the apostles diligently warned the Christians against such teachers. Paul, in <sup><40B></sup>Acts 20:29-30, prophesies to them saying: "I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock," etc.
3. Such are they who would lord it over souls with doctrines formulated or invented by their own wisdom, or who, with good intent, would dictate to them about what they should do if they would be saved. As, for example, did the Pharisees and scribes among the Jews; they thought themselves saved by their own human doctrines and writings and the worship of good works. And they in the papacy expect to be saved by that utter filth — their own false and self-chosen works, worship and monkery; not to mention their public idolatry and shameful lying nonsense — praying to deceased saints, their indulgences, purgatory and the like. They indeed do not wish to be regarded as thieves and murderers; they would be respected in the world as worthy, invaluable, and safe teachers and preachers. But when they are made manifest by the Word of Christ, it is discovered that they awfully mislead and ruin the souls who follow them.
4. They are called thieves because they come stealthily sneaking, and with smooth speech, as Paul says in <sup><51a8></sup>Romans 16:18; and they come also with imposing airs, and in true sheep's clothing, especially advertising their faithfulness and their love of souls. But these are the very marks by which, as Christ teaches, they are to be known; they do not enter by the door, but climb up some other way, or, as Christ himself explains, they come before him and without him, not pointing and directing to him as the only Shepherd and Savior.

**5.** For the words “came before me” do not refer to those who preached before Christ; nor only to those who undertake to preach without a call and secretly sneak into the fold, who are certainly no better than thieves and murderers. But the words refer in general to all those — yea to them who have a true call and are regularly installed in office — who do not begin with and adhere to the doctrine of faith in Christ as the chief article of Christianity, but mislead the people, directing to their own holiness and their own worship, which ignores faith in Christ. If it were not for this error, such teachers would never harm with their doctrine; for all doctrines concerning works would be harmless if they did not teach faith and trust in works as being sufficient to merit the forgiveness of sins. But in no case is to be tolerated the teaching that we are to place in them our confidence and faith, for it should be centered alone in Christ; nor that we esteem them to be a special service to God when they are without the Word of God.

**6.** We could also without wrong keep all the commandments of the pope and of his councils if they be not in opposition to God’s Word — when they refer only to outward order and the observance of certain times — the use of certain clothing, meats, and the like; as in other things a person may follow custom. Yes, such outward and immaterial things were without harm if they did not claim that they are necessary to salvation or serve to promote it. Just so the greater part of their priestcraft and monkery is mere unprofitable, useless jugglery and simply child’s play, appropriate to a Shrove-Tuesday carnival performance or to a puppet show. But that they should command man to do such works at the peril of being lost, and say, He who fails to do them shall fall under the wrath and displeasure of God Almighty and of all the saints, and be condemned to hell — that is the wolf-like and murderous voice of the true Antichrist in Christendom.

**7.** Now, these destructive thieves and murderers are the great multitude; they are always in the majority in the world. And they cannot be different since they are out of Christ. The world desires such wolf preaching, and is not worthy of anything better since it will not hear nor respect Christ. Hence it is that there are so few true Christians and faithful preachers, always outnumbered by the members of the false church. Teachers and pupils mislead one another; as Moses says, the drunkards draw the thirsty after them and lead them to ruin. <sup>(Deu 29:19)</sup> Deuteronomy 29:19. But Christ on the other hand comforts the true Church with his counsel to his dear sheep to guard against the false teachers and not to listen to, nor follow, them; as he



says later, in plainer words: “My sheep hear my voice, but they hear not the voice of strangers.”

**8.** True, the sheep may at first and for a time be deceived by the false appearance and actions of thieves and robbers. Such has been the case hitherto under the papacy when all the pulpits and churches were filled with the false and only a few sheep heard the voice of Christ, the true shepherd; as Christ declared in <sup><422></sup>Matthew 24:24, saying, that they would lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Yet, at last he shall help them to hear the voice of the true shepherd and follow him. And many such have been snatched out of the errors of papacy even on their death-beds, and have laid hold of Christ and died in him.

**9.** Now, these are the first class of cursed teachers and preachers who directly oppose Christ and only mislead and ruin souls. These he sharply distinguishes from himself, and passes judgment, teaching that we are not to hear them at all nor tolerate them, and that they who, themselves out of Christ, point the people elsewhere, are only thieves and murderers.

## II. THE SECOND CLASS OF PREACHERS — PORTERS OF THE FOLD.

**10.** There are other preachers, who advocate God’s law and commandments, not devised of themselves, but taken from the Scriptures. Such were the teachers or scribes among the Jews, so far as they adhered to Moses and the Scriptures; of whom Christ says: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe.” <sup><423></sup>Matthew 23:3.

**11.** These teachings in themselves do not oppose Christ, but they who make use of them to teach the people to trust in themselves and in salvation through the works of the Law, are thieves and murderers like the others; for they also hinder and restrain the sheep from coming to Christ.

**12.** But if these preachers are to rightly serve, faithfully and helpfully, they must not themselves climb into the sheepfold like the others, nor attempt to be shepherds; they must be simply porters and servants of the true shepherd, Christ, keeping the sheep in shelter and safety and not allowing strangers to break in upon them, and preparing for and giving place to the

shepherd, who himself leads them out to pasture and in. Further, their office is appointed not to feed themselves, but to open to the shepherd; then the sheep hear the shepherd himself and are fed by him.

**13.** Such among the Jewish people were Moses and the prophets, likewise John the Baptist; and such are all who still preach the Law for repentance, to point the people to Christ, who shall save them from sin and death. So, then, such exercise both offices of the porter. They restrain strangers who come as shepherds to draw the sheep after them, taking care that the sheep be not misled by the delusion of a false confidence in their works, but learn to know their sins and danger and be ready to heed their shepherd. Paul speaks of the office of the Law, in <sup><4023></sup>Galatians 3:23-24, mentioning how it was given that we might be kept in ward under it, and shut up unto the future faith in Christ. “So,” he says, “the Law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be just(fled by faith.” Where the Law is so taught that man, threatened by the wrath and punishment of God, is outwardly held under good discipline, and restrained from presumption and carelessness, and is inwardly urged by fear and terror to feel his helplessness and misery and to recognize his own inability — where the Law is so taught, the fold is rightly closed and guarded, and the sheep cannot run away into error and thus become a prey to wolves.

**14.** But this preaching and office of the porter is not enough for the sheep. For if they should remain thus shut up, they would suffer and die from hunger. Therefore another duty of the porter is to open the door to the true shepherd, who himself comes and feeds the sheep. It is all for his sake — the preaching and teaching in the Church; otherwise one would not dare be a doorkeeper or preacher.

**15.** It is, however, opening the door to Christ when we thus teach the Law, as we said. God requires us to keep these commandments at the peril of our eternal condemnation. And though you have kept them as perfectly as you can, you must know that you will neither be justified nor saved thereby before God; for you can never fulfill them, as you are indebted to do. And if you were to fulfill them, still you would not thereby merit that God should give you mote than he has already given you, for which you are in duty bound to obey him; as Christ says: “Even so ye also, when ye shall have done the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.” <sup><2170></sup>Luke 17:10. Therefore you must, after all this, have Christ, the Lord, for the true

shepherd, who gives you his fullness and riches, and you must be fed, pastured and saved by him.

**16.** Thus you rightly fulfill both offices, and correctly distinguish the doctrine of works from the doctrine of faith — we are to keep the Law, but not trust in it; for faith alone will keep us and comfort us with Christ's pasture. So, works rest upon the obligation of the Law, and faith upon grace in Christ.

### III. THE THIRD CLASS OF PREACHERS, IN WHOM ALONE CHRIST IS FOUND.

**17.** Now, where the door is opened to the shepherd and he enters, the sheep receive comfort and help; as Christ says at the lose of our Gospel lesson: "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." For as Christ rules, guides and leads them, feeds and keeps them, he works in them through his Word and the power of the Holy Spirit, and they grow daily, becoming richer in knowledge, stronger in faith. in consolation, in patience, having victory in suffering and other trials, and of themselves bear fruit, teaching, serving and helping others. And thus the office and work of the shepherd, whose own the sheep are, go on continually, when he himself receives the sheep and works his will in them, which he does by his voice, that is, the external Word and preaching.

**18.** Therefore, Christ calls himself the door by which the sheep go in and out. For, as he is the shepherd and also the sermon through which he comes to us and by which he is made known, so faith in our hearts, by which his power and work are experienced, is simply Christ dwelling and working in us, making us in our life and work complete in him. So all goodness goes forth from him and is received through faith in him; we are pleasing to God only because of him, and are not dependent upon anything else, neither have we comfort from any other source.

**19.** With the same figure in which Christ speaks of his of-rice, which he administers through the Word, he speaks also of his sheep, telling how they are to conduct themselves in his kingdom — when the door is opened to him, they at once hear his voice and learn to know it. It is truly a comforting, cheering voice, whereby they are released from terror and fear and brought into liberty, where they can look to God in Christ for grace

and all comfort. And where they once recognize this shepherd, they confidently hold to him alone and do not listen to the doctrine of any other. For they have, as the nature of sheep is, very keen ears, that respond to a very soft voice, and are very docile, recognizing and distinguishing the voice of their shepherd from all others who pose as shepherds. For now the experience of their own consciences and the witness of the Holy Spirit in their hearts testifies that no other doctrine or word can console the heart nor bring man rightly to trust in God and call upon him, except the voice of this shepherd, Christ. Therefore they reflect upon it without any doubting or wavering whatever. They do not gaze in wonder at what others teach or do, at what the world likes or the councils decree; if there were not a single person upon earth to agree with them, they would still be assured that they hear the voice of their true shepherd.

**20.** Yes, and they are of admirable intelligence; if they were, without fear or danger, given the choice, each pious soul would rather follow his conscience and plant himself upon Christ and his grace than upon his own works, even if he had an abundance of the latter. For of his works he is doubtful. Yea, he knows that they cannot stand before God's judgment; as David and all the saints say: "Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight no man living is righteous." <19E302>Psalm 143:2. But he knows that grace is assured to him; for it is God's Word and truth.

**21.** What mean Christ's further words: "And he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out"? All hear the harmonious voice of Christ — the preaching of the Gospel: faith, baptism, hope and salvation they all have in common and in equal measure. The grace that Magdalene has is the same as that of the Virgin Mary, and that of Peter the same as the dying thief experienced.

**22.** But there is a difference when he begins to call by special names those who are in the same grace; as a shepherd has special marks for each sheep and calls one "Brownie," another "Blackie," or such names as he will. Likewise Christ produces special works in each individual when he comforts, admonishes, and helps him in his needs and cares, through his Word. Also he distributes to men his gifts: to one a stronger faith than to another, or more understanding; gifts to teach and explain the Scriptures, to preach, to rule. Again, he uses an individual for a special work, to accomplish more and greater things than another; he visits one with much

suffering and another with little; he extended the Gospel farther through Paul than through the other apostles; he called Peter and led him to suffer in a different way than he did John.

**23.** Paul, in <sup><452></sup>1 Corinthians 12:4-6, says: “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit,” etc. As in the same house there are many kinds of work, many occupations, but all the workers are members of the same family, having the same kind of food; and as there are many members in the same body and each has its special work and use, and yet all are of the same body and the same in health, deriving a common pleasure from the food and nourishment: so in Christ’s kingdom there are many kinds of gifts, of works and sufferings, distributed to each according to his capacity and calling; but all are sheep of the same kind, sharing all his blessings, and one is as dear to him as another. He says further:

*“He leadeth them out. When he has put forth all his own,  
he goeth before them” etc.*

**24.** This leading them out is, as I said, Christian liberty. They are now free; no longer penned up and captive under anxious constraint and fear of the Law and of divine judgment, but happily pastured and nourished in Christ’s sweet kingdom of grace. Of this liberty St. Paul says: “Ye are not under law, but under grace.” <sup><454></sup>Romans 6:14. Again he says: “Now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor.” <sup><455></sup>Galatians 3:25.

**25.** This liberty does not mean that the sheep may now without a fold and without a keeper run from their shepherd unrestrained into error; or that Christians can do whatever the flesh lusteth for. But it means that, now free from terror and fear of wolves, thieves and murderers, they may live with their dear shepherd, in love and pleasure following where he leads and guides; because they know that he so defends and lovingly oversees them that the Law dare no more accuse and condemn them, even though they are weak as to the flesh and have not perfectly fulfilled the Law.

**26.** For here the Lord, God’s Son, is the shepherd, who takes the sheep under his grace, his shelter and protection; and he who will accuse or condemn the sheep, must first accuse or condemn the Lord himself. Paul gloriously and defiantly says in <sup><456></sup>Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” etc.; likewise in verses 33 and 34: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea

rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” This is, I say, freedom of conscience — freedom from the condemnation of the Law. Now that we are in Christ, the Law has no claim on us, for the material, bodily life has no place here. It has its own external government and law, unrelated to spiritual life in the kingdom of Christ.

