

In our time the Dean Laestadius began to work in the Lapland of Tornio like John the Baptist in the wilderness of Judea. He began to wake up sorrowless sinners by sermons of law putting according to folk's manner to speak their life in front of their eyes. He even shows in his sermons that such life brings forth to the destruction of hell if a change of the heart and mind do not happen through repentance, penitence and living faith upon Lord Christ.

This doctrine effected first wrath among the majority in the areas of Lapland and the parish of Pajala, and even on the shores of Finland and Tornio people got a sting of ears of the voice of Laestadius. It is no wonder that such folks got an illness in the gall, because all harlots, thieves, drunkards, liquor dealers and fighting men were trusting on God's grace without repentance. That is why they do neither tolerate nor hear the sermons of repentance. The liquor dealers said first in the parish of Karesuando that "if such kind of sermons will be kept, the Church will become empty." But when the preaching had gone on in two years time, folks even from other communities came to the services, so that all people had not place in the Church. All who God by His word and Spirit woke up, felt the power and became enlightened by the doctrine and sermons of the Dean Laestadius, even though the sermons were not kept in decorated words. That is why the naturally virtuous folks get angry, both the lords and farmers, when according to the Holy Bible the rebirth is demanded in the following sermons, "even if the rebirth should have taken

place already as child in the baptism."

It is even shown that selfrighteousness is not valid as the foundation of the salvation. This is not tolerated by the civilized world which trusts on its own honesty. This is the greatest reason to the accusations which the lords of the world and the liquor dealers made against him. That is why Laestadius got angry enemies when he did not leave the lords of the world and the sorrowless clergy without punishment.

Note this, dear reader, that he was persecuted as all the preachers of righteousness are persecuted. He was able to tell me about this at the time when many did not see a coming change, that the persecution is approaching. It is possible that a false sect can appear beside the right [Church]. So it happened even in Koutokeino, of which the Bishops of Norway wanted to accuse Laestadius. But it was not Laestadius' fault, because he had not such men at that time, which he could have been able to send to Koutokeino in right time when it still had been possible to advise them.

He sent me, and gave me the office to keep schools in the parishes of Jukkasjarvi and Gallivare, where the Lapish people in that time were under the flood of liquor and adulterous life, drowning into a natural and eternal destruction, just like in the parish of Karesuando.

Now the seventeenth year is at hand since the Dean Laestadius' death. The field of God is still flourishing beautifully both in the Laplands of Tornio and Lulea. On the shores of Tornio, in Fin-

land, Norway and even into America has the work and revival movement, that Laestadius began, expanded. A great multitude have already with joy met the end of their life.

We said above that Laestadius' sermons which he kept in the Church effected first wrath in the hearts of a lot of people, but when they became awakened, the wrath was changed into love, and they confessed their sins and asked forgiveness, and they have paid their evil deeds. The consequence of that is the fact, that even this year a lot of evil deeds are paid, when young people have awakened in the province of Lapland. But all have not yet made repentance. All field is not the good ground, as Christ says. There are still harlots, thieves, companions of thieves and liquor dealers. Laestadius preached in his sermons which he kept in the Church repentance even to virtuous harlots, honest thieves and honorable liquor dealers. These sheep of slaughter he according to his own words led for sake of the hungry sheep.

He has through his sermons of law prepared the road for Lord Jesus into the hearts of the folks just like John the Baptist. He has shown the Lamb of God to the awakened ones and built up the road from the Garden to Golgotha. He has even put he bleeding, thorn-crowned King in front of the eyes of those who are sorrowful because of their sins, and he has led them to acquaintance with living Lord Jesus. He has preached to the awakened ones that the sins may not prevent them to believe through Christ the forgiveness of sins. The corruption [of sin] which is

not deleted must not sink the partakers of grace into doubts. You may understand this, [dear] reader! that he calls the sorrowless people: the thieves of grace, [namely] those who trust upon God's grace without the change of the heart and the mind, those who even do carnal deeds. The selfrighteousness of the virtuous ones is not valid as the foundation of salvation, because they lack the living faith and the feeling of blessedness. They even lie without the Holy Ghost spiritually dead.

The Dean Laestadius has said that those whom the Christians in behalf of God in the name of the Lord testify the forgiveness of sins, are not thieves of grace. And this is what the doctrine of Christ also has shown. In the beginning of the awakening the most part of people in the Churches of the parishes of Karesuando and Pajala were sorrowless. That is why Laestadius had to preach more law than at the present time. Now the most part of people who come to the meeting places and prayer-houses are believers and through law awakened ones. The preachers and those who declare the word of God must preach gospel and testify the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' name and blood, so that they may be able to by faith receive the grace of the Lord.

Beloved readers and coming generations. Take heed of the sermons of the Dean Laestadius! because he is the first and best laborer on God's field in the province of Lapland. God has blessed and given growth for his and his disciples' labor. The fields have become white for the time of harvest. The field of God is ready for harvest in many pla-

ces. Indeed we wish for rain from heaven so that the flowers of eternity would grow on the graves of the laborers of the field.

Builders, build the spiritual house on the foundation of the Prophets and apostles in which Jesus Christ is the best corner stone, on which the whole building stands. On the same foundation has the Dean Laestadius built. Let us still remain in that hope that he through his sermons wakes up his tired disciples who have been waking and striving nearly thirty years' time in their most precious faith and traveled in the holy way. These firstborn have got thousands of brothers and sisters, born of God, even during the last years.

Be free, you into freedom redeemed flock! Remain on the mount of Zion, in the city of the living God, it is, in the congregation of the living God. In this congregation are the souls and the hearts which are sprinkled by the bloody sermon of gospel. They are released from bad conscience through faith upon Lord Jesus. Let us be diligent in the law of Christ in order to love each others. There is still one sheepfold and one shepherd according to the word of the Lord. Work for keeping the congregation united! Let us praise God through Jesus Christ that the Lord has woke up even clergy men to continue the work of Laestadius! - God will always take care of his matter. - Repentance and forgiveness of sins is still preached according to the commandment of the Lord.

We will even finally remind, because voices have been heard that the followers of Laestadius have changed

the doctrine after his death, that it is not true. Because all that nowadays has been preached, has been the same doctrine as that which has been preached at Laestadius' time, even though Luther and Laestadius have in their sermons, which they have kept in the Church, put the law of Moses to guideline for such Christian congregations which are carnal in their life, in that intention, that God's righteousness through law would chastise them to fly to Christ, through faith receive the forgiveness of sins for sake of Jesus' name and blood, and even the righteousness of Christ which is the pure wedding garment in front of God's bright face, and even get powers through the Spirit to mortify the carnal deeds. The law is not set for those who are justified, says Paul. But nevertheless we are not without law. We have the law of Christ. It says that we should love each other. The love of Christ demands to reject all ungodliness. The holy life will become upbuilt through faith upon Lord Christ. Thus the law has been our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ. But when the faith came, then we are not more under that schoolmaster.

The Dean Laestadius has not bound the awakened consciences with the law if the sermons are right understood, but he teaches [people] to believe and rebukes those who commit the sin of unbelief, calling it selfrighteousness, so that our righteousness would not come through the law. Because all of those who are of the works of the law, are under the curse, says Paul. And if the righteousness would come through the

law, then Christ would have died in vain.

Be free, you redeemed flock! Christ Jesus is by God set for us to wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. - All peaceless consciences, own by the faith of the heart through the mouthly confession and through the faith of the heart, the salvation for sake of Jesus' name.

Glory to God the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost for ever! Amen. Halleluja!

You will hear more about the conversion and Christianity of Laestadius in the biography. - I have written this and said the truth. By Laestadius educated teacher of the children.

Saivonmuotka July 1877.

John Raattamaa

Nr. 1 First Sunday in Advent

The Apostle Paul writes in today's epistle, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. Romans 13:11

This the Apostle writes also to other Christians of that same awaking out of the sleep of sin as 1 Cor. 15:34, Ephes. 5:14, 1 Thes. 5:6, from which we surmise that this servant of God had noticed how a spiritual sleep forces itself even upon those who have awakened. When the enemy does not accomplish anything by roaring like a lion, nor by shooting fiery darts or by threats of the world or terrible anger nor also by inward temptations, he had to entice them with sleeping potion, the wine of adultery, and love of the world

so that he in that way could put them into a sack and bring them into the cave of darkness. When, namely, the awakened souls cease watching and striving, then the love of the world comes with spiritual sleep and also makes sorrows of the world allowable through love of the world. The Christians then begin to look with one eye at the world and the other eye at heaven, but while a Christian looks with one eye at the world and the other at heaven, he loses that narrow way and soon goes astray entirely into the world, if some new reminder of his mortality does not come. When now this spiritual sleep forces itself so strongly upon a Christian, so Paul has commanded them to arise from sleep for their salvation is now nearer than when they believed. With these words he depicts the Christians former condition, when they lived in sorrowlessness and self deceit, then they believed that salvation was very near. They did not then have that feeling that salvation was far from them; in the sorrowless condition they did not doubt of their salvation, or think that hell was closer to them than the kingdom of heaven. But only afterwards, when the conscience awoke through the Word of God, through which they became great sinners, then they began to doubt of their salvation, although this doubt which was not felt in the sorrowless condition came from self righteousness, which only now in the awakened state received power to oppress penitent souls into doubt so that they would not flee to the Saviour. Nevertheless this noble Apostle now shows that salvation is nearer to doubting

souls than then when they believed that salvation was near, for the night is spent and the day is at hand. The night is that spiritual darkness in which the whole world had slept, before the light of Christianity began to shine. At night or in the time of darkness they all slept a spiritual sleep. They knew nothing of the light of Christianity. But now is the time to awake out of sleep since the day is at hand when the light of Christianity has come into the world, for just at that time is our salvation nearer to us than then when we believed: then at night or in the time of darkness we believed in our sleep and in our blindness that salvation was very near, although it was far from us; but now when the day began to dawn, when the light of Christianity has appeared, now is our salvation nearer than at that time when we believed. Therefore he says, "Now is high time to awake out of sleep for the night is spent and the day is at hand." It is not very strange to think that sleep forces itself upon the night watchman, who has watched while others have slept, who has stood on Zion's wall and cried out that the time was twelve o'clock or midnight: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him." If some lonely traveler asks of him, "Watchman, what time of night is it?", then he has answered, "The time is eleven o'clock." But the watchers on the wall of Zion have become sleepy, they have not known what time it is, they have been dumb dogs who have not barked although the town was full of thieves. Now it is high time for them to first arise from the sleep of sin, since fire has broken out in the town, and then all

dumb dogs should begin to bark so that the people would awaken when the thieves sneak into the houses, so that they would not get to steal the goodness of that rich man which the unjust steward has no doubt wasted. Rise up from sleep, watchers on Mt. Zion, and cry out that it is eleven o'clock, fire has broken out in the city of corruption. Rise up from sleep, all dumb dogs, rise up and bark. The thieves are entering the houses to rob the master's storehouse, to steal that rich man's goodness which that unjust steward has no doubt already wasted. But when sleep forces itself upon even those who have slept at night and have not awakened early, what must we say of those who sleep both night and day, into whose mouths the devil has poured sleeping potion and also dripped it into their ears so that they would not hear although one awakened person shouts in their ear that fire has broken out and the house is burning. Those who sleep very sound become angry with the one who wakes them, and also threatens in his sleepiness, "if you do not allow me to sleep in peace, I will let you have it on the ear." They who are drunken with the devils sleeping potion also sleep in church and see dreams. The Word of God through which they should awaken effects in them as though sleeping potion would have been dripped through the ears into the brain. They hear as in a dream, the words splashing on both sides and the hum of the words going over their heads, bypassing the ear, bypassing the mind, bypassing the conscience, bypassing the heart, and never toward it. If these words would finally

attach to the wall, then let the walls answer on judgement day. The drunken have not heard them, no doubt the hum of the words effects so much that all drunken become saved. The Saviour has said what prophet Isaiah has written before, "With hearing ears they hear and with seeing eyes they see, nevertheless they do not comprehend for this people have a hardened heart and poor hearing." Because of this hardening of the heart, such a heavy sleep has fallen upon the sorrowless that the Word of God effects as a sleeping potion. But then the doctor's book says, "Wake them, wake them, who have drank the sleeping potion; if you do not wake them they will sleep forever," Arise from sleep all drunken, for the night is far spent and the day is at hand, you have already slept the whole long night and you have lived in sorrowlessness in the time of darkness. You have then committed the deeds of darkness, which Paul enumerates in today's epistle. Some of you have lived in over-eating, some in drunkenness, some in the chambers or the whore-houses, some in strife and envy, and with such a life think they will be saved, who sleep in the daytime. But they will sleep forever who do not awake from the sleep of sin when the day has come, since the light of Christianity has begun to shine into some dark souls and the dawn of the day of grace has dawned into the hearts of some sinners. They sleep everlastingly, they who hate the light, who flee from the edge of the light into the darkness and they who have become drunken with the devil's sleeping potion and the wine of adultery and flo-

wing devil's dung; they sleep forever who do not wake although an awakened person shakes them who do not hear, although the dogs bark that the thieves are coming. But the doctor's book says, "Wake them, wake them, do not allow the drunken to sleep when the house is on fire." It is not the fault of the one who wakes him, if one drunken person dies in the flame when he is awakened but he still does not wake up. It stands clearly written in the book of Revelations that they are drunken with the wine of adultery, who serve that great beast who arises from the sea and bottomless abyss. And who else do the sorrowless people of the world serve than that great beast, who rules the whole world. Since now from this day the new church year begins and since the course of the world shows that the greater part of the people of the world are soundly sleeping the sleep of sin, although the night is far spent and the day is at hand, and the spiritual sleep forces itself not only upon those who have watched all night while others have slept, but also upon those who have slept at night and have just awakened with the day, then it would be necessary to pray to that great Night-watcher, whose eye does not sleep nor doze, that He would first awaken all the watchers on Mt. Zion to watch and to cry out what time it is, to cry that the fire has broken out in the city of corruption, that the thieves are stealing the goodness of the rich man which the unjust steward has wasted, that all dumb dogs through the watchman's shouting would begin to bark so zealously that the people in the city of corruption

would awaken, that if some solitary traveler, who has strayed from the city of corruption would ask, "Watchman, what time of night is it?", the watchers on Zion's wall could answer, "The time is eleven o'clock, it is not a long time before the judgement bell will sound." Hear you, God who never sleep, the sigh of those who are watching. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matt. 21:1

With the guidance of our holy gospel we must at this time consider what the people of the city of corruption do when the king of the daughter of Zion comes riding on the foal of an ass. The first consideration: What does the King of Zion do when He sees the city of corruption? The second consideration: What do the people of the city of corruption do when the King of Zion comes? If now the merciful Lord Jesus, who is the king of the chosen daughter of Zion, would find some soul in the city of corruption who has not given a kiss to Baal!

The first consideration: What does the King of Zion do when he sees the city of corruption? The evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke relate that Jesus wept, as he was riding on the foal of an ass, when He came to the Mount of Olives; from there He saw the city where there were so many people who could have been saved if they had known their time of visitation, but they had all hardened. Perhaps they had such splendid and large buildings and a beautiful church, at which the disciples marveled, just the same this great city, along with the church and priesthood and all that great multitude who lived

in that city, was destroyed and perished because of that hardening, because of that spiritual hatred and persecution with which this unfortunate people had hated the prophets and persecuted the Christians and shed the Savior's blood. When it came to Jesus' mind how many thousand souls in this city must go to destruction, it touched His heart and He had to weep and pity the lasciviousness and deafness of this unfortunate people whom He had tried so many times to wake from the sleep of sin. He had wanted to gather the children of Israel as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but they would not. Many think, when they hear how hardened the Jews were, that the people of this time are much better than the Jews. But if the Saviour would begin to bark at the hypocrites and mouth Christians, as He sometimes barked at the Jews, who knows how long they could stand Him? I fear that the meek and honorable people of this time would have spit in His face and would say, "You are a Samaritan and you have a devil. Is it the Son of God who barks at honorable people in that way?" The meek people of the world would just say, "We have not lived so wickedly that He would need to come to reproach and bark at us." The confessors of dead faith would say, "We are not so mean that Jesus would need to weep because of us, for we have always believed upon Him, and loved Him from our childhood on. The Jews had no doubt lived so wickedly that the Saviour has had to weep over their unfortunate condition, but we certainly have not lived so wickedly." Who knows if you have not

lived even worse than the Jews? The Saviour has not accused the Jews of drunkenness, for the Jews were not drunkards but they were opposed to it, as the Saviour Himself reminds. Reproving the Saviour of drinking, the Jews said thus, "Behold a man gluttonous and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Have the Jews not found fault in the life of the Saviour? Why did He need to come to reprove them when He was a drinker and the Jews were not drinkers? The Jews also found many other sins in the Saviour's life. The Saviour was not only gluttonous and a winebibber, but also untidy and a sabbath breaker, disturber of the people and one great sorcerer, who drove out devils with the power of Beelzebub. And also, a blasphemer of God and that was a great crime (in their minds) that He confessed Himself to be the Son of God. If He had preached sweetly to the Jews and begged them saying, "Dear Jews, you are God's children, you have always been meek and honorable to God, no one can accuse you of iniquity and an ungodly life and you will surely be saved if you live as you have lived thus far." Then the Jews would have liked Him well and said, "Master, we know that you are from God and you teach the road of God in truth and do not behold the form of man." But when He began to bark at and accuse them of hypocrisy, an adulterous generation and generation of vipers, is it any wonder that they became angry with Him? But the meek people of this time who keep themselves to be godly and all the same sometimes drink, sometimes curse, sometimes

fight, and sometimes keep drinking parties, and sometimes commit adultery, they would just say, "We have not lived so wickedly that someone would need to reprove us of iniquity and an ungodly life, for we have not only been born of meek parents, but all our lives have lived meekly, surely the Saviour does not need to weep because of us. We are not as hardened as the Jews; if the Saviour was before our eyes we would take Him around the neck and would give Him a kiss." So also Judas did who betrayed Him; he was no doubt the best Christian who gave the Saviour a kiss. But if the Saviour had to cry over the city of Jerusalem, He then also was under great sorrow because of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him with a kiss. And are they not like Judas, who have been taught in the Christianity and have received better knowledge of the Christianity than the Jews, nevertheless they live worse than turks and heathens. Are the tears even yet flowing from the Saviour's eyes, when the inhabitants of the city of corruption are so hard of hearing and so hardened, that they do not receive the King of Zion through true penitence and repentance, through living faith and a change of life? Surely He weeps and pities those unfortunate souls, who do not yet want to awake from the sleep of sin, although so much is preached of true Christianity. As the enemy in the Saviour's time had hardened the hearts of the Jews that they had to carry hatred toward all Christians, so also now the enemy has blinded the minds of the unbelievers and reversed their eyes that they look at true Christianity to be false.

The Second Consideration: What do the inhabitants of the city of corruption do when the King of Zion comes? The evangelists relate that the Saviour when He, on the Mount of Olives, had wept over the corruption which was in that city, rode upon the foal of an ass into the city of corruption and when the disciples began to praise God and shouted Hosanna to the Son of David, then envy arose from that in the Jews, who asked the Saviour to command the disciples to be silent. The chief priests and scribes said also among themselves, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing, Behold the whole world is gone after Him." The lords of the world began to fear that they would lose their power and honor if the people would begin to believe upon the Saviour. And the more the people begin to praise and honor the King of Zion, the greater envy and hatred arises from the lords of the world, whose honor, power and income lessen, if the people would be converted to Christianity, for the honor and power of the lords of the world are founded upon the ignorance and blindness of the common people, when sin and evil make that common people so blind that they must serve the lords of the world. When now all are transgressors of the king's law, some are drunkards, some are liquor merchants, some are whores, some are thieves, some are cursers, some are fighters, some are smugglers — said in a word, when now all have lived so wickedly so that they could not find a one who does not deserve to be fined, they would all become six mark men (bribers), if one would live strictly with them according

to the law. For that reason they must serve the lords of the world, who are set up as judges upon the earth. When they first commit evil and transgress the law of the king, they must afterwards persuade the lords of the world, that they would not bring them before the law, and because of the evil of the common people, the lords of the world have power over them. But if the people would be converted to Christianity, they would cease to commit evil, would cease to transgress the king's law, would cease taking people before the law and fighting, then all the power and honor of the world's lords would end. But the enemy will not allow that the power and honor of the world's lords would end; he intends that the lords of the world would go before the common people with such an example as finery, world's vanity, drunkenness, liquor business, card playing, dancing, games, cursing, greed, adultery and deceit, and also the common people would be strengthened in that faith that this kind of a life is the right life. Why do the lords of the world live so? (they ask.) It is not a sin since the lords do so. For that reason the lords of the world are so angry with the Saviour and His disciples, who now begin to praise God for that change which has come about through Christianity. Such envy comes to the lords of the world over that, that they began to say to Nicodemus, who is not on the side of the lord, "Are you also that man's disciple? Has one of the high priests believed upon Him? But this ignorant people, who do not know the Scriptures, are cursed." The lords of the world, who have a large brain in

their skull, think they know better where the road goes to heaven. They do not become so foolish that they begin to believe upon Jesus. But this people who do not know the Scriptures are cursed. Hear now, you disciples of Jesus, what the world's lords think of you, who cry Hosanna to the Son of David. They think that you are crazy, who believe upon Jesus. They soon decide that you must be silent, you must not cry out Hosanna to the Son of David, for when the lords of the world who are wiser have not believed upon Him, neither do you need to cry out, Hosanna to the Son of David, for by that crying out the honor of the world's lords is lessened. If Jesus is given honor and power over a Christian, then the power of the world's lords will end. If you begin to hear the doctrine of Jesus, if you common people become so foolish that you hear the teachings of the disturber of the people and become the disciples of Jesus, then the lords of the world will begin to hate you. The lords of the world do not hate you because of that drunkenness, because of that adultery, because of that cursing, because of that fighting, because of liquor business, of which all the world's lords have learned well and through which the world's lords have received both honor and income from you. But if you would begin to cease from your former life and be converted to Christianity, just then you would see what kind of love the lords of the world have — they would begin to hate you because of the Christianity! For that reason that must be the best advice, that you live as before, drink, curse and fight,

keep a liquor trade, whore and fight between yourselves through the law, in that way the lords of the world can earn something from you, since part of the fine also goes to them. Now we have heard what the lords of the world do in the city of corruption when the King of Zion comes riding on the foal of an ass. The lords complain very much that the disciples cry out Hosanna to the Son of David. The lords would wish that the disciples would be silent and also ask the Saviour to command His disciples to be silent but the Saviour says thus, "If these disciples should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Let us behold now what the merchants do in the city of corruption when the King of Zion comes. The evangelists have written that the merchants were trading in the church when Jesus came there. This honorable trade took place then in the church for the honor of the god of this world and although such a trade was forbidden by the law, nevertheless the lords of the world did not complain or keep it to be wrong that God's house of prayer was made into a den of thieves. Why do the lords of the world, who otherwise were zealous after the honor of God, when Jesus was accused with lies, so that He intended to demolish their church to the ground, why were the eyes and ears of the world's lords locked shut when such an unlawful affair took place in the church? The merchants and the animals together mooded and dinged in the church. If this kind of bazaars would have happened in the courtyards of the lords, they would have called the sheriff to take the merchants before the

law, but that it happened in the church against the law, it is not dangerous, since they themselves were given mutton roasts. And we know that the lords of the world have a keen eye to see faults in the lives of the Christians, but if the merchants of the world did whatever they did, only that they would anoint the bowels of the lords, then all kinds of trade was allowable even if it happened in the church. When now the Saviour took a scourge and drove those two-legged and the four-legged creatures out of the church and overturned the exchange tables so that the money fell to the floor, then the chief priests and lords of the world became angry with Him and asked, "By what authority dost thou these things? And who gave Thee this authority to do these things?" And the natural mind also agrees with that, that if it had been some other person than the Saviour, these merchants to whom the damage was done would have demanded payment of the damage. For so say the liquor merchants, if the sheriff would come to steal their liquor or would fine them for selling liquor, then the liquor merchants would say, it is a great sin and wrong, that we would cause our neighbor damage. And in that way the Saviour also did wrong when He spoiled their business and in that way caused damage to His neighbor, or was it a wrong law which forbade that one can trade in the church. Now we have seen what the people of the city of corruption do when the King of Zion comes. The evangelists have also written that a commotion arose through the whole city. When He rode through the city some asked, "Who is

it?" And the same kind of a commotion arises even yet in the city of corruption when the King of Zion comes. The children of the world ask, "What kind of commotion is it?" And from where does such a commotion come? Formerly the liquor business was kept in peace near the church. Formerly a person could get a drink of liquor when he came from church, but now even punch cannot be drunk. Formerly they cursed and committed adultery and it was not barked at like it is now barked at. They bark at home, they bark everywhere, this life is not fitting. Such a commotion comes in the city of corruption when the King of Zion comes; all the lords of the world become offended at the cries of the children and the disciples, Hosanna to the Son of David. But cry out anyway, you children and disciples and strip all your clothes off and put them on the road where the King of Zion travels, and carry palms in your hands. Break off palm branches and spread them on the road where the King of Zion travels so that in time He will give you palms in your hands when He comes again into the new Jerusalem riding on the foal of a work ass. Then you can shout everlastingly in that New Jerusalem, Hosanna to the Son of David and blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest. When now will the disciples of Jesus be able to so cry out? We itope that the King of Zion will come soon to redeem His poor bride. Amen.

First Sunday in Advent. (Second sermon)

Thus saith the Lord my God: Feed the flock of the slaughter. Zech. 11:4
And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you “ O poor of the flock”. Zech. 11:7

God had through the prophets often and in many ways warned the children of Israel of that misfortune which would undoubtedly come upon them because of their ungodly life, but those hardened ones did not lend their ears to the exhortation of the prophets and therefore did not repent but became angry at the prophets. “The Lord has not so spoken, the prophets speak into the wind, they do not have God’s word.” Because of this ungodliness and hardening, they become ready for the slaughter or to be destroyed as the fat sheep, whom the Lord has intended to destroy, in prophet Zechariah’s time the ungodly people of Israel were already prepared for the slaughter, the destruction and end of this unfortunate people was very near. The sorrowless people of that time were like the fat sheep, whom the Lord has intended to destroy, therefore the Lord said to the prophet, “Feed the flock of the slaughter.” But it is not written how he must feed the sheep of the slaughter, we think only from all indications of the matter that one sorrowless people who run open-eyed to destruction are like the sheep of the slaughter, of which another prophet has said that they are fattened as for the day of slaughter, and who is he who fattens them? Surely the right shepherds have

not fattened them; but the enemy who is a man killer, who wants to destroy people, he has fattened the sheep for slaughter; they are already marked for slaughtering when the measure of sin is fulfilled; when they become very fat from the blood of the prophets and the Christians; then God gives them, into the care of Satan to be slaughtered. So anyway it went with the Jews before their country was destroyed, also then when the heathens brought them into captivity at Babylon and also then when the kingdom of the Jews was destroyed by the Romans, both times they were as sheep for slaughter, marked with the mark of the beast, as John saw them in the book of Revelations, all who did not have the mark of an angel on their forehead, they were marked with the mark of the beast. And so the Jews were like sheep for slaughter both at prophet Zechariah’s time and also at the time of the Saviour, for which reason the Lord says, “Feed my flock, of the slaughter”. Some expounders of the scriptures bring this to the time of the Saviour who also fed the sheep for slaughter, that is that they had to preach to them as to prisoners of death, which the priests prepared for death. That word, “Feed my flock of the slaughter” is therefore one commandment given to prophet Zechariah and also to the Saviour, that they must be preached to in a different way than to those poor wretched, who are lean, therefore are not fit for slaughter, to those sheep of slaughter must be preached as to prisoners of death but we know that some prisoners of death are so hardened that they will not receive anything from the Word of

God; there are very few prisoners of death who the priests can so prepare for death so that they would be prepared, for most prisoners of death are so hardened, that they do not want to confess their evil deeds although the offense is proven in court through witnesses and the judgement has already fallen upon them, all the same they are so hardened, they do not want to even confess their sins to the priest. And when the priest encourages them to penitance, they blaspheme him and say, it is not necessary to confess, and they call the priest a black devil who encourages them to penitence. Such prisoners of death are like sheep for slaughter, who are forcibly dragged to the place of execution, who have such stiff necks that it takes four people to press their heads on the block. But such is depicted in the Bible, one sorrowless and hardened people, to whom the judgement is read from God's law book, and they still do not want to receive God's word. If one priest encourages them to confess their evil deeds and to regret their sins, they answer, "The Lord has not so spoken, the prophets speak into the wind, they do not have the Word of God". Such hardened ones look at the priests as black devils, hate their teachers and the Christians who encourage them to penitence. Such are the sheep for slaughter. And when the Lord said to prophet Zechariah, "Feed my flock of the slaughter", it signifies, you must preach to them like to hardened prisoners of death, who have received the judgement but still do not want to confess their evil deeds or regret their sins. Now what can a teacher do with such

ones; he feeds them like sheep for slaughter, but he cannot so prepare them for death, that they would be prepared, but he must finally tie a black scarf over their eyes, give them over to the executioner and leave with a sorrowful heart. If someone asks of the priest, what kind of a feeling do you have of that prisoner of death? He has to say, there is no hope of his salvation, he went to death unrepentant and hardened.

To me is given of the Lord also this commandment, Feed the sheep of slaughter, and I feed them for the sake of the poor wretched ones. Here it is heard what the prophet's intention was, that he would not have otherwise fed the sheep for slaughter but because of the poor wretched ones. How do you now understand these words of the Bible, you wise of the world who always say, surely we can see for ourselves from the book? When now the expounders of the scriptures say so, that these words pertain especially to the Saviour, who feeds the fat sheep because of the poor wretched ones, but have not said who the sheep for slaughter are or what kind the poor wretched ones are, so we must then ask of the wise of the world who say, we can see for ourselves from the book, how do you understand this place? The natural intellect says thus; When people are compared to sheep then it can be surmised that the fat sheep are understood to be such people, who are acceptable to the Lord, as also it states in the Swedish Bible of the fat sheep, that the Lord protects them and restores them although in the Finnish Bible it states:

The Lord will destroy the fat sheep. If now this place had been translated right in the Swedish Bible, that the Lord restores the fat sheep, then it follows that the fat sheep are such people who are very acceptable to the Lord, as in a natural sense fat sheep are in people's minds better than lean sheep who are no good for slaughter. But turn now your intellect to this parable of the sheep and think if you were one of the sheep and you had the understanding that the fat sheep would be slaughtered first but the poor wretched would be saved, then you would always want to be a poor wretched sheep, for the poor wretched sheep can live.

And think now you wise of the world, who has understood better, the old testament which says that the Lord restores the fat sheep, or that which says the Lord will destroy the fat sheep. I think that he, himself was a fat sheep who said that the Lord restores the fat sheep. We understand so that the fat sheep are those sheep for slaughter who are already appointed sheep for slaughter.