*“When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him.”*

**27.** That is the Christians’ life under their shepherd. Christ ever rules, leads and guides them. They remain with him in the liberty of faith, wherein they walk, following his example in obedience and good works, of which example Peter says: Christ has “left you an example, that ye should follow his steps.” <sup><412></sup>1 Peter 2:21. And Christ himself says in <sup><415></sup>John 13:15: “I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you.” Christ’s kingdom, as I said, was not instituted that we might indulge the lusts of our flesh; but that we, released from the captivity of the Law, under which we could not in sincerity do anything good, follow Christ forward cheerfully and with a good conscience in our lives and works. And each responds as Christ calls him, a special instrument for Christ’s use.

**28.** To follow the advancing Christ means that our whole lives and all our works be in the faith of Christ — a constant exercise of faith, wherein we recognize and are assured that because of this dear shepherd we have favor with God. Thus our works and lives, weak and imperfect in obedience as they are, are also under the wings of the mother hen, and are pleasing to God because of the shepherd. In this confidence we now begin to be obedient, to call upon him in our temptations and needs, to confess his Word and serve our neighbors. And thus, both in the inner and the outer life — which Christ here calls “going out and in” — we are to find pasture; that is, comfort, strength, help, the increase of faith, and everything good. To this end a Christian constantly needs the Word of Christ as his daily bread; he needs to learn from it and to exercise himself in it. Therefore, Christ says again, in concluding his words on the sheep that follow him:

*“For they know his voice.. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.”*

**29.** That means, they know now how to keenly distinguish doctrine, faith and life; for they have the standard of the Word, which teaches them to cling alone to this shepherd, and thus be enabled to rightly judge everything offered to them and shun and condemn that which directs and leads them otherwise. Therefore, under this shepherd they abide indeed safe, undeceived and rightly led; they are excellent, intelligent, well sheltered, contented, secure and blessed sheep.

**30.** Notice that this parable pictures so beautifully to us Christ and his sheep that we see the inner life of his kingdom and the treasure we have from him. And it finely symbolizes how we should teach the Law and faith and works in the Church. But the Pharisees and their blind leaders and the false saints understand naught of this; as John here says:

*“But they understand not what things they were which he spoke unto them.”*

**31.** Yes, although Christ even interprets and illustrates these things in plain words, yet his hearers do not understand them. They consider and estimate his words from the low plane of their own reason, which learns nothing beyond the doctrine of the law of works, and seeks the fulfillment of the same by its own strength; as Paul, in ~~510B~~Romans 10:3, says of them: They seek to establish their own righteousness, and do not subject themselves to the righteousness that avails before God. Hence, when they hear the doctrine of our salvation, how our lives must be hid in Christ alone and nothing avails without him, they begin to blaspheme; as they say of him at the end of this sermon in verse 20: “He hath a demon, and is mad; why hear ye him?” So in our day they revile the doctrine of faith as heresy, and say that we forbid good works; but thereby they candidly reveal their own blindness — they do not understand what Christ, faith and good works are.

**32.** We, however, who have — God be praised! — the true knowledge, should learn from this Gospel two things: First, that nothing should be taught in Christendom except that which pertains to this one shepherd, Christ — and every individual should guard against all that does not point to him for enlightenment of the conscience and for strengthening the hope of salvation; or that is not enjoined and commanded as necessary to keep. Therefore, Christ calls himself the door, through whom alone we must go out and in; and true doctrine and faith, and life proceed only from him, lead to him and are found in him.

**33.** The second truth is that all Christians have the power and right to pass judgment upon any doctrine, and to turn from false preachers and bishops, refusing obedience to them. For you hear in this Gospel that Christ says of his sheep: “My sheep hear my voice, and a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of the stranger.” The reason Christians can rightly judge is because they apply the standard — as I mentioned — from this Word of Christ, that all who fail to teach Christ are thieves and murderers. These words have already passed the judgment and further knowledge than that of Christ is unnecessary. Christians, then, are in duty bound to follow this judgment, fleeing and avoiding all it contains, it matters not who, how wise or how many they are.

**34.** Here are deposed from their office and power those who wish to rule in the Church and yet do not teach Christ’s Words but their own commands, and who require the people to obey them as bishops occupying the appointed seats of authority in the Church. So it is the duty of Christ’s sheep to follow Christ’s judgment, holding such teachers as dethroned, condemned and excommunicated from the Church of Christ, and fleeing from them as accursed. And they who wish to remain godly, and Christ’s true sheep, should never yield this power and right of judgment, nor permit themselves to indorse, accept or follow what others may decree, contrary to its teaching, be they pope, bishop or councils.



# PENTECOST WEDNESDAY.

This sermon is not found in the edition of the Church Postil edited by Creuziger, and in some of Rodt's editions it is found in the festival part of the Church Postil of 1528.

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:397; Walch Edition, 11:1533; St. Louis Walch, 11:1137.

*Text: <sup><RBH></sup>John 6:44-51: No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he that is from God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness. and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: yea and the bread which I give is my flesh, for the life of the world.*

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## SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL:

1. No one will know Christ unless the Father draw him, that is, unless the Father teaches him inwardly in his heart. Therefore Christ says to Peter in ~~<DIGT>~~Matthew 16:17: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."
2. Christ is the tree of life, of which Adam was forbidden to eat, Christ is the wisdom of God that is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it, as Solomon says in ~~<ANSI>~~Proverbs 8:11.
3. The old bread from heaven, that is, the righteousness of the Law does not justify; but Christ makes alive forever when one believes on him.

## I. ON FAITH, AND COMING TO CHRIST.

**1.** This Gospel text teaches exclusively of the Christian faith, and awakens that faith in us; just as John, throughout his whole Gospel, simply instructs us how to trust in Christ the Lord. This faith alone, when based upon the sure promises of God, must save us; as our text clearly explains. And in the light of it all, they must become fools who have taught us other ways to become godly. All that human ingenuity can devise, be it as holy and as luminous as it may, must tumble to the ground if man be saved in God's way — in a way different from that which man himself plans. Man may forever do as he will, he can never enter heaven unless God takes the first step with his Word, which offers him divine grace and enlightens his heart so as to get upon the right way.

**2.** This right way, however, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever desires to seek another way, as the great multitudes venture to do by means of their own works, has already missed the right way; for Paul says to the Galatians: "If righteousness is through the Law," that is, through the works of the Law, "then Christ died for naught." <sup><4021></sup>Galatians 2:21. Therefore I say man must fall upon this Gospel and be broken to pieces and in deep consciousness lie prostrate, like a man that is powerless, unable to move hand or foot. He must only lie motionless and cry: Almighty God, merciful Father, now help me! I cannot help myself. Christ, my Lord, do help now, for with only my own effort all is lost! Thus, in the light of this cornerstone, which is Christ, everyone becomes as nothing; as Christ says of himself in <sup><4017></sup>Luke 20:17-18, when he asks the Pharisees and scribes: "What then is this that is written. The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner? Every one that falleth on that stone shall be broken to pieces; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust." <sup><19B822></sup>Psalm 118:22. Therefore, we must either fall upon this stone, Christ, in all our inability and helplessness, rejecting our own merits, and be broken to pieces, or he will forever crush us by his severe sentence and judgment. It is better that we fall upon him than that he should fall upon us. For this reason the Lord says in this Gospel:

*"No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day."*

**3.** He must surely perish whom the Father does not draw. Thus it is decreed, that whoever does not come to this Son must be condemned

forever. The Son is given to us only to the end that he may save us; besides him, nothing saves us, either in heaven or on earth. If he does not help us, then nothing will. On this Peter says in the Acts of the Apostles (~~401~~ Acts 4:11-12): “He is the stone which was set at naught of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation; neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.” Where, in the light of this, are our theologians and professors who taught us that we become pious through our many good works? Here the great master Aristotle is put to shame, who proclaimed that reason strives for the best and always follows after the good. Christ says to this: No; if the Father comes not first and draws men, they must forever perish.

**4.** Here all men must confess their incapacity and inability to do the good. Should one imagine he is able to do anything good of his own strength, he does no less than make Christ the Lord a liar; he would rudely and defiantly come to the Father and in all rashness ascend to heaven. Therefore, where the pure and plain Word of God goes, it breaks into pieces everything that is exalted of man, it makes valleys of all their mountains, and all their hills it makes low, as the prophet Isaiah (40:4) says. Every heart that hears this Word must lose faith in itself, else it will not be able to come to Christ. God’s works do nothing but destroy and make alive, condemn and minister salvation. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, sings of the Lord: “Jehovah killeth, and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up.” ~~406~~ 1 Samuel 2:6.

**5.** Hence, a person who is thus smitten in his heart, by God, to confess that he is one who, on account of his sins, must be condemned, is like the righteous man whom with the first words of this Gospel God wounds, and because of that wound fixes upon him the band or cord of his divine grace, by which he draws him, so that he must seek help and counsel for his soul. Before he could not obtain any help or counsel from God, nor did he ever desire it; but now he finds the first comfort and promise of God, which ~~2110~~ Luke 11:10 records thus: “For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” From such promises will he ever continue to gain courage as long as he lives, and will ever win greater and greater confidence in God. Just as soon as he hears that grace is the work of God alone, he will desire it of God as from the hand of his gracious Father, who wishes to draw him. Now, if he is drawn by God to Christ, he will certainly experience what the Lord here

says: "He will raise him up in the last day." For he has laid hold upon the Word of God and trusts God. In this he has a sure sign that he is one whom God has drawn, as John says in his First Epistle (<sup><450></sup>1 John 5:10): "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him."

**6.** Hence, it must necessarily follow that he is taught of God, and that he knows now in truth that the meaning of God is nothing more than Helper, Comforter, Savior, as we say of those who rescue us from danger: Thou wast today my God. From this it is now clear that God will be to us nothing less than a Savior, a helper, and a giver of all blessedness, who neither demands nor desires anything from us. He only gives, he only offers to us; as he says to Israel in <sup><4910></sup>Psalm 81:10: "I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Who would not be kindly disposed to such a God, who approaches us so lovingly and graciously, and offers us his favor and blessings if we only acknowledge him as God and are willing to be taught of him? They cannot escape the severe, eternal judgment of God who ignore such grace, as the Epistle to the Hebrews (<sup><5008></sup>Hebrews 10:28-29) says: "A man that hath set at naught Moses' law dieth without compassion: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing."

**7.** Oh, how diligent and earnest St. Paul is in all his Epistles that we may always grasp the knowledge of God aright! How often he expresses the wish for growth in the knowledge of God! As if he would say: If you only knew and understood what God is, then you would be already saved, then you would gain love for him and do only those things well pleasing to him. Thus he says to the Colossians (<sup><5100></sup>Colossians 1:9-12): "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And in <sup><19B934></sup>Psalm 119:34 David says: "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy Law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart."

**8.** Thus you learn from the first utterance in today's Gospel that this knowledge must come from God the Father; he must lay the first stone of the foundation in us, else we will never do anything. But this is accomplished in the following way: God sends us preachers, whom he has taught, to preach to us his will. First he instructs us that our entire lives and characters, however beautiful and holy they may be, are before him as nothing, yea, are as abomination, and displeasing; this is called a preaching of the Law. Then he offers us grace; that is, he tells us that he will not utterly condemn and reject us, but will receive us in his beloved Son, and not merely receive us, but make us heirs of his kingdom, lords over all that is in heaven and upon earth. This is called preaching grace or preaching the Gospel. But God is the origin of all; he first awakens preachers and constrains them to preach. This is the meaning of St. Paul's words when he says to the Romans: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ." ~~6107~~ Romans 10:17. This truth the words of the Lord in today's Gospel also declares, when Christ says:

"It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he that is from God, he hath seen the Father."

**9.** Now, under the first preaching, the preaching of the Law, namely, that we with all our works are condemned, man is restless and fearful before God, and knows not what to do with his life and deeds. He suffers from an accusing and timid conscience, and, if relief from some source were not to come quickly he would have to despair forever. Therefore, we must not long delay with the other preaching; we must preach the Gospel to him and lead him to Christ as the one whom the Father has given to us to be our mediator, that we should be saved solely through him, out of pure grace and mercy, without any works or merit on our part. The heart rejoices at this word and runs to such grace as a thirsty deer to the water. This longing David keenly experiences when he says in ~~1941~~ Psalm 42:1-2: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God, my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God."

**10.** Now, when one comes to Christ, that is, to his Gospel, he hears the personal voice of Christ the Lord, which confirms the knowledge God taught him, namely, that God is nothing but a very gracious Savior, who

wants to be gracious and merciful to all who call upon him. Therefore, the Lord adds:

“Verily verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.”

**11.** In these words the soul finds a well prepared table, at which it satisfies all hunger; for it knows for a certainty that he who speaks these words cannot lie. Therefore the soul falls upon the Word, clings to it, trusts in it, and also builds its dwelling-place in the strength of this well-prepared table. This is the feast for which the heavenly Father slayed his oxen and fatlings and invited us all to it.

## II. THE BREAD OF HEAVEN.

**12.** The living bread, of which the Lord here speaks, is Christ himself, of whom we partake. If in our hearts we lay hold of only a morsel of this bread, we shall have forever enough and can never be separated from God. The partaking of this bread is nothing but faith in Christ our Lord, that he is, as Paul says in <sup>403</sup>1 Corinthians 1:30, “made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.” He who eats of this food lives forever. Therefore, the Lord says, immediately following this Gospel lesson, where the Jews strove among themselves about this discourse of his: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

**13.** The bread from heaven the fathers ate in the wilderness, as Christ says here, was powerless to keep them from dying; but this bread makes immortal. If we believe on Christ, death cannot harm us; yea, it is no longer death. The Lord utters the same truth in another passage when he says to the Jews: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my Word, he shall

never see death.” <sup><RS></sup>John 8:51. Here he speaks definitely of the Word of faith, and of the Gospel.