When now the expounders of the Bible have said that these, the Lord's words to Zechariah 11:4 Feed my flock of the slaughter, pertain to the Saviour, so we must today observe how the Saviour feeds the sheep of slaughter for the sake of the poor wretched ones. But are there now poor wretched sheep here for whose sake the sheep of slaughter must be fed? Now where are those poor wretched sheep, which that Good Shepherd pities, where are the miserable and poor wretched sheep, whom the Good Shepherd of Israel must carry,

where are those lambs who He feeds with food and gives milk to drink. Where are those poor ones who are in such depression they cannot follow the flock? Where are you poor wretched sheep, whom the fat sheep have butted, do you have such poor pasture that you are not able to keep up with your mother. I know that the Shepherd pities you, he will not leave you to die on the road but will lift you up from the muddy bog, into which you have sunk and will carry you in His arms and will give you milk to drink so you will be able to follow the flock. Hear Shepherd of Israel the pitiful cry of the poor wretched sheep when they cry unto you. Our Father, etc.

The gospel Matt.21:1.

Today's gospel is taken from Matthew, 21st chapter, where the evangelist writes how Jesus rode upon the female ass. But Luke has written more of this matter from which we hear that Jesus drove out the buyers and sellers from the temple, upset the exchange tables, drove out from the temple the two-legged and four-legged creatures who drank and dunged there, and all the children began to shout in the temple Hosanna to the Son of David, then the pharisees became offended at that shouting, but the mooing of the animals in the temple did not offend them, nor did the pharisees become offended at the din of the buyers and sellers or at their cursing; but when the children and the disciples began to cry out in the temple for honor to the Saviour, then the pharisees got an earache and the

voice of the children bothered them. This zeal of the Saviour indicates to us, how He feeds the sheep of the slaughter, because of the poor wretched sheep, for the Jews were already in the Saviour's time sheep for slaughter, they were because of their hardening near their end. John said to them, "The axe is laid at the root of the tree." God's punishment is at the door, but these hardened ones did not believe that they were that unfruitful tree at whose root the axe was laid. They did not believe that they were those sheep for slaughter who Jesus feeds, when He took a scourge and drove the sheep for slaughter out of the temple. Let us observe through God's grace, how Jesus feeds the sheep for slaughter because of the poor wretched ones. But if the sheep of slaughter knew that they were appointed from above, sheep for slaughter, the wretches would not be so bold to butt the poor wretched sheep so much.

The first consideration: Who are the sheep for slaughter? We understand well that the sheep for slaughter are one sorrowless and hardened people, whose end and destruction is very near, so it was with the people of Judah in Zechariah's time, so also with the people in the Saviour's time, but the wretches did not believe that their end and destruction was so near, they did not believe that they were those sheep for slaughter, who were already appointed by God, sheep for slaughter. And when do the sorrowless believe that their end is so near? But how now does the Shepherd feed the sheep for slaughter? Yes, He takes a scourge and drives

them out of the temple and says, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."

In what way do the sorrowless and hardened make the house of prayer into a den of thieves? Yes, when the sorrowless come into the prayer house, they then mock the Christians tears, also laugh in the church, show their foolishness in the prayer house, some there fly behind the corner like owls hunting for mice. Is this life of the sorrowless better than the life of the Jews, when they kept sheep for slaughter in the temple and traded with them? But very severely the Saviour rules these sheep for slaughter, he does not speak to them in meekness, he does not beg them and say, "dear Jews, do not keep ungodly life in the temple and around the temple! But stop now your ungodly life and make repentance." But he only took a scourge, drove them out of the church and upset the wine-merchant's exchange tables. Was he not then in pride when he took a hold of them so. We do not know. The Pharisees anyway complained greatly about the zeal of the Nazarene and asked with whose power do you do this? Who has given you the authority to do thus? The pharisees also became offended at the children crying in the temple as these Pharisees became offended at the voice of God's children in the church. That crying of the children in the church is so horrid that the pharisees cannot stand to hear it. But let us observe for what reason the Saviour so severely rules and feeds the sheep for slaughter or why He is so severe and harsh to the sorrowless

people, why he reproaches and condemns them and barks at them as being an adulterous generation, a generation of vipers and whited walls? The sorrowless of this time say that such barking and condemning does not belong anywhere. By it the people only harden and become worse. So they do, they harden through judgement and become worse. So also did the Jews, they hardened at the condemnation of John the Baptist and the Saviour and finally become so hardened they gnashed their teeth and stopped their ears when one Christian Stephan began to upbraid them, “ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye”. And for that reason the Saviour said to them “fulfill the measure of your fathers”, Now therefore the Jews can say to John the Baptist and the Saviour, you have made us hardened with your harsh judgement, you have condemned us to hell, so answer now for our souls. But was it the teachers fault that the Jews hardened? When the Bible says, let him who is unjust become more unjust. A person must become a devil, but if he through this hardening comes to realize and know his devilish nature, the devil would become distressed, but the hardened heart swells from day to day, the longer he lives, the more terrible and horrible he becomes, finally the devil of hatred turns their eyes around that they look at God as satan and satan as God. The Saviour becomes a Samaritan in the eyes of the hardened, a disturber of the people and a blasphemer of God, in the eyes of the hardened the Christians become proud, devilish, false prophets and wild spirits. But whores,

thieves, murderers, drunkards, cursers and fighters become beloved Christians. And the apostles of the devil become the best priests. Behold, so the shepherd feeds the sheep for slaughter, very severely He rules them. And for what reason is he so harsh and severe to condemn them? Yes, only because of the poor wretched sheep he so condemns the sheep of slaughter.

The second consideration: Who are the poor wretched sheep? The Lord says, Feed the flock of the slaughter and I feed the flock of the slaughter for the sake of the poor wretched sheep. Here we hear that the shepherd would not feed the sheep of slaughter if there were not these poor wretched sheep, who need the help of the Shepherd. No doubt now all understand that with the sheep for slaughter are understood the sorrowless and hardened, whose end is near. The sheep for slaughter are the fat sheep, whom prophet Ezekiel says in the Bible trample the pasture or overlook the Word of God, and foul the springs, that is the sacraments, as for example many in this congregation overlook the Lord’s Supper but not only that, that the fat sheep trample the pasture and foul the springs but they butt these poor wretched sheep, that is, they despise the penitent, mock their tears and persecute the penitent souls with spiritual hatred. This butting is also that wrong doctrine which the fat sheep for slaughter proclaim, when they twist and turn the Word of God with the wrong mind; by which the sorrowless can draw upon themselves the mill, simple ones are led astray and wavering ones begin to doubt which

doctrine is right, the pharisees or the Nazarene's doctrine. But all these sheep for slaughter should be so severely restrained because of the Word of God so that they would not have room to twist and turn the Word of God so that simple, penitent, wretched or doubting souls would be led astray, through the wrong doctrine from the right ordinance of grace. Even as here some thieves of grace twist Luther so that they could thereby topple this Christianity and make wrong the whole foundation of salvation; but Luther was not such a man who would topple this Christianity, but they who imagine they get allowance from Luther for drinking, dancing, finery, doing away with confession of sins and spiritual joy or that movements are wrong and of the pope; they read Luther like the devil reads the Bible, And such are the sheep for slaughter, who the Shepherd feeds because of the poor wretched cheep, and very severely we see he rules them, when he drives them out of the church with a scourge and overturns the money-changers tables so that the money falls to the ground. Otherwise the Nazarene would not have needed to contend with the pharisees and scribes, who were hardened but because of the poor wretched, because of the simple ones, because of the doubting ones he had to contend with the cross, that the seeds of the serpent would not pervert the scriptures and through wrong doctrine get simple ones to doubt if Jesus the Nazarene's doctrine could be the right doctrine. For that reason He often warns the disciples of the leaven of the pharisees and of that wrong

doctrine which they proclaim to the simple people.

He feeds now, that Good Shepherd, the sheep of slaughter for the sake of the poor wretched sheep. And so we must also tend the sheep of slaughter for the sake of the poor wretched sheep, for here are many sheep for slaughter who trample the pasture, foul the springs of water, and butt the wretched sheep with hatred, persecution, wrong doctrine and despising the Word of God. Some are so hardened that they make mockery of the Word of God, and overlook the sacraments, some also go as Judas to the Lord's Supper to confirm themselves with dead faith, these are all sheep for slaughter, marked with the mark of the beast on their forehead and so are under God's condemnation, not truly in creation appointed as sheep for slaughter, but only then appointed as sheep for slaughter when they become very fat and begin to trample the pasture, overlook and put to wrong use the Word of God and the sacraments, then has the Lord intended to destroy the fat sheep but save the wretched sheep. And I feed the sheep of slaughter because of the wretched sheep. Where now are the wretched sheep? Where are you sorrowful and doubting, penitent and wretched who because of depression are not able to follow the Shepherd of Israel, when He calls you with His sweet voice, because of your misery He has compassion on you, — is it because of lack of food that you have become so wretched and miserable that the Shepherd must carry you, when you are not able to walk; He must give you to drink, since the fat sheep have fouled

the springs; He must feed you since the fat sheep have trampled the pasture. He must refresh you when you become tired. He must bind up your wounds when the wolf has torn and ravaged you. He has had to find you when you were lost. He has had to cry out when the wolves were howling, He has had to pity you, you wretched sheep, when you are so miserable and so wretched in His eyes. Your wretchedness effects so much that the Good Shepherd of Israel has compassion on you, he cannot kill you no matter how poor wretched and miserable you would be. Hear you wretched sheep, the Shepherd calls, where are you wretched sheep? The Shepherd travels those heavy and troublesome steps and seeks the wretched sheep on Mt.Sinai, near the river Jordan and along the shores of the Red Sea, calling the wretched sheep, where are you? Come to the Shepherd you miserable sheep the Shepherd cannot bear to kill you because you are not fit sheep for slaughter, as those fat sheep. He will try yet to feed you one winter, so that He could bring you to verdant meadows and the best pastures when summer comes, when the flowers of eternity begin to grow, then He will wash your wool snow-white in Jordan's stream and protect you from all beasts which are heard here, and finally He will bring you to the eternal habitations in the valley of Sharon and will give you to drink of the water of life and will heal your wounds now and forever. Amen.

Second Sunday in Advent Sermon
Nr.2

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon and in the stars.
Luke 21:25

In today's gospel the Saviour speaks of the signs of the last times which appear in the heavens, before the end of this world; and these signs must be in the sun, moon, and stars. We must now first understand that with the sun is meant in the spiritual sense, the light of Christianity, which is as the sun to those who are traveling to eternity. If this sun darkens, then spiritual darkness comes on the earth, so that the travelers no longer see where the road goes to Heaven. The sun does not darken in any other way except when the moon goes in front of it, then the sun becomes dark. But in a spiritual sense, with the moon is understood that natural intellect which is a great hindrance to those who intend to be penitent and repent. The natural intellect is blind, blinded by the lust of sin, as naturally the moon of itself is black and dark, but gives a little light when the sun shines on it, so also from the spiritual sun the intellect gets a little enlightenment so that a person understands how to take care of his natural work and arrange his life so he would get along reasonably in this world.

But man cannot see with his intellect or his wisdom where the road goes to Heaven. The intellect or the knowledge of the skull is that moonlight, by which dim light a person can see to travel the broad road which leads to dam-

nation. But that narrow road no one can see with moonlight or the wisdom of the intellect; there must be full day or perfect enlightenment of God's Word before a person can see where the road goes to Heaven. We hear in Prophet Joel's writing that the sun will become dark and the moon red, before that great day of the Lord shall come. No doubt these are those signs of the last times which the Saviour means when He says that there must be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. The Sun of Christianity will become dark when the moon or the natural intellect goes in front of it. But not many realize that the moon has gone in front of the sun when the sun has become dark, and not many realize that the natural intellect has come in front of the Christianity when the sun of grace has become dark: Certainly now can be seen those signs of the last times in the sun, when the world is in such spiritual darkness, that not many can see where the road goes to Heaven.

Certainly many a night-watcher tries to travel to eternity by moonlight, or by the wisdom of the intellect, but how can he get there when he cannot see by moonlight the narrow way which leads to life. But that is even worse when the moon becomes red, or the natural intellect becomes so darkened, that a person does not understand how he should arrange his life so as to get along in this world. All do not understand for what reason the moon becomes red. It is from that vapour and that smoke which John saw in the Revelation, rising from the well of the abyss from which the sun becomes dark. This black smoke is that which ri-

ses from the well of the abyss and makes the moon red, that people can no longer see how they can get along in this world. The vapour of sin rises from the well of the deep, that is from the deepest wisdom of the world, and confuses the natural reason that the natural government can no longer understand how to keep under control the blind and unruly people.

Then pride, drinking, greed, adultery, finery, cursing and discontent make the subjects rise in rebellion; the people in one country begin to fight among themselves as it now happens in the world. Then there is fault in the natural intellect when the people of one country cannot remain together and the natural government is not able to rule the people. Those totally pagan people have a better intellect who obey their natural government and understand it to be necessary that the natural government has to have subjects, otherwise the whole country will fall apart and come to naught.

But not only does natural pride confuse the natural intellect but also fornication makes the intellect so blind that the whore does not understand that because of fornication distress will come upon her in the end; the lust for drunkenness also makes man's intellect so blind that the drunkard does not understand that he will become poor through drunkenness, Look! This is the smoke that rises from the well of the abyss namely the sinful lusts and desires which come from the flesh where the devil is the ruler; the well of the abyss is the worldly wisdom which makes such sins allowable. The moon or

the natural intellect becomes so darkened that man does not understand how he should live so that he could get along in this world. But the signs of the last times appear yet in the stars.

In the Revelation, John saw many stars fall from heaven onto the earth and he also saw the great dragon draw down with his tail a third part of the stars from heaven upon the earth. By the stars are meant the spiritual teachers who show the sinners where the road leads to heaven. Since the sun does not shine and the moon does not give light to one lonely journeyman, how can he travel unless there be a star on the horizon that would show him the course so he could correct his traveling so that he would not be totally lost in this dark world. It would be better that at least one star could be seen. But if the stars fall from heaven onto the earth, if the spiritual teachers become worldly, that they begin to follow after the vanity of the world, where can the hearers of the word find guidance? If his doctrine would still be somewhat or as according to the word of God but his life would war against that doctrine, then the hearers of the word would live according to the example of the teacher — they would be godly in the church and ungodly behind the church — they would sit peacefully in the church and fight behind the church — they would bless in the church and curse behind the church — they would weep in the church and laugh behind the church and say “the minister does likewise so it must be right,” Such life comes into the congregation when the spiritual teachers become worldly — that is the stars

fall from heaven. It is lamentable that the great dragon has begun to draw down from heaven on to the earth already in the beginning of Christendom. During the time of Luther he has so entirely drew down the stars from heaven onto the earth. Not even now are many stars in the heaven that have not fallen onto the earth. Only a few stars can be seen on the horizon which a lonely journeyman can see with a telescope. If those few stars fall upon the earth, where must you find guidance you poor journeymen who travel in solitude seeking in the darkness for some sign in the heaven that would show you the way to Bethlehem.

Pray to the great King of heaven, you journeymen to heaven. Sigh you solitary traveler and pray that those few stars that can be seen on the horizon — that those few stars, I say — would not fall upon the earth and you would then be in total darkness and would be entirely lost from the way of salvation! Pray you solitary traveler and you poor Journeyman so that the dragon with his tail would not be able to draw down those few stars from heaven onto the earth, who now show you the way to salvation! Hear Thou Father of Light the sighs of the poor journeyman! Our Father which art in the heavens.

Gospel Luke 21:25

According to the Holy Gospel we must through the grace of God consider:

1. What are the signs of the last times?

2. What are the prominent sins of that time of which Christians should take heed?

The Saviour says that the signs must appear in the sun, moon, and the stars. As it was before the destruction of Jerusalem many signs appeared in the heavens. So it must actually be the signs in the sun, moon, and stars will be visible to the natural eyes and also the signs will be visible to the children of the world. It happens as a warning to them though they do not make a repentance even then. A great fear comes to the sorrowless as the Saviour testifies "Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth," Nevertheless the hardened people will not become penitent and make a repentance though they fear that coming wrath and a greater distress will be placed upon them. John saw in the Revelation how they gnashed their teeth because of pain but all the same they blasphemed their Creator, Wherefore we do not doubt that these signs in the sun, moon, and stars will become visible to the eyes of the sorrowless. But a Christian who takes heed of the signs of the times will see the signs for a time before they come before the eyes of the sorrowless. He can see the sun become darkened when the light of Christianity is extinguishing; he can see how the moon goes before the sun when the intellect goes before Christianity. Then the intellect will extinguish the sun of grace when the substance of living Christianity has ceased, when the consciousness of sin has ceased and the feelings of grace have ceased, temptations have ceased, fear

and doubts have ceased. Then dead faith will become strengthened, a sinner will begin to commit sin on grace and the intellect makes sin customary, drunkenness becomes allowable, fornication becomes allowable, greed becomes allowable, cursing becomes allowable, and even fighting becomes allowable. The intellect expounds Scripture so that the home sins of old Adam become allowable. Just the same such a slave of sin can believe that the door of grace is open to him and he will become terribly angry when he is reproved for sin. And this blind wretch does not know it to be a sin that he hates and persecutes Christians who encourage him to repentance. The devil has so reversed the eyes of the blind wretch that he imagines the he is doing God a service when he persecutes the Christians. Is not this sign in the sun and the moon a horrifying sign when not only the priests in the faith of the pope but also those who confess the Lutheran faith with their mouth bear spiritual hatred to the children of God and pervert the Scriptures when they expound them with a blind intellect so that the persecuting of Christians not only becomes allowable but also a demand of the conscience. The conscience demands that the children of the world would persecute Christians and they do not find peace in their conscience until they suck the blood of Christians, So dark the sun of Christianity becomes when the moon or natural intellect goes before the sun. For what reason does the sun of grace often become so dark for a Christian? Does not the black and dark moon or the blind intellect cover the

sun of grace so that the sun would not begin to shine into the soul of a penitent sinner? When the moon goes before the sun, then darkness comes upon the earth from the sixth hour "till the ninth hour. The Saviour was in darkness for three hours and at the ninth hour He cried, "Eli Eli lama sabachthani," Because that darkness which had covered the face of the Father from the eyes of the only Son, such great agony came to the Saviour because of the ungodly children who let the blood flow from the veins of the heavenly Parent and cried out for the punishment of God to fall upon them, that He had to cry and lament that God the Father had forsaken Him into the care of the prince of darkness and the blood hounds. And so must also a Christian cry and lament that God has forsaken him into the care of the prince of darkness when great darkness comes upon him. But God has not forsaken you forever, but only for one moment until you begin to cry, Eli Eli lama sabachthani. Behold! Such signs are visible in the sun, that the sun has become dark and black as if the soot-devil would have taken soot from hell or the cabin of the abyss and painted the bright sun black and so has the moon become red from the smoke that rises from the well of the abyss.

The natural intellect is black and dark of itself. As the moon receives its light from the sun since it has no light of its own, so also the dark intellect of man receives some light from the effects of the Holy Spirit which are felt in the heart. But what kind of enlightenment can that person's intellect receive in whose heart the spirit of the devil af-

fects? In such a heart the intellect of man receives that enlightenment that this light which has now made its appearance is nothing else but the devil's fishing fire and that the Christianity is one wild disease. The intellect also receives light from the liver and spleen where the devil of honor and self-righteousness has prepared itself an abode. The intellect also receives enlightenment from the gall where the devil of hatred dwells and in the stomach where the devil of greed lives. All these angels of the devil give the intellect the enlightenment that Christianity is only one extraordinary witchcraft, Then the moon becomes red from the smoke that rises from the well of the deep. Natural intellect "becomes so "blind from the lusts and desires of the flesh which rise up from the liver, spleen, and stomach that adultery changes into love, drunkenness changes into medication, greed changes into an acceptable livelihood, hate changes into a seal in behalf of the truth, finery changes into raiment to protect the body, and a shameful life changes to honor. Now since the devil has reversed the eyes of the blind wretch by the lusts and desires of the flesh then the intellect begins to see that all sins are allowable then the moon has become red. Such signs are seen in this moon that the children of the world keep all sin allowable such as drunkenness, fornication, small thefts, cursing, finery, greed, pride, fighting, deception and others that are similar, even yet worldly honor of which no one has known before who has given that to man. All have been in that faith before that God has given man honor; no one

has guessed that it is the devil that has given man honor.

Behold! Such signs are now in the sun and the moon, that every Christian who can see these signs can certainly think the signs of the last times are now in the world, namely, the sun is dark, that is, the light of Christianity has gone out and the moon has become red, that is, the natural intellect has become confused so that the kings and chief men of the country do not understand anymore how they should rule the vulgar and radical people so the world would stay together. Of the stars there is not much knowledge, are there anymore of them in the heavens, none have been seen for a long time. Without a doubt the dragon has drawn them with his tail and dropped them, to the earth, when it is a wonder that there are a few stars in heaven, from which one poor journeyman and lone traveler can get some guidance only that much so he can see in which way he should travel. But those few stars which are seen on the horizon are so dim because of the smoke that rises from the well of the abyss, so that the; travelers which travel land and sea must look with a telescope to see them. And when such a star appears which is befitting for a guide for the poor and tired journeymen who are; traveling to eternity, then the wise of the world say, "The devil's comet can now be seen!" The reverser of the Byes has reversed their eyes. When they see those bottles of liquor which are shaken well, then they become elated and say, "It is good liquor." But when they see one star which leads the travelers to Bethlehem, then they say,

"It is the comet of the devil." John saw the dragon draw a third part of the stars from heaven unto the earth with his tail but now the dragon has taken care of almost all the stars from heaven and for that reason the world has become so black and dark that there are not many souls who can see where the road leads to heaven. The owls with large eyes in their skull love darkness and hate the light and for that reason will not receive correction from the stars of heaven. Screaching they fly around the houses in the dark. The magpies and forest devils also fly around in the dark but when daylight comes they flee away. Such signs can be seen in the heavens. The sun has become dark and there are only a few places in the world where one small edge of the sun can be seen. And the moon has become red from the smoke that rises from the well of the abyss; the dragon draws down a third part of the stars of heaven onto the earth. If there does not come some kind of a change in the faith and life of the people of the world — the world will soon fall apart,

2. When the Saviour speaks in the beginning of this gospel of the signs of the last times, He warns His disciples of those sins which are especially ruling then when the signs of the last times begin to appear, "And take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares!" We see that over-eating and drunkenness are ruling sins in the world, the lords of the world go ahead with a good example and the peasants follow after. When a

person is born, they serve the god of the belly, when someone dies, then they again serve the same god of the belly; namedays and birthdays are kept holy for the pleasure of the god of the belly. Sundays are made into feast days, drinking days, days of pleasure, days of cursing, days of fighting. And it seems like the god of the belly gets the most honor and service by the slaves of the world. Has God then created man to eat and to excrete, to drink and to fight, to whore and to steal? For what purpose is man created into this world? The lords of the world anoint their throats with flowing devil's dung and the peasants follow their example, So are they living now in the world and with that life they imagine they are acceptable to God. If some Christian comes to rebuke the children of the world of such a life, they become angry and gnash their teeth; they cannot get peace of conscience before they can make sausages from the blood of Christians. But they cannot see to make sausages before they fetch fire from hell. It can also be surmised that from that kind of a life follows sorrow over the belly; when they have served the god of the belly well, all thoughts go into the same place. So that they would have sufficient to eat and drink well, many have to steal crown; others take from the poor and give to the rich. Some try to get rich through the liquor trade and others through crookedness.

After such a life to some comes poverty, especially to the drunkards whores and thieves, who the devil has made poor, and others who the devil has made rich, accumulate much worldly

goods. And after such crooked and ungodly life, they imagine they are ready to step into the kingdom of heaven without penitence, without repentance, without faith and without love. So should it not be necessary for a Christian to beware of over-eating, drunkenness, and cares of natural living, so that day of the Lord would not come too suddenly upon him. So we hope that those few souls, who formerly have lived the same kind of a life which the world lives, but have through the grace of God seen where such a life will lead one, must from now on watch and pray that great Cross-bearer, that He would protect them from such a life. Former drunkards, former wine-merchants, former whores and former thieves, remember without a doubt what their former life was like, as Paul writes to the Christians, "Remember, that ye were in times past Gentiles." Remember that formerly you lived as these pagans who screech here around the Church. But now you see and feel In your hearts, that grace of the great God of Israel, through who you have been pulled like burning coals from hell, from darkness into light, from under Satan's power received unto God. Now you see, you awakened and graced souls, what a bottomless pit the enemy prepared for you. How you see what an unspeakable joy awaits you if you are faithful in your most precious faith until the end. Be therefore watchful and ready praying that that great Cross-bearer who has begun the good work in you, would help you in the last struggle of life, and when these natural eyes close, that the

bright eyes would open, which see God and all the holy angels. Amen

Third Sunday in Advent Sermon A.

“What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out to see?” Matthew 11:7-8.

The Saviour put this kind of a question to that blind people who followed Him because of curiosity. These blind people had, namely, gone into the wilderness to see John who preached of penitence and repentance. And the Saviour now asked the people, “What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?” Do you imagine that John is as soft as a twig which sways here and there from the wind of the world; do you imagine that John is a wavering man whose mind changes according to the wind of the world? Do you imagine that John bends as a reed bends before the wind of the world? Do you imagine that John humbles and bows himself before the world, that he serves the world’s lords or preaches to the world to please the mind? John the Baptist was such a man who dared to speak the truth to the world. He was as firm as a tree against the world; he dared to say to the world’s lords: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” And because of that barking all meek whores became angry at him and put him into prison. But the meek whore at whom he had barked did not get peace of conscience before she got John’s head on a charger. Only then did this meek whore get peace of

conscience, when she got to cut off John’s head. And this same nature the world’s whores are seen to have even now. They become terribly angry if someone is bold to bark at them as virtuous whores, and threaten to question their honor. The devil has given them such great honor that they do not care to hear the name whore; but if they are barked at as a whore, the seeds of the serpent especially begin to squirm at the bottom of the heart. But the blind wretches do not know who has given them honor. Virtuous whores imagine that God has given them honor; they do not understand that the world and the devil have given them honor. The Saviour has said, “How can you give honor to God, who receive honor from one another?” But that royal harlot who John barked at had such great honor that she did not receive peace of conscience from the devil before she got to cut the neck of John. But when he began to bark at the world’s lords as a v generation of vipers, then the world’s lords became terribly angry and said, “That man has a devil,” and so they say even now. When some awakened person barks at the world’s respectable people as whores and thieves, then the world’s people say, “That man has a devil, the devil of pride has risen to his head.” Even with his life John made the world’s lords angry: he had given the people a bad example when he did not live so sumptuously as other world’s lords. It also offended the liquor merchants that John did not put liquor into his mouth. The Saviour Himself spoke of John’s manner of life, and said to the Jews, “For John came neither eating

nor drinking, and you say, He hath a devil." Most likely the liquor merchants become angry at such a man who does not taste liquor; such a non-drinking man spoils their liquor business. Namely, if the country begins to follow his example, then the liquor business will end; and through that great misfortune will come to the liquor merchants and liquor distillers; first, because no one will buy devil's dung from them, and second, people will not allow themselves to be deceived by the liquor merchants because liquor, this intoxicating urine, has not confused the mind. There were still other reasons why the fine and meek whores had become angry at John. He had such poor clothing, namely one coarse shirt of camel hair. If people would now begin to follow his example, how would it then go for the world's meek whores who wear a cambric shirt, that it would be soft for the whorebucks when they come to their side. And how would it go for the world's merchants who take a large gain from all kinds of finery; how can they keep weddings and drink punch? If the country would take an example from John and throw away finery, then distress would come to the world's merchants; they would have to bring salt to the market, which are heavy goods to carry and from which does not come such a great gain that it would pay to build handsome mansions and to arrange guest banquets, although there is by no means a shortage of salt here. I guess that the peasants have during the last years bought so much salt that it does not lack even if they give salt to the lords of the world, too. Because of

all this barking, and because of disregarding the world, the high lords of the world and the meek whores, and the liquor merchants have got angry to John, but they will indeed not get any peace of conscience before they get opportunity to cut off his neck. — However, John was so stiff against the world as a crowbar, and so unyielding that he did not leave the lords of the world in peace, but salted them strongly, because he saw that they were decaying in adultery, laziness, drunkenness [and] greediness. That is why the Saviour said to the people who had gone into the wilderness to see the man, about whom the lords of the world had said that he has a devil: What went you out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? Was it that kind of a man you went to see, whose mind bows by the wind of the world? Or what did you go to see? Was it a man who wears soft clothes. Was it such a high lord of the world that you went to see? Or what did you go to see? Did you go to see a Prophet? I say unto you, he is higher than a prophet, because this is the one, about whom it is written, "For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." We hear from these words that John the Baptist is Lord's angel who builds the road through which Lord Jesus can enter into the hearts of men. — If only Lord Jesus would now give him power to build this road so that the Lord of Glory would have opportunity to go forward. This road is namely totally destroyed by snowstorms and st-

rong winds. While the builder of the road comes and begins to build the road for the Lord, he must walk in deep snow where only the footprints of the wolf are visible. Indeed we have that hope and that firm confidence to God that the road will be opened as long as the builder of the road digs snow with the iron spade and pries up all stones of offence with the crowbar of truth, so that the Lord of Glory gets opportunity to walk from above downwards, from the North to the South and from the East to the West. Pray the great Cross-bearer, All you poor and tired travellers who sit on the road and wait for the Lord of Glory, that He would give power and strength to chop, dig, pry, roll, grub, wrest and lift stumps, bushes, roots, rocks, trees and snow banks, that the Lord of Glory could travel through, and that the poor and weary travelers who sit upon the road and await the Lord of Glory, could with Him be able to travel to eternity. Hear, you praised King of Glory, the sigh of the poor and weary travelers. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 11.

We hear from the above read gospel that John the Baptist in prison had sent two disciples to ask Jesus, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" This question did not come because of John's own unbelief, for John had received such an assurance from above that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Saviour that was to come; but John's own disciples surmised that: was he the one that should come, or was He the Saviour of Whom

so much was spoken in the Scriptures. The Saviour commanded them to say to John what they had seen and heard: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, ... and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." With the guidance of these words at this time, we must also ask those who doubt, is this Christianity right which has now appeared in these places, or must we wait for another. What are the signs which testify that this Christianity is right? Yes, one sign is that the blind receive their sight; the second sign is that the lame walk; the third sign is that the lepers are cleansed; the fourth sign is that the dead are raised up; and the fifth sign is that the gospel is preached to the poor. We know that there are many who doubt if this Christianity is right. Not only the Pharisees, who see many faults in the lives of the Christians as they then saw many faults in the Saviour's life, but the disciples of John, who have not yet separated from John although he has wished that they should leave him and go unto the Saviour Jesus, are still wondering; is this the one that is to come? For the strengthening of their faith who are wondering if this Christianity is right, they are commanded to look upon those powerful works which have happened.

First: The blind receive their sight. It is not exactly written how many they are who are born blind; but we know that they are a great group who have formerly travelled in blindness 20, 30, 40, 50 and 60 years, and now they see. While they were blind they travelled

rashly toward the eternity. But at that time they travelled on the broad road of the abyss, because they did not see where the road which leads to heaven was. How can a blind one see the narrow road that leads into the life? He travels along the broad road that the whole County walks on. That is the road which the devils angels have built for the god of this world. But the wretched blind one does not see the narrow road that leads into the life. Nobody has asked each other during the time of blindness and darkness: Do you know where the road into heaven can be found? All of them have namely travelled the same road. And still today we hear that the blind ones believe that all people will come into the same place. But those few souls who have received their sight by the power of the Saviour can now say like the man who was born blind, but by the power of the Saviour received his sight: One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. This is now one sign for those who doubt about this doctrine, if it may be right.