**14.** But one may say, as did the Jews, who took offense at these words of the Lord: The saints, nevertheless, died, and Abraham and the prophets likewise died. We reply to this: The death of Christians is only a sleep, as the Scriptures everywhere call it. A Christian neither tastes nor sees death; that is, he is never conscious of any death; for this Savior, Christ Jesus, in whom he believes, has destroyed death so that he no longer needs to taste it and pay its penalty. Death is to the Christians only a transition of life, yea, a door to life: as Christ says in <sup><RS></sup>John 5:24: “Verily, verily,! say unto you, He that heareth my Word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.”

**15.** Therefore, a Christian life is a life of bliss and joy. Christ’s yoke is easy and sweet; the reason it seems to us galling and heavy is that the Father has not yet drawn us, and so we have no pleasure in it, neither does this Gospel lesson minister comfort to us. If we, however, rightly appropriated the words of Christ, they would be of much greater comfort to us. By faith we partake of this bread that has come down from heaven, Christ the Lord, when we believe on him as our Savior and Redeemer.

**16.** In this light I now remind you that these words are not to be misconstrued and made to refer to the Sacrament of the Altar; whoever so interprets them does violence to this Gospel text. There is not a letter in it that refers to the Lord’s Supper. Why should Christ here have in mind that Sacrament when it was not yet instituted? The whole chapter from which this Gospel is taken speaks of nothing but the spiritual food, namely, faith. When the people followed the Lord merely hoping again to eat and drink, as the Lord himself charges them with doing, he took the figure from the temporal food they sought, and speaks throughout the entire chapter of a spiritual food. He says: “The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life.” Thereby he shows that he feeds them with the object of inducing them to believe on him, and that as they partook of the temporal food, so should they also partake of the spiritual. On this subject we will say more at some other time.

**17.** Now let us here notice that the Lord approaches us so lovingly and graciously, and offers us himself — his blood and flesh — in such gentle words that it should in all reason move the heart to believe on him; to believe that this bread, his flesh and blood, born of the Virgin Mary, was



given because he had to pay the penalty of death and suffer in our stead the torments of hell, and, besides, to suffer the guilt of sins he never committed, as if they were his own. This he did willingly and received us as brethren and sisters. If we believe this we do the will of the heavenly Father, which is nothing else than that we believe on the Son. Christ says, just before our text: “This is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” ~~466~~ John 6:40.

**18.** It is now evident that whoever has faith in this bread of heaven — in Christ, in this flesh and blood, of which he here speaks that it is given to him and that it is his — he also accepts it as his own, and has already done the will of God and eaten of this heavenly manna; as Augustine says: What do you prepare for your mouth? Only believe, and you have already eaten.

**19.** The whole New Testament treats of this spiritual supper, and especially does John here. The Sacrament of the Altar is a testament and confirmation of this true supper, with which we should strengthen our faith and be assured that this body and this blood, which we receive in the Sacrament, has rescued us from sin and death, the devil, hell and all misery. Concerning this I have spoken and written more on other occasions.

**20.** What is the proof by which one may know that this heavenly bread is his and that he is invited to such a spiritual supper? He needs only to look at his own heart. If he finds it so disposed that it is softened and cheered by God’s promises and is firm in the conviction that it may appropriate this bread of life, then he may be assured that he is one of the invited; for as one believes, even so is it done unto him. From that moment on, he loves his neighbor and helps him as his brother; he rescues him, gives to him, loans to him and does nothing for him but that which he would desire his neighbor to do for himself. All this is attributable to the fact that Christ’s kindness to him has leavened his heart with sweetness and love, so that he has pleasure and joy in serving his neighbor; yea, he is even in misery if he has no one to whom to show kindness. Besides all this, he is gently and humbly disposed toward everybody; he does not highly esteem the transient pomps of the world; he accepts everyone as he is, speaks evil of no one, interprets all things for the best where he sees things are not going right. When his neighbors are lacking in faith, in love, in life, then he prays for them, and he is heartily sorry when anyone gives offense to God or to his neighbor. To sum up all, with him the root and sap are good, for he is

grafted into a rich and fruitful vine. in Christ; therefore, such fruits must come forth.

**21.** But if one has not faith and is not taught of God — if he never eats of this bread from heaven — he surely never brings forth these fruits. For where such fruits are not produced, there is certainly no true faith. St. Peter teaches us in ~~6010~~2 Peter 1:10 that we should make our calling unto salvation sure by good works; there he is really speaking of the works of love, of serving one's neighbor and treating him as one's own flesh and blood. This is sufficient on this Gospel. Let us pray for God's grace.

# SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, OR TRINITY SUNDAY.

This sermon, which is not found in edition c., appeared in two pamphlet editions in 1522 and 1523. The title of the first was, "A sermon of Dr. Martin Luther, Preached on the Day of the Holy Trinity on the Gospel, John 3. Wittenberg (1522)."

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:407; Walch Edition, 11:1547; St. Louis Walch, 11:1146.

*Text: <sup><RH></sup>John 3:1-15: Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shayy ye believe if I tell you heavenly things? And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.*

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## SUMMARY OF THIS GOSPEL:

Here we have a masterly, excellent and valuable example of the wisdom of human reason and the foolishness of Christ, that is, of the righteousness of the spirit.

1. A wise and moral man is here punished because he knew nothing of the things of God, who least expected that he would be convicted by them.
  2. Nicodemus imagined the righteousness of the Law to be something; but Christ teaches that the new birth, that is, the crucifixion of the flesh, is right and true righteousness.
- Human wisdom can not understand the righteousness of God, but considers it to be foolishness.
4. By the passage, "That which is born of the flesh," all our affairs and we ourselves are condemned and overthrown, regardless of how holy and great they are.
  5. Honest and spiritual characters are concealed and are not recognized by the flesh. What have we then to do with the outward pomp that still holds the church together?
  6. "No one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven." From this it is clear that you will never ascend into heaven by means of your free will or your own power, but alone in him and through him who alone ascended into heaven, that is, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

## I. THE HOLY TRINITY.

1. Today we celebrate the festival of the Holy Trinity, to which we must briefly allude, so that we may not celebrate it in vain. It is indeed true that the name "Trinity" is nowhere to be found in the Holy Scriptures, but has been conceived and invented by man. For this reason it sounds somewhat cold and we had better speak of "God" than of the "Trinity."
2. This word signifies that there are three persons in God. It is a heavenly mystery which the world cannot understand. I have often told you that this, as well as every other article of faith, must not be based upon reason or comparisons, but must be understood and established by means of passages from the Scriptures, for God has the only perfect knowledge and knows how to speak concerning himself.
3. The great universities have invented manifold distinctions, dreams and fictions by means of which they would explain the Holy Trinity, and have

made fools of themselves. We shall therefore quote only passages from the Scriptures in order to determine and establish the divinity of Christ. In the first place, we quote from the New Testament, where we find many proof texts; for instance, <sup><B00></sup>John 1:1-3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made.” Now if he is not made, but is himself the Maker, he must indeed be God. John also says afterwards: “And the Word became flesh.”

**4.** Again, we quote from the Old Testament, where David says, in <sup><19B001></sup>Psalms 110:1: “Jehovah saith unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand,” that is, sit upon the royal throne and be a lord and king over all creatures, all which must be subject to thee — “until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” In <sup><B004></sup>Psalms 8:4-8, we read: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him but little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honor. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.” That means: Thou hast made him Lord of the whole world. Paul explains this passage, in <sup><B002></sup>Ephesians 1:20 and <sup><500B></sup>Colossians 2:9-10, in a masterly way. Now, if God has set him at his right hand and made him lord of all in heaven and on earth, he must indeed be God; for it would not be fitting that he should set him at his right hand and give him as much power over all creatures as he himself possesses, if he were not God. God will not give his glory to another, as he says in <sup><2381></sup>Isaiah 48:11. Thus, we have here two persons, the Father, and the Son to whom the Father has given all that is subject to him. To “sit at the right hand of God” means to be over all God’s creatures; he must therefore be God to whom is given all this.

**5.** God has also commanded us not to worship strange gods. Now, we read in John that, according to the will of God, we should honor the Son even as we honor the Father. These are the words of <sup><B59></sup>John 5:19-23, where Christ says to the Jews: “Verily, Verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and greater works than these will he show him, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to

whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him." These are, to my mind, truly clear and distinct words concerning the divinity of Christ. Now, as God commands that we should have only one God, and should not render to any other creature the glory which belongs to God and is due him, and yet he gives this glory to Christ, Christ must indeed be God.

**6.** Paul says in <sup><B10D></sup>Romans 1:2-4: "The Gospel he promised afore through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord." Therefore, according to the flesh he began to exist, but according to the spirit he existed from eternity, although it was not clearly understood before; as it was not necessary that we should make a God of him, but only that we should declare and understand that he is the Son of God. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, as Christ himself says in <sup><B163></sup>John 16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth." And elsewhere the Evangelist writes, <sup><B170></sup>John 17:1-5: "These things spoke Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee: even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal life. And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ. I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

**7.** We also read in <sup><B08></sup>Psalms 2:8: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." He is truly enthroned king of all. He is God's child, and the world is subject to no other prince or king. Likewise, in another psalm, David openly calls him God, when he says: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of equity is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." <sup><B16></sup>Psalms 45:6-7. God will make no one such a king who is not God, for he will not give the reins out of his hands; he alone will be the Lord over heaven and earth,

death, hell, the devil and all creatures. If he, then, makes Christ Lord of all that is created, Christ must truly be God.

**8.** We can, therefore, have no surer foundation for our belief in the divinity of Christ than that we enwrap and en-'close our hearts in the declarations of the Scriptures. The Scriptures gradually and beautifully 'lead us to Christ; first revealing him to us as a man, then as the lord of all creatures, and finally as God. Thus we are successfully led to the true knowledge of God. But the philosophers and the wise men of this world would begin at the top and so they have become fools. We must begin at the bottom and gradually advance in knowledge, so that the words of <sup><197></sup>Proverbs 25:27 may not apply to us: "It is not good to eat much honey; so for men to search out their own glory is grievous."

**9.** Our faith in these two persons, the Father and the Son, is therefore sufficiently established and confirmed by passages from the Scriptures. But of the Holy Spirit, the third person, we read in <sup><198></sup>Matthew 28:19 that Christ sent forth his disciples, saying to them: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Here divinity is also ascribed to the Holy Spirit, since I may trust or believe in no one but God. And I must trust only in one who has power over death, hell, the devil and all creatures, whose authority withholds them from harming me, and who can save me. None will suffice except one in whom I may trust absolutely. Now, Christ in this passage commands that we should also believe and trust in the Holy Spirit; therefore he must be God. In the Gospel according to John, Christ speaks frequently to his disciples of the Holy Spirit, his power or existence.

**10.** In <sup><199></sup>Genesis 1:2 we read: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." But this passage is not as clear as the one last quoted; the Jews attack it and affirm that the word "spirit" in Hebrew signifies "wind."

**11.** David says in <sup><200></sup>Psalms 33:6: "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the Spirit of his mouth." Here it is quite clear that the Holy Spirit is God, because the heavens and all their hosts were made by him. And, again, David says in <sup><19D907></sup>Psalms 139:7-8: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there." Now, this cannot be said of any creatures



— that it is everywhere and fills the whole world — but only of God, the Creator.

**12.** Therefore, we cling to the Scriptures, those passages which testify of the Trinity of God, and we say: I know very well that in God there are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; but how they can be one I do not know, neither should I know it. This may suffice for the first part. Now we will come back to the Gospel and say something on that in the time that is left us.

**II.** EXPLANATION OF THIS GOSPEL; CHRIST'S CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS.

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## I. THE CONVERSATION IN GENERAL.

**1.** In this Gospel you see clearly what reason and free-will can do. You may see it distinctly in Nicodemus, who was the best of the best, a prince and leader of the Pharisees, and the Pharisees held first place in their day. They were, however, in the highest things — in spiritual life — altogether blind and dead before God, however holy, wise, good and mighty they may have been considered by men. The longer Nicodemus associates with Christ, the less he understands Christ, although he is expected to understand only earthly things and the manner of Christ's death. Reason is so blind that it can neither perceive nor understand the things of God, nor all things which properly belong to its own sphere. This is a blow to nature and human reason, which have been rated so high by philosophy and the

wise men of this world; the wise ones have said that reason always strives to attain the best.

**2.** God has here given us an example showing that even the best in nature must fail. In instances where human nature is at its best it is blind, not to speak of its envy and hatred. Christ has here demonstrated by examples, words and deeds that human reason is altogether blind and dead before God, Hence, it cannot appreciate divine things nor desire them.

**3.** Now, Nicodemus, who is a pious and well-meaning man, cannot grasp the work and Word of God; how then would Annas and Caiaphas? He comes to the Lord at night, which he did from fear, not desiring to be called a heretic by others. From this we may conclude that he was in nature an old Adam, cowardly seeking Christ by night, and that he did not yet possess the true light. If he had been a “new man,” he would have come in the bright light of day, fearing no one. Because of his hypocrisy, the Lord deals sharply with him, cutting off his salutation and all further speech, as we shall see. Nicodemus approaches the Lord with these words:

*“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him.”*

## II. THE CONVERSATION IN DETAIL.

**4.** He thinks that he has uttered these words in all sincerity; but there is still the old life and nothing but hypocrisy. For this reason Christ will not accept his salutation, but will take from Nicodemus everything in which he feels secure and will make a “new” man of him, giving him a new heart and enabling him to walk by faith. He says to him:

*“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

**5.** Christ’s words are as if to say: No, my dear Nicodemus, I am not moved by your beautiful words. You must give up your old life and become a new man. You have not the faith which you say you have; you are still afraid. Although the natural man hears the Word of God, the Gospel, and delights in it, yet it does not enter the heart. Therefore, we must slay reason and experience the new birth. This is what Christ means when he says that we

must be born anew. Reason cannot understand this, wherefore Nicodemus replies:

*“How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?”*

**6.** Thus reason takes offense at the Spirit, imagines unreality’s and conceives of this new birth as a natural birth. Therefore Christ proceeds, explaining this birth to him to clear his misunderstanding, and says:

*“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

**7.** In other words: The new birth of which I speak must be otherwise explained. I do not abolish the natural birth but I speak of a birth which is of water and the Spirit. Then he continues:

*“That which is born of the flesh is flesh;  
and that which is borne of the Spirit is spirit.”*

**8.** These words cannot be grasped by reason, which seeks to explain the words “Spirit” and “water,” speculating how such birth may be. Here it sees nothing in the nature of a birth and therefore plays the part of a fool by saying: How earl a man be born of water and the Spirit? Indeed, such a source would produce but water-bubbles.

**9.** Now, Christ speaks and destroys reason, saying: “Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?” You should teach others the spiritual birth, that they might become righteous, but you yourself do not understand it. He defeats reason and the whole law and says: My friend, do you not know how these things can be? It is plain to me, as it was also to the prophets, who corroborate my words. Renounce your reason and close your eyes; cling only to my Word and believe it. Again he says:

*“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”*

**10.** As if to say: You presume to judge spiritual things by your reason, and at the same time you cannot understand the simple things of nature. He calls Nicodemus’ attention to the wind. No philosopher or scientist has ever been able to comprehend and describe the nature of the wind —

where it has its beginning or where it ends. We cannot see where the wind comes from, or how it blows past us, or how far it goes. Now, if we cannot by our reason fathom those things which we see daily in nature, much less will we be able to fathom with our reason the divine works which God accomplishes within us.

**11.** How a man is born anew may easily be told in words. When, however, it is a question of experience, as it was here with Nicodemus, then it is a hard matter to understand and it requires effort to attain the experience. It is easy to say: We must blind our reason, disregard our feelings, close our eyes and only cling to the Word — finally die and yet live. But to persevere in this, when it becomes a matter of experience and when we are really tested, requires pains and labor. It is a very bitter experience.

**12.** An example of this new birth we have in Abraham, whose son was to inherit the world and whose seed was to be like the stars in heaven, as was promised him in <sup><015f></sup>Genesis 15:5 Then God came and commanded him to slay his son. Now had Abraham acted as reason dictated, he would have concluded thus: Aye, God has given me this seed, by which he has promised to increase my family, and now he commands me to offer him up as a sacrifice. Surely, God cannot command this; it must be the devil. But Abraham slays reason and honors God, thinking: God is so powerful that he can raise my son from death and increase my family through him. or he can give me another son, or effect his purpose in some other way, which I do not know. So Abraham commends all to God. Here Abraham leaves his old life and surrenders himself to God, believes in him and becomes a new man. Then the angel comes and says to him: “Abraham, Abraham, lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him;: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me,” <sup><021b></sup>Genesis 22:11-12. Abraham could not have imagined that God would thus come to his rescue; nay, he had already in his heart slain his son.

**13.** Now, the beginning of this birth was in baptism. The water is baptism; the Spirit is that grace which is given to us in baptism. The result of this birth is clearly seen in the hour of death or in times of test by poverty and temptation. He who is born of the flesh fights to defend himself, looks hither and thither, employs his reason to make his living. But he who is born anew reasons thus: I am in God’s hands, who has preserved and

nourished me before in a wonderful manner: he will also feed and preserve me in the future and save me from, all sorrow and misfortune.

**14.** When we are about to die we feel that we must depart and we know not whither; the house of shelter is not ready and we know not whether it will be a white or a black house. For where there is flesh and blood, there is still the old Adam, who does not know where he shall go, whether below or above, to the left or to the right; on what he should rest his soul and depart. Then there is anxiety and misery in the nature of a real hell; for the torment of hell is nothing but fear, terror, dread and despair. But if I believe in God and am born anew, I close my eyes and do not grope about. I am willing that the condition of the soul be changed entirely, and I think: O God, my soul is in thy hands; thou hast preserved it during my life and I have never known where thou hast put it. neither do I wish to know, to which place thou wilt now assign it. I only know that it is in thy hands and thou wilt take care of it. Thus we must abandon the life of the flesh and enter into a new life, being dead to the old. This is a real dying and not merely a painful sensation, like the scratching off of a scab, as the philosophers have said; and they have compared the entering upon the new life with the rinsing of a pot by the cook. There must be a real change and an entire transformation of nature, for the natural state and natural feeling must be completely overthrown.

**15.** Now, the Lord says here: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "Flesh" means the whole man, with body and soul, reason and will, who is not yet born of the Spirit. For the soul has entered so deeply into the flesh to guard and protect it from harm that the soul is more flesh than the flesh itself. We see it in death, when the flesh does not willingly give up life because the soul is still present; but as soon as the soul has departed, the body allows itself to be mutilated and permits everything that may be done with it. The Lord our God also alludes to this with these words in Genesis, spoken before the deluge: "My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he also is flesh." Man does not desire the destruction of the flesh, or, in other words, to die; but this is the will of the Spirit, wherefore he desires that the flesh may soon be destroyed. Thus the nature of the soul must change and it must become an enemy of the body, desiring that the body may die, so that it (the soul) may enter into a new life. That this will be, we are to believe, but not to know how. It is the work of God, and he has not commanded us to fathom it.

**16.** Thus the Lord would point out with this simile of the wind that the spiritual man is neither here nor there and is not limited to any time or place. He does not put on a hood, neither does he do any of the things that are merely material. for he knows that they will not avail. In brief, no pilgrimage. no fasting, no money given for masses, no good work at all. is of any avail; there must be a new life, that is, all our works must perish and come to naught, as has been said. The new life, however, consists not in dependence upon works, but it abides and perseveres in the grace of God, which he gives us through Jesus Christ. If I would then hold my ground, my works and all I have devised must fall to pieces and come to naught. Consequently, there is in the new man no definite beginning nor end. We indeed hear the blowing of the wind. but do not know whence it comes and whither it goes. Thus it is here: A man preaches and the Word is in his mouth, but no one knows whence it comes to him, what it will accomplish and where it will bring forth fruit.

**17.** Hence, we conclude from this passage that a Christian should not depend upon works, upon certain places or persons. Reason wonders at this and inquires: How can it be that everyone, who is born of the Spirit is to be compared with the wind and that all our works mean nothing? What results can possibly follow? If this were so, all priests, monks and nuns, with their beautiful and worthy lives, must be condemned. Christ answers Nicodemus' question, "How can these things be?" as follows:

*"Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?"*

**18.** In other words: You surely should know this, because you are one of those who teach the people, but I see that you know nothing of it. That which I have explained to you. namely, that we must be born anew, you should have taught the people. But you have taught them the contrary — have endeavored to know whence the wind comes and whither it goes, have concerned yourselves about its blowing and other useless things; but the things most necessary to you and the people, you have disregarded. Hear then what I tell you:

*"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness."*

**19.** As if Christ said: Should I point out to you how these things can be? It cannot be done. You should believe me. since you say yourself that I am a teacher come from God. When I have said that a man must be born anew

and that all your works are worthless, it cannot be demonstrated so that you may see it with your eyes; it can only be explained in words. If you believe it, you will understand it. But Nicodemus did not understand it. Therefore, the Lord, disclosing more and more to him his folly, continues:

*“If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?”*

**20.** I have only told you of earthly things — how we must all come to naught; that man is dust and must return to dust: how the wind blows — and yet you do not understand it. What would you know if I should tell you much about God? I have spoken to you about insignificant things, and you do not understand them. How would you understand if I told you that our immortal bodies, after death, will shine as bright and clear as the sun? And what if I told you of what comes after death? You would understand this much less. He then explains to Nicodemus a few of these heavenly things and continues:

*“And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven even the Son of man, who is in heaven.”*

**21.** Reason does not understand what this means, for it is a sermon from heaven; as if Christ would say: The Son of man came upon earth and yet remained in heaven. He again ascended into heaven; that is, he became Lord of heaven and earth and all creatures. Know then that I am he who has come down, who even descended into hell, and yet remained in heaven. For when Christ was in death, he lived; when he was considered the most insignificant and despised of men, he was before God regarded as the most worthy of honor, and the greatest. He ascended again into heaven, after he rose from the dead, assumed again all power, and has become lord of all creatures on earth. No one has followed him in this.

**22.** We are truly also in death, but at the same time we are in heaven like Christ. Sin and death rule within us, but they have not been able to Conquer Christ; nay, in his hand and in his power are life and death, as he says in <sup><B017></sup>John 10:17-18: “Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” No one but Christ obtains such power that all things are subject to him. Although before the world he was dead, yet he lived before God, his Father; and although before the world he was in great disgrace



and shame, he was yet greatly honored by God. But all this he did only for our sakes. For in the fall of our first father Adam, we are all fallen. Christ had to atone for this fall by his disgrace, shame, ignominy and death, so that we might again obtain honor and life.

**23.** Christ rebukes Nicodemus here again, as he had done before when he said: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” He says in effect: You presume to, ascend into heaven and to escape from hell, but you will fail. Flesh and blood cannot enter into heaven. Only he ascends into heaven, who has come down from heaven, so that the control of all may be in his hands. He can destroy all that lives, make alive all that is dead and make poor all that is rich. It is then here determined that nothing can enter into heaven that is born of the flesh. But Christ’s ascent into heaven, as well as his descent to us, was for our benefit, so that we, who are carnal, might also enter heaven. Yet it is only on the condition that first our mortal body must perish. In short, we cannot effect anything by our own works, for God will save us only through Christ, who alone is the ladder by means of which we ascend into heaven. How this ascent into heaven is granted to us, how it becomes our own, Christ explains when he says:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.”

**24.** What does Christ mean by this? He means that all who would enter heaven and follow him must become new creatures; he ascended into heaven that we might follow him. The narrative to which Christ refers is written in <sup>9216</sup>Numbers 21:6-9: “And Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, because we have spoken against Jehovah, and against thee; pray unto Jehovah, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And Jehovah said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a standard: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it upon the standard: and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived.”

**25.** Christ uses this Scripture to point to himself; his reference is as if to say: Just as the Jews in the desert, who were bitten by fiery serpents, were saved by looking upon the serpent of brass, which Moses set upon a

standard, so it is also with regard to me. None who looks upon me will perish; that is, all those who have an evil conscience, are tormented by sin and death, should believe that I have come down for their sakes and have ascended again. Then neither sin nor death shall harm them; nay, they shall not perish in all eternity. Whoever would enter heaven and be saved, must be saved by this serpent, which is Christ; otherwise he will perish. Thus, this Gospel condemns freewill and everything of human accomplishment and points only to this serpent.

**26.** The spiritual significance of the narrative in Numbers is this: The serpent, which bit and poisoned the Jews is sin, death and an evil conscience. I know that I must die and that I am under the power of death; I cannot free myself and must remain in this state until a dead serpent is set up for me, one which, because it is not alive, can harm no one, but rather benefit, as did the serpent of Moses. Now, this is Christ. I see him hanging on the cross, not beautiful nor greatly honored. If his death upon the cross were in fashion to win for him the plaudits of men, the flesh might say that he deserved his honors and his exaltation by his works. But I see him hanging in disgrace on the cross, like a murderer and malefactor; thus, reason must say that he is cursed before God. The Jews believed that this was true and they could only consider him the most cursed of all men before God and the world, for they remembered this passage in the Law of Moses: “He that is hanged is accursed of God.” <sup><6223></sup>Deuteronomy 21:23.

**27.** Moses had to set up a serpent of brass, which looked like the fiery serpents, but did not bite or harm any one, nay, it rather saved the people. Thus, Christ also has the form and the appearance of a sinner, but has become my salvation; his death is my life; he atones for my sin and takes away from me the wrath of the Father. The living, fiery serpent is with in me, for I am a sinner, but in him is a dead serpent; he was indeed regarded a sinner, but he never committed any sin.

**28.** If, then, man believes that the death of Christ has taken away his sin, he becomes a new man. The carnal, natural man cannot believe that God will gratuitously take away and forgive us all our sins. Reason argues in this manner: You have sinned, you must also atone for your sin. Then it invents one good work after another and endeavors to take away sin by good works. But the Gospel of Christ is: If you have fallen in sin, another must atone for you, if a man believes this, he becomes one with Christ, and has everything that is Christ’s.