The second sign is this: The halting walk. Even if the blind one's eyes are opened so that he sees the road to heaven, thereof does not yet follow that he has powers to walk along that road, because he is lame and crippled. Many people have open eyes but they lack power to walk because their legs stiffen. That is why they sit down on the road and stay there. They do see how others pass by them but they have not power to follow them. These tired travellers are sitting on the road and they cry to those who pass by! Do not leave us! But they answer: You are lame and

crippled, that is why you are not able to walk on the road of life. Why did you not creep to the mercy seat? Why don't you cry with so strong voice in the depth that your voice will be heard in heaven: Merciful Lord Jesus, heal our feet, that we, too, should be able to follow the others before the snowstorm and severe wind take the road away, before darkness overtakes you. Crawl, you lame and maimed one, crawl before the mercy seat and pray that great Crossbearer that He would heal your legs, for He has said, "The lame walk." And through the prophet He says, "The lame leap as an hart." And Peter and John healed one beggar, who had been lame for many tens of years. This should be a sign to those who doubt whether this change could be right or wrong.

The third sign is that the lepers are cleansed, although many of the lepers are yet uncleansed; but this we know for sure, that ten have been cleansed. When Jesus said to them, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." and as they went, they were cleansed; and the ten cleansed have also showed themselves to the priest and have received a testimony from him, as Moses has commanded them. But worse than that, not all cleansed souls have come back to thank Jesus for His great grace, for the Saviour asks, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" Undoubtedly they have become attached to the world, and only one stranger who is the poorest of all has come back to thank Jesus. Where are the nine? Where are you, you cleansed souls? Jesus longs for you, it is sad for Him to see

that you are so unthankful, that because of love of the world you do not have time to come back from the world to thank Him for all of His good works. Remember anyway that you were once cleansed, and it should be a sign for those who doubt if this doctrine is right or not.

The fourth sign is that the dead are raised up, although many are still lying as dead and as a carcass and are already rotting, and worms? also gnaw at them, the worms who are called the dogs of hades; and some blind wretches have tried to kill those worms with devil's dung, but they have not yet died, although the wretches themselves lie dead and as a carcass. Nevertheless many a dead carcass has been lifted up from the grave of dead faith and has become alive through the power of Jesus; and those few souls who have become alive follow Jesus on the road of life. One is Lazarus who had lain in the grave for four days, a second is the son of the widow of Nain, who was carried out dead, the third is the daughter of a ruler in Capernaum, of whom the Saviour said, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." Besides are those who were raised up from their graves through the death of Jesus, and they had for a long time lain in their graves. But the leaders of natural meekness, Joseph and Nicodemus, have not become alive, for they have put Jesus' body into the grave of dead faith, and the world's lords, the enemies of Jesus' cross, have placed a lock upon the grave so that His disciples could not steal Him. And nevertheless He rose up although the soldiers tried to watch the tomb. But the soldiers became power-

less when the Lord's angel stepped down from heaven and rolled the stone from the door of the tomb. This has also happened for a sign to those who doubt whether this could be the right doctrine. Try, try, you world's soldiers, to keep the body of Jesus in the grave of dead faith! Nevertheless you are not able. You become dead as soon as the Lord's angel steps down from heaven and rolls the stone from the door of the tomb; in the end you must lie that the disciples have stolen Him.

The fifth sign is that the Gospel is preached to the poor. Before the gospel has been preached to the rich, but now the gospel is preached to the poor. Truly before these times there were not many poor; people have been richer before, as long as they were well able to steal. But now many poor have come, then when the master of the house has gotten such dogs who bark at thieves, that they are no longer able to steal. Now the thieves have become poor because the dogs of hades bark so loud that the thieves must bring back the stolen goods. I do not know what sorcerer has incited the earthlings after those thieves, that they must reveal to the master what they have stolen before and owned with crookedness. All liquor merchants consider that strange, especially they who are accustomed to putting water into the wine, although their goods are not drunk any more because such good taste has come to the drunkards that they will not take into their mouths anything but pure and unmixed wine. Now the former thieves have become so poor that they do not have much of anything to put into the mouth.

And to those poor, the gospel is preached. Surely the rich would wish that the gospel would be preached to them also; but when we know in what way they have prospered, namely by stealing, then we wish that they would first bring back all they have stolen. We wish that they would rightly become poor, wretched, naked, down pressed, broken and distressed; only then will the gospel be preached to them. But to those who are not thirsty, salt is given that thirst would come to them; to those who are not beggars, twigs are given, because they beg although there is no distress. Here are many of those hypocrites who make themselves poor and troubled, although the stores are full of stolen goods; and such want that the gospel should be preached to them. But to such goats, twigs should be given to chew.

Therefore five signs have been brought forth, which testify to those who doubt if this is that which was to come or should we wait for another; five signs of which the doubting ones can decide if this is the right Christianity or must they wait for another. We know that not all hold this Christianity to be right: the Pharisees criticized that it is entirely wrong; the Sadducees criticized that the raising up of the dead is spoken there; the scribes criticized that therein is lack of love; the pagans imagine that it is a wild disease; Nicodemus also wonders that a person must be born again. But the blind who now see, the lame who now walk, the dead who now live, the lepers who have now been cleansed, and the poor to whom the gospel is now preached, they know

that this is a right doctrine, and yet pray that the Saviour's doctrine would always spread, that the lame, blind, and maimed would always come unto Him, that the lepers would be cleansed, and that the dead would be awakened to hear the Lord's voice; they pray that the poor, troubled, naked, sorrowful, weeping, hungering, thirsting, miserable, and down-pressed ones could hear that gospel every day, which is preached to the poor. Amen.

Third Sunday in Advent Sermon B.

The Saviour said to the Jews: "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." Matthew 21:32

Thus spoke the Saviour to the chief priests and scribes when they came to ask him by whose power He had begun to teach people and do miracles, and by whose permission He began to overturn the tables of the liquor merchants. The chief priests and the scribes wanted to know who had given Him permission to so teach the people contrary to the other priests. Then again He returned the question of the chief priests, if the baptism of John had come from God or from men. But the chief priests did not want to say that the baptism of John was of men or a concoction of ones own intellect, for the priests knew that the people believed John's baptism to have come from God; but the priests did not believe that. Because now the priests surmised among themselves

how they should answer that they would not come into some entanglement of the intellect, they said among themselves: "If we shall say, from heaven; He will say unto us, why did ye not then believe him? But if we say, of men; we fear the people." At last they had to say, "We cannot tell." So say also the Pharisees of this time when such a question is placed before them, of which there would be a fear that they would become entangled according to intellect if they would answer wrong: so they put themselves into ignorance and say: "We do not know." And with that cloak of ignorance they imagine that they will become free of all responsibility. But the Saviour asked them with that intention that they would entangle themselves, for the Saviour well knew that the chief priests did not hold John to be a right teacher, but a false prophet. And so it would go even now if John would rise up and begin to preach as he then preached: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" It would go so, that all scribes and Pharisees would begin to hate him and says, "This is none other than some false prophet and wild spirit who barks at respectable people as a generation of vipers." If yet some Nazarene would ask the Pharisees, "Was the baptism of John from heaven?", then they would no doubt answer, "We do not know", or they would go out from that church where such is preached that people are a generation of vipers. They would yet say, "We have not lived in such a manner that a single priest or false prophet needs to come to bark at us." And the

Pharisees of this time would become even more angry if the Nazarene would say to them: "John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him." Thus say the Pharisees of this time, "Publicans and harlots!" That is, custom hounds and whores; they quite easily believe upon him. If the Nazarene would yet say to them: "Although you see how publicans and harlots believe John, you nevertheless have not made repentance, that you would have believed him."

Truly the scribes and Pharisees of this time have seen how publicans and harlots have believed that the baptism and doctrine of John are from heaven, and they have also seen how whores and thieves have made repentance. They have seen how devil's dung has flowed unto the ground, of which remorse has come to the liquor merchants and horror has come to the drunkards; for if devil's dung had not flowed unto the ground, remorse would not have come to liquor merchants; if devil's dung would not have flowed to the ground, it would not have become a horror to the drunkards. But surely, for that reason, the greater liquor merchants bear hatred in their hearts, and threaten to kill that wild spirit and false prophet who first began to call God's grain devil's dung.

Nevertheless this same man is still living and intends to still call God's grain devil's dung, though it is surely one great and abominable sin that a person must spoil God's grain, that it changes even into devil's dung. Not a single one in the thousand years before would

have believed that God's grain should turn into devil's dung, but nevertheless it has so happened. But cursed be everyone who changes God's grain into devil's dung; and cursed be everyone who puts devil's dung into his mouth, for the evil spirit smells in everyone who puts devil's dung into his mouth. But the greater liquor merchants do not therefore cease transporting devil's dung, although remorse has come to them because devil's dung has flowed to the ground. Nor do the greater merchants yet cease drinking that flowing and cooked devil's dung, although some drunkards have become horrified that such grain has flowed to the ground. Meek whores have also seen how public whores have begun to make repentance when John began to bark at them; but meek whores do not yet believe that the baptism of John is from heaven, for meek whores follow the example of that meek harlot who did not get peace of conscience before John's head was cut off. Why was the heart not roasted? I have heard one meek whore mentioned who did not get peace of conscience before she got the parent's heart to roast upon coals. Honest thieves have also seen how some known thieves have had to return the stolen goods for the reason that one great sorcerer has placed or raised earthlings upon them. But honest thieves do not yet believe that the earthlings will be raised upon them after death unless here there comes a haste to return the stolen goods. Now truly all sorrowless and thieves of grace have seen how whores and thieves, as also drunkards and liquor merchants, have

made penitence and repentance, but they do not yet believe that this baptism of John is from God. No doubt they want to see signs from heaven before they believe. Only then might they believe, if they would see fire and brimstone raining from heaven.

But nevertheless our belief is this, that although meek whores ask for John's head upon a charger, nevertheless John must receive joy even in prison from that, that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the dead are raised up by the power of Jesus; and John can, even in prison, rejoice that his troubles have not gone in vain, when sinners come unto Jesus and become healed by His mercy. So go now, blind wretches, to the eye doctor and buy eye salve. And you lame who have halted on both sides until this day, go unto Jesus that He would heal your legs. You lepers, if you wish to become cleansed, then go now to the Great Healer, that you would become cleansed. And you dead wretches who have died so young and yet lie in the snare of dead faith, do you wish to hear the Lord's voice before the worms eat you? Rise up from your graves before a rock if placed at the door of the grave and covered with earth. Hear, merciful Lord Jesus, the voice of the blind, lame, and lepers when they cry unto Thee. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 11: 2

We hear from our Holy Gospel that John the Baptist was in prison, into which he had been cast because of that meek harlot who did not get peace, of

conscience before John's head was cut off. In that prison he sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" This question is now hoard thus: "Is this Christianity right, or must we wait for another?" Many a sorrowless one has already, for a long time, wanted to destroy this Christianity, that it is not right. Jews do not want to confess this Christianity to be right. Liquor merchants have become terribly angry at this Christianity when their goods are not acceptable any longer. Merchants do not like this Christianity at all, for they complain very much that God's grain is called "devil's dung". Meek whores have become so very angry at this Christianity that they want to behead that man who they believe is the cause of this kind of wildness, for meek whores are now barked at in every place; they cannot lie in the bed of adultery in peace any more. Honest thieves also complain that this Christianity is not right when a haste to return stolen goods has come to some thieves. No doubt some sorcerer has raised up earthlings upon them, that they must bring the stolen goods back. But especially grace thieves, or Pharisees of this time, and also scribes, or lords of this world, have become angry at this Christianity, for grace thieves do not want to return stolen goods which they have stolen from God. When they say, "We have one father, even God", then Christians say, "Ye are of your father the devil"; and then the seeds of the serpent squirm at the bottom of the heart when they are not accepted as Christians. Pharisees see many faults in

the lives of the Christians and therefore they cannot believe that this Christianity is right. The scribes or world's lords complain that Christians do not bow themselves before them, and condemn those also to hell who are supposedly learned and respectable men. The high priests do not hold this Christianity to be right because Christians bark even at them, and demand repentance. When now such men and women, as meek whores, honest thieves, sober drunkards and honorable liquor merchants, do not hold this Christianity to be right, and even then the world's lords and high priests say that this Christianity is one wildness of the devil's spirit, then finally John, who had first begun to bark at people, must begin to halfway doubt if this Christianity is right. He does not, however, doubt for himself, but for the sake of some of his disciples who cannot believe that this Christianity is right. These disciples of John have awakened to that extent from John's law sermons that a sorrow has come over the salvation of the soul, but they have not begun to follow the bloody footsteps of Jesus, nor have they come into the light of the gospel, nor into reconciliation with God. And when self-righteousness has begun to rule them, they attempt to become saved with their own repentance and with the righteousness of the law. And finally they begin to doubt if this Christianity is right, when they themselves have not attained the light of the gospel. Because of them, John had to send those doubting ones to Jesus, that they could hear from His own mouth if He was the one who was to come, that is: is this Christianity

right or must we wait for a better one? Jesus now commanded those doubting disciples of John to say again salutations to John of what they had seen and heard of the powerful works of Jesus. And now it is apparent to all that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the dead are raised up, and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, says Jesus, the Blessed One. I think that most assuredly the disciples of John see all of these miracles taking place, that the spiritually blind have received their sight, and the spiritually lame have begun to walk on the road of life, and the spiritual lepers also become cleansed when they come unto Jesus. So also the spiritually dead are raised up and receive life through the word of Jesus. But the world is offended, however, from the poor form of Jesus, and imagine that He is a Samaritan and that He has a devil. For although they see that a change of life has taken place, and that the common people have begun to follow Jesus, although they see that the gospel is preached to the poor, the poor receive help in behalf of both body and soul, the children of the poor receive teaching and food, so the slaves of the world do not like that at all, for the slaves of the world and the devil say: "He has stripped the congregation naked." Who else has stripped the congregation naked than the devil through his slaves and hired men? The devil has stripped the country naked through the liquor merchants and through the swindlers. Who else has stripped the country than the devil of drunkenness and the devil of adultery, the devil of finery and the devil of

pride? Judas began now to have pity on the troubled and to have sorrow over the poor; only that Judas would not preach into his own purse when he begins to ask, "Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor." Behold, thus preaches Judas when he sees one sorrowful and penitent soul breaking the precious box and pouring the precious spikenard ointment. How is it now, Mary Magdalene? When you, in the simplicity of your heart, want to pour precious spikenard ointment upon the head of Jesus, then Judas comes to persecute your conscience with that reproach, that you have done wrong when you poured the precious spikenard ointment upon the head of Jesus. Judas reproaches you now, Mary Magdalene, that you have wasted the share of the poor when you have poured the precious spikenard ointment upon the head of Jesus. But never mind, you sorrowful woman; pour out the love of your heart toward Jesus; break the box in which you have kept in store the precious spikenard ointment; it has been poured for the burial of Jesus and it may be the last time when you are pouring this precious spikenard ointment upon the head of Jesus when He is yet living, for already the high priests, scribes and also the Pharisees and elders of the people have gathered themselves against Jesus, and against this Christianity, to destroy Him. Therefore, faithful soul, anoint the head of Jesus with precious spikenard ointment before Jesus dies. Soon, soon you can sit upon His grave and shed tears of sorrow and lon-

ging. Do you not see that He is already dying in the hearts of the Christians? Soon only a memory of that thorn crowned King will remain in the minds of the Christians, and then the disciples will begin to say, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." We formerly had the faith that this Christianity is right, but now we have been left as orphans and without faith. Many have already begun to lament that there is no faith, and they, too, who have believed before, complain that there is no faith. How do they have faith whose Saviour has died, whose Redeemer is in the grave? They in whose heart the Saviour has died are no longer able to believe. And if there would still be the right sorrow, if they would weep upon the grave of Jesus, then it is possible that the Crucified One would yet become alive. But because they lament that there is no faith, and there is no sorrow nor longing, how then can He revive any more? But nevertheless this Christianity is surely right, although the slaves of the world say, "It is not right because the priests, scribes, and elders of the people do not consider it to be right." So John tells in the gospel how the world's lords spoke among themselves when they considered this Christianity which has come into the world with Jesus of Nazareth. The world's lords surmise thus: "He has a devil, and He is out of His mind; why do you listen to Him?" But others say thus: "These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" John 10:21

Again John tells, in a different place, what the world's lords surmise

about the Author of this Christianity; they say thus, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." John 7: 48-49

And now you hear what the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and world's lords think about this Christianity which has come into the world through Jesus. They think that it is not right because the chief priests have not believed in it. But this people who do not know the law are accursed. Now do you believe that this . Christianity is right when it has truly happened just as Apostle John has written? For so they preach who do not believe this Christianity to be right, that this people is accursed who do not know the law. From where will the people know what law the lords and the chief priests have when they can so twist the law that one word of the Scripture becomes ridicule when it comes out through the mouth of a Christian? But if the devil's apostles pervert the words of Scripture with a wrong mind, then the Word of God is right. Thus the devil explains the Bible, that it becomes permissible to jump from the roof of the church down to the ground. And do you know what Christianity is right in the world's opinion? Yes, such a Christianity as is now practised in the world, namely in adultery, drunkenness, cursing and fighting behind the church; that is the world's Christianity. They sing hymns in church and adulterous songs behind the church. They sit meekly in church and fight behind the church. They are meek in church and whore behind the church. They drink from the Lord's cup in

church and from the devil's cup they drink behind the church. Such now is the world's Christianity. And such a Christianity the world's lords now consider to be right, and the chief priests highly praise that Christianity which is now practiced in the world. They say to the whores, "dear Christians", and to the liquor merchants, "dear friends of Jesus, surely you will become saved if you live as virtuously as you have lived up to this time." To me, it would be better if the priests would preach to the liquor merchants, "Dear friends of the devil! Drink and fight well, then you will become saved in hell." But now I will end my speech for this time. May God and the Great Cross Bearer, who has sweated and shed His blood in behalf of all, strengthen with His grace those few souls who believe this Christianity to be right and who are endeavoring after this, that they would win the crown of life.

The disciples of John must nevertheless become disciples of Jesus when John's head is cut off because of that meek harlot.

And now, you blind, lame, and leprous ones who have become healed, not through mine, but through the words of Jesus, remember what kind you have been and pray that you will not again become blind, lame, and leprous, that the last would not become worse than the first. Amen!

Fourth Sunday in Advent

(No sermon can be found for the fourth Sunday in Advent so this is printed in place.)

"In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, repent ye for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Matthew 3:1

So John the Baptist preached to the sorrowless people who because of peering came to see that man who had begun to preach in the wilderness. That was the beginning of his sermon, "Repent ye." And from that sermon of repentance some became awakened and began to ask, "what must we do?" But considering how great the numbers were there, certainly not many became awakened. And so it has also happened here although it has now been preached of repentance, however not many have become awakened, because as in John's time the greater part had already hardened, so it is also here. And as in John's time the hardening increased by the hard preaching as also here the hardening has increased. The reason for the hardening is in the Word of God itself, as it is written, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still," and this has come for the fall and rising of many in Israel. In John's time, those who awakened confessed their sins, and so it has also happened here. However, not many have become awakened then, hardly one in a thousand. And from that too the sorrowless have taken for themselves substance for sorrowlessness, when the sorrowless see that not many become awakened, they think that the doctrine cannot possibly be right when so few become awakened. But in that surmising, the sorrowless are greatly deceived, for so it is written in the Word of God that they are few who be-

come saved. Since they who attempt for awhile to get into the strait gate are not able, how then can those who have no intention to make repentance become saved? There are many here who have not yet intended to make repentance, for the reason that they keep such a repentance useless which John meant, where each one himself must confess his sins, for some say, "It is not necessary to cry out to the world," Some do not understand of what a person should begin to make repentance. It can be heard very much from their questions. The soldiers especially asked what they should do, the publicans especially asked what they should do, So it can be heard from the questions of these awakened ones, that they did not understand what each according to his station must do when he must begin to make repentance. And so all newly awakened do, they ask of the disciples what should they do. They know, surely, that there are sins, but they do not understand in what way they should begin to make repentance. When do the sorrowless come to ask of their teachers: "What must I do to become saved?" Yes, they come to the liquor merchant and ask, "What does it cost?" They come to the peddler and ask, "How much does this silk kerchief cost?" They come to the whore and ask, "May I come near you?" Is that a lie? What does your conscience testify, is it a lie? The penitent came to John and asked, "What must we do?", but the sorrowless did not come then, nor even now come to the teachers to ask, "What must we do to become saved?" Only then when death comes, they say, "Get

the priest, death is coming!" And then all the sins are in a pile, all evil deeds unreconciled, all transgressions unforgiven; death is approaching and a great fear comes, but not many have knowledge where they will finally have to live. Only some say, "To hell is the only remedy, it will not become better." Such is the life of the sorrowless and after such a life one terrible death follows. But you heard in what way the awakened came in the time of John; they came to ask of their teachers, "What must we do?" And so have the awakened done even at this time, they have asked of their teachers in what way they should make repentance. The awakened have not dared to rely upon their own wisdom. The awakened have not said as the sorrowless and grace thieves, "Surely we can see for ourselves from the book." Nor has John said as some sorrowless priests say when some awakened one comes to ask something that pertains to spiritual matters; then the sorrowless pastor says, "What foolishness is this?" And some sorrowless pastors say, "Go away from sighing here, some hypocrites," but John counseled the awakened accordingly as each one had need.

Today we must more broadly speak of repentance in accordance with our Holy Text, when we have first prayed that great Healer that He would give us the right enlightenment as to how the true repentance and penitence must take place. Our Father.

The text of the high mass for Rogation Day: Acts 3: 19

“Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out!” With the guidance of this text we must at this moment take notice of how true repentance must take place.

Since the gracious king has chosen such places from the scriptures for substance of consideration, which pertain to repentance, then we conclude from that, that the will of the king is that the subjects should make repentance of all those sins which are practiced in the country of Sweden, as drunkenness, adultery, stealing, cursing, finery, and all other evil habits, because it is not pleasant for the king to hear that all the prisons are becoming filled. The transgressors of the law no more fit into the prisons and it becomes a great expense to the king. The king would surely wish that all people would make repentance and penitence, and for that reason the king has chosen such a place from the scriptures which pertains to repentance for the text for the rogation day.

Therefore the question is this: How should true repentance take place? If we would follow John’s example, how John did with the awakened people. He counseled them to make repentance and to begin to live differently than before, he told them to cease from those sins which they had committed before. He told the publicans to cease from stealing from the government and he told the soldiers to cease from robbing and be satisfied with that wage which they received from the government. And to the common people he said, “He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none.” From these words it sounds as if John was

counseling the awakened only to outward repentance. But we also have the same faith, that whoever does not want to refrain from sin and make repentance of his outward life, he has no desire at all to become saved. As John stressed very much upon the outward repentance, so we also have demanded that the outward repentance in life and works must take place first before the repentance of the heart comes, for the sorrowless person does not see the evil of the heart, but adultery and drunkenness and stealing and cursing he does see, and he can also refrain from these sins if he wants to, for the members of the sorrowless one are not given into Satan’s care, but when he himself willfully gives his members into Satan’s care, then certainly the devil rules the whole person. For that reason John the Baptist has counseled the awakened to outward repentance first, and in that is: First, true confession of sins; Second, being reconciled to one’s neighbor; and Third, ceasing from all willful sins, as for example; away with drunkenness, away with cursing, away with adultery and stealing, away with finery, away with greed and vain honor, away with all willful sins before a change of heart and mind comes about.

But someone says, “If John the Baptist has preached so, Christ has not preached so.” Do you think that Christ has preached in a different way than John? Has Christ said: you can drink and fight Just so you believe, you will surely be saved; you can commit adultery and steal, surely you will be saved just so you believe, Christ said to one whore, “Go and sin no more!” Christ

has not taught so that unrepentant whores and unrepentant thieves will become saved, but he has pronounced a severe judgement to all sorrowless, but to the poor in spirit He has preached the gospel. And when John said, "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," then it was his intention that no one becomes a Christian with that outward repentance, but with the outward repentance a person must prepare himself to receive the kingdom of heaven. And who does not repent, he has no desire to be saved. And now since the king has taken a certain place from the scriptures which is of repentance for a text for the rogation day, then it is truly the king's will and intention that all subjects would repent. But the sorrowless are not desirous of that, for if the king would ask them to drink and steal, whore and steal, that they would go and do willingly. But when the government encourages them to repentance, they do not obey at all, and the greater part postpone that to the last, and when death comes, they say, "Wow it is too late. When we haven't sought it before, it can be left," Only those few souls who have truly awakened make repentance and cry out with a loud voice from the depths to the heights, as David and Mannasseh, they cry out as the children in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" And all the Pharisees become offended with that crying, but the children do not cease crying out, however, although the Pharisees become offended, for they know that they will soon reach the new Jerusalem to cry out Hosanna to the Son of David, there no one will be offended with their

crying. But if these children would not cry out, then the stones would commence to cry out. Amen.

Christmas Day

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Isaiah 9:2

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

The prophet Isaiah has written in the 9th Chapter, 2nd and 6th verses, what he saw happening in the time of the birth of the Savior. There he saw the people walking in spiritual darkness, and the Saviour has afterward said that he who walks in darkness knows not where he goes. That people which prophet Isaiah saw walking in darkness were first, the Jewish people or the nation of Israel who had an outward knowledge of that coming Saviour, but this outward knowledge was only in the brain or skull. They certainly had the Word of God, but this Word of God was only in their memory; no Light or understanding came from it. In their hearts was such an expounder of the Scriptures who expounded all spiritual matters backwards. They understood entirely wrongly what the prophets had written of the coming Saviour. They thought the Saviour would

come as a natural king, who would through warfare get all the pagans in subjection, and rule the world in a visible way. They who read the word of God had such a great spiritual darkness that the devil turned all the letters in reverse. The Jews held themselves to be Christians because of that worship of God which Moses had prepared for them. They had taken the outward signs of grace upon their bodies from circumcision, and ate the lamb of the Passover, but this outward worship of God did not help them since their hearts were unchanged and their everyday life was exactly a paganish life. Greed was their bosom sin, and adultery, but not so much is written of their drunkenness. Now when God's own people were in such great spiritual darkness, although they had the Bible, churches, priests and the outward worship of God, then it can be surmised that the pagans were in still greater spiritual darkness; in the pagan's kingdom there was very black darkness before the Saviour came into the world. Prophet Isaiah saw this spiritual darkness 700 years before, through that spiritual enlightenment which he had received from the Lord. But at the Saviour's time even all the priests were in spiritual darkness. That teacher, who sees the people walking in darkness, is not entirely blind; he has already received some enlightenment from on high. But in the Saviour's time all the priests were so blind that they did not see that the people walked in darkness. But if the priests were then so blind that they did not see that the people walked in darkness, although they had the know-

ledge of the Bible, certainly even now some priests are so blind that they do not see at all that the people walk in darkness. And some priests are so blind that they see light to be darkness and darkness to be light, as the Lord laments through the same prophet Isaiah, "Woe unto them...that put darkness for light, and light for darkness.." But that teacher, who sees the people traveling in darkness, can also see that the people who thus travel in darkness see a great light. This the prophet Isaiah saw in spirit, and he saw also from where the light came to the people who walked in darkness. That light came into the world through the Saviour, for the prophet speaks, in this place of the Saviour's birth when he says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders". So Prophet Isaiah saw that the light came into the world through the Saviour, and the Saviour Himself has said afterward that light came into the world, but the people loved darkness more than light, because their deeds are evil.

Therefore, when the Saviour was born the whole world was in darkness. All the people were sleeping the sleep of sin; there were no others watching except some shepherds who tended their flocks, but it is not written what flock it was which they watched, whether it was a swine herd or a goat herd, or if it was a herd of sheep, but nevertheless they were watching. It is unknown how many shepherds are now watching and tending their flocks; when all others are asleep, the shepherds also want to become sleepy, especially those

shepherds, who have a wolf's coat on, in which they are quite warm enough to sleep comfortably. Those shepherds, who were watching when all other people were asleep, were first able to see that great light of which Prophet Isaiah speaks, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light". But they who lie down see nothing, nor do the blind see anything. Whosoever wants to see that great light must watch as the shepherds in Bethlehem, and whosoever's eyes are opened can see that great light; but the blind do not see the light, nor does a sleeping person see the light. But we know that the magpies and owls hate the light, so also do the earthlings and gnomes; they do not dare to travel on the earth in the time of light. So also the whores and thieves, who do the works of darkness, hate the light. And when the watchers on Zion's wall hope for the day break, then the whores and thieves await that the time of darkness would soon come. But some again are so accustomed to walking in darkness that they do not want to see light; they think that spiritual darkness is light. But when such magpies and owls can see light in the time of darkness, they think that this spiritual light is the devil's torchlight. Some flee quickly from the edge of the light as the large fish, but the fly is so foolish that he flies directly into the flame of the candle and there burns its wings, then it lies on its back and groans. So it happened to Eve — when she wanted to become as wise as God, she became ignorant. And the wise of the world who want to comprehend with the intellect what light is, are just like the fly;

they fly right into the flame of the candle, and there burn their wings and then lie on their backs and squirm.

Since now this spiritual light came into the world, as prophet Isaiah saw in the spirit that a child was born, and a son to us was given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, who is a Wonderful Counselor and the Prince of Peace, then they, who do not hate the light, should pray to that wonderful Counselor, that He would protect us from that spiritual darkness in which the people walked until that time that light came into the world, for they who walk in darkness do not see at all where they are traveling. And those shepherds, who first could see that great light, can certainly proclaim to all what they have seen. We do not have such great light; that light which we have is probably like the smouldering candlewick, but the Lord has said, "...smoking flax shall He not quench..." And Lord Jesus, do not quench the smouldering candlewick before the day dawns and the day star arises. Then that great light can be seen, which all the poor watchers on Zion's wall await and all solitary travelers hope for, to come through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has called us all into the wonderful light.

The Gospel: John 1:1-14

In accordance with what has been said in the forward, we must at this moment consider: How, through the Saviour's birth and coming into the world, the people which sat in darkness saw a great light. The First Consideration: Who hate this light? The Second

Consideration: Who thank God for this light?

May God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has brought this light into the world through His only Son, give His grace that all sleeping ones would awaken to see the light of the world, that the eyes of all the blind would be opened to see light of the world, that all who are in darkness would see this light and that they, who see this light, would always remain in the light, until that time that eternal light comes.