**29.** This Gospel, then, signifies that our works are nothing, and that all human power can do is useless, but faith in Christ does it all.

# SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, OR TRINITY SUNDAY.

## SECOND SERMON, ~~AR~~ JOHN 3:1-15.

The following sermon is found in place of the preceding one in edition c. and is a revision of a sermon that appeared in 1526 under the title: "The Gospel for Holy Trinity Sunday" etc., which in its primitive form was issued early by Stephen Rodt in the festival part of the Church Postil, under the name of "A sermon for the day of the founding of the Cross of Christ."

German text: Erlangen Edition, 12:427; Walch Edition, II, 1569; St. Louis Walch. 11:1162.

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**1.** This is another beautiful Gospel and treats of the foremost and chief doctrine in Christendom, namely, the article, How a person becomes holy and righteous in the sight of God. And there is here placed before us a beautiful allegory, showing how reason at its best and holiness in its highest state on earth run aground upon the genuine truth and spiritualness of this matter. For this person, Nicodemus, is highly praised by the Evangelist John, who states that he was great both as to the esteem with which he was regarded among his fellow men, and also as to his beautiful life in accordance with the Law. He was a ruler of the Jews, that is. a counselor in their governmental affairs; and in addition a Pharisee, that is, one of the most learned men, for they were regarded as the wisest. Moreover, he was one of the most pious men; for the members of this sect. were considered the greatest saints. Thus, no fault or blame can be laid on him, and he cannot be made greater: in the government he is a ruler, in knowledge the wisest, and in his life the saintliest.

**2.** Above these, there is in him another grace, namely, that he has a fondness for Christ, the Lord. This was a virtue far above the other three. The other rulers and Pharisees, though they were the wisest and holiest men, persecuted Christ and allied him with the devil; and no one dared to grumble at their decision; for the grumbler was expelled from the council and unchurched. Still, Nicodemus is so holy as to love Christ and to approach him in secret in order to speak with him and show his love for him.

**3.** Indeed, he must have been a particularly excellent man among the Pharisees and a man as truly pious as he could be by nature and according to the Law, earnestly seeking the truth and inquiring how and what men were teaching and preaching. Being a wise man, he also observed that this Jesus must be an extraordinary person, and was moved by his miracles to desire to hear him personally and to speak with him regarding his doctrine. For, no doubt, he had heard and learned that John the Baptist recently had introduced a new sort of preaching and baptism and had proclaimed the Messiah, who was then coming, while he had sharply and severely attacked and reproved the Pharisees, as this man is now also doing. Accordingly, he is moved to go to him and to hear what it is that he teaches, and what he is reproving. For an intelligent person like himself cannot understand why there should be anything deserving censure or blame in the Pharisees' holy life according to the Law and in their beautiful works.

**4.** Therefore, he goes to Christ with thoughts like these: Christ will rejoice to see me come and will be highly pleased because such a great and excellent man, one of the rulers and of the best of men, so humbles himself and shows such honor to a lowly person like Christ as to go to him and to seek his friendship, a thing Christ dare not expect of anyone.

Thus he sets out in a pleasant mood, expecting to be made welcome and to be very kindly received. Nor has he the least fear that possibly he may be reprov'd or put to school, but he imagines that, since he is acting like a good friend, Christ will in turn treat him respectfully and kindly.

Occasionally it still may happen that an earnest preacher is deceived by a person of this sort and allows the good opinion expressed to tickle him, causing him to flatter and fawn in turn.

**5.** Nicodemus, then, begins with these words: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God" etc. That is great praise for this preacher, by which Nicodemus offers his testimony that Christ's doctrine is from God; that is, that it is genuine truth and God's Word, notwithstanding Christ was not thus esteemed by all the Pharisees and rulers, but rather considered a seditious spirit and an impostor who had come forward without a commission from the proper authorities, and, in opposition to them, would attach the people to himself etc. Nevertheless, since Christ introduces a doctrine other than that which they had learned heretofore from the Law, and since he assails the Pharisees so vigorously, Nicodemus is as yet perplexed and desires to know what better and different things Christ can possibly teach.

His remarks are as if to say: We see and know very well that your doctrine is beyond reproach and censure and must be true and divine; and whoever wants to bear witness to the truth must so confess. For this is proven by the signs and wonders which you do and which no other ever has done nor can do. However, what do you mean by bringing forward another doctrine and by reprov'ing us? Are our doctrine and works, then, vain and valueless? What do you find in them to censure? We surely have the Law of Moses, which, without a doubt, was given by God. Why, then, do you reprove us when we exert ourselves with all diligence to keep and fulfill the Law, as though God had no pleasure therein and we could not thereby enter heaven? And why do you receive publicans and other manifest sinners instead?



What other and better things with which to please God can be taught or practiced?

**6.** Thus you see that the question which Nicodemus seeks to have answered by Christ is none other than, How may a person lead a righteous life in the sight of God or, as the apostles express it, how become righteous and obtain eternal life? To this question Christ returns a curt and dry answer; he shows himself an altogether different person than Nicodemus had expected to find him. First, he affronts Nicodemus rather harshly, and repels him, as it were, with a thunderbolt, saying:

*“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

**7.** This is a hard text indeed, and an unfriendly reply to so friendly a greeting. For with these words he upsets all pretensions of Nicodemus; yea, he demolishes and condemns all his works and life. He means to say: You consider me not qualified to censure your beautiful discipline and worship as Pharisees, and unable to teach anything better; that is, you do not regard me more than a teacher and instructor of human works, even as you place no higher esteem on your Messiah and expect him to be no more than a person who will praise and laud, guard and keep, your Law and regulations, and who on that account will place you in high honor and authority. But since you take me for a master come from God, I will tell you something that you have not heard before and do not know: My dear Nicodemus, do not imagine that you will please God and be saved by your life and works, no matter how beautiful and precious they may be, even though they be according to the Law.

Although it is true that God has given the Law and demands that you keep it, still you are not righteous in God’s sight on that account; for it is one thing to have the Law and another to fulfill it. It is far from being fulfilled by your outward performance of its works. It must be kept wholly and perfectly, with body and soul, and from the innermost heart, without any disobedience and sin whatever. You Pharisees and self-righteous people are not doing this; for you imagine that you can give God his due by outward holiness, and, relying on and being secure in such holiness, you live in a false confidence, void of the fear of God, yea, you despise his wrath against sin. Moreover, you despise and condemn other people who do not regard your holiness highly and do not pattern after it.

**8.** To state the matter briefly, he says: Your life and works, which you consider holy, and those of all Pharisees, yea, of all men, are void and avail nothing in the sight of God. A change must take place by which a person is born anew, that is, he must become an entirely different person; otherwise he cannot enter the kingdom of God. There, now, you hear what is my doctrine, about which you have inquired. I do not teach in opposition to the Law of God, to destroy it, but I only charge you with not having kept it, yea, with not understanding it, though you pretend to be its instructors and imagine that you are fulfilling it. You imagine that I ought to preach the Law, the same as you do, and that if the laws of Moses, which you claim to have kept, are not sufficient, I ought to bring to you a new and better law teaching good works, just as you set up many self-elected works in addition to God's Law, as though you had already fulfilled it.

**9.** But I am not telling you of new articles, laws or works, for those the Law enjoins are already more than you can do and keep. But I teach that you must become altogether different persons. My teaching is not concerning what you must do or not do, but concerning what you must become. It aims not at the performance of new works, but first at being born anew; not at a different life, but at a different birth. It will not do to put the end before the beginning, or alongside of it; to expect fruit before or as soon as there is a root. The tree must first be made new and there must be a good and proper root, if the fruits and works are to be good. It is not the hand and foot or their actions that must be changed, but the person, that is, the entire man. If this has not taken place, works are of no value and of no avail whatever and a person cannot see the kingdom of God; in other words, he must remain under the condemnation of sin and everlasting death.

**10.** This was, verily, strange and unheard-of preaching, and a rough and surly answer to our holy Nicodemus who had come to the Lord well-intentioned and thinking that he was in the right way. He had expected least of all that Christ would or could condemn his goodly life and his zeal in keeping the Law. On the contrary, he had hoped that Christ would have to praise them as an example to others, or that he would urge him to continue, or would suggest to him some other work which he was yet to do. Such he was prepared to hear and to do. And now he hears instead that Christ utterly rejects him and condemns all his good and holy living, thus proceeding in an altogether absurd manner. He praises Christ as a good man; Christ in turn accosts him, saying: And you are a bad man. He gives

honor to Christ and calls him a teacher come from God; Christ in turn tells him that both his doctrine and life are wrong and have already been ruled out of heaven. For what else is the meaning of his words than this: You are doing many beautiful works and imagine yourself to be holy and without reproach, so that you must needs please God. But I tell you, all that you have done in your past life, or that you may still do in this life, is lost labor and condemned in God's sight, and not only your works but also your heart and your entire nature — all that you are and all that you do. All must be put aside; the tree with its root and fruits must be cast out and burned, and a new tree must be created.

**11.** Thus, this first part of Christ's conversation with Nicodemus is nothing else than a real, sharp call to repentance. Christ, like a faithful preacher, takes pity on Nicodemus because he is so ignorant and still very far from the kingdom of God. Hence he curtly closes and denies heaven to him, yea, he condemns him and hands him over to the devil, stating that, as he now lives or may be able to live in the future, he can never enter the kingdom of God, but must be lost and remain in the power of the devil, of death and of hell. He does this in order that Nicodemus may be brought to a knowledge of self and attain to a genuine understanding and life before God.

Penitential preaching of this sort is particularly needed by people like Nicodemus, who pursue their course in the righteousness of their own works and claim to be holy and righteous in the sight of God because they are blameless in the eyes of the world.

**12.** Thus, Christ always begins the preaching of the Gospel with this point: He first reveals and teaches that which no man's reason has gathered or known from the Law, namely, that all men in their natural state and life are condemned and under sin. St. Paul also proves this conclusively in the very beginning of his Epistle to the Romans. And this is the first sentence and conclusion here laid down that, in his natural state and with his every ability, man cannot fulfill the Law of God, though he may attempt to keep it; that keeping the Law does not mean doing its work outwardly, as far as human strength is able; and that, consequently, the Law cannot aid man to become holy in the sight of God nor save him from sin and everlasting wrath.

**13.** If this were in man's power and could be brought about in our nature by means of the Law, Christ could not say regarding all men, as he does here: "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." That

is certainly saying that man in his old nature, no matter to what eminent height he may attain by his gifts of reason, wisdom and virtue, cannot rid himself of sin nor of the power of death, nor can he please God. In short, there must be an entirely different being; that is, the entire person must be changed so as to obtain an altogether new mind and heart, and new thoughts and feelings.

**14.** Thus you see overthrown, as by a mighty thunderbolt, all the teaching and boasting of men who undertake to instruct people how to become righteous by the strength and works of human nature, or who would at least have works placed alongside of faith, and who claim that men must contribute something themselves toward their righteousness. For here you are clearly told that a person must be born anew or changed before he can see the kingdom of God or do anything to please God. Now, man surely cannot contribute anything to his birth by his own works; nay, before he can be active at all, his birth must have been accomplished. Then, since a new birth is demanded here, the works and activity of the old birth can never be of any value or aid; in fact, they are all rejected and condemned beforehand.

**15.** Nor can the claim stand that the works which follow the new birth contribute something toward our righteousness, for the new birth must have occurred before a person can be active by virtue of it; that is, one must first belong to the kingdom and to heaven before he begins to do works that are pleasing to God. But this point will be more fully explained by the following verses, in which Christ states' the process of the new birth. We have here only the introduction, in which he overthrows the Pharisee's conceit and establishes the contrary doctrine. On hearing this Nicodemus becomes perplexed, and because he does not know what to make of Christ's words, he blurts out and says:

*“How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?”*

**16.** He wishes to say: What a queer and absurd statement and teaching that is! Who ever heard of a person being born anew, or that it is at all possible to be born differently from the way in which one has been born? What do you mean by proposing and demanding such an impossible thing? If you wish to teach people, you must tell them something that a human being can do. This is the answer which the wisdom and reason of men return to the preaching of repentance and of the new birth, by which the Law receives

its true glory. And, indeed, they must answer thus, because they do not know otherwise. Owing to that outward training in a holy lift which a person can obtain by his own strength, provided he hear the Law, Nicodemus cannot endure to hear these things so commendable in the eyes of the world shall all be counted worthless and shall be condemned, especially since there are very few men who thus lead a beautiful and virtuous life. All the rulers of this world, intelligent, wise and great though they are, consider it harmful teaching to depreciate such a beautiful life, and on that account charge the Gospel with aiming to forbid good works etc.

**17.** However, by so doing, they testify to their own blindness and ignorance in these divine matters. Nicodemus, who passes for a teacher and instructor, by the confession of his own mouth seals his wisdom with greater foolishness, because he is dreaming about a natural birth from father and mother and imagines that he comprehends Christ's meaning and has effectually blocked his aim. Such is the corrupt habit of human reason, which ever assumes to pass judgment on the Word of God and to act as its tutor, though it does not understand it. As if Christ, whom Nicodemus has to acknowledge a teacher come from God, were not wise enough himself to know that a person cannot be born again in physical birth, and that such a birth would not benefit him! And, indeed, Christ himself meets this conception.

*“Jesus answered: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*

**18.** He means to say: You need not instruct me how to express myself. I know very well what! have said, and in order that you may know that a person does not enter the kingdom of God by his own ability, I say again that he must be born differently, or he cannot enter. However, I do not speak of natural birth, of one's descent from father and mother, of which you are dreaming because you know of no other birth; but I am speaking of a different birth, a new birth, of water and the Spirit. You 'certainly have heard me reject this very birth from father and mother by which you and all other men, Jews or not Jews, have been born. Even were! to grant this to be the meaning of a person's new birth, still, a person might be born over again from his mother's womb as many as a hundred times, and yet every new birth of this kind would not be different nor better than the former. The reason he declares as follows:

***“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”***

**19.** These are two clear sayings by which he overthrows the Pharisee’s conception and dream of a natural birth, and explains his opening remarks, in which he had stated that, unless a person receives a different birth, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. The term, “that which is born of the flesh,” defines all that man is, and is able to do, according to his human nature in its present state, since Adam. For the Scripture significance of “flesh” is the natural man, in his human sense, born from father and mother, as he lives, works, thinks, speaks, and acts, no matter when, how often, or of whom he is born, or whether he is called a Jew or a gentile. <sup><R012></sup> John 1:12 speaks of being born of blood, that is, born in the natural way, from the holy fathers, or obtaining birth through the will of man and therewith accepting membership among the people and children of God. All this is nothing but flesh, that is, it is void of the Spirit. However, to be void of the Spirit means nothing else than what he terms not being able to enter the kingdom of God, that is, being condemned in sin, under the wrath of God, to everlasting death.

**20.** This certainly is a curt, unvarnished, solemn and awful verdict on all men in their natural state. It lays down the conclusion that by the teaching and works of the Law, such works as man is able to do in accordance with it, no person becomes rid of sin nor is righteous in the sight of God, because his nature is not changed by works but remains what it was before. For this reason no person can, under the Law, enter the kingdom of God nor obtain life everlasting.

**21.** Again, he says: “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” He calls “Spirit” that which God works in us above the ability of human nature, namely, such spiritual knowledge, light and understanding as he reveals to us, to the end that we may know God, turn to him, lay hold of his grace, and cling to him. In order that man may receive these revelations, his heart must first be renewed and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, that he may learn to know God’s will toward him and may understand the way to obtain grace and everlasting life.

**22.** The preaching and teaching of the Law alone cannot do this; *it*, indeed, demands works and obedience of us, but since these things are not possible to our nature, which is characteristic of the very reverse, the only effect of the Law, when correctly understood, is to make us guilty and to condemn

us to everlasting hell under the wrath of God. And it is for this purpose that it must be preached, for it was given by God to the end that man should learn this truth first. Now, if man is not to remain under condemnation, but is to look to God for grace and comfort, the preaching of a different word must be added. We are here told that such word is the preaching and office of the Holy Spirit, revealed and brought down from heaven by Christ, the Son of God. Christ speaks of this office now and explains more fully later.

**23.** Thus there is shown us by this passage the reason for what the first part of this discourse has stated, namely, the reason why a person cannot enter the kingdom of God in the nature he has by birth, and why another birth is necessary, one which must be accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Christ rebukes here not only human ignorance and error, but he also begins to teach what the new birth is and how it takes place, although he does not here include all parts which belong to it, but shows, in the first place, only *causas efficientes*, the causes and means from which this new birth springs and by which it is effected. Later he will tell how it is acquired, and by whom; also the way to receive it. Therefore, we must look at these words a little more closely, so as to learn what being born of water and the Spirit means.

**24.** Note, in the first place, that he directs Nicodemus to the external ordinance in the Church, namely, to preaching and baptism, because he says that one must be born of water and the Spirit. He is speaking of the ordinance which had been introduced by John the Baptist, the forerunner and servant of Christ. The Pharisees and Nicodemus knew this very well, because they had seen it. By pointing him to this ordinance, Christ wishes to confirm the preaching and baptism of John as institutions that are to be in force and operation forever, and are appointed by God for the purpose of the new birth, and so it is that no one shall go to heaven who does not accept them or who despises them. It is as if he were to say:

If you wish to see the kingdom of God at all, you will all have to accept this very preaching and baptism that John practiced, and which you Pharisees were unwilling to accept because you would not suffer yourselves to be reproved by him and were offended at his new and unheard of preaching against your holiness by the Law. All your Mosaical and legal washings, purification's, sacrifices, worship and holiness will be of no help nor benefit to you. You can enter the kingdom of heaven and be

saved in no other way than by this ordinance which preaches Christ and baptizes in his name.

**25.** This ordinance he magnifies by stating that it is the office and work of the Holy Spirit, by which a person is born anew; that it is not simply baptizing with water, but that the Holy Spirit also is present. A person thus baptized, is baptized not with water only, but with the Holy Ghost. The presence of the Spirit could not be claimed for any other washings and baptisms with water, such as the ceremonial washings of the Jews, else a new baptism would not have been necessary; and it could not be claimed that another means aside from the Mosaical Law and form of worship was necessary for a person's new birth of the Spirit. The reason is plainly this, because through the Mosaical ceremonies the Holy Spirit is not bestowed and does not act.

**26.** Thus he shows that there is no other means by which a person is born anew and enters the kingdom of God than the office of preaching and baptism, and that the Holy Spirit is connected with this office and by its means operates in the hearts of men. He does not speak of the Spirit in his hidden and unknown qualities, such as he is in his divine person and essence, without the means by which he has revealed himself, but of the Spirit as revealed in the external ordinance, by which he is heard and seen, namely, by the office of Gospel preaching and the administration of the Sacrament. God does not intend to come and act through his Holy Spirit secretly and privily, nor deal with each individual in a particular manner; in that case, who could know for certain where and how to seek and find the Holy Spirit? But he has ordained that the Holy Spirit shall be revealed to the ears and eyes of men by the Word and Sacrament, and shall be active through this external ordinance, so that men may know that the effects which there take place are truly caused by the Holy Spirit.

**27.** Therefore, the words "Except one be born anew of water and the Spirit," are equivalent to saying, A person must be born anew by the preaching of the Gospel and the ordinance of baptism, by which the Holy Spirit operates. For by means of the Word he enlightens the heart and reveals God's wrath against sin; and, on the other hand, by showing us the grace of God which has been promised for the sake of his Son, Christ, he so kindles our hearts that we begin to believe and soon turn to God, take comfort from his grace and call upon him. And in order to rouse and strengthen our faith he adds baptism as a sure sign, along with the Word,



to show that he washes away and blots out our sin and promises at all times firmly to keep for us this grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit which he has promised us. Of this more shall be said at another time.

**28.** Observe from this text how Christ in plain words ascribes to baptism, which he calls water, such glory and power as to say that the Holy Spirit is present in it, and that by its means a person is born anew. By this statement all false doctrines and errors against the doctrine of faith and baptism are overthrown. Among them, in the first place, is that of the papists, and others like them, who seek to obtain righteousness and salvation by their own works. For you are told here that a person's own merit and holiness, which he possesses by his old birth from flesh and blood, or has achieved by following his own choice and imagination, are insufficient and avail nothing toward this end. There must be a new birth by holy baptism, toward which man can contribute nothing himself, but through the will and grace of God the Holy Spirit is bestowed by means of the preaching of the Word and by water, which act as father and mother at this new birth by which one becomes a new, pure and holy person and an heir to heaven.

**29.** In the second place, the pretense of the Anabaptists and kindred sects is here overthrown, who teach people to seek the Spirit outside of and without the Word and Sacraments, by special revelations and operations from heaven, without means etc. Yea, they despise blessed baptism, considering it no more than mere useless water. Hence they are in the habit of saying blasphemously: What can a handful of water benefit the soul? However, Christ says clearly that the Holy Spirit is present with this water, and states that a person must be born anew of this water. He certainly refers to real, natural water, such as John used and as he commanded his disciples to use when baptizing. Therefore St. Paul in <sup><403></sup>Ephesians 5:26, calls baptism a washing of water by which the Church of Christ is cleansed, and in <sup><404></sup>Titus 3:5, he calls baptism the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

**30.** Yea, Christ so orders his words in this passage as to place at the head "water" and after it the "Spirit," to indicate that we must not look for the Spirit without and outside of the external means, but know that the Spirit intends to operate in, through, and with the external means and ordinance. Hence both must remain united, and a person must be born anew, of water, by the Holy Spirit, or of the Holy Spirit with and by water. Aside from this instance, it is quite true that, if there were water only without the Spirit,

there would be no greater effects than in other water and washings, and there certainly would not result a new birth. For this reason, this birth is called a birth, not of water only, but also of the Spirit, besides and with the water. The Holy Spirit acting at this birth is the male, and the water is the female part, or mother.

**31.** Moreover, you gather from these words that baptism is not such an unnecessary thing as the sect of the Anabaptists blasphemously claims, stating that one can easily omit it or put it off till old age; or gabbling that baptism is of no benefit to infants, merely because they do not understand how it can be. There is here a plain saying which includes all men in this divine ordinance, namely, that all who wish to enter the kingdom of God must be born anew of water and the Spirit. Hence, it will not do at all to despise this matter, or to put it off, for that would be willfully despising and setting aside the ordinance of God. Such an action, indeed, could not be taken with the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Moreover, it is certain that Christ does not exclude infants in this passage, but they are embraced in it, and if they are to enter the kingdom of God, baptism is to be communicated and administered to them. He assuredly would have them born anew and desires to operate in them. In another place he commands that they shall be brought to him and says that of such as are brought is the kingdom of heaven. Now, if they are to come to Christ, they must not be denied the means and symbols by which Christ operates in them.

**32.** But this I say of the common ordinance and rule, which ought to be observed wherever and whenever baptism can be obtained. In an extreme case, where it cannot be obtained, there must be exceptions, just as in similar cases of necessity; then the desire to be baptized must suffice, and the person must be brought to Christ and offered to him on the strength of his Word. Of this matter I do not wish to speak further at present. Now, this is what Christ has stated regarding regeneration by the baptism of water and the Spirit. He continues:

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

**33.** It seems a marvelous and rare saying to Nicodemus, the wise, intelligent, holy Pharisee, that his work and holiness, and that of all men as well, is so utterly rejected that it is of no avail in the sight of God; that he must let go of it all, no matter how many and how great things he may have accomplished in his life; and that he must become another man. There is really nothing better of which Nicodemus has knowledge or that he understands how to do. Also, he is directed preeminently to this ordinance, in which nothing is done or seen except the external ceremony of baptizing one with water, and the hearing of the Word; and he is to believe that through the reception of these such a change takes place in one that he is born anew and becomes pure, holy and righteous in the sight of God, all of which blessings cannot be attained in any way by human work and ability. Alas! he muses, how is this possible? What can be accomplished by such an insignificant matter as being baptized or bathed with water? Is it not a matter of far higher merit to exercise one's self with great earnestness and diligence in good works and holy worship according to the Law and to shine in the splendor of a beautiful, upright life and of great virtue? Can you name and extol anything nobler and better in all the world?

**34.** While the Pharisee is thus musing and wondering, Christ replies, explaining to him by a parable what he had said about the new birth of water and the Spirit; he tells him that this matter is not to be considered by the rule of reason, which has regard to the brilliancy of meritorious works and exemplary life and admires them, imagining that they must be as commendatory in the sight of God as in its own estimation. My dear Nicodemus, he says, I will tell you how this takes place: Your conception of the matter is not the right one; you view it as you would anything perceptible to the senses or to reason. But this is a matter which is beyond the fathom of human reason and thought, and it is accomplished in man by the Holy Spirit.

**35.** Its process in the heart is similar to the phenomenon of the wind, which blows and blusters when and where it will, and passes through all that grows and moves and lives in creation. In the case of the wind there is no more than a breath or air, which lies still for a while but suddenly begins to move, to blow and rush, and you do not know whence it comes. Now it blows here, now there, producing all kinds of sudden changes of weather, and yet you cannot see it nor conceive what it is; you only hear it rushing. You notice its presence, its stir and motion upon the water or in the fields of corn, but you cannot tell, when it strikes you, when or where or at what

distance from you it took its start and how far beyond you it will stop blowing, nor can you appoint time, space and measure for its coming and going. In brief, it is in no man's power at all to bind and rule the wind, to start or to calm it; it moves freely, of its own accord, and does its work without let or hindrance, when, where, and in what manner it pleases. No man can do ought in this matter, nor discover the process and origin, but as <19D507>Psalm 135:7 says, God brings it out of his treasures and secret places, which no man knows beforehand, nor can discover.

**36.** "So is every one," he says, "that is born of the Spirit." You must not stand gaping to see great and excellent works of specious holiness which strike the eye. You must not attempt to estimate and grasp these spiritual matters with your reason and according to the Law and external aspect, examining what great works the person is doing who is entitled to be called a person born anew and an heir of heaven, and how he is living and conducting himself. This matter cannot be thus grasped and comprehended, nor can it be pictured and represented in such a manner that we could say: Behold that person; he is a pious Jew and, moreover, a Pharisee who keeps the Law with great earnestness and diligence, hence he is a living saint and a child of God etc. But this new birth which begets children of God, or righteousness in the sight of God, is quite a different thing. It takes place in one's heart, not by a person's own choice or action — for that is all flesh and cannot see the kingdom of God — but by the word of the Gospel, which reveals to the heart both the wrath of God against men — inducing repentance — and his grace through the Mediator, Christ, for the consolation and peace of their conscience in the sight of God.