The First Consideration: Who and what kind of living beings are they who hate the light? When the prophet Isaiah says, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" and near it says these remarkable words, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given", then everyone can hear that he speaks of the Saviour's birth. Now everyone who walks in darkness should rejoice over the light, and pray to the Father of Light that he could always walk in the light. But the Saviour Himself has said that the people loved the darkness more than light, for their deeds are evil. Therefore what kind of living beings are they who love the darkness? They are the owls, magpies and forest devils who cannot bear to see the light. The owls are night birds, which fly in the air in the time of darkness and hunt for mice, which they swallow whole with skin and entrails. They have a large throat as Daniel says: "Their throat is an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongue." The owls have large eyes in their skull with which they look backward when they twist their necks

and peer. The owl does not look forward, but peers backward. Such kind are the night birds who love the darkness and hate the light. They also have a terrible voice, like the magpie's voice. The magpies laugh in the darkness and grimace against the light. The magpies cannot bear to see the light, but they flee away from the light into the darkness and live in their dens. So also do the forest devils, who eat flowing devil's dung and curse terribly when some person comes with light into that cave where the forest devils live. The forest devils are also quite the whores, and for that reason hate the light. Namely, we know that whores and thieves cannot stand it that some person comes upon them with a candle when they are whoring and stealing, for adultery and stealing take place in the darkness, and they do not dare to do those deeds of darkness in the light. If a whore is discovered right in her devilishness, then she covers her eyes and imagines that people do not see her. The thieves are in a great hurry if some person comes with a candle upon them when they are stealing. Some thieves paint their faces black so that no one would recognize them if they would be seen, but everyone who sees them guesses that they are thieves, for the thieves go around in the darkness; they do not dare to steal as long as there is light. Some thieves also hate dogs who bark, for they surmise that the master hears when the dogs bark. For that reason it is not good for the thieves to steal as long as the faithful house dog barks. Because of that barking the people of the house awaken and begin to watch their own posses-

sions. Some thieves are so cunning that they entice the house dog with a piece of meat which they carry under their arm, but a faithful house dog does not allow himself to be enticed with a piece of meat, but he barks twice as zealously when the thieves give him a piece of meat.

But they are not only the owls, magpies and forest devils who love the darkness more than light, but also gnomes and earthlings go about in the darkness and hate the light, for their deeds are evil. The gnomes live under the earth and dig the earth with their fingernails, and they imagine they will find a treasure trove there. But when their possessions are beheld in the light, then it can be seen that their treasure trove is nothing more than a charcoal pit. It is said also that the gnomes have children, but when the children are swaddled, they forbid the mark of a cross to be placed on them, for they are the enemies of the cross of Jesus, and therefore the gnomes cannot bear to have the cross placed on the breast. But the gnomes also want to entice living people to them, and it is very dangerous if a living person, who travels in the light, listens to the wildness of the gnomes and follows the daughters of the gnomes under the ground, for the gnomes will no longer allow a person to come back up into the light when they have once consented to it. But if a person does not taste of that food at all, which the daughters of the gnomes offer, then they must allow that person to come out in three days time. The earthlings also hate the light. They go about in the time of darkness scaring living

people and haunting them, but they do not come before the eyes of all, but he who eats well of devil's dung can see them. The earthlings do not dare to come out in the daytime, nor can such a person who goes about in the light see the earthlings very often, for the earthlings do not dare to come near such a person who watches with a candle, but as soon as the candle goes out, the earthlings begin to scratch the walls. Do not put out your candle, you night watchers, but put the candle in a candle stick that it will light the whole house, for the earthlings do not dare to come into that house where the candle is burning. Such are those living beings who love the darkness and hate the light, namely the owls, magpies and forest devils, and also the gnomes and earthlings, of whom the Saviour has said that they love the darkness more than light because their deeds are evil.

The Second Consideration: Let us observe secondly what living beings they are who want to see the light. Prophet Isaiah has spoken of that people who walked in darkness and saw a great light when the Saviour was born into the world. This people has certainly walked in darkness and has not known in what direction they were going, but the same people which thus walked in darkness certainly could see that great light when the Saviour was born. But no others could see this great light except those few souls who were watching, for a sleeping person knows nothing of the light although the sun is shining. What does he see, who is sleeping? He sees nothing more than dreams. But in the night time not many

people are watching. Only those shepherds, of whom it is mentioned in the gospel that they were watching and tending their flocks, could first see that great light when the brightness of the Lord shone around about them, and the angels from heaven came to tell them that the Saviour was born. Assuredly Joseph and Mary were also watching, and those few souls who awaited the redemption of Israel, for example the old Simeon and Anna the prophetess. But all others were sleeping; all the priests were sleeping, all the peasants were sleeping, the whole world was in darkness. But those few souls who were watching could see that great light. But they were afraid at first when the brightness of the Lord shone round about them. However the shepherds went quickly to Bethlehem to see the light of the world, and they proclaimed to all what they had seen and heard of that Child. But Mary preserved those words, pondering them in her heart. Others probably kept the reminiscing of the shepherds as delirium, and so it probably happens even now, that some keep the tidings of the shepherds as foolishness and prattle. They who are sleeping do not hear what the shepherds speak. And without a doubt those few souls who are watching go to Bethlehem to see that heavenly Visitor, who lies in a manger among the animals, for the animals recognize their Creator better than the sorrowless and hardened people, as the Lord says through the prophet Isaiah, "The ox knoweth his owner.." but Israel doth not know the Lord, saith the Lord. Know now your Creator, you ox and

ass, and you chickadees and swallows and nightingales. Behold how beautiful and comely this Child is, who came as a visitor to us, and taught us that we must become child-like before we can enter into the kingdom of heaven. Know your Creator, you crows and ravens. But the crows and ravens certainly do not know Him, nor do the owls and magpies, but only the chickadees and swallows and nightingales, who twitter thanks to the Creator for that light which came into the world. Amen.

Second Christmas Day Sermon A.

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." 1 John 3:15

What John here writes of those who hate their brothers is the everlasting truth, although they who hate their brothers do not feel their hatred when hatred changes to truth. With hatred is understood in this place especially that spiritual hatred, which has been throughout time between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, from that time when Adam's first son Cain slew his brother. They did not have a dispute over temporal things, but then as he who was born after the flesh persecuted him who was born after the spirit, so it happens even now. Cain was, namely, born after the flesh; he was the serpent's seed, he was the first persecutor of Christians, and his descendents are yet living. This persecution of Christians has remained from that time when Cain slew his brother, and it will

remain as long as some Christian is found in the world.

And who are they who especially persecute the Christians? Whores and thieves are the first ones to persecute Christians, then drunkards and whiskey merchants, cursers and fighters, and last, the mouth Christians and the meek ones. All these hate and persecute Christians.

In the Old Testament such people have persecuted prophets, and in the New Testament the same kind of people have persecuted Christians. And all of this hatred and persecution has come from this, that prophets have, on behalf of God, barked at and rebuked the sorrowless for sin. Because of this barking all sorrowless have become angry at the prophets, because of this same barking John the Baptist was killed, and because of this same barking and judging the Saviour also was crucified. And it is not so remarkable that open whores and thieves hate Christians because of barking, but it is more remarkable that virtuous people also become angry at Christians. The high priests, scribes, and pharisees are, in their own mind, virtuous people, but they are the ones who hate the Saviour the worst. And so it is seen even now that priests, scribes and pharisees are the worst ones to persecute Christians. It comes from that, that they understand to fetch light from hell, or to reverse the world's laws so that the law which has been made against the sorrowless comes against the Christians, But the Saviour says to His disciple "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things they will do unto you,

because they have not known the Father, nor me."

Saul in his blindness was zealous in persecuting God's congregation, for he had received that enlightenment from hell that Christians were wild spirits, who supposedly wanted to destroy the faith of Moses, And the sorrowless of this time say that the Christians want to destroy Luther's faith. But those poor wretches do not know what Luther's faith is and from where Luther's faith has had its beginning.

In today's Gospel the Saviour has read a terrible condemnation to those blood worms who have shed the blood of prophets, and that condemnation belongs to all the enemies of Jesus' cross, both the former blood worms as well as those of this time who even now persecute God's congregation and through that show their hatred toward God. Christians can be in agony, fear, and oppression because of those sorrowless ones who hate them because of faith. But Christians have the hope and confidence in God that they will soon leave the persecution of the enemies, when the great Crossbearer comes to judge the world. Then the enemies, scoffers, and opposers of Christians will begin to howl and to gnash their teeth when they can see whom they have pierced. The penitent and believing ones will soon be able to move into the bright air. And as Stephen already here saw the Son of God sitting on the right hand of God, so also all believing ones can soon see the Son of God sitting on the right hand of power. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 23: 24

In today's Gospel, Jesus reproaches the Jews for persecution of prophets and threatens them with a terrible condemnation.

We must behold what a terrible condemnation comes to those Jews who hate and persecute the prophets.

So much had been preached to the Jews of penitence and repentance that they should have already long before repented in sackcloth and ashes, but the Jews became offended and hardened from that preaching of repentance, as also here the sorrowless harden; the more it is preached to them. Hardening has come to the Jews from the sermons of the prophets, John the Baptist, and Saviour. But was it the fault of the prophets and teachers that the Jews hardened? The Jews so imagine that it is the fault of the prophets that they hardened, although the greatest part of the Jews do not recognize their hardening. They imagine that those are false prophets and wild spirits and therefore they must be killed and destroyed; for the Jews have sometimes said thus: "The prophets speak to the wind and they do not have the word of God," And so some Jews say even now: "The Christians come with a curse upon people. They do not speak according to the word of God," From where do the Jews understand the Word of God? They imagine that they see and ask, "Are we blind also?" The devil yet teaches them that they must believe lies. If a poor year comes, then the prophets are blamed for it. If hunger oppresses the people, then the head of the prophets must answer for it. The Jews do not want to confess that they have

merited punishment. And this is now the right reason why the Jews persecute prophets and Christians. The devil has reversed their eyes so that the prophets become false and the Jews true. The Christians change to wild spirits and the sorrowless become Christians.

In this way the prince of the world has given the Jews the right to persecute prophets and hate Christian. This righteous blood has begun to flow from Abel and throughout time has been shed and will be shed even now in the pagans' midst. But this righteous blood must once become burning when the eyes open, although the conscience of the sorrowless and hardened will no longer awaken in the time of grace. So it appears from all of their actions that they will go hardened to hell. So it went for those Jews who hardened during the time of John, Christ, and the apostles. The devil made them so blind that they rose up against the government, for which reason the government punished them terribly. There is a danger that it would go just the same with the Jews of this time. Such signs of the times have already appeared, and if repentance does not come to this hardened people, then it will go amiss. Here they drink, here they curse, here they steal, here they commit adultery, as in Sodom and Gommorah. Here they ridicule the Christians and despise the word and mediums of grace. Hunger and hard times are already beginning to oppress the poorer ones. Is it not therefore apparent that God has intended to pour the vial of His wrath upon the earth? The mockers and opposers of Christians can soon see what will follow their

hardening. All the righteous blood which was shed in the Old Testament, from the blood of righteous Abel even unto the blood of Zechariah the son of Berechiah, came upon the Jews after the Saviour's death, in the destruction of Jerusalem. And the righteous blood which has been shed in the New Testament first by the pagans and after that by the Papists must also be avenged, for the more the Christians are hated and persecuted, the greater becomes hardening in the sorrowless people, who because of this hatred and persecution are given into the care of Satan. Nor do the mockers have it easier, and to the opposers who resist the truth will come the same condemnation.

But the prince of the world would not have such great power to rule the pagans if he did not have power to reverse their eyes so that they see Christianity as wrong and their own sorrowlessness they see as right. The Jews saw seven sins in Christ's life and therefore the Jews could not believe His doctrine to be right. Likewise, they also saw faults in the disciples, therefore the Jews did not believe their doctrine to be right. In these times the sorrowless have the same brightness to see the faults of the Christians. Who has given them such bright eyes to see the faults of the Christians? No one other than the same lawmaster who in Christ's time gave the Jews bright eyes to see His faults. And as long as a sorrowless person sees faults of the Christians, he must remain in his hardening.

So now the world has hated and persecuted prophets, Christ and His disciples since the beginning of the

world, as so will the world hate them as long as the world stands, that the measure of sin would be fulfilled, that all blood worms would be squeezed on the day of visitation. They must finally vomit up all the righteous blood which they have sucked, as it is written in today's Gospel, And the righteous blood which they have sucked must burn their consciences forever.

Stephen was the first Christian in the New Testament whose righteous blood the hardened ones shed. They were so terribly angry at Stephen that they gnashed their teeth and stopped their ears. Do not the sorrowless now understand what a terrible hatred they have toward God, when they see their form in the outcome of the Jews? Can not the sorrowless now surmise that they are enemies of Jesus' cross? It is hidden from their eyes. The Christians surely know that the world cannot be without hatred and persecution, but they also know that the great Hero of faith can so strengthen their faith in that great war and strife that the devil and the world cannot injure their souls, even though the devil's crowd would kill the body. Jesus says to His disciples: "Fear not them which kill the body, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." And do not rejoice over that, that a terrible condemnation will come to those Who persecute you but rejoice over this, that your names are written in the book of life. Amen.

Second Christmas Day Sermon B.

“He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about. He instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.” Thus speaks the Lord in Deuteronomy 32: 10-12.

I found him in a wilderness, in the great desert of tears, namely in Egypt’s heathenish bondage, where Israel had no shelter neither in heaven nor on earth.

There was the great desert of tears, there women and children many times wept under a cruel heathen’s tyranny, for which, as a consequence of their heathenism and ungodliness, they flogged and starved them. These wretches had no refuge anywhere, for then they themselves yet had no knowledge of Israel’s God. Gods word was like an old fable, few read and still fewer understood God’s promises of grace. God had promised them the gracious promise that He in His own time would save them from the great desert of tears and lead them to the land where milk and honey flow. But they had only a dead faith and a vain trust. If someone at that time had complained of his own poor condition, he had, nevertheless, no power to speak to others, he had no strength to lament over this, that the heathens with their ungodly life had oppressed and burdened the children of Israel.

In this misery and terrible great desert of tears, the Lord found you, Israel, and taught you to understand the promises of His promised land, which He had given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. What would have become of you, Israel, if you had died in that heathen land and in that unfortunate condition, wherein you had no knowledge of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but only a dreadful bondage of body and soul.

Without a doubt you remember, Israel, how many times you reproached Moses, who through God’s compelling began to lead you to the land of Canaan. Without a doubt you remember how many times impatience overcame you during your wandering through the wilderness, when you said to Moses, ”Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?” How had it gone with you, Israel, if you had died in the heathen land in your sorrowlessness, as your desire has sometimes been? Would you have ever come to see the land of Canaan, if you had died in that sorrowlessness and heathenism, wherein you had no knowledge of the God of Israel, if He had not, through Moses, taught you to understand that a better land and a better heaven can be found, which the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had promised to the children of Israel who are distressed, penitent, and despised by the heathens, whom the Lord found in the desert, in the waste-howling wilderness?

Now the Lord has taught you these precious promises of grace, which He has given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of that blessed land on the other

side of Jordan where milk and honey flow. Now He has taught you to understand that a better earth and heaven is found beside the river Jordan. You now know, Israel, whither you shall strive, hasten, and long, if you do not tire on the road or begin to murmur against Moses, that in the desert there is not water in every place, neither berries on the trees. The Lord has promised to bear you, Israel, as an eagle bears her young, on her wings. When the eagle has such great love for her young, that she takes her young and bears them on her wings, why then should the Lord not want to bear you, Israel, if you take your refuge in Him and give your body and soul into His care and protection, for He has promised to keep you as the apple of His eye. Remember now, Israel, in what wretched soul condition the Lord found you in the dreadful great valley of tears! You saw neither earth nor heaven, nor did you then yet see the abyss, that you would have avoided it. You knew nothing of that land which is the right fatherland, but only blindness and darkness surrounded you on all sides. There was no other food for the soul than old leaven, devil's dung, and the flesh pots. But then the Lord taught you to understand that there was a better earth and heaven which He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to their seed for an eternal inheritance, and through Moses, began to lead you to the shore of the Red Sea. Then you became distressed and then the Lord took you upon His wings, as an eagle takes her young. In faith you stepped into the Red Sea and there the enemies drowned, who pursued

you, but you arrived on the other side of the Red Sea to sing a hymn of thanks to the Lord. Remember now, Israel, that blessed moment, and listen to what the Shepherd of Israel preaches in today's gospel: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

In the Old Testament the Lord has borne the children of Israel on eagle's wings, but in the New Testament He gathers the children of Israel as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings; but not many have wished to allow themselves to be gathered. The chickens are careless, they do not understand to fear dangerous places, the wretches do not see far, from where the hawk comes, and eagle's young are proud, they trust altogether too soon in their own strength. How is it now with you, you chick, have you now taken your refuge and shelter under the wings of the hen; have you now listened to the calling voice of your parent? Have you all taken heed of the parent's warning cry? Surely the parent anyway sees the hawk from afar off. Gather now under the hen's wings, when she spreads her wings and with a warning cry calls you! Do you hear how the Heavenly Parent even today cries and laments, "How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings?" Pray now, you chickens, that He would gather you all under His wings and take you into His shelter, before the hawk comes and snatches you away! Hear, You Protector of the chick, when the chick cries in the talons

of the hawks Our Father, Which art in Heaven.

Gospel: Matthew 23: 37

We hear from the Holy Gospel which has been read how the Heavenly Parent takes a parable of a hen, who indeed has a parent's heart, and preaches in this way of the hen who gathers her chickens under her wings when a hard storm comes. Now the Heavenly Parent has taken a parable of the hen in order to show how this little bird, whose heart's inclination shows and reveals itself in great love toward her young, gathering them under her wings. So has the Heavenly Parent wanted to gather the children of man under His wings, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but not all wanted to receive this place of shelter. Let us therefore examine the heart of the Heavenly Parent along with the hen's heart and observe First: How the hen gathers her chickens under her wings and Second: How Jesus wants to gather His children under His shelter.

Oh, that all chickens would now gather under His wings! That the hen has a perfect parent's heart is seen from this, that she gathers her chickens under her wings. All men can observe in that, what kind a parent's heart is. Man has through sin become so corrupted that he does not have such a parent's heart, as certain creatures do, not such as the hen who has a pure parent's heart. When the Heavenly Parent wants to show with what kind of love He wants to gather His children under His gracious shelter, He does not say, as in the

Old Testament, "Can a woman reject her child, beloved fruit of the womb, so also to refuse from the child the desire of her heart?" Instead Jesus takes a parable of a hen who has a pure parent's heart. Man's heart is not like a hen's heart. Because of honor many a mother slays her children and casts them into a stone ruin. Because of anger many a parent unmercifully whips his children and some parents because of this same anger disinherit their children. But the hen does not kill her chickens, neither does she in anger whip and slay them, but always with love's difficult and warning cry, she calls and gathers them or brings them up with an apparent instinct of love. With a different cry the hen gathers her chickens to eat, and with a different cry warns them of danger, and with a different cry again calls them to her. The chicks, on the other hand, quickly learn to understand the parent's cries. They understand early what is a cry of love, what is a cry of fear, what is a warning cry, what is a severe cry, what is a gentle cry, and what is a cry of terror.

Parents, do you now see how a senseless creature is a hundred times wiser and more diligent to help and bring up her young than man is, who no longer has a pure parent's heart. If some parent would yet have some substance of inclination left, it still would not be comparable to a hen's heart, in which the indwelling natural instinct is pure.

The devil of honor or the devil of wrath are not in a hen's heart, as is the case with man. When human parents must fetch their children, then is Old

Adam often with them. If the children do shameful deeds, which touch upon the parent's honor, then some parents have no more mercy in the heart. Do you now understand you earthly parents, why the Heavenly Parent can not take example from man, when He wants to make known His love to His children, but He must take example from an unintelligent creature, who has a pure parent's heart? Jesus has said that He wants to gather His children, not as a human parent who gathers her children, but as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings. Thus man no more has a right parent's heart. The hen has a purer parent's heart than man has. Many think that man has a better love toward his children than a hen toward her chickens, but this is not so; the hen has a purer and greater love toward her chickens than man has.

So cold and horrible has man become that he does not have a parent's heart, for we hear in today's gospel that the Heavenly Parent can no more take an example from the heart of man, but only of a creature must He take example, when He wants to show what a true parent's heart is like. Be ashamed now, you parents with intelligence, when senseless creatures have a better and purer parent's heart than you have!

In this way the hen gathers her chickens under her wings. When the hawk is in the sky, then the chickens do not understand to fear it, but the hen gathers her chickens under her wings and carries them under the house. If the hen notices some grains on the ground, she gathers them for her chickens. If some enemy approaches, the hen at

once gives a warning cry and flees with her chickens to a place of shelter. If the hen does not manage to escape, then she gives her life for her chickens.

"Behold the fowls of the air:" says Jesus, "for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them." Behold the fowls of the air, what kind of a pure parent's heart they have! They do not have world's honor as some men do, who murder their children. They do not have Old Adam, with which some parents whip and, through that, harden their children. The birds of heaven do not go before their young with a bad example, as do men. The fowls of the air show us how bad and wretched man has become, and how great love they have, when the Heavenly Parent takes them for an example, and shows how the hen gathers her chickens under her wings when, on the contrary, man is so ugly and entirely corrupted that he does not have a pure parent's heart, although the parent's love should be greater and purer than all other love on earth. The parent's love wants to be mixed with impatience and Old Adam. Even Christian parents are able to feel within themselves, that a parent's heart is no longer so pure as the heart the fowls of the air have, whereby one sees that not a single part in man is pure and faultless, from the top of the head all the way to the heel. Therefore must Peter also say: "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

It is therefore not possible to be saved if the Heavenly Parent is not able to gather us, as a hen gathers her chick-

ens under her wings. We hear Him lament in today's gospel, "How often would I have gathered you together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings?" The chicks let themselves be gathered, the chicks come under the mother's wings when hard frost and storms are in the world. The chicks know that they will not endure elsewhere than under their mother's wings. The wretches have no shelter elsewhere, not in heaven nor on the earth. Have you shelter anywhere else, you chicks, than under the parent's wings, when hard frost, snowstorms and storms come in the world? You do not seem to have so many feathers, you chicks, that you could survive anywhere else than just under the parent's wings.

The Heavenly Parent has wanted to gather your children, you miserable Jerusalem, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not. So must He lament over the sorrowless and hardened people, that they would not. But the chicks nevertheless have wanted to come under the hen's wings. The chicks, which are small, fit under her wings. Do you see now, how the hen calls you? Come under her wings! Now in the world snowstorms and tempests have come, and you do not have feathers that you could survive elsewhere than under her wings.

There you have shelter, you chickens and young swallows, when the cold weather conies. Where have you shelter anywhere else than under the parent's wings? Come quickly, when she wants to gather you, for now are frost and storms prevailing in the world. Now the spirit, who has power

in the wind, has raised a severe storm in the world. Now the chickens and young swallows have shelter nowhere else at all, than just under the parent's wings, to where they must flee. There you have warmth, there you have shelter. Come, therefore, you chicks, when you hear how the dear Parent, who yet has a pure parent's heart, calls you with a sweet voice! With a warning and an earnest cry, He wants to gather you under His wings, until that time that you grow better wings, so that you will be able to leave from this cold weather to a warmer climate; where the sun shines overhead, where there are neither wars nor tempests nor frost, as there are here. There you can sit on the branches of the tree of life, singing and twittering songs of praise to the Great Creator, Who has given you life. Amen. Hallelujah.

First Sunday after Christmas Evening Sermon, 1855

"I have gotten a man from the Lord." Genesis 4:1

Thus said Adam's wife Eve when she gave birth to her first son, for she thought that this was now that seed of the woman which should bruise the head of the serpent. But Eve began to preach of the Saviour too soon. Although Eve now had believed the promises of God of the coming Saviour, this faith of Eve's was partly from that, that she had received the gracious promise from God's own mouth, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head

of the serpent. Eve's faith came partly from that pain which she had to suffer in giving birth, as the faith of many women is strengthened in the pains of child birth. Nevertheless, the Bible shows that Eve began to preach of the Saviour too soon, when she thought that the first child who was born of woman was that blessed seed of the woman who shall bruise the head of the serpent. And why did Eve begin to preach of the Saviour too soon? Yes, for the reason that she had a firm dead faith, which effects so much in many women, that she preaches of the Saviour even though the conscience has not yet awakened. If Eve would have had the right self-knowledge, she could have known that the Saviour would not come from such evil seed as Adam and Eve had after the fall into sin, since they were just then driven out of Paradise, and both had an evil conscience, for everyone who conceives with an evil conscience must know that the evil nature of the parents will adhere to the child. Everyone can experience that not only in himself if he has children, but also from the example of Adam and Eve, for Adam and Eve had an evil conscience when they were driven out of Paradise, and immediately afterward the first child was conceived, to whom the evil nature of the parent adhered. But when both of the parents could see the effects of sin in their own children, the evil of the children began to touch the heart of the parents, when they saw that their own children became a sorrow and bitterness of mind to them. Without a doubt the parents then became concerned over their children, and

this concern effected so much that old Adam did not have as much power as before. And for that reason especially the younger son Abel was quieter, since the gall of old Adam no longer dripped as much as when the first child was conceived. Although this teaching of inherited sin is disputed by the wise of the world who do not believe that the corruption is in the seed, nevertheless David knew this when he said, "I was born of sinful seed", and those who carefully consider the corrupted nature of man must perceive that the fault is in the parents when some children are proud and some quiet, although they are born of the same parents. It depends on what conscience and what nature the parents have had when the children were conceived. If the parent has been in the influence of old Adam a little while before the child was conceived, then the same evil nature adheres to the child. This teaching of the inherited sin is no new teaching, even if it is greatly disputed by the wise of the world, who do not believe that there is inherited sin. But the doctors who study the construction of the body and soul more, know well that the corruption adheres to the children. Thus Eve could have surmised that the Saviour, who is so free of sin, would not come from such seed. But Eve did not have self-knowledge in that matter, and therefore she, in her lack of understanding, began to preach of a Saviour too soon, especially for the reason that she believed upon a false Saviour; she thought that Cain was that blessed child or seed which should bruise the head of the serpent. In today's gospel another example is gi-

ven to us of one woman who has also preached of the Saviour, namely Anna the Prophetess, but that woman has not believed upon a false Saviour, as Adam's wife Eve. This Anna also had a different state of conscience than Eve, for Anna's conscience had awakened, but we do not know what kind of conscience Eve had, since she did not have self-knowledge. We know, namely, that every person who does not have the right self-knowledge also does not know the true Saviour. If, therefore, such a one believes upon a false Saviour, he is in self-deceits but Anna the prophetess had self-knowledge, therefore she knew the true Saviour.

Anna, the Prophetess! You have been a widow a long time, and without a doubt have waited a long time for that blessed moment when you could see the Saviour of the world. Now you can preach of Him to all who await the redemption in Jerusalem. Now, say I, since you have seen Him with your own eyes, now you can preach of Him. And as you have diligently prayed in God's temple that you too could see the light of the world, then pray now with joy and rejoicing that the Son of God would be carried into the temple at this moment, that you could see Him and carry Him in your arms before you die. Our Father which art in heaven.

The Gospel: Luke 2: 33-40

It is written in the gospel not only of Simeon, who was ready to die through seeing the Saviour, but also of Anna, who also preached of Christ to all those who awaited the redemption

of Israel in Jerusalem. We have spoken before of the prophesy of old Simeon, for which reason it could be fitting to speak of Anna at this time. Therefore let us observe how Anna the Prophetess preaches of Christ to all those who await the redemption of Israel in Jerusalem. There were many who awaited the redemption of Israel, but many awaited only a natural Saviour, who should redeem the Jews from under the power of the Romans. All the sorrowless waited only for a change in the government, since their King Herod was a terrible tyrant, who not only burdened the people with excessive taxes, but also killed many people and shed innocent blood. Therefore the Jews awaited a change in government, and they had such a faith that the promised Saviour or Christ must soon come to redeem them from under natural tyranny. All the sorrowless feel fleshly slavery, when the government is strict and severe in burdening them, and therefore they wait for a change in government. But the sorrowless do not feel any trouble from spiritual slavery. The wretches do not feel how the head tyrant, the devil, hurries them into hell with a fiery switch. Therefore the sorrowless cannot await a spiritual Saviour, who should redeem the prisoners of death from under the power of the devil. But old Simeon and Anna the Prophetess were among those few who awaited the spiritual redemption of Israel. Namely, they felt a great trouble and a burden from the attacks of the devil. Since it is written about Anna that she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers

night and day, then it can be surmised that she did not have so much concern over the sustenance of the body, but her greatest concern was how her soul would become saved. Therefore, she was one penitent and grace seeking soul who held fast to the gracious promises of God of that coming Saviour. She had not yet seen the Saviour, nevertheless she awaited His coming soon. And when Mary came into the temple with her Son and Anna could see old Simeon taking the child in his arms and thanking God, then Anna also became joyous, for she believed that this child was the Saviour Himself. Assuredly we can say that Simeon and Anna were awakened and penitent souls, and that they believed firmly upon that promised Saviour, especially since Simeon had received that assurance from the Holy Spirit that he would not taste of death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. Therefore they had true penitence and hope, but Just at that moment they became joyous when they could see the Christ. Anna the Prophetess was unable to preach much about Christ before she had seen Him. But to whom did she preach of Christ? Did she preach to the sorrowless of Christ? The evangelist says that she spoke to those who awaited the redemption of Israel in Jerusalem, that is, to the penitent, sorrowful, doubting, oppressed and poor in spirit, who had no joy or comfort in the world. These penitent, sorrowful and oppressed souls surely awaited the redemption of Israel, but they had no joy since the promised Saviour was unknown to them. Some were able to hope that they would see

Christ before they die, but not all had that hope. The last promise of Christ had been given through the prophet Malachi, and from that time four hundred years had already gone by, and no Messiah or Saviour had come. Certainly, the Jews even now await the Messiah's coming, although it is one earthly Saviour which they await. But it is apparent that the penitent do not have such long suffering and patience that they would await the redemption very long before they begin to doubt of their salvation, when the Messiah does not come immediately to help them from that burdensome life which the awakened and penitent souls are in. They want to become faint because of doubt, and begin to think that striving and awaiting no longer help, and then they cease and go into spiritual laziness, cease watching and praying, cease striving in faith and knocking. And after that spiritual laziness comes spiritual slumber. Love of the world causes one to gradually watch toward the world, from which not even a natural Saviour will come, how then a spiritual one. Do you see now, you burdened souls, who have awaited the redemption of Israel and have not yet received the full redemption, do you see how zealous the Jews were in awaiting a natural Saviour, which nevertheless was a vain hope. The Jews had already awaited 2,000 years for a natural Saviour, who should build them a new Jerusalem, and the hope of the Jews upon that coming Saviour has not yet ceased. And you sorrowful, you penitent, you burdened souls, who await a spiritual Saviour, you cannot await the redemption

of Israel one year or one month or one week, although Anna the Prophetess preaches to you that the Messiah has already come, that He will soon reveal His glory, that He will soon come to preach redemption to the prisoners of death. Neither old Simeon nor Anna the Prophetess have ceased to await the redemption of Israel, although the last promise of Him was given 400 years earlier, and because of this endless waiting and longing, Simeon and Anna could see the Lord's Christ in the temple. Ad when the old Simeon and Anna the Prophetess preach of Him to all those who awaited the redemption of Israel in Jerusalem, which had not happened before, since all Jews in Jerusalem awaited only for a natural Saviour who will never come, no matter how long they wait, so believe now, you few souls who await the redemption of Israel. Believe now, you sorrowful and penitent ones, that the Messiah has already come, since Simeon and Anna have seen Him. Believe, you burdened and sighing ones, that Christ will soon come to redeem the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Believe, since Simeon and Anna preach to you of Christ, that the King of Zion will come to redeem your souls from this valley of death and slavery of sin, which trouble and burden your souls. Believe that the Jews' vain hope and trust in a natural Saviour is a deceit of the devil, with which he reverses their eyes, that they must believe lies. For all Jews who are now living will die in their sins before their Saviour comes. And those wretches, who believe upon a natural Saviour, will also have an unfortunate death, for

they will never see that natural Saviour. But Simeon and Anna, who await a spiritual Saviour, they can see Him before death. Simeon had received that assurance from the Holy Spirit that he should not taste of death before he sees the Lord's Christ and he also did see, and through that seeing he was prepared to die. It is truly not written of Anna, whether she would have received the same kind of assurance from the Holy Spirit, but nevertheless she awaited the redemption of Israel until old age. She waited, she longed, she prayed with unspeakable sighs of the spirit, and this waiting and longing effected so much that she could see the Saviour. And through this seeing Anna became joyous and began to speak of the Messiah to all those who awaited the redemption of Israel in Jerusalem. You few souls, who await the redemption of Israel in Jerusalem, do not become weary of waiting the redemption of Israel; but with Anna be unceasingly in fastings and prayers until the time that the King of Zion comes to give you that eternal redemption. You sorrowful and burdened souls, come with Anna to the Lord's temple, both those who have received that assurance from the Holy Spirit and those who have not received it. Surely Simeon, who has received the assurance previously, will immediately recognize the Lord's Christ, and from that Anna also comes to know Christ and to believe. Simeon becomes ready to die through that seeing, and Anna the Prophetess begins to preach to all those who await the redemption of Israel. And believe now, you sorrowful, penitent, and burdened souls, that the Mes-

siah has come. The King of Zion has come to redeem the prisoners of death and to preach the sweet year of grace on the mountain of Israel. Amen.

New Year's Day

Peter writes, “(Neither is there salvation in any other:) for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” than this name of Jesus. (Acts 4:12)

Without a doubt Peter had surmised that another saviour would be found who could save mankind. When Peter was in unbelief and doubt, he was bold to think that another saviour would be found who could save mankind from its misfortune, but he had not then found any other name than only this name of Jesus. Although he doubted greatly that it might not be the right saviour who could not help himself from death and the hands of the enemies, he did not anyway find any other name than this name of Jesus. The more he thought, the more he became assured of this, that no other name is found whereby we must be saved.

Now no others than the wise of the world doubt whether that Jesus of Nazareth was the only right man who would be acceptable for a saviour. But of this only the penitent have a doubt: how can Jesus receive such sinners before they become better. Many a prisoner of unbelief doubts of this, if it is fitting to believe upon Him and if one dares to own His merits before a better

penitence, greater devotion, heavier pains of conscience, and a greater distress after the Saviour comes. But we have seen that such prisoners of unbelief finally find their saviour in the world, when they do not come to the Saviour then when they feel their poor-ness and worthlessness. The devil of self-righteousness tires the prisoners of unbelief and presses them into the world when they do not believe then when Jesus of Nazareth is available. At last they find their best joy in the world, in finery, in drunkenness, in lasciviousness, and in pleasures. In that condition they find another name or another saviour who is not so holy and righteous as Jesus, nor do they care to see those who sigh, they do not care to hear those who howl, they do not care to look upon those who are in poor clothing.

Have you found another name whereby you must be saved? Have you found another saviour in heaven, in earth, or under the earth, who can help you from sin, death, and from under the power of the devil? When all the ditches of Belial begin to run and all of the waves of the deep begin to rise and the bottomless sea begins to roar and the well of the abyss begins to seethe, have you then found another name than this name of Jesus? I believe and confess that the penitent, sorrowful, and downpressed souls have not found another name. But they who are not penitent or believing ones find another name by which they imagine that they will be saved. They find some other saviour, some son of man or some she-devil, who is acceptable to them for a sa-

viour. The devil of adultery is acceptable to some for a saviour, finery to some, worldly honor to some, whiskey to some, and great possessions to some.

Today is the Saviour's name day, and those few souls, who do not find another name under heaven whereby they must be saved, should on the Saviour's name day ask the high priests of the New Testament, in whose keeping the church books of life are, they should ask this day if their names are found in the church book, especially for that reason that Apostle John writes in the Revelation that they have received one name which no one else knows, but he himself. Who knows the names of how many will be wiped out of the church book during this year. But may the great Name Bearer, Who today has received the name of the Saviour, support the wavering, strengthen the trembling ones, help the poor, and have mercy on the needy, that they could be able to finish off this year! Hear, great Name Bearer, the sighs of those who have not yet received a name and do not wipe out their names before they die or before they pass into the other kingdom without the pastor's testimony. Our Father, Which art in the Heavens, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 2:21

We hear in the above read Gospel that the Child, the Son of God and Mary, was circumcized on the eighth day and His name was called Jesus, Who was so named of the angels before He was conceived in His mother's womb.

We must therefore by God's grace behold how the Son of God has received a name before He was conceived.

God has already in eternity chosen His only Son as a Saviour of the sinners and has given Him a name which is the greatest of all names, that at the name of Jesus all knees must bow, those who are in heaven, upon the earth, and under the earth, and all tongues must confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore He has been given a name a thousand years before He was born and this name the Holy Spirit has given to Him through the mouth of David, namely Christ, that is anointed, as Paul says: "He has been anointed with the Holy Spirit." This name Christ has therefore been given to the Saviour a thousand years before He was born, and has through David become known to all the Jews, But this name Jesus was given of the angels before He was conceived in His mother's womb. Surely all Christians now believe that this has so happened, but the wise of the world do not believe that Mary's son has received a name before He was born, as the wise of the world do not believe that Mary's Son is truly the Son of God. The wise of the world can say that Mary was a sorcerer, she has seen a dream and dreamed her own dreams and believed, and from that a name has come. But from the beginning of the world Christians have had that belief that God has given a name to all the elect and especially to those whom God has already beforehand seen to be elect mediums to preach and to lead sinners to penitence and repentance, as for example Moses, the prophets, and

John the Baptist, to whom a name was given before he was born, God has change the names of some saints, to whom had been given a heathen name, as Abran? was called Abraham and Jacob received the name Israel when he wrestled with the unknown man, Saul was called Paul when he became a Christian. These have received a new name already in this world, but he who is victorious shall also receive a new name and this new name is written in the book of life.

At this time parents give their children heathen names. It is true, a name of itself does not effect any principal matter, but we heard now that God changed the heathens' names when some remarkable change has taken place in their hearts. The main thing is that each one would remember why a name has been given to him and what he has promised by this name already in baptism. When God gave Jacob a new name and called him Isreal, it meant: man overcame God, Peter means cliff or rock, Christina means Christian. Now if everyone would be according to his name, then Israel should overcome God with his prayer, Peter should be a rock upon which Christ builds His congregation, and everyone whose name is Christina should be a Christian. And because Christ, by whom all Christians have received their name, has been anointed, so should all Christians now on the Saviour's name day remember how great and holy this name is and how much this name signifies, and begin henceforth to so watch and strive, that this high name will not become wiped

out of the book of life. Surely it is easy to say I am not a Christian, but it is more weighty to confess oneself to be a Christian, for in that confession the devil causes distress to many. The awakened may say and confess their sins, no matter how ugly and shameful they would be, but when they must confess themselves to be Christians, the devil makes hindrances, although Paul says: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Remember now all Christians how precious and weighty this name of Christian is, how Christ through great trouble has merited this high name for you, and how great a responsibility lies upon you. If you through unwatchfulness or sleepiness so behave yourselves that this beautiful name is wiped out of the book of life, then all the devils in hell will give you one terrible name, which is written in the black book. No matter how they would bark at you as whores, thieves, and wild spirits it does not do anything as long as you have the light that you know you have one beautiful, high and honorable name in the book of life, but if that name is wiped away, then you will receive one terrible name which will strip all honor from you. Remember also that God has given Christ a name which is the greatest of all names, that all knees must bow themselves at Jesus' name, those who are in heaven, upon the earth, and under the earth, and all tongues must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And when this day begins a new year, on which the Saviour of the world was named the Sa-

viour, so should every Christian think that this is the last year for him, that he soon would leave this valley of sorrow, that he soon can get to hear that new name which has been given to him in the kingdom of heaven and is written with large letters in the book of life. Amen.

Nr.9 First Sunday after New Year's Day

Prophet Elisha said to one pagan who was a leper, "Go and wash yourself in Jordan's stream," but this pagan Naaman became wroth and said, "Are not the waters of Syria better than all the waters of Israel?" 2. Kings 5: 10-12.

This example shows to us that all pagans become angry when such work is put before them where the mind becomes offended. The pagan Naaman had heard that in Israel could be found a prophet who could heal all kinds of sickness. When now in Syria there could not be found such who could heal leprosy, then this pagan decided to go to the prophet Elisha, but he thought that the prophet would put his hand upon him and recite some saying of sorcery as sorcerers usually do. But when prophet Elisha did not come to speak to him with beautiful words, but commanded him to go and wash himself in the river Jordan, then the pagan became angry at the prophet and said, "Are not the waters of Syria better than the waters of Israel?" The words of the prophet effected such obstinateness in the blind intellect of the pagan, as if

some Christian here would have told some pagan that he should begin to make repentance of his colon. And I think that all pagans would have become angry with the prophet because of that word. Natural man imagines that a Christian should speak to him with beautiful and sweet words, as you yourself know what kind of thoughts you had of this Christianity when this awakening was first heard of. If the character of Christianity would have been such, that sweet gospel sermons would have effected the right awakening, then truly the Christians and pagans would have taken you around the neck. But John preached sin to be sin in the wilderness of Judea and baptized in the river Jordan, and preached the pious Pharisees to be a generation of vipers and revealed Who would come after him. Who had been "before him, Who would "baptise with the Holy Ghost and fire. Now we understand why "baptism in the river Jordan was such a powerful cure for all lepers, who wanted to be cleansed from the leprosy of sin, but the pagan did not understand that in that water should be such a power to cure leprosy. Nevertheless, that pagan Naaman became healed of his leprosy when he had washed himself the first time in the river Jordan.

We should now ask as Luther, "How can water produce so great an effect?" Water is such a substance, through which the filth of the body is washed away and cleansed. But when the question arises of the leprosy of sin, which reaches to the soul, then the intellect becomes blind, when he wants to understand how baptism effects the for-

giveness of sins. This is not such an ordinance that the intellect would comprehend it, but through faith we must receive it. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," even if he were baptized ten times.

Today we must behold how the Saviour is baptized. But those few souls who observe how the Saviour is baptized, raise your eyes und look up if the heavens open and if the Holy Spirit comes upon Him as a dove, and surmise that, that if the Holy Spirit does not come upon the baptized one, then the baptism does not effect anything. Pray, all baptized ones, that the Holy Spirit would come upon you, that you would be able to believe, for baptism worketh forgiveness of sins and gives eternal life to all who believe. Hear the sighs of the penitent, You Founder of Baptism, our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 3: 13-17

We hear in today's Holy Gospel that Jesus came to John and asked to be baptized. He Who had no sin, truly did not need to receive sins forgiven through baptism, but He wanted to set an example for sinners and to sanctify this sacrament.

We must now observe through God's grace the benefit and necessity of baptism, when Luther says that baptism worketh forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal life to all those who believe.

We must now consider, First: How baptism worketh the forgiveness of sins. Second: How baptism delivers

from death and the devil. Third: How baptism gives eternal life to all those who believe.

First. Baptism worketh the forgiveness of sins. Have all the baptized ones now received their sins forgiven? Do not all baptized believe that and even those also who believe, often want to be wavering in faith and life. They do not want to be steadfast in the covenant, and some depend on that new birth which has happened in baptism. But those few souls who have been baptized not only with water, but with the Holy Ghost and with fire, can believe that in the washing of the new birth they have received all their sins forgiven and have "become children of God,

Second. How baptism delivers from death and the devil. They who remain in that covenant of baptism through the renewing of the Holy Spirit, through war and striving, can be delivered from spiritual death and also from eternal death, if they remain steadfast in their faith to the end. Baptism also delivers the believers from the devil, that the devil does not have any power over those who through God's grace win over the temptations of the devil and the world.

Third. How baptism gives eternal life to all those who believe and through God's grace have become assured of the forgiveness of sins, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. And when the Bible says that the righteous shall live by faith, then it can be surmised that no other can live by faith, than he who through true repentance and living faith

has become justified. There is eternal life, that the righteous live by faith.

What does baptism signify? That the Old Adam must be drowned and destroyed by daily sorrow and repentance. This explanation of Luther is also very important for the Christians to remember, for the Old Adam also wants to come out in a Christian through unwatchfulness. If Old Adam does not become drowned and destroyed in the river Jordan, in daily sorrow and repentance, he will soon become a lord. Many have lost their faith and gone to hell because of Old Adam.

Now the Heavenly Parent is washing His children in the river Jordan, that they would be cleansed when the visitors come from heaven. "Ye are clean, but not all." Go now, all black tartars, to the river Jordan and let the Parent wash and cleanse your souls, for you through your own washing can do nothing. But do not howl, you fools, because the Parent washes you with cold water and also puts soap in your eyes, for you will not become clean otherwise. The Parent wants that His children would be clean; He cannot show the black ones to the visitors. Come to get yourselves washed, that the Heavenly Parent could show you to the visitors who come from heaven. Who knows the visitors will soon come from heaven. Soon you will get to bathe in the river of life so that you will become white and clean and shining as the angels. Amen.

Epiphany

"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh — there shall come a Star out of Jacob and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."
Numbers 24:17

Thus speaks one pagan sorcerer, who was called to curse one tribe in Israel, but through the powerful effects of God he had to bless. He saw also afar off in a future time the Saviour pictured before his eyes, although this vision was so dim that he could not separate the natural kingdom from the kingdom of Heaven. He saw as in a fog that a Star arose out of Jacob and a sceptre out of Israel, but what star this was and what kind of a sceptre it was, that he could not explain. If we take other places of the Bible for a guide, then we find that a star in a spiritual sense is one spiritual light which shows the travelers where the road goes to heaven, when they travel in the shadows of darkness, and if this star did not lead the travelers to eternity, they would become lost. That this star rose out of Jacob, it signifies that the spiritual light came into the world out of the tribe of Jacob, when namely all pagans in the Old Testament were in total darkness, there was always a small light in the tribe of Jacob, although a few people took heed of that light. That sceptre which Balaam saw signifies a spiritual kingdom which had received its beginning from Israel. But all these matters were so far from his vision that he confessed, "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh," and these

Balaam's words can be read in Numbers, 24th chapter.

Moreover, this pagan sorcerer had come to curse the congregation of Israel, but when he came closer and saw its beauty, he had to bless the congregation of Israel, although he had come to curse them. It has happened to many who have heard by word of mouth something about the Christianity, that he has come to curse them, but when he has beheld the Christianity closer, he has had to say, as the sorcerer Balaam, "Blessed is he that blesseth thee and cursed is he that curseth thee." As Balaam had started out from home on a mission to curse the congregation of Israel, so have many sorcerers of the world started out on a mission to curse and blaspheme Christians, but when they have observed the Christianity closer, their thoughts about Christianity have changed, and that same man who intended to curse the Christians has had to bless them. When the natural intellect keeps his natural state as Christianity, he sees that true Christianity is superstition and the effect of the evil spirit, and when the message of Christianity travels farther, the devil adds ten more lies for each word. In that way the effects of Christianity sound terrible in the ears of a natural person so that a natural person cannot think otherwise of the Christianity than what the spirit of the devil causes him to believe, that Christianity is one human superstition. But when one natural man, who had started out on a mission to curse the Christians, comes closer and observes the nature of Christianity and the effects of Christianity, such an assurance

comes to him that he is not worthy to curse the Christians. Although this light of the Christianity is at first so dim that it appears as a small star on the horizon, nevertheless the Spirit of God has turned the blind wretch's mind around, when he who came to curse the congregation of Israel had to bless them. But many a person of the world is so hardened, that the more often he sees Christians, the more he curses them. This spiritual hatred comes more often to those who have, according to their own opinion, lived meekly; when their meekness is reproved, they become very angry, that they begin to curse and swear. The thieves of grace also do likewise when their faith is reproved. They become angry with all those who want to try their faith. That living Christianity becomes so contrary and so terrible to the meek ones and the thieves of grace, that they would sooner go head-long into hell than that they would begin to make penitence and repentance. Total heathens would turn sooner, or such people who have lived in coarse sins, than the meek and true grace-thieves, whose foundation of salvation is in the skull, for total heathens realize after a short time that their life is not possibly a Christian life, and from the conversation of the Christians, they soon get that assurance that with such a life they will certainly go to destruction if a change and repentance do not come. But the meek whores and honest thieves, who are not at all conscious of their faults, they become angry as ashes when they are reproached for adultery and stealing, for their honor is so great that they go to hell with their

honor. Therefore the Saviour says also that many pagans will come from the east and the west and sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven, but the children of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness.

Those men from the east, who came a long distance to seek that newly born Saviour, were also Gentiles, and one strange star guided them to Bethlehem. But the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who had better knowledge of that coming Saviour, did not go there although they heard that the star was seen. So it happens even now that total heathens will sooner turn to true Christianity than some mouth Christians who live near the church and hear the Word of God every Sunday. But they will have a greater responsibility, who hear the Word of God often and do not therefore go to Bethlehem to seek and to bow down to that newly born King of Judah. The star of that King is not always shining on the horizon of the heavens; but in these days His star has begun to shine in the north country, as that same star shone at that time in the east, that same star was then as a guide showing the way to those who traveled in the time of darkness, and that same star should even now be as a guide showing the way to all who with fervency of the heart seek the Saviour. Therefore, take heed of the stars of heaven, you poor travelers who travel many dangerous trips through fog and tempest, take heed of the star of heaven when the time of darkness comes, when the wind of the world comes with a blizzard and takes away the road so you cannot find the track, take heed of the star of hea-

ven when the heavens darken and the sun has become black behind black clouds. Take heed of the star of heaven when the road ends and you must spend the night in the woods among the wolves and lions. Take heed of the star of heaven and pray that the Lord would soon allow His sun of mercy to shine upon those who sit in the valley of darkness, and we hope and believe that He hears the prayer of all the sorrowful, longing and wretched ones. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

We heard from our Holy Gospel that the wise men from the east came to seek and to worship, praying to that newly born King of Judah, and one strange star which had appeared in heaven was their guide showing the way. In accordance with this we must at this moment, through the grace of God, consider: How God leads the Gentiles to the Saviour.

The first consideration: The gentiles from the East studied the star and, in studying them, a strange star appeared to them. The Second Consideration: This strange star was a guide to them showing the way. May the merciful Lord Jesus, whose star has now appeared, allow that all gentiles would begin to follow that star which shows them the way to Bethlehem.

The first consideration: The gentiles from the East studied the stars. They are few, who truly study the stars of heaven. Those people whose possessions are in the bosom of the earth look downward, and therefore they cannot

lift their eyes to heaven, for they so diligently seek for that treasure trove where they think they will find some great hidden treasure, that they do not remember to lift their eyes upward. And although some people seek that treasure trove, which according to common imagination and old time recollection should be found in the bosom of the earth, they nevertheless do not find it. For the earthlings or possessors of the earth have hidden that imaginary substance under the earth, and if someone was such an enchanter who could speak with the possessors of the earth, then it is said that such a one could acquire that great possession, which other people seek for in vain. But although the substance of the possessor of the earth shines as gold under the earth, when it is brought up from under the earth and it is beheld in the sunshine, it is nothing more than a charcoal pit. So, likewise, all those people become deceived, who seek for that buried substance from under the earth. But those few people who seek that hidden treasure in heaven, they are accustomed to always look upward, although other people of the world say that they are crazy who seek a treasure trove in heaven. It sometimes also happens so, that they who seek that hidden treasure in heaven fall into some pit, when while they travel they look always upward; but although the devil's angels get to laugh when one who is looking up into heaven falls, he cannot anyway prevent him from rising up. If that person who raises his eyes to heaven and the student of the stars travels steadily and feels with his feet where the pits are, he

should not fall so often, and the devil's angels will not have so much laughing. When now, as it has been said, the wise men from the East or astronomers begin to raise their eyes to heaven, a strange star appears to them, which already from the beginning of the world has been on the horizon, although the people or those who study the stars have not seen it before, when it has been hidden behind other stars, or if old people has not understood how to look at those stars with a telescope. No matter how this matter is, that only is known and true, that the wise men from the East have noticed one strange star, and from that they surmise according to that old faith that one great and powerful king has been born into the world. And by the guidance of that star, they began to travel from the East, a long distance, in that direction in which the star in heaven leads. How far the birthplace of the wise men is from Bethlehem is surmised from that, that some surveyors have figured that they have traveled a whole year before they reached Jerusalem. Now if a person travels 18 miles in a day, which goes slowly, then the birthplace of the wise men was about 6,000 miles from the town of Bethlehem; it could be even farther. Since the evangelist has not heard of the name of that country from which the wise men came, then it can be surmised that the birthplace of these wise men was so far away from Jerusalem, that no ear had even heard the name of that country. All the same, these wise men began to travel from that dark and heavily fog-wrapped pagan land; they began to travel such a long distance that they did

not know where this journey would end. But that marvelous star was a guide and showed the way. Nevertheless, they did not know to go directly to Bethlehem, but they got lost in the city of Jerusalem, where they thought they would find this royal child whose star had appeared. Surely they did not find there that king which they sought, but they received there such enlightenment, that the birthplace of the Saviour was not there, but in Bethlehem.

We must now remember that in the city of Jerusalem, in which the wise men got lost, lived first: worldly honor, second: self-repentance and third: dead faith. Worldly honor is that King Herod, who began to fear when the wise men began to speak of the star of the newly born king. Herod and all the lords of the world with him began to fear that they would lose their honor if this King would get to grow up. Herod, or worldly honor, then began to question the priests of dead faith, who had read the Scriptures, where the Christ was to be born. Herod had only heard mention of the Christ, that He should come into the world, but he had not considered the Scriptures more broadly. But the dead faith priests had considered the Scriptures, and they know surely that place where Christ should be born, but nevertheless they do not go there themselves to see Him, for the honor of the world prevents them, and self-repentance or that outward meekness also prevents them; they do not care to go to such a poor and despised place, although they hear now that a king is born. If they would even half believe that Christ is born in Bethle-

hem, nevertheless they would not go there for the reason that worldly honor does not allow them to go and self-repentance also is an obstacle. Also this Herod, or the honor of the world itself, wants especially to kill the Saviour, and for that reason he questions carefully at what time that star first appeared, and also asks the wise men who it is and what child it is. He says certainly with the mouth that he also wants to come to worship that child, but in his heart he intends to kill him. Such now is worldly honor, and although the dead faith priests and scribes do not go to Bethlehem themselves, nevertheless, after the king's command they tell where the Christ is to be born. That knowledge from the Scriptures which the wise men received from the scribes was certainly good for them, but worldly honor also makes that decision that if such a child whose birth is recorded in the Scriptures would get to grow up, then all the lords of the world would lose their honor, for which reason they secretly decide to kill him before He grows up.

The second consideration: That strange star, which the wise men saw leading them in the heavens, is a guide on the way to Bethlehem. It is reminded by clear testimony of the gospel writer that the star went before and stood still upon the place where Mary was with the Child, from which can be surmised that if the star had not led them, they would not have been able to find Bethlehem. But although these wise men or astronomers saw the star, it is not written in the gospel that other people saw it. Only the astronomers, who study the stars, saw it and under-

stood that it was the star of a great King; so it is even now, that only they who study the stars can see the Saviour's star. And if there were not this wonderful star, then surely all those would be lost who start out to seek the Saviour. But this star, which shines so brightly on the crest of heaven, is always the guide on the way for all poor travelers who start out from the darkness of heathenism. Even if he feels in the beginning of his penitence and repentance that he is far away from Bethlehem, he nevertheless finally will reach the promised land after his journey through many dangers and temptations. If this star were not the guide on the way, then he would certainly become more lost than these wise men, who thought they would find the Saviour in the city of Jerusalem, although they found only the Saviour's enemies, namely, the honor of the world, (it is the King) Herod, who wishes from the heart to kill that newly born saviour, and confessors of dead faith, who surely know, after the testimony of the Scriptures, the birthplace of the Saviour, but do not go to Bethlehem themselves, but live always in that city where our Lord was killed. If now this star of Christ would cease to shine, or be behind black clouds, what would then be a refuge for the poor travelers, when they travel at night and in the time of darkness, many dangerous trips where the severe wind of the world, tempests, and hailstorm take away the road, which is anyway so narrow and hard to travel. What would be a refuge for these poor travelers if this star which has appeared on the horizon would cease to

shine or disappear, when fierce beasts and lions roar on both sides, and the daughters of the earthlings with deceitful beauty entice and call the weary journeymen to them, and promise all kinds of delicacies and a good bed and sweet sleep. Do not listen to them, you weary journeymen, what the daughters of the earthlings whisper in your ear. They will give you sleeping potion if you go with them and then they will steal your provisions, your possessions. It is better to lie down on a rock or cliff and await when the dawn begins to break in your heart, than to go to the earthlings. And what would be a refuge to the weary journeymen if this star would disappear, when the spiritual lions begin to ravage and rend through doubts, like a bear who first oppresses the frightened into the bog and there tears and ravages, but nevertheless is not able to lift up the carcass from the bog. I know that the weary journeymen cannot bypass the slough of doubt, but if another person presses him even more, who is already sinking, then they certainly do more than what the Saviour and the Apostles have done. Some do it with a good intention, but not according to spiritual wisdom. For those poor and weary travelers, there is therefore that star which shines in the heavens, the best guide on the way; and whoever follows that star, should never stray very much, that he will not finally reach Bethlehem. Therefore take heed of the star of heaven, you weary journeymen, and do not ever lose this star from your eyes, for it leads you to Bethlehem. For long is the way to the land of Canaan and short is the time of

grace, and that road that leads to life is narrow and many dangerous places are on the road. If the poor travelers would lose the Saviour's star, then they will be lost in a fork in the road. Therefore take heed of the star in heaven, you weary journeymen, do not become weary of watching and striving, do not look at the earth, but look upwards where the star comes from, and follow the star, then you will reach Bethlehem, where that newly born King of Israel lies, and offer up to Him of your hearts, gold, frankincense and myrrh, an acceptable gift for a king and for a sweet savor, and bow down and pray to Him now and forever. Amen

First Sunday after Epiphany

“All thy days keep God before thine eyes and in thine heart, and let not thy will be set to sin or to transgress His commandments,” Tobit 4:6 (Finnish Bible)

The old Tobit counsels his son in this way, but when the Christians can hardly keep God before their eyes and in their hearts, then one sorrowless person can even less keep God before his eyes, although some confessor of dead faith thinks that he can keep God before his eyes and also in his heart, but it is the devil who deceives the thief of grace in this way. It is seen from today's gospel that not even Jesus's parents were able to so keep Jesus before their eyes that they would not have lost Him, how then can a sorrowless person and grace thief keep Jesus before his eyes, as it is counseled here. That place is su-

rely impossible, since a Christian cannot even so watch that God could always be before his eyes. But we know that one sorrowless person always keeps the world before his eyes. God cannot be in the mind very often, and God is never in the heart as long as a person lives in sorrowlessness. From where could God get into the heart of such a person whose heart is full of devilish spirits? If a sorrowless person would seek for Jesus in the Lord's temple, but he seeks Him among his acquaintances and kinsfolk, namely among the company of such from whom God is afar off. The drunkard seeks the Saviour in the whiskey merchant's house, and the whore seeks the Saviour in the rich man's house, but never in the church. Therefore such seldom come to hear the Word of God; they overlook the worship of God and the Lord's Supper. They say, “Surely we have books at home from which we can see the Word of God; if we live according to that, we do not have to doubt that we will become saved,” These are old adam's excuses with which he eases his troubles, that one would not need to spend the time in going to church. Especially since they are barked at in church and praised at home, the old adam takes his refuge in the book and thinks that there is better word of God in the books than in church; and upon this faith old adam takes confirmation even from the Scriptures. When, namely, the Saviour said to the woman of Samaria that they should not pray on Mount Samaria (where one church was) nor in Jerusalem (where another church was), but in

every place where two or three are gathered together in Jesus' name, there Jesus is in the midst of them; from that, old adam now takes for himself that faith that he does not need to pray to God in the church when he has better word of God at home. But David was not satisfied only in that, that he had Scriptures at home, but he hastened into the gardens of the Lord as a swallow hastens to his young in the nest, and says that "the bird has found an house and the swallow a nest", when he approached the altar. It was so pleasant for David to be in the Lord's house, that he wanted to be doorkeeper. David was a king of Israel and, nonetheless, did not consider it to be a poor office to be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, but now not many want to be a doorkeeper in the Lord's house. When people do not care to sit in peace in church, they have to go out. Some sit on hot coals, which the black ironsmith puts underneath their butts; some have to go out when the word of God begins to burn their consciences. Some pagans are forced out of the Lord's house because they do not care to sit quietly there when the devil tickles and whispers in their flesh. And some again must go out of the church to anoint their bowels with flowing devil's dung. In such a church, where the devil drives his slaves to go out before the sermon is finished, there the doorkeeper is in great haste when he must open the church door to all those whom the devil drives out before the service of God is finished. No doubt the enemy fears that they will become dizzy if they would sit quietly in church and listen to the sermon.

For that reason he drives those out who serve him. But those again, whom the enemy does not allow to go into the church in the first place, read the round book at home, in which the black master expounds the Scriptures to them in that way that drinking becomes allowable, adultery becomes allowable, whiskey trade becomes allowable, cursing and fighting become allowable. Luther has written that the enemy is surely able to preach the gospel better than some pastor, but in that church where the devil is preaching, all the meek whores sit at peace, all honest thieves weep because of love, serpent's tears flow from the eyes of the merciful whiskey merchants, temperate drunkards become so godly that they bow their knees before the whiskey merchant when they come out of the church, and stick their tongue out of their mouth like a devil's ox and say, "One drop, one drop, dear friend of Jesus! One drop!" The whiskey merchant is, in the drunkard's mind, a dear friend of Jesus, but the preacher of temperance is, in the drunkard's and the whiskey merchant's minds, a friend of the devil when he hinders the children of God from enjoying whiskey, which is God's grain. When now the devil has much to do in the Lord's house, when he causes some to go out who have come in and some again he does not allow to go to church in the first place, then it can be surmised that he would want to burn all those churches where the word of God is so preached that the hearers would get a troubled conscience, or if to some would come spiritual joy and rejoicing, then the devil begins to shed serpent's

tears of envy. The tears of the penitent also burn his conscience, and especially if the pups of grace begin to whine, then the devil jumps up from the bench and goes very quickly out of the church, and all of his servants follow him, for the pups of grace confuse him, so that he cannot hear what the pastor preaches. Otherwise the devil is careful to listen if he is reprov'd in church of being a whore or a thief, that afterwards he would question his honor, but he does not care to hear when the pups of grace begin to whine. For that reason it is the best counsel that all the servants of the devil's spirit would go out of the church until that time when another pastor comes who preaches so nicely and so sweetly that all meek whores can cry, and all drunkards can laugh, and all honorable whiskey merchants can rejoice, then also all shameless and unrepentant whores are admitted into the kingdom of heaven; but the penitent, sorrowful, oppressed cross-bearers, those who sigh in spiritual poverty, are condemned to hell. Hasten, therefore, as David says in the 84th Psalm, all you titmice and swallows, snow buntings and nightengales: hasten, strive, long, hurry to the shelter of the nest. Hasten, you pups of grace, to the gardens of the Lord; come before such a distributor of grace comes who gives the delicacies to the dogs and throws the bones to the children. We hope and pray that when the small birds hasten quickly to their young in the nest which is built in a sapling, then also their teachers will see to their joy that they follow the Lord and win the battle, by which the mouth of the evil

one are stopped and salvation will come to the people. Finally when that great day of the Lord comes, the door-keeper will let in all those who, with a sorrowful and broken heart, knock on the door of the church. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 2: 42-52.