**37.** No peculiar or glorious manifestation, indeed, will be seen outwardly in this exalted and supreme work, for there is nothing required for it but the Word and water, which we hear and perceive, and yet the power and efficacy of the Holy Spirit is present, kindling and quickening the heart unto true fear of God, true confidence and comfort in his grace, and also unto true prayer, thus renewing the heart and causing a person who receives the Word into his heart to overcome God's wrath, and sin, death, the flesh and the world, to turn to God sincerely and to conceive a desire and love for everything good.

**38.** These are genuine, living works of the Holy Spirit, far greater and more glorious than the righteousness of man's works, which latter possess indeed a great glamour, and are much vaunted in the eyes of men, but are

merely dead things, powerless to change in any wise the heart, and which are not followed by genuine and unfailing comfort, and transformation of life. Man, in his own righteousness, remains in the old carnal state of mind, without repentance, in unbelief and doubt, in secret contempt, disobedience, hatred of and enmity against God. This is afterward evident in the real conflict and terror of conscience, where actual flight from God, despair and finally impatience and blasphemy against God, ensue.

**39.** Such are the genuine fruits of the great and beautiful holiness of Pharisees. Their holiness is without the knowledge of Christ and without faith, and yet claims to be righteous and holy by the rule of the Law. In the end, the great and knotty problem arises which Paul in <sup>4:13</sup>Romans 7:13 calls sin aroused by the Law. Sin is made exceedingly sinful by it; that is, it is made great and grievous, submerging a person and causing him to perish in everlasting death. Yet, previously, that same sin and hidden malice of the heart was for a while covered with the outward show of great and holy works in obedience to the Law, permitting the person to live secure in his carnal mind and, as St. Paul says, without the Law, that is, without a genuine knowledge and perception of sin and, hence, also utterly without the Spirit.

**40.** On the other hand, wherever the Holy Spirit is present he effects a new heart and mind in one, who no longer flees from God but, though he knows and acknowledges that he has sinned and merited God's wrath, still takes comfort from the grace of Christ, which Christ has promised and proclaimed by the Word of God to those who repent and believe. Thus one obtains a childlike heart toward God as his dear Father, and can cheerfully come before him and call upon him by faith in the Mediator, Christ.

**41.** Such a new heart and life, I say, is wrought in one by the Holy Spirit through no other outward or visible means than through the Word and baptism, though these produce no external show whatever. It is effected inwardly, before the least change can be seen in a person, and yet Christ says that it truly is, and is called, a birth of the Spirit. Reason and human wisdom cannot comprehend how so significant a work should be accomplished by things apparently so very insignificant. Though reason hears, still it does not believe. Nicodemus, too, is still more startled, wondering at these words, and is rebuked by Christ because he wants to grasp the matter with his reason and not to believe it.

**42.** We have, accordingly, in this parable a beautiful picture which clearly presents to our eyes the process of this new birth. In the first place, there is the external office of the Word and the power which the Holy Spirit exerts through it. As there are in the wind these two features — the blowing, which is the wind itself, and the sound, which is heard without, though the blowing is not seen nor felt except by the person who receives the force of the wind — in like manner there are two features in the new birth; namely, the Word, which is a physical sound that one hears, and the Spirit, who operates with and by the Word. This power is not seen nor felt by anyone except him whom the Spirit seizes, and yet it certainly occurs wherever the external Word and baptism are agents. The Spirit, accordingly, can be seen and apprehended bodily, as it were, in this external institution, which provides us with a certain sign indicating where we are to look for him and where he operates, although the inward power is concealed to human eyes.

**43.** Accordingly, as I have stated, you must not understand these words “born of the Spirit” as referring to the Holy Spirit in his invisible and incomprehensible divine essence in heaven, but to the manner in which he must be known and apprehended in the Church here on earth, in the Word and symbols. Hence, where these things are heard and seen one may say: There you hear and see the Holy Spirit. Just as you say of the blowing of the wind: There you hear and see the wind. In brief, all that is accomplished by the office of the Word and baptism must be declared to be effected by the Holy Spirit. Just as Christ in our text calls that person born of the Spirit who has received the Word and baptism or as he says elsewhere, who believes and is baptized, etc. <sup><41166></sup> Mark 16:16.

**44.** In the second place, this parable aptly shows that Christianity is not bound up in external affairs, places, persons, garments and other things, such as the outward holiness of the Jews required. A Christian is set up in the liberty of the Spirit, rid of the Law and all its bonds. He cannot be bound and made captive by any sort of laws, rules or works that may be proposed to him with a view of his becoming righteous through their efficacy in the sight of God. (We are not speaking now of his outward life, in which he may keep all laws, provided, however, it is done without injury and damage to his spiritual liberty of mind and conscience.) Hence, by faith in the Word and in his baptism he remains a free man, superior to all laws, because he has through Christ forgiveness of sin, the grace of God and the Holy Spirit, and governs his entire life accordingly. Through the Holy Spirit, who operates in his heart, he is now become righteous, and has been

quickened into life, and, except as the Holy Spirit by the Word guides and directs him, he does not look for other teaching regarding works of holiness.

**45.** Hence, as Christ here states, Christianity is like the wind which blows where it will, and yet no one sees or knows whence it comes and whither it goes, through what distance or extent it passes. In like manner, the Spirit in a Christian cannot be confined by rules and teachings, nor can it be determined by reason, but it must be untutored and unjudged by everybody, as St. Paul states in ~~<K015>~~ 1 Corinthians 2:15. It is not felt, heard and manifested outwardly except in the Word and in its proclamation, by which everybody must be governed, without regard to the persons of men who preach it, no matter how great and holy they are; the only requirement is that they exercise the office and Word of the Spirit aright.

**46.** However, it is and always will be strange, a thing at which human wisdom will be offended and scandalized, that such a significant, sublime, divine work should be accomplished in so humble and mean a way, by the puny voice of a poor mortal who utters only these words: I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and again: By the command of the Lord Christ I announce to thee the forgiveness of sins, etc. There is nothing in these acts but the breath or sound of the words which strike the ear, and yet these great things are claimed to be accomplished by it, namely, that you are cleansed from sins, saved from everlasting death, quickened and made a new-born child of God.

**47.** Much pain and labor are involved before a person is naturally born into this world; ten months he must lie in his mother's womb, and afterwards both mother and infant are in extreme danger of losing their lives in the birth which ushers man into only this miserable mortal life. But in this case of the new birth it is so easy and so soon accomplished that no work could be easier. There is only the Word spoken to one and he is baptized with water, and yet the effect — provided only the heart lays hold by faith — is so significant that the person in that moment is born to everlasting life and snatched out of everlasting death and hell.

**48.** However, it is part of the perverse arrogance of reason that it wants, in so momentous a matter, to decide and to pass judgment, according to its conceptions, its way of looking at the matter, and after the standard of greatness as it appeals to the senses, refusing to regard the will of God and to recognize his ordinance, when he has issued his word of command in



this matter, and hence it is he who is himself preaching, baptizing and operating through the external means. Divine results would necessarily follow, even if he were to produce them through external means still more insignificant. That is the reason why Christ so harshly assails and rebukes Nicodemus, who undertakes to form his judgment here on the ground of his wisdom.

“Nicodemus answered and said to him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.”

**49.** Here you can see how into Nicodemus’ comprehension has utterly failed to enter what Christ had stated regarding the new birth by baptism and had explained by means of a parable, namely, that the true spiritual character of this matter could not be seen with the eye nor judged, determined and grasped, as Nicodemus wished to do, by the wisdom and understanding which he possessed from the teaching of the Law. He is so confounded by Christ’s reply that he steps back forthwith, and cannot help being offended at Jesus because the latter proposes what, in his opinion, is an absurd idea. His attitude is as if to say: Is only this single act of baptizing a man with water to be of value, and shall the Law, which God has explicitly commanded us to keep and which he has ‘confirmed with great signs, be pronounced worthless and void? How is it possible that your baptism is such a momentous affair when a person cannot see at all its effects?

**50.** Before finishing the discourse which he had begun, Christ returns a scathing and solemn answer, in order to show Nicodemus his ignorance and to rebut his carnal notion. Why, he says, you are a teacher of Israel, that is, a person whose duty it is to teach and govern the people of God, and are you so utterly ignorant of these things? Is it not a shame that you who have been appointed to instruct and wish to be extolled as teacher of other people, possess no true perception whatever of these divine things? In what respect are you better than heathen, who are not the people of God and have not God’s Word? For you have no knowledge except that of human works of holiness, such as intelligent and wise men among the heathen also teach. You are utterly ignorant of the teaching which ought to be common knowledge in the Church, regarding Christ, the kingdom of



God, and authentic spiritual things. And yet you have the Word of God abundantly in Moses and the Scriptures. You ought to teach the people from the Law to know the wrath of God against their sin, and, in consequence, to seek grace by faith in the promise of Christ. Instead you have perverted everything; you have no knowledge nor experience of genuine repentance, and yet you parade your holiness, secure and insolent, confirming yourselves and others in contempt of God and in unbelief, and with all this, you are dreaming about a Messiah who shall crown you for your Jewish holiness and give you the dominion of the world. Such things you do who pretend to be the foremost people on earth, and by so doing you go farther away from the kingdom of God and merit for yourselves more grievous punishment than others, even manifest sinners. who are more easily instructed and converted than you who pose as great saints.

**51.** That I call reading him a good, sharp lesson. However, it is done in a friendly spirit, because Christ is talking to a person who, unlike the rest, is not stubbornly despising Christ; and this admonition is necessary in order that he may show Nicodemus the way out of his ignorance, and to rouse his attention to instruction on the subject of how he is to enter the kingdom of God and heaven. Accordingly, he proceeds:

*“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen,” etc.*

**52.** You who pretend to be teachers have no knowledge and understanding of things which should be understood by everyone in that society of men called the people of God. And yet, you refuse to believe the teachings which are apparent from the Word and testimony of God, and you judge simply according to your notions. No, it will not do that with your blind and uncertain conceptions you should act as tutors in the things of our definite teaching and testimony, and that you dispute their truth. How much will a pupil learn who starts out by questioning the correctness of his master’s teaching and wanting to be master himself before he has begun to learn? If you have no knowledge and understanding, you must not pass judgment and pretend to be smart in this matter. If you have not seen these things, we have — John and all my prophets; and we are not offering you uncertain fancies, such as a person spins out of his own head, but the doctrine which God has revealed and has had witnessed by the Holy Spirit. It is useless for you to try to accept this doctrine by your reason, or to grasp, to see with your eyes, to feel, how this new birth of man takes place,

in the same way that you behold and grasp your works of external worship. You must lock up your reason and open only your ears and your heart, and believe what God's Word tells you, which Word we have surely received from God with the command to teach and to testify unto it.

**53.** If you wish to know which is the way, listen: You must believe and receive the Word, and let go of your notions which undertake to comprehend and encompass matters that no reason can understand nor attain unto. Else what need would there be of teaching God's Word which I have heard and received from the Father, as also John and the prophets have received it by divine revelation from the Holy Spirit and have borne witness unto it? Thus St. Peter in his Second Epistle ~~602~~ 2 Peter 1:21, says that no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit. For this reason he commands that nothing is to be taught in the Church except that which we know for certain to be God's Word, not what seems good and right to human reason and wisdom.

**54.** Therefore, Christ very properly rebukes his Jewish teachers who would rule and instruct men's consciences in the matter of their relation to God without certain testimony from God's Word, and who would harmonize their teaching with human reason. The result of such practice leaves the hearer in doubt and uncertainty, confused with heathenish notions of men and never arriving at the true knowledge and experience of the truth.

*“If I told you earthly things and ye believe not,  
how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?”*

**55.** I have hitherto told you of earthly things — how a person must be born of water and the Spirit, that is, how the Spirit operates through the external office of the Word and of baptism — things which you can see and grasp with your understanding. You have heard my doctrine expressed in a parable, in a figure of things familiar to you, and you are forced to confess that I have spoken correctly. Now, if you are unwilling to believe the things presented to you in a material way, much less will you be able to believe if I tell you of things not earthly but heavenly and pertaining to the counsel of God, which no one knows except God alone and he who comes from heaven, namely, the Son of God. Whoever wishes to comprehend in any measure the things of heaven must hear and believe him alone who is come from heaven, and who has seen and who testifies of these things. He says:

## II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT AVAILS BEFORE GOD.

*“And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven?”*

**56.** Here he begins to speak of infinite and heavenly matters — of the secret, eternal, unspeakable counsel and will which God framed in eternity. And thus he completes the second part of this discourse regarding the new birth, that is, how a sinful person becomes righteous, a child of God and an heir of heavenly and eternal life; whence baptism has such power and by whom it has been acquired and merited; also how it must be received. And he now begins to speak of himself as the Messiah promised and sent by God, God’s Son and his office and work. Of these things the Pharisees were in utter ignorance, things which seemed far more strange to them than those he had already told them. They could not at all conceive that their Messiah had to be sent from heaven that he might redeem and propitiate all the world, and particularly his own Jewish people, who were condemned and lost, under the wrath of God, and this notwithstanding they had the Law and the ceremonial of Moses. Much less did they understand that he had to die on the cross, that he must be crucified and become a sacrifice for their sins and the sins of the whole world, and that his dominion was not to be in the nature of an earthly kingdom. To be told these things was utterly offensive and intolerable to them. The reason was because they failed to recognize that the whole nature of man in the sight of God merited only damnation and perdition; and because, in their holiness, they regarded themselves as being without sin, or were so bold as to imagine that they could put away and atone for their sins by their own good works and so would need no Messiah, but only one who would deliver them from their temporal bondage and foreign oppression and who would avenge them upon their enemies.