The evangelist Luke recalls in today's gospel that the parents of Jesus had come to Jerusalem to church and there they lost Jesus, whom they began to seek among acquaintances and kinsfolk, but finally found Him in the church. In accordance with these words we must at this moment consider: Where must the parents find Jesus when they have lost Him? May God allow that the parents who seek for Jesus with sorrow would find Him in the Lord's temple, when they seek for Him in vain among their acquaintances and kinsfolk in the world.

Dear parents, you have lost Jesus in your sorrowless state! Let us see where you will find Him, when you long for Him in an awakened state. You have lost Him while attending church, when in a sorrowless state you came to church according to the custom of the festive days. In your sorrowless state you have come to church only as a custom on festive days, not for that reason that you would gain some enlightenment for your soul in the Lord's house, but for that reason that you would receive some upbuilding for your belly according to old custom. In the sorrowless state you have come to church to receive pleasure for your eyes from vanity and finery of the world, and to

show your idols to the world: beautiful and fat horses, well fed with grain, painted sleighs, broadcloth clothes and silk kerchiefs on your heads, silver pipes in your mouths, a watch in your pocket, and a whiskey flask under your arm pit. This splendor and finery has followed you to church after the custom of the festive days, so that the world would see how rich and beautiful you are. If some poor traveler would have met you on the way to church and would not have known what a lordly group you are, when you came driving with sleigh bells and with a whip in your hand, shouting, "Off and do you finally guess where you must find Jesus? It the sorrowless state, you have not sought for Him in the Lord's temple, but in the whiskey merchant's house. Then you were in a hurry to flock out of the church to the whiskey merchant, that you could not wait for the Lord's blessing. You were in a hurry to read and to hear the devil's blessing in the tavern. Try, finally, to seek Jesus in the Lord's temple. Who knows, He can be found there where you do not think He is. David writes of himself that the bird has found an house and the swallow a nest in the house of the Lord. I have seen that the crows and magpies sometimes build their nests in the bell tower, but I have also seen that the swallows build their nests in the church and the titmice build their nests in the crevices of the living Grape vine. If you sorrowful parents would seek Jesus, do not seek Him among such acquaintances and kinsfolk who have not seen Him, but try finally to seek Him in the temple. Perhaps He remained in the

church when you went into the world. You will surely be surprised when you find Him there where you did not even hope to find Him. But do not therefore scold Him, that He has caused too much trouble, for it is your own carelessness that you have not always kept Jesus before your eyes. When you were in a hurry to leave the church and go into the world, then Jesus was left in the church, and it is your own fault that you have lost Jesus. But you put the blame on Jesus that you have lost Him. Woe! Woe! How blind you are, you sorrowful parents, why did you not always keep Jesus before your eyes? How you seek for Jesus everywhere, among acquaintances and kinsfolk, now you long for Jesus, when your consciences have awakened. Now you think that Jesus has caused you great trouble, when you have lost Him through your own carelessness. Impatience causes you to reproach Jesus that He has put you through this trouble, that you have already so and so long sought Him worrying. But you are so ignorant and unskilled in spiritual matters, you do not understand that Jesus must be there since the Heavenly Father has placed, it upon Him. Hear now, you sorrowful parents who have lost Jesus and sought Him with sorrow, do you know where you must find Him? You have lost Him in a sorrowless state while attending church. In the awakened state you must now return to God's temple to seek Jesus there. You sorrowful and doubting ones who have begun to long for Jesus, where must you seek Him? You penitent and heavy-laden ones, where must you find Jesus? You unfortunate

parents, who through your own carelessness have lost Jesus, where must you meet Him? Woe! Woe! Unfortunate souls who have lost Jesus, and now with a sorrowful and bleeding heart are seeking Him, where must you find Him? You seek Him among kinsfolk and acquaintances, but they have not seen Him. There is no other counsel, but to return to God's temple and there you will meet Him, there you will find Him. But if you find Him yet once more, take Him home with you and do not lose Him any more from before your eyes.

Return therefore, you sorrowful parents, when Jesus is lost from you; return to the gardens of the Lord, as David, when he was sorrowful, fled to the Lord's altar, and sings there that the bird hath found an house and the swallow a nest, when he was able to flee to the house of the Lord. Return, therefore to the house of the Lord, you sorrowful souls who long for Jesus. Return, you small birds, you swallows and snow buntings, nightingales and wag-tails, return, strive, long, hurry to your nests when thunder roars loudly on Mount Sinai. Hide yourselves in the crevices of the living Vine when the hawk chases you. If one titmouse cries in the talons of the hawk, then all the titmice chase him. They would surely want to rescue that unfortunate soul who cries in the talons of the hawk, but they are not able for the hawk is big but the titmice are small birds; nevertheless they pity that unfortunate wretch who cries in the talons of the hawk, as King David sings in the 84th Psalm: "Like the little birdies So hastily do flee, back

to their nests and nestlings, Which the they have built on a sapling. So my soul to Thy altar, Lord, ever craves with yearning." How does this beholding of David fit with the sorrowless, who go after the world: some go to the whiskey merchants, and there find their best joy; some go to the whores and there find their best joy. They do not enjoy being at church at all, especially so when the small birds who, as David says, find a nest in the house of the Lord, begin to sing and to twitter thanks to that great Creator for that first ray of light which awakens them in their nests. Have you not heard how the swallows twitter in their nests when the sun rises? But you sit deaf and dumb in the Lord's house; you probably will reprove Jesus that He caused you much trouble, when you had to seek Him in the temple. But the sorrowless do not find the Saviour in the temple, but they imagine that they find the Saviour in the world. But the penitent, sorrowful, doubting ones, who truly seek for Jesus when they feel that they have lost Him, and also the graced souls, when through unwatchfulness they have lost Jesus, they can find Him in the Lord's temple, where He willingly lives and listens to how the swallows and titmice and nightingales twitter with their voices, they sing thanks to that great Creator for the first ray of light which awakens them from sleep. When the sun of grace arises on the horizon of heaven, then they sing and then they thank for this light which has come, and say, "Amen! Hallelujah! thanks, honor, and praise to that great Creator and Lamb who was dead, but behold, He lives in

the hearts of the believing ones.”
Amen.

Second Sunday after Epiphany

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”
Isaiah 55:1

In this place it is heard God promising hungry guests wine and milk without money and without price. It comes to this, that if they would care to come to buy without money and without price, wine and milk. I have seen that some poor ones are so proud that they do not care to beg; they would sooner die of hunger than to go begging. We hear also in one gospel of that unjust steward, that he did not care to beg, when he said, “I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed.” It is heard in this place that honor prevents some from begging. They would sooner begin to steal, that they would live thereby, as this unjust steward who began to deceive his Lord; first he wasted the Lord’s goodness, and then he also taught the Lord’s debtors to write fifty instead of a hundred and to change the books of account. And for that reason those debtors, whose debts are left unpaid, intend to bear him into everlasting dwelling places. But who knows into what dwelling places they will finally carry him, when they realize that they will have to pay their debt eternally, just because of that unjust steward who with iniquity taught them to lessen the debt, and did not teach them to beg for grace

so that the debt would be wiped away. But they did as the unjust steward commanded, and for that reason can now pay their debt eternally. It would have been better if that unjust steward would have taught his Lord’s debtors to beg, but how can he teach them to beg, when he himself does not care to beg. He would sooner teach them to steal than to beg, for that begging greatly bothers the honor. We hear also of the behavior of the prodigal son, that he did not go immediately to his Father either, although poverty was upon him, but he first went to one merchant in that country and that same merchant put him to herd swine. Therefore, this prodigal son had less honor than the unjust steward; but certainly there was much honor in him too, that if he had not known the Parent’s heart, he would sooner have eaten the husks from the pig trough and herded swine all his life, than that he would have gone to his Father. But it sounds as if the unjust steward had such great honor of the world that he certainly would not have begun to herd swine since he did not care to dig or work the fields. Before such a handsome steward would begin to dig in the field or to beg, he would sooner teach the debtors to lessen the debt, so that the Lord would not have so much to yearn for when the time of visitation comes, but to herd swine, that he will never do. The prodigal son had to do it, although it is kept as almost the worst work, that some honorable manservant would not care to begin to do that because of honor. For who could stand to hear that other honorable men would call him a swineherder; it must

be only a beggar boy or such a rag devil who would begin to herd swine, and he must be almost in great distress before he goes to herd swine. But now although the prodigal son had to do it, these animals do not need to think that the unjust steward will begin to herd them, who is so proud that he cannot dig and so honorable that he is ashamed to beg. But the prodigal son has to herd swine for a time, until then when distress commands him to arise and go to his Father. He would not have had to do it if he would have immediately gone to his Father when he had spent all, but honor was so great in him that he could not go immediately as such a rag devil to his Father; he would have sooner wanted to earn his food himself in some way. But that merchant in whose service he was, that same merchant is so greedy that he would not even give food of the swine as wages. That merchant feared that the swine would fall down if the prodigal son ate with them.

Arise now, you prodigal son, and begin to think how many servants in your Father's house have a better opportunity than you in this far country, where not even swine food is given to eat. How many years or months have you already served that merchant who put you to herd swine? Are you not tired of herding swine, you wretch? I hear that the Father has prepared a wedding for you and for other rag devils who come to Him as poor and wretched as they are. I hear that the Parent's heart longs for you, unfortunate wretch, who left from the Father's house to waste and spend your substance with harlots in the far country. I

hear that the Parent's heart is longing for you, and is killing the fatted calf because of you, and is preparing wedding garments ready for the time the prodigal son comes. I hear that the Parent's heart longs for you and is waiting when that unfortunate prodigal son comes in rags and tatters, black and honorless, hungry and cold. The Father has now prepared a wedding where such hungry guests can enjoy wine and milk, when He says through Prophet Isaiah, "Come and buy, without money and without price, wine and milk." Arise, therefore, unfortunate wretch, and go to your Father and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son; let me be as one of the poorest of Your servants." Arise, arise, unfortunate son, and go soon, before all love cools in the Parent's heart, before the Parent dies of sorrow and because of waiting,. When can He hear news of that unfortunate son, who went so far in the far country so that the Parent's ears do not hear news of that wretch any more? Arise, arise, prodigal son, and go as a rag devil to your Father, that your eyes could yet once more see the Parent's face before you die. And hear now, gracious Father in heaven, the sigh of the prodigal son: Cur Father Who art in the heavens!

The Gospel: John 2:1

We heard in today's gospel that Jesus was called to the wedding and that the wine was wanting, and His mother said, "They have no wine." In accordance with this, we must, at this holy

moment, consider: From where will wine come for the poor wedding guests when the wine runs out?

It appears certain that the wine was wanting in the wedding of Cana, but we hope that Mary, Jesus' mother, will reveal it to her Son, and say then to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

The first consideration: Why is the wedding wine so soon wanting? The second consideration: Jesus changes the water into wine; and third consideration: According to the custom of the world, the poorer wine is saved for the last, but in the wedding of Cana, the best wine comes last. But the guests must wait until the servants draw water and bring it to the governor. For the governor does not know from where the wine has come, but that it is good wine which Jesus has prepared; that he knows if he cares to taste of that wine which the servants carry to him.

The first consideration: Why is the wedding wine so soon wanting? We do not know why it is so soon wanting, but that we know, that there was only a little wine at the wedding in Cana. Before it became wanting, some of the guests have become drunken, but now when it began to be wanting, Mary laments, saying, "They have no wine." Although Mary herself is not the worst drinker, nevertheless she would willingly have it so the wedding guests would drink and become joyful. If it is true as Sirach says that wine gladdens the heart, then surely Mary had experienced so much of the power of the wine and what the wine effects when it comes into the heart, that she would have wil-

lingly wished it so, that the guests would have had that much wine, that they would become joyful. It was very sad for Mary to see that the wine would so soon be wanting. The wine effects that the guests become joyful and the desire to preach comes to them; they become talkative when wine warms the heart, and some begin to dance when the wine rises to the head. To some, such a burning love comes from the wine that they weep on one another's necks from love, and some reveal the most secret matters of the heart when they are drunken, for which the old saying is, "Wine is truthful." That we have seen, that the disciples became very talkative on Pentecost, when they were full of sweet wine. Therefore it touched Mary's honor, that the wine would so soon be wanting at the wedding of Cana. Surely the wine has been wanting, for the wedding guests are no more talkative; the wedding guests now sit speechless and look at each other with sorrow and a heavy mind. The wedding guests are not able to be happy when the wine has run out; they are not able to jump and dance when the wine is not gladdening the heart; they do not have burning love when there is no wine, which makes them happy and warms the heart. Said in a word: It is very sad for all the wedding guests to sit at the wedding table without wine, and some guests who are called to the wedding begin to regret already that the wedding is kept without wine. For some it becomes so sad to sit there that almost right away they get ready to leave, and some have already secretly gone out of the wedding hall, but with a

bad conscience such guests go to some whiskey merchant, who gives them a different kind of wine, mixed with water. For the whiskey merchants do not dare to give the drunkards pure and clear wine, but they give such a water mixture which, along side of strong and clear wine, is a water mixture. And I think that all such guests, who do not care to sit in the wedding hall until such a time that Jesus prepares the best wine at the last, can now drink the water mixture into which the whiskey merchant has put his own urine for better flavor, and such watered wine or water mixture must be sweet in their mouths, who have drunk so much flowing devil's dung that they have lost all taste. Such guests do not complain about their pasture, no matter what kind of wine is given to them in church and in the Lord's Supper; even if flowing devil's dung was mixed with the right wine, they will surely swallow it as sweet in the mouth and with a good conscience. Those who gather devil's dung certainly do not tie a scarf in front of their mouth, although their own mouth reeks for devil's dung, but they willingly with a good mind receive that water mixture which the whiskey merchant gives to them and say, "This is good wine, this is not a water mixture." But I hope that the true guests at the wedding of Cana, who have not yet spoiled their taste because of devil's dung, and have once tasted a little of that pure and clear wine, do not go to the whiskey merchant to beg for the water mixture, but they say to the whiskey merchant, "If you want to give us wine, then give that pure and clear

wine, but it probably is not to be had. And if it is not, then give even salt. Salt is nevertheless better than your water mixture, for we are like sheep who are accustomed to licking salt water from the Shepherd's hand."

But we were supposed to ask why the wine was so soon wanting in the wedding of Cana. We heard, namely, Mary lamenting, "They have no wine." And that is true, that the wine is wanting, but whose fault is it, that the wine is wanting? It must be such a poor groom, that he cannot afford to prepare as much wine as the drinkers need, or is it such a poor governor that he does not take heed of how much wine is needed? I must confess before both the groom and the bride that the governor has been lazy and careless to take heed of how the wine was going. But I hope that the governor, through God's grace, will pour into the glasses more and more of that best wine, which the bridegroom has saved for the last, when the governor first can taste how sweet that wine is which the servants bring from the well. For the governor does not know from where such sweet wine has come, but that much he knows, that it is the best wine, although he who is preparing food for the wedding guests cannot drink so much of that wine as the wedding guests drink, especially such guests who are real drinkers. I say, the governor cannot drink so much that he will fall over, for he must prepare so that all guests will receive their allotted share of both the food and drink. He must first taste the different foods; does it have ample salt, that the guests can eat it. If he feels that there is insuf-

ficient salt, then he must put more salt. And in that making of food and tasting of food, his time passes so that he cannot sit as a lord at the wedding table, but he must be in the kitchen with the servants and see to it that each course is properly prepared, that it is suitable for the guests. And when all the guests have been fed, then the governor can eat with the children and the servants. And the Saviour asks, "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth."

The second consideration: The wine has truly run out and there is no one who goes to get more. How will it go now with the guests since the wine is lacking? Mary! You who have carried the Son of God under your heart and have felt the heavenly joy already then when you became pregnant by the Holy Spirit, and have said, "My soul doth rejoice in God, my Saviour." You cannot bear to see that the guests in the wedding of Cana sit like garden-owls, quiet and still, but you, bridesmaid, surely want that the guests would be happy, especially when the Saviour has said, "Can ye make the children of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" You must now lament before the Lord Jesus of that lack of wine which is with this poor wedding party and say, "They have no wine." But it sounds from His answer that He did not keep Mary's request to be very nice: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Is it so now that Jesus does not want to show His godly power yet? Or

is His will so, that the guests can be at the wedding without wine? I think that He cannot reject Mary's request, no matter how unbecoming this request is, that He must now prepare wine for this poor wedding party; although formerly they had wine at weddings, nevertheless now they have not had wine for a long time. But Mary believed nevertheless that Jesus cannot refuse, although it is almost an unbecoming matter, as I think, because of the world which gossips so much about wine and drunkenness at the wedding of Cana (although it is not written that they were drunken). Nevertheless He commands them to draw water into the stone vessels and to carry in to the governor. For what reason do the servants carry the water in stone vessels? And when these servants come inside, this water is the best wine. It is miraculous that water outside is not more than water, but as soon as they come to the governor, this water is changed to wine. It has happened through the power of Jesus. But the governor does not know where the wine has come from, but he thinks that the groom has prepared that wine in some way. And when the governor tastes that water, which through the power of Jesus has been changed to wine, then he knows immediately that it is the best kind of wine. It is not such water mixture which the spiritual whiskey merchants offer to the guests at the wedding of Cana, nor is it flowing devil's dung, which the devil himself has excreted, which the forest devils lap up, with which they anoint their bowels and consider it sweet: that flowing devil's dung is the best wine of forest

devils. But forest devils are not at the wedding of Cana, nor such magpies and earthlings who laugh in the darkness and curse around the church, but at the wedding of Cana are Jesus' disciples, as Peter, James, John, or Nathanael, and also Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was a bridesmaid, and other women who have followed Jesus. They just now begin to believe upon Jesus when they can taste that wine which Jesus has made from the water. The third consideration: Why did the governor say to the groom: "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse?" The governor marvels why in other weddings the good wine is given first, and when they have become drunken, then the poorer is given to the guests. But in the wedding of Cana the poorer wine was given first and the best wine is saved for the last, and that is truly a matter to be marveled at — why it is so. But so it has happened, and I think that all those guests who were called to the wedding of Cana have been able to experience that the poorer wine is given first and the best wine is saved to the last. But all guests do not have such patience that they would sit in the wedding hall so long that the best wine would be brought forth, but some of the guests go out of the wedding hall before they have tasted wine, and some go then when the wine has run out. They gather up their bones and say, "Let a dog sit here, where there is not given better wine." Many have already gathered their bones and gone out of the wedding hall, and they must be those old vessels, of which the Saviour

says, "No man putteth new wine into old vessels," for the old vessel will not stand up when new wine is put into it, but will break and the new wine runs out of that old vessel which is leaky. But the new wine is put into new vessels, and both are preserved. So eat and drink wall now, guests, as long as the wedding days last: Eat and drink wine and milk, for the days will come that the bridegroom is taken away, and then the wedding guests will have to fast when there is not a governor who will pour out the new wine into new vessels, and when the wine is lacking, then the wedding guests will be sad. Who will finally prepare wine for the poor wedding guests when wine is lacking? Our hope is that Jesus is still living, if there would still be one Mary who would pray to Jesus and lament, "They have no wine!" It could probably be possible that Jesus, because of Mary's prayer, would change the water into wine so that the wedding guests would become joyful and talkative, that they would not have to sit speechless, as some now sit speechless, although the wine is not yet entirely lacking. Who knows when the messenger will come to call the wedding guests to the heavenly wedding, where they can keep the wedding eternally. There the wine will never be lacking; there the wedding guests can be joyful every day. Amen.

Third Sunday after Epiphany

The Lord praised the centurion who said, "I am a man under authority", and the Lord said, "I have not

found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” Matthew 8: 9-10

In this faith of the centurion, we surely find an example of humility, who did not feel it troublesome to be under another’s authority; although it is troublesome for the Old Adam to be under another’s authority, nevertheless it is a sign of true faith to be under another’s authority without murmuring. But the world is not like that, that one would willingly want to be under another’s authority. Not only the sorrowless want to be free lords, but also some Christians want to be free lords, for it becomes troublesome for the Old Adam to serve. Not many now truly want to be under another’s authority, although the Lord praised that man’s faith, who said, “I am a man under authority,” and the Lord said, “I have not found so great faith in Israel.” And who knows, can such faith be found in Israel today? We know, namely, that pride is now ruling on the earth: all now want to be free lords, not one would want to serve. Children do not want to serve their parents, although our Lord and Saviour Himself served His parents for thirty years, He wanted, namely, to pay for their trouble and so fulfill all human righteousness, before He began to fulfill the heavenly righteousness. But the children of this time want to be adults themselves before they are able to rise up on two feet, and it is not strange that the sorrowless do so, who have no better conscience than a dumb ox, but Christians also want to be free lords. Who knows, will Jesus now find such faith in Israel as the centurion had, who said, “I am also a person under authori-

ty,” This being under another’s authority becomes greatly troublesome to the Old Adam. Many think thus: “I have already been under other people’s authority, now I want to be free.” Some free lords take for themselves consolation and Justification from this Word of God: “Be in bondage to no man.” Some put that for an excuse, “I cannot fill the place of a servant well, therefore I cannot serve,” but such words are nothing more than Old Adam’s excuses, for when you in serving do all that you are able and understand, then you are free of reproach of conscience; but if you are lazy and careless, then you are reproved with cause. I fear that Jesus will find such faith in Israel no more, as the centurion had, for he confessed himself unworthy to receive Jesus into his house, although he had faithfully served his government and also took such care of his servant as of his own child. Where now are such people, who willingly and without murmuring are under other’s authority, and faithfully serve their neighbor for the Lord’s sake? And where now can such a master be found who takes care of his servant like his own child, who goes many miles to seek help for his servant in his sickness?

The world has now grown so large and swollen that not many want to be under another’s authority, but all want to be free lords. Not many want to serve others, and because of that pride and fleshly freedom, many lose their faith, so that it is unknown if the Lord would not find such faith in Israel like the centurion had. Nevertheless, fleshly freedom is not a fruit of the right faith, but

under that fleshly freedom lies selfishness, pride, and love of the world, and, who knows, also adultery lies under that same freedom. Nevertheless adultery is not far when poor servants are inclined to marry and want to become free lords through marriage. There is not such a faith there as the centurion had, who said, "I am a man under another's authority." And we know that the service of the centurion was harder and heavier than some other service, for a soldier must show such obedience to the government, that if the government asks him to go to such a place where his life is in danger, then he must go.

In war it does not help to say, "I will not go where I will be slain," but where death is near, there the soldier must go. There truly is needed such faith which the Lord has not found, nor can probably yet find in many places in Israel. Compared to those soldiers, other servants have good days, for they do not have to go to such places where they will be killed. However, there is such a poor faith in many, that fear of men brings him into such an enslaved condition if he would go to serve; it is not the fruit of the right faith, but it is the fruit of pride, laziness, and adultery. Now when hard times are before us and independence wants to be with many, God must finally so punish the world that many a proud man must become a slave to the enemy when he has not understood to thank for that freedom which had come to him through Christianity, when all Christians have such a law, that there should be no slaves among the Christians, but he who is

won over in war becomes a slave of the enemy, in a spiritual as well as in a natural war. Pray, all Christians, that the Lord would not so punish us with war that we would become slaves to the enemy, when He has given freedom to all the Christians; especially has He redeemed us from spiritual bondage with His own precious blood, so that we need not be under the power of the devil, if we, through His grace, war manfully, valiantly, and faithfully against the enemy, equipped on the right and left side with the shield of faith and the sword of the spirit. For now hard times are before us both from the natural and spiritual side. Soon the faith of Stephen will be tried. Soon the Lord will come to seek such faith in Israel as the centurion had. Hear, therefore, the prayer of the centurion. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 8: 5-13

By the guidance of our Holy Gospel, we must at this holy moment take heed and consider: Will the Lord find such faith in Israel as the centurion had? The first consideration: What were the signs of true faith in the centurion's travel? The second consideration: Will the Lord now find such faith in Israel? We hope and pray that the Lord would find such faith in Israel, which would stand in all trials and also in the last struggle of death.

The first consideration: What are those fruits of faith and signs which show that the centurion had the right faith? The first sign was that, that he had such concern for his servant as for his own child, for not many masters do

that at this time. Many masters evict their servants when the servant becomes ill and is no longer able to work for his master. Nor do many masters at this time go far to get medication for a servant when the servant is ill, but some masters allow the servant to lie ailing like a pup, without helping and without caretaking. But the centurion went immediately when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth had come into that country. He went to pray to that heavenly Healer in behalf of this ailing servant, that he knew that natural medicines would no longer help in this case. There the centurion showed fruits of faith and such fruits of faith which we do not find in many places in Israel, for if some masters perhaps procure natural medication for their ailing servants yet few masters go straight to Jesus to pray in behalf of their servant, although it is a Christian's responsibility to do so.

A second sign is that, that this centurion felt his unworthiness: "I am not worthy that you come under my roof." Some other confessor of dead faith or grace they would say in this place, "If Jesus came under my roof, I would receive Him with joy and would offer Him the best wine that I have." But the centurion was not able to be so vain and lightminded that he would have addressed Jesus as an equal, which a sinful person can call under his roof. But the centurion knew that the Son of God is not equal to men; he felt that a sinful creature was not worthy to take the Son of God under his roof, although the Son of God was so lowly that He surely would have come under the roof of a sinful creature if he would not have

believed that his servant would have been healed otherwise. But the centurion had such a faith that the Word of Jesus effects as much to those farther away as to those who are close by. The centurion felt that the Son of God is the Almighty God and omnipresent, and this faith not many had in Israel yet at that time. Someone could probably find some substance of unbelief in this centurion's unworthiness when he did not dare to receive Jesus under his roof, and could such a person who is in unworthiness receive the Son of God with joy at the judgement when he did not dare to receive him into his home? But in this place we must make a lasting distinction between true and false unworthiness, for in true unworthiness there is the right faith, which reveals itself like this, that the word of Jesus effects as much as if Jesus Himself was present. Such a faith the centurion had that one word from the mouth of Jesus effects so much as if Jesus Himself was present. But false unworthiness effects so much unbelief, that people do not believe the word, but they want that Jesus Himself should come bodily to them and put His hand upon them. In that way the unbelieving tempted the Saviour, as for example Jairus, who did not believe that Jesus could heal his daughter since she was already dead. And surely many penitent also tempt Jesus with their unbelief, when they do not believe the Word, do not believe that the word effects so much as when Jesus Himself is present. There now the centurion shows his faith, when he had such an assurance that one word effects as much as when Jesus Himself is pre-

sent. But the centurion also shows his faith with that word, "I am also a person under another's authority." We know, seriously, that they who do not want to be under another's authority are in pride and love that fleshly freedom; they want to be free lords. Such do not have the right faith, if they even confess faith, for the fruit of the right faith is humility, and submission. A believing one can be a slave bodily and, nevertheless, free in behalf of spirit. The Jews said to the Saviour: "We have been born free, we were never in bondage to any man." The Jews boasted that they were slaves to no one in behalf of the body, however they were sold into slavery to the Gentiles when their country was destroyed, for spiritually they were the slaves of sin although they boasted of freedom. But if the Son of God could have made them free from the bondage of sin, they would have also avoided being bodily enslaved. But they were so proud that they incited the Romans upon themselves. If they had received Christianity, their kingdom would have been enduring, but they persecuted the Christians and became so proud that they obeyed no one any more. The free lords of this time can take an example from them and take heed, how it went with the Jews who said, "We have been born free, we were never in bondage to any man." But they did not have the right faith, although they kept it so that they had the right faith. But the centurion had the right faith when he said, "I am under another's authority." And the Lord said, "I have not found such faith in Israel."

The Second Consideration: Will the Lord find such faith in Israel anymore? We do not know if He will find it, but we know that many will come from the east and the west to sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, and the children of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness: there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The Lord will probably not find such faith in Israel which would stand in trial, except those few souls who are like this centurion, and have become unworthy to receive the Son of God under their roof, and in that unworthy condition nevertheless believe firmly that the word of Jesus effects as much as if Jesus Himself were present with it. That was the faith of the centurion, that one word of Jesus was as powerful as He Himself. And if all penitent, sorrowful and doubting ones would be able to believe as this centurion, that one word of Jesus is as powerful to heal the sick as Jesus Himself, then surely they would soon be healed. But all do not have such faith as the centurion had, for the sorrowless do not believe at all before they see signs and wonders, and the awakened, too, would want to see signs and wonders before they would be able to believe that Jesus with a word will heal their hearts; although now is given the sign of the Prophet Jonah to all doubting ones who want to see signs and wonders. So Jesus Himself has said, that no other sign will be given to those doubting ones than only the sign of the Prophet Jonah. So behold now, you doubting ones, the sign of the Prophet Jonah, and take heed of the faith of the centurion, you doubting

ones, when you become sick because of unbelief, when the heart becomes hard because of unbelief, then believe that one word from the mouth of Jesus effects as much as Jesus Himself. When the devil of self-righteousness ravages your hearts and persecutes your consciences, believe then, as the centurion, that one word from the mouth of Jesus will drive the devils away and heal the wounds of the heart; otherwise He must say, "I have not found such faith in Israel." Whoever has such faith that one word from the mouth of Jesus effects as much as He Himself, certainly also feels the blessed power from that one word which proceeds from the mouth of Jesus. And we truly believe that although many a believing one feels himself unworthy to receive Jesus under his roof, one word from Jesus' mouth must effect in him so much, as if Jesus Himself were bodily present, and many a believing one will come from the east and the west to sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; although he feels himself unworthy to receive the Son of God under his roof. Therefore say then only one word, gracious Lord Jesus, You great Cross-bearer, You Healer of the sick and Comforter of the doubting, then my heart will be healed and my conscience cleansed and all tribulations of body and soul will cease. And our assurance is, that many have already by one word come from the east and the west to sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, although the Lord has not truly found such faith in Israel, as He finds with those who feel themselves unworthy to receive Jesus under

their roof. But they, however, believe that one Word from Jesus' mouth will effect healing for their sick hearts and wounded consciences; but the children of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Amen.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

The Lord set the limit for the sea and said: **"HITHERTO SHALT THOU COME, BUT NO FURTHER, AND HERE SHALL THY PROUD WAVES BE STAYED."** JOB 38:11.

We hear from these words that God has set for the waves of the sea a limit or boundary, over which they cannot pass and if this boundary were not set for the waves of the sea, they would drown all which is upon the earth. But this word is not only said about the natural sea, but it is especially of that spiritual sea as spoken of the waves of the bottomless sea, which is found in an ungodly person's heart. This bottomless sea surges in a constant roar in sin and evil, so that it is almost never calm. And it is difficult to say who had raised the wind and waves on the sea when the disciples were rowing and thought they would drown, had God raised it or that spirit which has power in the wind, we do not know to say. But that we know seriously that those waves of the bottomless sea which roll in an ungodly person's heart, are not raised of God but that spirit which has power in the wind of the world, and without a doubt has raised the wind in the ungodly person's heart, where the waves of the

bottomless sea roar like a swirling rapids. And it seems like there is no limit set to those waves. When namely this bottomless sea begins to surge, all proud and evil words come out of the mouth, especially surges the white foam out of the mouths of those, who bear hatred in their hearts toward the Christians, who they wish would drown in the bottomless sea, although those ungodly and unconverted, who are sailing bravely in that sea are themselves drowning therein, but they care not about that, just so they could get the christ-ians to drown. Such great envy have the devil's angels, that they take no heed of their own souls, just so they could cause some misfortune to the Christians. Although now many people at this time, who bear spiritual hatred in their hearts, know for sure that they must drown eternally in such a state as they are now in, but nevertheless they do not consider themselves and realize that this hardening comes from that hatred which they bear in their hearts, and also spew out of their mouths when they think a Christian has now come to misfortune. Then the ungodly can begin to rejoice, when Christians are oppressed in the world, when Jesus' disciples are about to drown sailing in the billowing waves of the sea, then the devil's angels begin to laugh. But who knows how long they will laugh, before they themselves will come to distress. Although it seems before our eyes that He has put no limit to the ungodly, nevertheless, we must believe that God has set the limit to the waves of the billowing sea and said" Hitherto shalt thou come but no further, here shalt thy

proud waves be stayed!" So also a man's iniquity will not exceed that limit which God has set, although it sometimes surges terribly and also come! out of the heart like the white foam on the waves of the sea; for David has written that their throats are an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongue. For the ungodly and enemies of Jesus' cross think that the disciples of Jesus now drown in the waves of the billowing sea, when that spirit which has power in the wind, has raised such a storm in the sea in which Jesus' disciples anxiously row, but as long as Jesus is in the ship, the disciples are in no distress, even if he is asleep. He can soon arise when Jesus' disciples cry out in their distress,"Lord save us, we perish". But the devil's angels have no distress as long as they are able to drink and fight, whore and steal, they have no distress as long as they are able to slander the Christians, and like the soldiers offered Christ vinegar mixed with gall. For we know already from the experiences in the old testament that the enemies of the cross of Christ rejoiced over the Christian's misfortune. But once there will come that time, that they will see whom they have pierced,although the god of this world has now blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they must believe lies. And those blind wretches become the most shamefully deceived, who rejoiced over the misfortune of the Christians, and think that, that small ship where the disciple of Jesus row with great fear and trembling on the billowing waves of the sea, they think say I, that this small ship will soon drown in the waves of doubt. But

yet if that spirit which has power in the wind, had raised this hard wind and storm, we nevertheless do not doubt that the disciples of Jesus would perish in that storm as long as Jesus is in the ship, if He was asleep in that ship, it is anyway our hope and trust in God, that Jesus will awake as soon as the disciples cry out in their distress "Lord save us, we perish." Then He will arise to still the wind and the sea and a calm will come. Cry out now you disciples of Jesus, who are in great tribulation rowing on the billowing sea of the world if Jesus is in the ship, as our hope is that He is in the ship, then cry out in your distress! Just the same He will awake to still this storm and wind, which that spirit, which has power in the wind, has raised up. Hear you stiller of the wind and the sea, the cries of the frightened and distressed. Our Father etc.

The gospel. Matthew 8: 23-27.

By the guidance of our above-read holy gospel we must at this moment through God's grace consider and look at. 1. Who has raised this storm on the sea? 2. What would the world's throng have done if Jesus' disciples had drown?

We hope nevertheless that Jesus' disciples would cry so in their distress that Jesus would awake to still the wind and the sea before the disciples drown.

The first consideration: Who has raised this storm? We hear from our holy gospel, that Jesus stilled the wind and in the old testament or in the original tongues it says so, that He rebuked

the wind. If this storm was raised by God, the Son of God would have not dared to still the wind by rebuking, but by praying. If God had raised this storm, then the Son of God would have prayed to the Father, that this wind would be stilled. But when He rebuked that great wind and sea, then it can be surmised, that this great wind and storm was not of God. But that spirit which has power in the wind, which also in Job's time raised such a storm, that houses collapsed in which Job's children were, that same spirit had without a doubt, raised this storm, although many confessors of dead faith think, that too much power is given to the devil, if he yet could raise up a storm on the sea. Thieves of grace think that the devil has no power on the earth, but Paul writes nevertheless clearly of that spirit which has power in the air, which also works in the children of disobedience. And if that spirit had not such great power in the natural wind, but the wind of the world has surely such great power through that spirit which works through the children of disobedience, that he can certainly raise a great storm on the billowing Sea of the world, to drown the disciples of Jesus if they did not have Jesus asleep in the ship, who was able to still this great wind and sea, as soon as the disciples with their cry of distress awaken Him. Certainly nevertheless all the devil's angels would wish that the disciples would drown in this great storm and tempest. The devil's angels cannot bear to hear that that spirit, which has power in the wind, had raised this storm, because from that fol-

lows the conclusion that the devil wants to drown the disciples of Jesus but not God. But the enemies of Jesus' cross have that faith that God has raised this storm and therefore they conclude that God is angry with them but not the devil. If namely, the devil, was angry with the disciples of Jesus, as he surely is angry with them, then the enemies of Jesus' cross would have reason to doubt that then God would not be angry with the disciples of Jesus; although those persecutors who imagine they are doing a service to God, when they kill the disciples of Jesus, have always been of that faith, that God is angry with them because the world is angry, and from that have made such a conclusion that God hates them since the world hates them. But the Word of God again stands so strongly against that place, so that the devil's angels cannot so twist and turn the words of the Bible that God would also hate those who the world hates. Because the world has never been able to love the Christians, but in "every place, where true Christianity has revealed itself, there also has hatred and persecution come from the world. And for that reason the god of this world is angry with the disciples of Jesus, and that spirit which has power in the air, he has raised this storm and tempest, and he is also that same spirit which works in the children of disobedience hatred and persecution toward the Christians; and they would surely receive great joy, if now the disciples of Jesus would drown in this great storm. But the enemies of Jesus' cross do not need to rejoice too soon because Jesus is still in the ship and if He was still as-

leep, surely he can quickly awake to still the storm and tempest, although these wretches have such unbelief that they are afraid, but I have nevertheless that faith, that Jesus will awake as soon as they cry out in their distress; and I know seriously that they will cry out and believe also that Jesus will hear their cries and awake and arise to still this storm and tempest, which that spirit has raised, which has power in the wind of the world. And I hope that the disciples of Jesus will reach the other shore in good health which is on the other side of the sea, and let the wind of the world roar on the billowing sea of this world as much as it wishes.

The second consideration: What would the world's throng have done if Jesus' disciples had drown? We well suppose that the world's throng would greatly rejoice, if the disciples of Jesus would drown in the storm which the enemy has raised upon them. What more could the slaves of the enemy wish for than that drowning would come to those, who with great fear and trembling row against the wind of the world. Because the enemys' slaves never fear that they will drown in the billowing sea of the world, for first they have a big ship with which they sail with the wind of the world and second they have the wind of the world in their favor. But the disciples of Jesus have first a small ship and second the wind of the world is against them. For that reason, the world's throng always has such a joyous hope that Jesus' disciples would soon come into distress and drown. What now would the slaves of the world have done, if Jesus' disciples

would have drown in the storm? What else would they have done but drank well at the funeral feasts as is their custom. If namely someone is born, they are ready to drink at christening feasts and if someone dies, they drink at the funeral feasts. There it can be seen best, that their belly is their God. And I have observed that the children of the world always gather together to drink, when they imagine they will win something good. They drink ahead of time for joy before they have won that good thing, which they hope for. Because the children of the world know of no other joy but that fleshly pleasure, although Paul says “who sows in the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.” So I think that the world’s slaves would gather together to drink at the funeral feasts, if Jesus’ disciples had drown in that storm, which the enemy had raised. There is their joy, but a very short joy, for God’s two-edged sword now flashes over the world. And who has raised this storm in the world? If God has raised it, would not it now be a reminder to the world of God’s wrath, would not there be occasion to begin to take heed, how one has lived up until now in the world, in joy, in vanity, in fornication, in pleasure, in drinking, in greed, in hatred and in envy. Who knows but that the world will yet come into greater distress than Jesus’ disciples, who were certainly afraid that they would drown and therefore awakened Jesus with their cry of distress. But the slaves of the world do not understand to fear anything, if now God had become angry with the world and for that rea-

son punish with wars, famine and disease.

The Jews had such a strong faith in God, when the enemy had already encompassed their city, that they became more proud the closer the destruction of the city came. The Jews thought that God through some miracle would rescue them from the powerful invasion of the enemy. But Christians do not have such a vain trust in God, but they flee with their life from the city of corruption, for they knew well, that God was angry with that city, whose inhabitants had shed the “blood of the saints and persecuted the Christians.

Now we will conclude this consideration with that hope that all unconverted and unreborn would take heed of the signs of the times, of which the Jews did not want to take heed. When the sea and the wind roar in the world, and nation rises against nation, are there not then such signs of the times, which indicate, that some great change will come into the world. Oh that that change would happen first in the heart and then in the wind! But our hope is, that the great stiller of the wind and of the sea, who with one word has stilled the wind and sea, can even yet still that wind and sea which the enemy has raised to drown the disciples of Jesus. As long as Jesus is in the ship, although He would yet be asleep, Jesus’ disciples should not be in distress, for they will awaken Him with their cries. They cry in their distress “Lord save us, we perish”. Did you think you sorrowless pagans that Jesus is sleeping so soundly that He will not hear the cries of the disciples? Did you think so, that Jesus

will no more wake from His sleep? Do not think in your hearts, you enemies of the cross of Christ, that Jesus' disciples will drown in this storm, which the enemy has raised upon them. You will sooner drown in your sins than the disciples. If also sometimes the waves of doubt strike over them, because of which Jesus also reproves them, when they are of such weak faith, how does it effect you? Your condition does not become any better through that, that the disciples fear they will drown in such weather, for the adage says: All are wise on the land, when misfortune happens at sea.

But row, row, you few souls, who are with Jesus in the ship, row and cry out: "Lord save, we perish!" And He will arise and still the wind and the sea, and you must reach the other shore in good health, which is on the other side of the sea, and there you must sing the new song to God and the Lamb. Amen. Hallelujah!

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany 1857.

(No sermon was found for the 5th Sunday after Epiphany, for which reason this sermon was printed in place.)

"I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen."

Ezekiel 36: 29,30

God promises the children of Israel through the prophet Ezekiel that He wants to save them from all their uncleanness and then intends to give them better fruit from the earth so that the heathens could not reproach them because of famine. It sounds from these words, that when God punished the children of Israel with famine and hard times, then the heathens reproached them because of famine, although it is not written how they reproached, but it is to be surmised that they reproached as Solomon has written in the Book of Wisdom: The ungodly say, The Righteous boasts that He is the Son of God; Let God now deliver Him, for He has said, "I am the Son of God."

In that way the Jews mocked the Son of God, not because of famine, but because of that wretchedness in which Jesus was in on the cross. We do not know if the heathens mock the Christians now because of famine, since the heathens themselves are in the same condemnation, although some heathens say that it is because of the Christians that this punishment has come. But the Christians must take heed of what God says through the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel In the same chapter from which the words of today's text are taken. When, namely, God punished the children of Israel so that they had to leave their country, then the heathens mocked the children of Israel saying, "Are these the people of the Lord and are gone forth out of His land?" But the Lord took that mockery to Himself and said that the heathens mocked His holy name when they mocked the children of Israel. But the Lord said to the

children of Israel, "I will save you for the sake of my holy name, which the House of Israel profaned among the heathen," Here we hear that the children of Israel profaned the name of the Lord among the heathens. The people of Israel should have been like a candle among the heathens, for Israel at that time carried the name of a Christian; they were then the people of God, but their life was such that the name of God was profaned among the heathens. Therefore the Lord rebukes the children of Israel through the mouth of the prophet and says (Ezekiel 36:21), "But I had pity (on namely the people of Israel) for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen." Although the house of Israel had profaned His holy name among the heathens, the Lord, however, pitied them, "I do not this for your sake, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathens whither ye went." God's name becomes profaned among the heathens when they, who are called the people of God, live so that the pagans are able to mock and reproach, although the life of a Christian is not satisfactory to the pagans, but if the pagans, because of the weakness of the Christians get to confirm their false faith that the Christians are no better than the pagans, in this way especially the name of God is profaned. But the Lord has pitied them, not because of their own merit, but because of His holy name, so that the pagans would not be able to thoroughly mock God and say, "The people of God are no better than the pagans," And as the heathens then mocked the people of Is-

real because of famine, the heathens of this time also mock the Christians because of poverty, although we know that poverty has come from that former vanity, when the Christians have been in sorrowlessness and lived as the slaves of the world live, some because of drunkenness, some because of finery, and some because of pride have become poor. Some have not yet wanted to part from their old finery, when they are able to carry the name of a Christian and finery. If, therefore, the Lord yet pities, He does not pity because of the Christian's own merit, but because of His holy name, that it would not become thoroughly mocked among the pagans; Let the pagans now carry their finery, but the Christians should no longer save their old finery; well knowing, that they have a better finery in store, which is not made of the excrement of worms, but of pure and incorruptible substance, which the sorrowless and unbelieving cannot take upon themselves. The pagans are not able to carry that finery which that great Heavenly King gives to those supper guests who strip off the black rags of self-righteousness and take upon themselves the wedding garment.

Thus says the Lord to the children of Israel: "I will save you from all your uncleanness and will call for the corn and will increase it and lay no famine upon you. I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. I do not this for your sake, says the Lord, but this you must know, but you must be greatly ashamed of your ways, ye Hou-

se of Israel,” We must hope that the Lord will say to the corn, that it must increase well, when we observe today in what condition God’s field is into which before this time blessed seeds were planted. Is it the fault of the seed or is it the fault of the field, or the fault of the weather that God’s field is not as beautiful as it has formerly been at this time of the year? Pray, all husbandmen and laborers in the Lord’s vineyard, that the Lord would give more moisture from heaven, and would allow His gracious sun to shine so that the Lord of the seed would get some grains of wheat into His garner in the harvest time, when He comes soon to purge His floor, whose fan is in His hand. Pray, all husbandmen, that the Lord of the seed would for a short time preserve this piece of field from snow storm, frost, and tempests, that those few straws among the thorns would ripen and prosper before the winter frosts come. Hear, You great Lord of the seed, the prayer of the poor husbandmen. Our Father, etc.

Today’s evening sermon text is found written in Ezekiel 36:27 and the words are thus: “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and ye shall keep my judgements and do them.”

In accordance with our above-read text, we must, at this holy moment, consider: How God gives His spirit to those who receive it.

In the time of the prophet Ezekiel, the children of Israel were in captivity in Babylon and were very oppressed bodily, and as a person in distress re-

members God better than in prosperity, so some prisoners had begun to know their sins and also confessed with the mouth, “We with our fathers have been ungodly.” Therefore, God gave some promises of grace beforehand through the prophet Ezekiel, that they would begin to believe better. God had already promised through many prophets that He wants to give His Holy Spirit, although this promise was fulfilled only 500 years later, when the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured upon the disciples, but all promises of grace are fulfilled on God’s part if a person from his part could receive them. The children of Israel did not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after the Saviour’s death, for they were so sorrowless, obstinate, and hardened, that they did not have such a sorrow which was after the mind of God. Although now, through the mouth of the prophet, God gave this kind of promises of grace, “I will put my spirit within you,” those wretches were not in that condition that they could have received the Holy Spirit. Although the natural chastisement had come upon them, although the heathens mocked them because of famine and because they were refugees from their land, that spiritual sorrow did not come to them, which was after the mind of God, but only sorrow of the world which causes death. And now when sorrow of the world is offered to all, then all penitent and believing ones should take an example from the Scriptures, which shows how God has often had to oppress the sorrowless with natural chastisement. And those few souls, who have then on God’s behalf

cried out repentance to the people, have themselves suffered bodily want along with the rest. The prophets have also received their share of that, although they have not needed so much, and on very poor food they have lived, but the prophets have had a greater power to preach to the sorrowless people when there was famine and hard times. Now the Christians should take heed of how much has been wasted in foolishness in the time of sorrowlessness, and how little the good times have been appreciated. If we now had that which was formerly wasted in finery and foolishness of the world, we would have no distress, we can see even with the intellect that if all would have sought the kingdom of God and His righteousness already in their youth, then all would be saved which was wasted in the time of sorrowlessness. To this today's text now pertains, when God promises to give His Spirit, that they who receive it would live after the will of God. The Holy Spirit reminds of the former life and wants to tear the heart away from the world so that the sorrow of the world could not enter into the heart, instead that spiritual sorrow would come to all, through which the heart would better become free from the world. When the Christians have been unthankful for the good times, then the Spirit of God now wants to remind them of that unthankfulness and of using the gifts of God wrongly; this effect of the Holy Spirit also pertains to true Christianity. When the sorrow of the world also forces itself into the heart of a Christian, then nothing other than that promised Spirit of God can

disperse that sorrow of the world; nothing other than that Spirit of God promised in the text can effect a greater concern over the soul's salvation than over supporting the body. Therefore, open up your hearts, all penitent and believing ones, so that the promised Spirit of God could enter into your hearts, which is able to disperse and quench the sorrow of the world, which will increase our faith, that we would be able to trust our body and soul into the care of God. We have seen that the Spirit of God enters the heart through the Word, when the Word of God becomes alive in a broken heart; but the Word of God is called a seed in the Bible, and this blessed seed is planted into God's field with that hope that it would begin to grow and to make fruit. And when God says to the corn that it must increase, we believe that the seed has life, which effects growth when it falls on the good ground. But good ground is not everywhere and poor seed does not sprout, for it has no life. When now God says to the corn that it must increase, we must believe that it will increase, when the Lord gives more moisture from heaven and allows His gracious sun to shine and protects this small field from snow storm, frost and tempest, so that the Lord of the seed would get some grains of wheat gathered into His garner before the whole field goes to waste. For the summer is short in the north country labor and the husbandmen can perform heavy labor before one small piece of field is prepared, and much fertilizer is needed, and often frost makes an end to the whole field before it becomes ready. Oh no,

how little the Lord of the seed receives for His trouble here in the north country where from the best field four-fold harvest can hardly come, but in the land of Canaan from the best field a hundred-fold harvest has come, you few kernels of wheat, grow among the thorns, ripen, soon the time of harvest will come, soon the angel of death will come to cut the field, soon you will reach the garner, where the frost does not penetrate or the hailstones fall, as here in the growing season. When the Lord of the seed has gathered the kernels of wheat into His garner, then the chaff is burnt, but the wheat can be at peace in God's garner; and we must believe that the Lord of the seed will receive some, although few, kernels of wheat gathered into His garner, no matter how poor and base God's field now would be. Grow and ripen, you few kernels in the milk stage, amidst the thistles and thorns; soon the angel of death will come to cut the field, soon the wheat will be gathered into the garner, where the frost does not penetrate, nor the tempests ruin the field of God. Amen.

Septuagesima Sermon B.

Jesus said to the Jews: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year

also, til I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Luke 13: 6-9.

This parable of the unfruitful tree the Saviour has brought forth as one example of how many years the Master of the vineyard spares those unfruitful trees before He commands them to be cut down. And we surmise from all aspects of the matter that this unfruitful tree was a green tree, for no one spares dry trees so long in the garden; but as long as one fig tree remains green and bears leaves and flowers, the Master of the vineyard wants to spare it in that hope and expectation that if, however, this fig tree would become fruitful. But; the Master of the vineyard will not spare that unfruitful fig tree very long, for we hear what John says, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." But we hear also from this parable, which has been brought forth in Luke 13, that the Master of the vineyard had sought fruit for three years from that fig tree, but found none. And then He said to the Dresser of the vineyard, "Cut it down; why cumbereth It the ground?" But the Dresser of the vineyard began to pray that the Lord would spare it yet one year, saying? "Lord, let it alone this year also, til I shall dig about it, and dung it." Oh, wonderful Dresser! how merciful You are and patient with this unfruitful tree; although this tree stands in the way and cumbereth the ground, just the same You want to yet dig around it and dung it. But if this tree does not

even then bear fruit when it is allowed to stand yet one year, then it will inevitably be cut down and cast into the fire. So merciful is the Dresser of the vineyard now to that green and unfruitful fig tree, that He spares it three years, and yet a fourth also, while He can dig around it and dung it. But do not, you dry tree, take for yourself any false hope from this green tree, for the Saviour has said, "For it they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:31) Many a dry tree imagines that he also will be spared because the green tree has not been cut down. But be not in that hope that you will be spared, you dry tree: instead, you will be cut down at the first opportunity, for you have been ready to burn for a long time. The devil needs firewood in the north country, where there is such a long winter and many months of freezing weather. How else would the old man devil survive here in the north country if there were not firewood in the forest? But neither will he take a green tree as the first firewood, for a green tree does not burn as well as a dry tree. But dry juniper and stumps he takes as the first firewood. Therefore the dry tree need not think that he will be spared. But the green tree will also be cut down if it does not now begin to bear fruit, when the Master of the vineyard comes the fourth time and finds no fruit. The Saviour speaks also of those decayed trees which bring forth evil fruit, and such trees which begin to decay from the root the Master of the vineyard has never spared. The Lord laments also in some place in the Scripture, that He has

done much work upon His vineyard and has not found anything but bitter grapes, and surely there are such here also. But of those branches of the vine which bear bitter grapes, He says in the Revelation that He will put those bitter grapes into the winepress of the wrath of God, and blood from that winepress shall flow by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs when He presses those bitter grapes in the winepress of His wrath. The Lord speaks also in some places in the Scripture that the high trees shall be brought down and the low trees shall be exalted: for the high trees prevent the sun from shining upon the low tree, therefore the Lord intends to bring down the high trees. When a hard wind blows, the high trees fall first, no matter how thick they would be. But a decayed tree which bears evil fruit and bitter grapes is cut down and cast into the fire.

Because now the Gospel for today speaks of the vineyard in which are both grapevines and fig trees, all laborers in the vineyard should pray that great Master of the vineyard, that He would spare those unfruitful trees yet this year as long as they remain green, that the great Dresser of the vineyard would dig ditches around them and dung them, that - who knows - they might become fruitful. And you unfruitful fig tree, remember once that this is now the third year in which the Master of the vineyard has come seeking fruit from you, you unfruitful fig tree. The Master of the vineyard has already said to the Dresser of the vineyard: "Cut It down; why cumbereth it the ground?" But the merciful Dresser of the vine-

ard is now praying in your behalf, that you would be spared yet this year. If you do not become fruitful within this time, then you will be cut down. Remember this now, you unfruitful fig tree. And you merciful Dresser of the vineyard, pray yet in behalf of this unfruitful fig tree, that he would be spared yet one year. Hear, You merciful Dresser of the vineyard, the sigh of the sorrowful ones. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 20: 1-16.

We heard from the Gospel how the Master of the vineyard hired laborer, into His vineyard, from morning until the afternoon. And we see from the sun that now it is already afternoon and the last times; it is not likely to be long before evening comes. But just the same, some still stand idle at the market place and say, "No man hath hired us." And the Master of the vineyard says to them, "Go ye also in the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." Let us see what they now do when the Master of the vineyard has hired them. We have before spoken of the laborers in the vineyard, and now when the laborers have labored, we should consider at this time: What fruit comes from the vineyard and what kind of fruit is it? First: Does much fruit come from the vineyard? Second: What kind of fruit is it which is now growing in the vineyard? May the great Master of the vineyard find some kind of fruit when He comes to seek! He laments through the prophet that He has not before found anything else but bitter grapes, but now He awaits better fruit than before.

First consideration: Does much fruit come from the vineyard? We do not yet know before all the branches of the vine are cut. Not many grapes have ripened yet and an unripe grape is tasteless. In our opinion surely some grapes are in a good beginning, if they would be allowed to grow in peace. But crows and magpies want to spoil the branches of the vine; truly they cannot eat those grapes, but they dung upon them. And who is the person who can eat such grapes, upon which crows and magpies have dunged? And I think that the devil himself has put them into the vineyard to spoil the grapes. There are also such worms, which are called the dogs of Hades, which gnaw on the grapes and do much damage. But I think that the moth, whose larvae the dogs of Hades are, should not lay eggs anymore as much as before in the vineyard. It is one large and, according to the world's mind, beautiful moth from which the worms come, which are called the dogs of Hades. This is the worm which will never die, which is written about in the Revelation, for it will gnaw their consciences forever, who here have not been grafted into that true vine. But also those grapes of the vine and leaves of the vine which have been grafted into that true vine, this same worm wants to gnaw before the grapes have ripened. But the more the branches of the vine suck sap from the vine, the faster they ripen, and then the worm no longer wants to gnaw them. But our hope is that those grapes, which are now growing in the vineyard, shall soon ripen if the Lord will give more moisture from heaven and allow His

merciful sun to shine. But worse than that, the grapes which are now growing in God's vineyard will not all become perfect. Some will be spoiled by worms, some the crows and magpies will dung upon, some grapes the frost will destroy, and in that way one part of the grapes go to waste. The flowers of grapes are surely beautiful at Saint John's time, but when harvest time comes and the branches of the vine are cut, then it is seen that there are not so many grapes as there were flowers in the beginning. If you would go to count those flowers which at Saint John's time were in the most beautiful bloom, then you would see that scarcely half of those bear fruits: in August there are not as many grapes as there were flowers at Saint John's time. What does this come from? It comes from this, that spring frost killed some flowers and early rain spoiled some. For the nature of a flower is such, that not a single fruit will come from those without seed. When a flower is now in most beautiful bloom, then there is such a seed in them by which the flower will become fruitful; and this seed is in all flowers, be it the flower of the grape or the flower of the cloudberry or the flower of the field. If rain now comes at the time of full bloom, then the flower is ruined in that way, that the rain takes the seed away from the flower; and such flowers do not become fruitful, but remain an empty shell. When you see such heads in which there is an empty shell, then know that during the time of full bloom, the rain has taken away the seed which is in all flowers. And thus many of those seeds go to

waste, which the Lord of the seed has in the beginning sown into the ground. The flowers of the grapes are also sensitive to the cold, as are also the flowers of the cloudberry; and therefore one part of them goes to waste during the time of full bloom and another part during the time of harvest, so that few grapes remain in the end for the Master of the Vineyard. Although the Master of the vineyard has hired so many laborers to dig ditches and also to dung the roots of the fig trees and to water the roots of the flowers, just the same His trouble goes to naught, if now henceforth more fruit does not come from the vineyard than has come up to this time. And surely the enemy rejoices over that, that the trouble of the Master of the vineyard goes to naught, but the Master of the vineyard becomes sorrowful over that, and all the faithful laborers in God's vineyard weep when they see how many of those flowers of the grapes go to waste, which were in most beautiful bloom at Saint John's time.

Second consideration: What kind are the red grapes which finally remain? The Lord has lamented formerly in the Old Testament that He has not found other than bitter grapes in His vineyard: and who knows what kind the grapes are which are now growing. But they have not yet quite ripened; but we hope that if the Lord allows His merciful sun to shine and prunes the unfruitful branches away so that the sun can better shine upon those branches which bear fruit, that they will bear more abundant fruit. When the Lord purges them, as He has promised that He wants to purge those who bear fruit,

then we hope that the few grapes who are growing here will become acceptable to the Lord when they ripen fully. We hope that the Lord will taste fruit of the vine which has grown in the north country. Therefore grow, you red grapes, grow and ripen before frost comes. Soon the angel of death will come to cut the branches of the vine. All grapes which are then bitter as the horseberry and the serpent's berry and pig's berry, them the Master of the vineyard will put into the winepress of His wrath and squeeze them so that the blood from the winepress of God's wrath will flow by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. But may the great Dresser of the vineyard, Who has through great trouble hired laborers into His vineyard and dug ditches and dunged the roots of the fig trees, protect the few grapes which are now growing, which have been grafted into that true vine, from whose heart they suck moisture. Protect them from snowstorms, frost, and tempests, that they could ripen before harvest time comes, that the Dresser of the vineyard would have a few red grapes to put on the table when visitors come from Heaven! Hear, You great Master of the vineyard, the prayer of those laborers who are in heavy labor. Amen!

Sexagesima Sunday 1857

“Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Isaiah 53:1

Prophet Isaiah laments that no one believes his report, for those people to whom he preached were so hardened that they did not care to hear God's

Word when it was preached so that it came against the intellect. And all the prophets of that time lament that the people of that time have not believed what was preached by the prophets. Not until after the death of the prophets did some begin to believe that the prophets had rightly preached, when they saw that the prophesies of the prophets were fulfilled. So also in the Saviours time, not many believed that His preaching was right. And when Luther began to preach repentance to the papists, not many believed his preaching and doctrine to be right, but they considered him to be a wild spirit. But after Luther's death his doctrine became spread more broadly. So all spiritual teachers have had reason to ask as the prophet Isaiah asked: “Who hath believed our report?” We have noticed that not until they are on their deathbed do some believe our preaching, and most of them have then had to confess that it has been preached rightly. But this confession has not helped them when they have not believed before. Some have believed our preaching for a while, but when the temptations of this world have come, they have ceased to believe; nor has this believing helped them, but it became a greater condemnation when death began to squeeze the heart. Some believe the preaching to be right, but do not do accordingly. They postpone their repentance from year to year and from day to day, until it is too late. And then they must say: “They are not acceptable to me.” Some feel that they are not able to believe so much that they would become free. Therefore we must ask as Prophet

Isaiah: "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

We do not know who will finally believe our preaching. But as the prophets have preached although none have believed their preaching, so we must also preach although no one would believe anymore. For we are convinced of this, that once that time will come that men must believe, when their eyes are opened to see that it has been rightly preached, that the way to Heaven has been shown to them. And Oh! that they would believe here in the time of grace, before the door of grace is closed.

Now when we today shall attempt to explain the Saviour's preaching of the four kinds of ground, we pray that the great Author and Finisher of faith would grant us the right understanding, that each one would come to understand of which ground he is. Those few souls who have ears to hear have, without a doubt, understood that in that great field into which the Lord of seeds has sown the blessed seed, there are many kinds of ground, in which the greater part of the sown seed becomes lost. It is unknown if He will even receive His seed in return when frost has damaged the field. Pray, you husbandmen, that the great Lord of seeds, who has sown the good seed, would protect the field, so that the seeds would begin to sprout and bear fruit; and that, while men sleep, the enemy would not have occasion to sow so many thistles that they would choke the wheat, for now it can be seen that thorns and thistles choke the field so that there are no longer

many kernels of wheat left. And even those seeds which have come up in a few places this year, may be so poor that they will not sprout, even though they would be sown. And Thou, Lord of the seed, protect us, that all seed would not be lost. Protect the field from frost, snow storm and tempest, so that those few kernels of wheat which you have saved for seed would sprout and bear fruit that the seed would not run out, for if the seed of all runs out, then we are all lost. Hear, Thou Lord of the seeds, the sighs of the poor husbandmen. Our Father and so forth.

The Gospel: Luke 8: 4-15

We heard from our holy gospel which was read, that the Saviour preached to the people about the four kinds of ground, but the people understood nothing from that whole parable. Neither did the disciples understand what this parable was, but they had the desire to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, and therefore they asked the Saviour what the spiritual meaning of this parable was. If, in that great multitude which was gathered then, there would have been someone who believed that in that parable was the word of God, then without a doubt one of them would have asked what the spiritual significance of this parable is. But we understand that sorrowless people do not consider such parables to be anything other than mere prattle and tales in which there is no truth or the word of God. Only the disciples had a desire to know and understand what this parable would be, and to them Jesus also explained this parable.

le. When now Jesus Himself has explained this parable to His disciples, with the guidance of this explanation we want to more broadly explain the most weighty parts which pertain to true Christianity, when we, through God's grace, at this holy moment speak about the four kinds of ground.