**57.** Christ’s words mean: My dear Nicodemus, withdraw your thoughts entirely from your own legal righteousness and holiness, and that of all other men, and be careful not to try to enter the kingdom of God by their merit. All ability of men, no matter how wise, learned and holy they are, is of no avail. It is determined with God from the beginning that no man can enter heaven as he is descended from Adam.

**58.** Yea, there has never been a saint who in his own merit could go to heaven, no matter who he was, whether Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, John or any other. None of these was distinguished as worthy to enter heaven — to reconcile God, to take away sin and death, to merit eternal life for himself and others. But before man can reach heaven, that is, enter the kingdom of God and receive eternal life, there must first come from heaven One who has eternal righteousness and life in himself, who is able to appease God's anger and to abolish sin and death. He must be the Mediator by whom we, too, may enter heaven. Yea, for this very purpose One had to come down from heaven and, for our sakes, become flesh and blood like we are; that is, he had to take upon himself our misery and sin.

**59.** With these words Christ directs us to himself as the point of all that he had said before regarding the new birth and the kingdom of God, that it may be manifest that no one can avail himself of these things except through him and for his sake. Without him, it would be in vain that man should even desire to be delivered from his old birth, to be renewed by the Spirit, and to become pure. For had not One first obtained for us these things no one could have realized them. Nor would there be any virtue in holy baptism and the Spirit if they were not bestowed through him and for his sake. Accordingly, the point on which all now depends is that this person, by whom we, too, may be saved, must be known and apprehended. This fact he sets forth in conclusion.

**60.** It is thus that he pictures his own person: He is the promised Savior come from heaven, that is, he is the true Son of God from eternity; for if he is come from heaven he must have been with God in eternity. But he is descended from heaven, not as an angel who appears and after a while disappears again, but he has taken upon himself the nature of man and, as ~~John~~ John 1:14 says, has dwelt among us on earth. For this reason he here calls himself the Son of man, that is, actual man, having flesh and blood like we have.

**61.** The signification of this descent of the Son of man is that he has cast himself down into our misery and affliction, that he has taken upon himself our sins and made himself a sacrifice to the everlasting wrath of God which we had merited by our sins. To this he alludes when he here says that he must be exalted. Now, since this man comes down from heaven, personally he must be without any sin whatsoever, innocent and of divine purity. It cannot be said of him that he was born of flesh, as we are, but of the Holy

Ghost; and his flesh is not sinful flesh and blood, but is pure and holy. All this was wrought to the end that he might be able to make our sinful flesh and blood pure and holy by his purity and his holy, immaculate sacrifice.

**62.** But what do these words import: “The Son of man, who is in heaven”? How is it that he has descended from heaven and is still in heaven? Did he not first ascend in the clouds on the fortieth day after his resurrection? True, he descended into our flesh and blood and humbled himself below all men, unto death on the cross, as a man forsaken and accursed by God. However, he was not in the meantime separated from God, but he remained with God all the time and hence was always in heaven; he exists from eternity, ever beholding his Father and present with him, ruling and working together with him, co-equal in power and might. These features of his omnipotence were not in any wise apparent in his humbled state, when he divested himself of the form of God, as Paul says in <sup><small>ROM></sup>Philippians 2:7, and went about in the form of a servant, enduring suffering and death, until such time as he was delivered from this state and was exalted again and sat down at the right hand of God, having now been made Lord over death and hell and all elements of his human nature. All this he has manifested by his visible ascension when he was taken up in the clouds before the eyes of his disciples, and in the same visible manner he shall return and be seen by all men.

**63.** That is the explanation of the record that the Son of man descended and ascended and at the same time remained in heaven in divine essence and power, and in eternal communion with the Father. He does not have reference to a material change of place but to a spiritual removal from humiliation to exaltation, from his suffering and death to his resurrection and heavenly communion with the Father, in which he is not restricted by material conditions. His divinity and communion with the Father he has had from eternity and has continued in possession of them all the time, even from the moment he took upon himself the limitations of his human nature.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.”

**64.** Here he shows how we may also enter heaven; that is, he shows what he has done for us and how we are to receive and become partakers of his blessing. With these words he proclaims the grand work of redemption, which was decreed by God in his eternal counsel and which, therefore, had

so to be accomplished out of the unutterable and fathomless love of God toward the human race, who would not that it should perish (as we have heard in the Gospel for Pentecost Monday, which follows soon after these words). Since there was not elsewhere any help or redress, any expedient for appeasing his eternal wrath against sin, any hope of redeeming men from everlasting death by the agency of any creature in heaven or earth, the only Son of God had to take our place and become a sacrifice for our sin, thereby to appease God's wrath and make payment for us. This work now is our salvation and comfort and the power that is operative in baptism to the end that we may become new-born men and enter heaven.

**65.** This is the teaching: His ascending and descending and his being in heaven pertain to himself, and do not help us. They are his prerogatives and no one can do the same. However, he says: I have all things in my power and dwell in heaven above, yet I do not wish to ascend alone, but to draw men upward with me; they could not otherwise ascend, but if they cling to me it shall be accomplished. I shall suffer myself to be crucified and shall rise. Those who believe that I have died for them, I shall draw after me, although they cannot enter heaven by their own strength. Thus he places us on his shoulders and bears us up to the place to which he ascends. Hence, our salvation is not by our strength, but by that of another. With these words all our works are rejected once more.

**66.** Now, he introduces a beautiful allegory from <sup>-0206</sup>Numbers 21:6-9, which aptly depicts Christ. When the Jews were journeying in the desert, the way being long and bread and water failing, they murmured against Moses and became very impatient. Then it was that God sent fiery serpents among them, which bit the people. In the countries toward the South there are great deserts, where no food nor drink is found, and there are also multitudes of noxious vermin. The serpents on this occasion were a particularly vicious kind, for their bite caused such fever and such an unquenchable thirst that people had to die. For this reason they are called fiery serpents, such as the Greeks called *Dipsades*. There may, however, be another reason for the term, for we read that some of the serpents in those countries are so fiery that when they hiss or give forth breath, there issues, as it were, sheer fire from them.

**67.** On account of this cruel affliction of the Jews there was much pitiful crying and calling among the people to Moses, but he could give no advice until God took pity upon them and said to Moses: Make thee a brazen

serpent, like those which are biting the people, and set it upon a standard. Every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live. “And Moses,” so the story runs, “made a serpent of brass and set it upon the standard, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived.”

**68.** Behold now, how Christ has been typified in this story. In the first place, the main point is that the Jews, when bitten by serpents, could find no aid nor remedy until they were helped by looking at such a simple thing as the brazen serpent. This serpent had the appearance of a real serpent, but it was dead and without venom, yea, it was salutary. Not that the brass could help them; what made it efficient was the fact that there was affixed to it God’s order and this promise: Whoever is bitten and looks at the serpent, shall live. This word was wrapped about the serpent, and by virtue of it the serpent helped the people.

**69.** Now, Christ makes application to himself and says: “As Moses lifted up the serpent, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” etc. This is the true explanation and interpretation of this allegory, or figure: We, too, have been stung or bitten by the deadly fang of the devil, which is sin. As St. Paul says, sin is a fiery, poisonous bite, or sting. If the poison enters the conscience, there is never any rest. Sin hurls against us and sets upon us death; death drives man, causing him to feel that he is in a veritable hell. And there is no help nor redress. You may do as many works as you please, you are condemned, nevertheless, until this miracle of grace arrives for you; that is, another serpent is raised up which is not poisonous nor harmful and has only the form of a serpent.

**70.** But why does Christ not choose a different symbol? Why that of the serpent by which men had been bitten? Surely, he might have chosen some other figure. The reason is stated by St. Paul in ~~ROM~~ Romans 8:3: *De peccato damnavit peccatum*. For sin he condemned sin. He has driven out death by death: he has overcome the Law by the Law. How has he done this? Christ was made a sinner upon the cross, bearing the title of an arch fiend in the midst of knaves. He suffered the judgment and punishment which a sinner must suffer. He was innocent, he never committed any sin; yet, the name of a sinner and the guilt and punishment verily settled upon him, and thus he has abolished sin by taking upon himself the sin which was not his, and by suffering himself to be judged and condemned as a malefactor.

**71.** Now, although he is indeed innocent, nevertheless he is like unto a sinner, and there is in him a salutary sin, by which he means to save us, who are truly sinners, from the deadly poison. He has condemned sin upon the cross; for sin wronged him when it condemned him and inflicted death upon him. For this reason he now obtains authority over the sin of the whole world and rightly and justly condemns sin, because it tried to condemn him. Accordingly, he now pronounces to all who believe, this verdict of justice in place of their sin: Sin shall not harm you; for it is become amenable to me and owes me penitence. Therefore it shall either be no sin, or else a sin that has been sentenced.

**72.** Now, the conclusion which Christ draws is expressed thus: "That whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." That is saying as much as was said in regard to the serpent: "Whoever looks unto it shall live." To look unto Christ crucified is to believe on him. By that act sin is canceled and cannot hurt us; or, if it does hurt us, it shall cause no harm. Accordingly, all depends on looking unto Jesus and not on any work. However, while on the former occasion looking was a physical action, looking in this instance is performed spiritually, in the heart, by believing that Christ by his innocence has destroyed sin.

**73.** Now, Christ might have died upon the cross a thousand times and we would have been helped just as little as the Israelites would have been helped by raising a thousand serpents of their own accord, if this word of promise had not been issued, namely, as is written: "Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish" etc. This word appropriates and applies to us these blessings and makes us certain that we shall reach heaven; that is, certain that for the sake of this exalted and crucified Christ we shall obtain the grace of God and victory over the power of sin, death and hell, and shall receive eternal life, if we believe on him and are thus borne upward clinging to him.

**74.** Behold, this is the allegory which faithfully depicts to us the misery and need of our entire human nature, and the office of redemption of Christ our Lord, and the manner of obtaining these blessings we have been discussing. It shows how all men were mortally wounded by the fiery, hellish poison of the devil, and no remedy nor aid could have been procured for them if the Son of God had not been given and had not appeared for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil, as ~~1~~ John 3:8 states. And this he did, not by a display of the great power, force and might of his divine



majesty, but in the greatest weakness and infirmity, by his suffering and dying, when he hung upon the cross, an accursed, noxious worm. But there is a salutary death in the form of this dead serpent; it brings to all who, by their sins, have been poisoned and tainted unto eternal death, a healing balm by means of which they recover and are saved forever.

**75.** It is very strange to say and to believe that this salvation is achieved utterly without human co-operation. Yon poor Israelites who had to lie among the fiery serpents were not helped at all, though they tried every remedy that they could secure; they only grew worse the more they labored and the longer they strove to defend themselves against the serpents. And at last, when they had despaired of all help and there was no more comfort and hope, no other plan is proposed to them than this, that they must have raised among them just such a serpent, made of brass — a sight that might have terrified and awed them still more! — and must lift their eyes unto this serpent. And yet, it came to pass that whoever obeyed this word of God recovered forthwith and remained unharmed thereafter.

**76.** So, in this instance, whoever desires to obtain unfailing aid and salvation against sin and eternal death must hear and follow this strange counsel of God, letting go of every other comfort and endeavor, and must fix his heart upon this Christ alone, who has borne our sins and death in his own body. For it is settled that for our salvation no other name under heaven shall avail except that of Christ crucified. ~~4012~~ Acts 4:12.

**77.** Thus, Christ has delivered the entire discourse concerning the new birth, or the righteousness of man in the sight of God, going through all the parts which must needs be taught in this connection, namely, whence and by what means it is effected and how it is obtained. He has instructed us concerning the Word, baptism and the Spirit who works through these means; concerning the merit and sacrifice of Christ, for whose sake the grace of God and eternal life are given us; and concerning faith, by which we appropriate these blessings. Accordingly, you must now so retain the thread of this entire discourse that the end shall agree with the beginning. When you are asked: How does the new birth take place, in which the Spirit through the water and the Word makes a person a child of God? you must answer: In the way that Christ has here stated — it takes place when, over and against the terror on account of your sin, you grasp this comfort, the belief that Christ, the Son of God, is come from heaven for your sake and has been raised upon the cross for you, in order that you should not

perish but have eternal life. This faith is the chest, or shrine, which holds the treasure of the forgiveness of sins and the heritage of eternal life, and man is saved by it; as Christ says, “Thy faith hath made thee whole” etc.

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