The first consideration: What kind of people are they whose hearts are as a trodden down road, where the blessed seed is entirely lost?

The second consideration: What kind of people are they whose hearts are as a rock where the blessed seed withers away?

The third consideration: What kind of people are they whose hearts are as a field where thorns choke the field?

The fourth consideration: What kind are they whose hearts are as the good ground?

While considering this Heavenly field, all true husbandmen should pray the Lord of seeds that some kernel would fall upon good ground, and that it would bear blessed fruit.

The first consideration: What kind of people are they whose hearts are as a trodden down road, where the blessed seed is not able to sprout?

According to the Saviour's explanation, they are such people who hear, then comes the devil and takes away the word out of their heart, lest they should believe and be saved. Here we hear that the devil, who is compared to a bird, takes away the Word from the hearts of the sorrowless, so that in that manner the Word of God effects nothing in such a heart from which the devil takes away the Word. In this place

the devil is compared to a bird of the heavens which flies around the world and devours the seed which is sown by the wayside. Those seeds are first trodden down, that is, the vain thoughts which fly to and fro trample and tread down God's field. Such a person, whose thoughts fly around the world, has no time to listen intently to God's Word. And who is it who makes them fly? It is none other than the devil who makes these thoughts fly around the world even while the Word of God is preached. An awakened person often feels how the devil wants to make the thoughts fly around the world during the sermon, but a sorrowless person does not feel that the devil takes away the Word out of his heart, for he sits deaf and dumb in God's house. The Word of God goes as a hum over the head or in one ear and out through the other, so that nothing remains from the whole sermon, not in the memory nor the intellect nor the understanding, much less in the conscience or the heart, where nothing at all adheres. How can the conscience of the sorrowless awaken when the devil takes away the Word from his heart as soon as it is preached? The black birds of heaven pluck out and peck that blessed seed as soon as it is sown. A sorrowless person has not come into the house of the Lord for that reason that he would now listen intently so that he might receive some enlightenment for his soul from it, but as in the Saviour's time the greatest part had come to peer, so even now the greatest part of the sorrowless gather in the church to peer and to show off their finery. They have not come with that

mind that with heartfelt desire they would receive the Word. They have not come with that mind that the Word would be able to effect an awakening of conscience or true repentance, but the greatest part has just happened to come. Some have come to mock and laugh, some have come to watch where they should take hold of, as the Pharisees in the Saviour's time. It is therefore no wonder that the devil takes away the Word from their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

The second consideration: What kind are they whose hearts are as a rock, where the blessed seed withers because of lack of moisture? The Lord of seeds Himself has explained this place in this way: they are such people who when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away. This place pertains to those who in the first awakening receive the Word with joy, as we have seen happen here also. Many have received the Word with joy when the gospel was preached to them so that the Word became living. All who are concerned over their souls, all sorrowful and penitent ones, receive the Word with joy when the gospel of the Crucified Saviour is preached to them. The Word becomes living in their hearts and they come into joy. It has now been seen and heard here that with many it has gone so, that they have believed for a while but in time of temptation they have fallen away. The Saviour says in the parable that they lacked moisture, and in the explanation He says that they have no root. With moisture is understood a

heartfelt sorrow, which that sinful woman had, who came and wept upon the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Leper. Some of the awakened have not had this heartfelt sorrow over sin, but only a fear of death which has driven them to receive the gospel's sermon of faith with joy. But such faith is not enduring because of the other reason, that they have no root. According to our mind this should be understood in this way; their conscience has not truly awakened, or even if it once has awakened, nevertheless this awakening of the conscience was not enduring, so that they would have remained watching and striving against the world and their own flesh. Therefore they have not had such moisture or such grief as the disciples, who wept and lamented after the Saviour's death. Nor have they such kind of root and awakening of conscience as Paul, David, and Luther. We can also surmise whether the Saviour, in this place, meant such people who are outwardly soft, but whose hearts inwardly are as hard as rough and stony ground. Seeds sprout even there when the gospel of Christ is preached, for such people also receive the Word with joy, but in the time of temptation they fall away. Their heart is not a broken heart; it is hard underneath although outwardly it is soft. Such kind of people surely weep when it is preached sweetly, but also laugh when light-mindedness is ruling. And if some Christian begins to delve deeper into their hearts, egoism rises and then they say: "That wild spirit would spoil the work of the Holy Spirit in me." But when the Saviour says: "for a while

they believe”, then we also must believe that He means such kind of people who have truly awakened and who have received the preaching of the gospel with joy, but they have no moisture, or such a heartfelt sorrow as did David, the disciples, and other penitent ones. Nor have they any root, or such an awakening of conscience which reveals itself in watchfulness, self-denial, and striving against sin. Therefore, in time of temptation they fall away. There are many such examples here who have, for a while, believed and during time of temptation have fallen away. And what is it that caused them to fall? Nothing other than adultery, love of the world, and worldly-mindedness, worldly honor, egoism, and greed. Oh! if these wretches would recognize, in the time of grace, what a miserable condition they are in! “Remember from whence thou art fallen, and do the first works!”

The third consideration: What kind of people are they whose hearts are as a field where thorns choke the wheat? The Lord of seeds Himself has explained this place in this way: “And they which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” Here is painted before our eyes such people who observe the outward customs of Christianity and confess faith, but the heart is so fastened to the world that in no way do they become free from the world. Not only sorrow of the world, which worketh death – sorrow of the world is as a nightmare upon them and presses them to the ground — but also riches or

worldly goods are on their mind night and day. First they want to gather worldly possessions and only then make repentance. And the third sin which prevents them from penitence and believing is the pleasures of this life, as marriage and other similar things. The pleasures of this life prevent the young from true Christianity, and the cares of the world keep the poor from coming to a knowledge of salvation. The wealthy, because of their riches, do not become free from the world. But all of these pretend to have concern over their souls’ salvation; they are not openly sorrowless, as those who drink, swear, commit adultery, and fight, but they are such who imitate the customs of Christianity, for in this field where the thorns choke the wheat, there is straw, but the ear is no more than a husk. They have the outward customs of Christianity, but in the heart there is no truth nor true penitence, even though they go to the meetings, and there are many of those even here who pretend to have concern over the salvation of the soul, but the soul’s salvation has not become a matter of the heart. Oh! In how many places has the blessed seed been lost, and how little does the Lord of seeds receive for His troubles! When we first behold that great multitude of the world, whose heart is as a trodden down road in whom God’s Word effects nothing, not even so much that one would stop in the race of sin and begin to have sorrow over his soul, and secondly we behold those who for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away, and thirdly those who because of cares of the

world, riches and pleasures of this life are choked by thorns, then not many persons or souls remain who truly bear fruit for the kingdom of Heaven. The Lord of seeds is not able to gather many kernels of wheat into His garner at harvest time. Now is still such a time when the sorrow of the world forces itself powerfully into the hearts of the Christians. And although the angel of death stands with a drawn sword over the nation as David saw Him standing with a drawn sword in Heaven, and as John saw this same angel of death sitting upon a pale horse, just the same people are able to live in sorrowlessness and open ungodliness, by which they mock their Creator. But when death comes, surely they then feel their misfortune, but then the time has become too late. They must finally condemn themselves and confess that they have been upon a poor road. But it does not help any more to cry and knock when the door of grace has been closed, as many a dying one has lamented in these times: "God no longer hears my prayers." Consider now, all sorrowless, fallen ones and those choked with the cares, riches and pleasures of this life, how short a time of grace you have and how long eternity is, and how precious-ly redeemed souls become lost because of your sorrowlessness, because of your ungodliness, and because of your obstinacy. In today's gospel, the Saviour has painted before your eyes the condition of each and every one, so that you might recognize yourselves and see which field you are in. But when the devil takes the Word out of the heart as soon as it is preached, then there is no

hope that such ones would awaken, until possibly in death, when the time of grace is no more, nor the grace of penitence, as it has happened to many dying ones even this year, that the grace of penitence was not given to them, who through a sudden death have been snatched away from the world into eternity. O, Jesus, help us to avoid wrong roads!

The fourth consideration: There is yet a fourth part of the great field which is called the good ground, where the blessed seed yields fruit an hundred-fold. But this place is not to be understood so, that a fourth part of the people will become saved, for neither in the apostles' time has a fourth part of the people become Christians, nor have yet now a fourth part come into the outward doctrine of Christianity, and much fewer are those who truly become saved. But we believe nevertheless that there is yet found one part in God's field which truly bears fruit, and they are truly penitent and believing who, according to the Saviour's explanation, hear the word and treasure it in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience. It is remarkable that they bring forth fruit with patience, and we also know that patience is necessary before the right fruit comes. In this evil world one must have much patience before the Christianity becomes enduring. Many, through impatience, have lost the right fruit of faith. Many have lamented that impatience had spoiled their faith, and it is true that many have lost their faith through impatience. But our hope is that there are yet some souls who bear fruit in patience. There are yet some, though few, souls who

bear the cross of Jesus with patience. And those few souls who bear fruit in patience should now pray the great Cross-Bearer that He would come to help them and strengthen their members when they begin to be weary, that He would pour out a few drops of grace from the wine of the Holy Ghost when their knees begin to faint under the burden of the cross, that they henceforth would be able to bear fruit for the kingdom of Heaven in patience, that they would be able to war and strive in their most precious faith until the end, and finally enjoy the fruit of patience in the kingdom of Heaven where all suffering ends, where the Lord wipes their tears away and gives them the crown of life. There the few souls who herein have borne fruit for the kingdom of God in patience, can enjoy the fruit from the tree of Life which is in the paradise of God, now and forever. Amen.

Shrove Sunday

“And Jesus said, For judgement I have come into this world that they which see not might see and they which see might be made blind.”

John 9: 39

The evangelist John writes in the ninth chapter of his gospel that the Saviour had given sight to a person who had been born blind and had been blind for thirty years. Because of that matter the Pharisees and scribes became angry with the Saviour, who had opened the eyes of the blind man, and said that he was a sinner or ungodly person. But the Pharisees also became angry with that man who was born blind, for when the

Pharisees began to question that man whose eyes were opened, they asked him what kind of a man he thought it was who had opened his eyes, and that man confessed that he believed that Jesus was a prophet. Although that man was born blind, and therefore could distinguish no letters in a book, nevertheless he had better knowledge of the Christianity than the Pharisees and scribes. That man who was born blind surmised from his own experience or the feelings of his heart, that God does not hear sinners, and that Man who could open the blind one's eyes had great power of God. But the Pharisees and scribes were very angry with the Saviour because of that barking. And that spiritual hatred made them so blind that they said he was a sinner and the greatest evildoer. Sometimes they thought that He had a devil, although some said, “Could a devil open a blind one's eyes?” Because of this spiritual blindness, the Saviour said that they who do not see might see, and they which see, might be made blind. Natural man always thinks that he has eyes, that he sees better than the Christians where the way goes to Heaven. He thinks that he has a better knowledge of Christianity than these awakened. He thinks that an awakened person, whose eyes the Saviour has opened, has become insane, and that they are possessed of evil spirits. Therefore they behold the Christianity to be wrong and a remarkable superstition; the Christians are in their minds an accursed group, who do not allow honorable people peace of conscience. But this false faith of the people of the world comes from that

spiritual hatred, which makes them blind, as the Pharisees and scribes did not know a worse man in the world than that Jesus of Nazareth, who reprov- ed them of iniquity. And also the blind throng of the world cannot find worse people than these awakened people. But it comes from that spiritual hatred which makes the sorrowless blind. Therefore the Saviour also says that they who see might be made blind. As a fish becomes blind in the bright light, natural man also becomes stone-blind through that heavenly light which appears through this Christianity. An eye doctor can best understand why a fish becomes blind in bright light. But we have seen that when the bright light comes suddenly upon a fish, it becomes so blind that it sees nothing. But the older and larger fish who are a little farther as on the edge of the light, they flee with their life from the light into the darkness, for they fear the light. So also old adam fears that spiritual light and flees with his life into the darkness, where he has been accustomed to swim since his childhood. A fish sees better in the darkness than in the light. Natural intellect can see better in natural darkness than in the light of Christianity what is right and what is wrong. But when the light of Christianity shines in the eyes, then he becomes so blind that he cannot understand at all what is right and what is wrong. He becomes so blind that he sees the Christianity as the effect of the devil's spirit, and his natural state, which is spiritual darkness, he sees as Christianity. And when a natural person becomes so angry with the Christians that the gall bursts, then he

begins to suck the blood of the Christians. The conscience does not tell him that it is wrong, but spiritual hatred gives him that wrong assurance that it is right, that the Christians must be hated and beaten. With that intention the Saviour says that they who see might be made blind, that is, hypocrites and mouth Christians, who have the best outward knowledge and a large intellect, must become blind through Christianity, but the blind, that is, the simple ones who do not have such a large intellect, must see what true Christianity is like. But the natural intellect is so opposed that it shakes its fist and says, "Is that true Christianity, which makes a person blind? Should a person not receive better eyes or a better understanding and better enlightenment through Christianity?" Yes, such eyes which can stand to see that light which shines in the Christianity, those eyes become brighter through Christianity. But such eyes which have become red from liquor, or through adultery have sunken into the eye cavities, or because of spiritual hatred have become bloody, or because of greed have dried up: said in a word, those who have eyes like an owl, who can see best in the darkness, they become blind because of that light which shines in the darkness. So also the large fish who swim in that natural darkness, they become blind in the light of Christianity. They can not bear to see the light, and therefore they flee as fast as they can from the edge of the light into that natural darkness, where they have become accustomed to swim. The Saviour says that they love darkness and hate the light, because their deeds

are evil. They do not dare to come into the light so that their deeds would be revealed. Everyone who does evil fears and hates the light, for the Christianity, which is that spiritual light, reveals the whores and the thieves. The enemies of the light or of Christianity, and also drunkards and whiskey merchants, cursers, fighters, greedy ones, lovers of the world's goods, all earthlings, spooks and evil spirits which move about in the darkness, they flee when the day lightens. All wolves and beasts which rend and ravage the sheep at night, go into their dens when the sun begins to shine upon the earth. So also the owls, who hunt their prey at night, fly away when the day lightens. All those creatures of darkness, who cannot bear to see the light, are now watching and waiting when the sun sets and when this small light would dis-appear, which has now appeared, that they would be able to again hunt for souls of men and eat up their possessions through whiskey trade. But we hope and pray to the Father of light, that He would open the eyes of all the blind who sit by the wayside begging, that they too could see what kind of light it is. As He opened the eyes of the man who was born blind, and the eyes of that man who sat by the roadside begging, so He even now can open the eyes of all blind ones who cry, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me, that I may receive my sight." Pray, all blind ones, pray all poor in spirit, and pray all wretched ones, that they who have received their sight would not become blind again, and that all that are still blind would receive their sight, that they would see to travel

to eternity. Hear, oh Son of David, the cry of that blind wretch, who sits by the wayside begging. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 18: 31-43

In today's gospel both spiritual and natural blindness are depicted before our eyes. That man who cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David," was naturally blind. But the disciples were also blind in spirit when the Saviour revealed the suffering which stood before Him, and they did not believe it. In accordance with this we shall, at this moment, speak of that spiritual blindness. The First Consideration shows how a person has become blind; the Second Consideration shows how this blind wretch must receive his sight. We follow Jesus, but we must not reprove that blind man when he cries after the Saviour, for if he knows his blindness, that because of blindness he has become a beggar, he will not cease crying out even if he is reprovved. It is written, namely in the gospel, that the more this blind man was forbidden to cry out, the more he cried out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

The First Consideration shows how this blind wretch has become blind. We have heard that this blind wretch was born blind, and if his parents were here, they could then testify that he was born blind as a wolf whelp. But even if he would not have been born blind, he has any way later on become stone blind, when the devil has reversed his eyes so that all the letters in the book are turned upside down, although the blind wretch thinks he understands rightly those

matters which pertain to Christianity. But when the devil has reversed the eyes of the blind wretch, he sees true

Christianity as the effect of the devil's spirit or as a superstition; but that natural state he sees as true Christianity. He depends upon this that he has lived meekly, even if he would be a little bit of a drunkard, whiskey merchant, adulterer, even if he would set exorbitant prices and be greedy to gain worldly goods; he takes from the poor and spends on the rich, he curses and fights with people, but certainly he has lived meekly even then. Certainly his conscience does not reprove him of drinking, cursing, or fighting, nor does his conscience reprove him of adultery or greed, for the devil has so reversed his eyes that he does not see his sins. But he certainly even then has sharp eyes to see faults in the walk of the Christians, although he himself drinks, curses and fights, commits adultery and steals, it does not come upon the conscience. But the speech and reproaches of the Christians, they become such a great burden upon the conscience of the blind wretch, that he cannot get peace of conscience before he has sucked the blood of the Christians. But how could his own terrible deeds come upon his conscience when the devil has hidden all his sins from his eyes and covered all his filthiness under a cover of meekness, or washed his heart clean with the slime of dead faith. Namely, if this blind wretch would not have lived so meekly that he could depend upon that, that God must repay his good deeds in eternity, nevertheless he takes and steals grace and thinks thus, "Not all wrong-

doing will fall only on me, since the whole world has lived in the same way." He also takes from that a false consolation that if he has to go to hell, certainly others will come after him; no doubt being in hell will be easier when there are lots of companions. Such a miserable envy comes to the devil if others would be better than he; for that reason he must put all those sins upon the Christians in which he is bound, even the worst and cruelest; for example, that Christians are blasphemers of God and servants of the devil, who do not allow honorable people peace of conscience. There it is best seen how blind a sorrowless person is, when in his mind all the effects of the Holy Spirit are the effects of the devil's spirit. Anyway so those meek Jews thought, that the Saviour opened the eyes of the blind with sorcery and the help of the devil. They said that He had a devil and that He was in alliance with the devil. The same thought all the servants of the devil have even now, who have been born blind as wolf whelps and whose eyes the devil has reversed. They even now have that belief that the Christians are servants of the devil's spirit and an accursed crowd, enemies of God and man, who do not give honorable people peace of conscience. Spiritual hatred has made them so blind that they thirst for Christians blood. In that way the servants of the devil receive peace of conscience, when they have that belief that Christians are servants of the devil. Now if the Christians are the servants of the devil, then the children of the world are the servants of God. If the Christians are fools, then the

children of the world are wise. If the Christians are dogs, then the sorrowless are angels. Such conclusions they make, that the Christians have the wrong faith, therefore it follows that the thieves of grace have the right faith, and through that conclusion, drunkards, whiskey merchants and fighters become Christians. But they who reproach people of wrongdoing and of an ungodly life, they are false prophets. And if the world, with the power of the law, is not able to suck the blood of the Christians, they try with fists, with evasions and falsehoods, threats, and cursings, with beatings and scourging, that thereby peace of conscience would come. But the more the blind wretch becomes angry and scourges, the deeper into hell he falls. Now a naturally blind person knows that sight is lacking, but a spiritually blind person thinks that he can see. He thinks he knows where the way goes to heaven, and he becomes very angry if someone tells him that he is blind and that in that blindness he will go into open water. The Saviour said to the Jews, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin," if you knew your blindness, then you would not travel so boldly to destruction. "But now ye say, we see, therefore your sin remaineth." If a natural person would know his blindness, he would not be so bold to hate and to blaspheme the Christians. But that very thing, that a natural person imagines that he sees or knows where the way goes to heaven; just that belief that he has eyes, although he is blind, that makes this blind wretch bold to curse, drink, fight, commit adultery and steal, keep a li-

quor trade, and blaspheme the Christians. And when he does such works, he is in his mind then a good Christian, a meek man and an honorable councilman, for he is well praised by the world. But the Christians who reprove him of adultery, greed, cursing, fighting, drinking, and whiskey trade, in his mind they are an accursed crowd, when they do not allow this blind wretch to go to hell in peace. Oh you blind wretch, buy for yourself eye ointment, that you would first begin to know that you were born blind, and have traveled blindly to this day. If you would become so blind that you would have to sit by the wayside and beg, then you would finally have to begin to cry out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" But now you cry out in your blindness to the prince of the world to help you every time that you become angry.

The Second Consideration: How must this blind wretch receive his sight? First, if he would realize that he has been born blind, and that he will go to destruction in his blindness. But he strongly argues that he is not blind. The Pharisees said to the Saviour, "Are we also blind?" If the blind wretch would first be won over to know that he is blind, but he strongly argues that he is not blind. And the prince of the world strengthens him in that faith, that he has bright eyes. What can he see when he says he can see? Yes, he sees the kingdom of heaven in hell; he sees cleanness in filthiness, and blessing in cursing; he sees the water of life in the wine glass; he sees mercifulness in greed; he sees God in hell and the devil

in the kingdom of heaven; and he sees his own image in the mirror of the devil and it is as beautiful as an angel. He also sees himself in the kingdom of heaven, but he sees the Christians in hell, such bright eyes the wolf whelp has, when he is in the wolf's den. And when the light of Christianity now whines into his eyes, he becomes stone-blind, as a fish in the bright light. The eyes stand still in the skull as an owl, but he sees nothing more in the Christianity than the effects of the devil's spirit. If now a bright flash would come from heaven and a terrible voice, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest, it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," then he will become stone-blind as Saul. Saul also became blind from that light which was brighter than the sun. And thus when he became so stone-blind from the brilliance of Christ, then his companions had to lead him. So it happens with all, into whose eyes the brilliance of Christ suddenly shines. At first they become quite blind: it signifies that the former natural intellect is lost. Before they had a large intellect and with that natural intellect they began to hate the Christians. The natural intellect says thus, "God and my own conscience demand that I must strike and scourge and persecute the Christian sect, for they are an accursed group, they are enemies of God and man. But now when he becomes blind because of Christ, or when the natural intellect is lost because of Christianity, then he must say as the old Tobit, "What joy have I who must sit in darkness and not see the light of day?" That blind wretch who sits by the wayside begging is now

in this soul condition; he is quite blind. It is to be surmised that it is not pleasant for such a person who must sit in darkness. But when he can hear that the Saviour is traveling near, then he raises his voice and cries out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" But that large crowd which is following Jesus because of curiosity, or because of that strange doctrine, or because of natural gain which they thought they would gain through the Saviour, they reprove that blind man to be silent. They do not keep him in such estimation that the Saviour should stop because of him. That large crowd which follows Jesus because of honor, or because of worldly gain, or because of curiosity, are hypocrites, mouth Christians and grace thieves, who do not care to hear that the blind wretch cries after the Saviour, whom they keep as a great prophet, as long as he feeds them free. They are disturbed that an awakened person, who has come to know his blindness, cries after Jesus. They reprove him to be silent. But the more the world's crowd forbids this blind man from crying out, the more zealously he cries out, with such a loud voice that the voice of the blind wretch finally reaches the Saviour's ears. And although the crowd of the world, who because of dead faith imagine they are closest to the Saviour, forbids you, oh wretched person who has become blind already in your mother's womb, and through this blindness has become so poor and so miserable that you must sit by the wayside and beg, although the hypocrites and grace thieves forbid you to cry after Jesus, do not therefore ce-

ase crying out, you blind and miserable person! Cry out, you blind wretch, with such a loud voice, that your voice would be heard above all the commotion of the world, although the great crowd of the world murmurs around the Saviour and scolds you to be silent. Do not take heed of their threatenings, but cry out with all your strength and with all your soul and with all your heart, that the Lord Jesus would have mercy on you, blind wretch, and would give you sight that you, too, could see the light of the world. Cry out! Cry out! you blind wretch, before Jesus passes by, and goes so far that the voice of a blind wretch won't reach any further than the abyss. Cry out! Cry out! blind wretch. If the Saviour does not hear immediately, then cry out with a still louder voice! Do not become silent, although the crowd of the world scolds you to be silent, and forbids you to cry out. But cry out boldly, then the Lord Jesus will stop and ask you, "What wilt thou?" Your request is that you would receive your sight. It is so troublesome to be blind and to sit in darkness and beg. Cry out, therefore, you blind wretch, and cry with such a loud voice that it will be heard over the commotion of the whole world's crowd. Then Jesus will come and ask, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" And you will answer, "That I may receive my sight." And Jesus will say, "Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee." Amen.

Nr. 19 First Sunday in Lent

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8

In this place Peter shows to the Christians how the enemy goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour and as it was then, so it also happens now. We see that the devil even now walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. No doubt the hungry wolf is dying of hunger when he, like a roaring lion, travels those dry places seeking rest and finding none. Wherever and whenever he gets the scent of sheep, there he howls, when he cannot quite after his own desire get to tear and ravage the sheep. The wolf whelps have the same nature as the mother wolf, they ravage the sheep wherever and whenever they meet them. We know that the wolf whelps are born blind and as long as they are blind they nurse the teats of the female wolf; they cannot in that blindness yet ravage the lambs. But as soon as they begin to see, they begin to hunt the sheep, but as long as the shepherd protects the sheep, the wolf whelps can go hungry and can howl in their dens. But now that time has come of which Peter writes, that the enemy goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And now the enemy begins to roar and shows his teeth, he tempts the Christians not only with the inward battle, but outwardly also he incites his crowd to go around. They are the wolf whelps, some bigger, some smaller, who have begun to go

around in groups; for a lone wolf is afraid if the shepherd shouts in the forest, but when there are many in a group, they no longer fear people but come boldly upon them. Nevertheless the wolf whelps cannot do great harm to the sheep but when the larger wolves come, then they can certainly ravage the sheep, if that Good Shepherd does not protect them.

But Peter also writes to the Christians in the afore mentioned place, namely 1 Peter 5:8, and advises them in what way they must war against the devils; he says namely this, "be sober and watchful", for if a Christian is not sober and watching, then the enemy will come upon him as a roaring lion and will ravage his conscience and also take away his life. We know that sober is such, who does not taste liquor and we have now heard from the mouth of Peter, that a Christian must be sober; and therefore all drunkards are far from the Christianity. The watching of the Christians seems to be poor, if they do watch sometimes, so also sleep comes too. The Christians can certainly somewhat avoid those outward enemies but those hidden enemies, these Christians cannot so easily avoid, because they are often sleepy, especially the sleep forces them, when they must watch in the garden. The love of the world appears to be one evil and cunning devil to stealthily sneak upon them. And when they are on the way to the garden, a quarrel comes up between them, who of them appears to be the greatest. But Judas is not with them, he has gone completely into the group of the high priests, scribes and pharisees,

with then he has agreed and no doubt they will give him the set amount, when he has now gone to urge them that they would soon come to take a hold of that disturber of the people, before His doctrine would get to spread, so that the last wildness would not be worse than the first. When now it is such a time, as Peter writes that the devil goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, so now all Christians should begin to watch better and to pray to that great cross-bearer, who was also tempted by the devil, that He would battle in behalf of those in that great war and strife when that roaring lion attacks them. For now that great dragon, who is called the devil and satan has become terribly angry at the seed of the woman; now he watches carefully, when that woman who cries in pains of birth has delivered a man-child, that he would get to swallow him. But God takes that man-child to himself and protects that woman from that slime of dead faith, which the dragon spews out upon her, for this woman has been able to flee into the wilderness where the dragon cannot get along very well. Perhaps in that wilderness are many of those smaller serpents which sting the children of Israel and the seed of the woman in the heel. So then be sober and watchful, you few souls, who are traveling through the wilderness of this world to the Fatherland. Although that roaring lion goes about, seeking whom he may devour, he can do nothing to you as long as that great war hero battles in your behalf. But do not quarrel on the way to the garden and do not sleep in the garden, where the hea-

venly parent sweats blood. Who knows how long you can rest before Judas comes with the crowd and gives Jesus a kiss. Then you will have to wake up from your sleep and flee, if it were not so that you intend to follow Him to the hall of the high priest. Do not give yourself to temptation, Peter, do not go to the hall of the high priest as long as you have such a faith that you deny Jesus; do not go amongst the chief priests' servants to argue before you get to know yourself better; who knows, they will spoil your Christianity, and you will find yourself lying before the world. The Lord looks upon you, Peter, and remember now the Lord's words, "before the cock crows twice, you will deny me thrice." And when you remember the Lord's words, then you must go out and weep bitterly. Hear, you great war hero, the sighs of the sorrowful and penitent. Our Father, etc.

The gospel, Matthew 4: 1-11.

In today's holy gospel is spoken of the enemy's temptations, and how the enemy could not be without tempting the Son of God; so it is to be surmised that he tempts other children of God awfully, but that was more strange that the enemy dares to begin to tempt the Son of God. That the enemy tempts the Christians, that is not strange, for he has that hope to get them to fall, as is seen in the book of Job; and so the slaves of the enemy still now think, that the Christians will forsake God as soon as the enemy gets permission to touch their skin. But the tempter has not known the nature of the Son of God rightly,

when he makes a bold attempt to tempt Him, for if he had known the nature of the Son of God, he would not have gone to tempt Him at all; he should have guessed that it is a vain work, to begin to tempt the Son of God. But it appears so, that the chieftain of this world is not so very vane since he goes to do such work from which no joy or gain comes, only shame.

Let us observe now through the grace of God how the enemy tempts the children of God. 1. Cares of this life or through love of the world. 2. Honor of the world. 3. Conceit or self righteousness. May all of God's children take heed of all the temptations of the devil, for the devil is not such a lax man, that the Christians can overlook him, although sometimes he pretends to be so poor and unworthy as one hungry wolf, who rolls and plays in the yard when he wants to entice the pups of the household with his deceit. Do not go to the wolf, you pups of the household, no matter how weak and powerless the wolf pretends to be.

1. The first consideration shows how the enemy tempts the children of God with sorrow of the world or the love of the world. The Son of God had fasted for forty days and did not feel hunger, as long as he was in deep meditation, as to where he should begin to preach repentance, and we have seen that some penitent have the same spirit as the Son of God, who was led by the spirit into the wilderness, that is into solitude, where they can be in peace from the bustle of the world and the foolishness of the world, nor in that condition do the penitent have a desire

for food, when they are in these deep thoughts and in the sorrow of penitance. So it was with the Son of God, a desire to go into solitude, where he could be at peace in deep meditation, how and in what way he should begin to preach repentance and redeem people's souls. And when he was in these deep meditations, he also forgot the natural food and did not feel hunger for a long time. But when he had thus fasted for forty days, finally the natural hunger began to be felt, and then the tempter came to him and said, "if Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." With that temptation the enemy had two objectives; first he wanted with the sorrow of the colon to arouse in him, so that with that sorrow he could confuse his thoughts and turn his sorrow away from the heavenly to natural matters. So the enemy has succeeded in confusing the thoughts of many penitent souls, when he forces the sorrow of the colon into the mind with this kind of a thought, "How will you get along now when you've began to be delirious," and the slaves of the world also say to this penitent soul, "he reads so many books, that he will become crazy, and now he even ceases from working and becomes delirious with those wild spirits." And yet say the slaves of the world, "Is that how a person lives, that he goes into deep meditation into the woods, and speaks of repentance, it is not fitting." It is nevertheless one time when the penitent are not able to do so much work nor have they had a desire of food, but the tempter has been able to confuse the thoughts of many penitent souls and

through sorrow of the colon disperse that sorrow which is after the mind of God. And he has also offered to the Christians the love of the world and sorrow over the colon, through which he has gotten many to waver and fall away again. Now the tempter thinks, who has gotten so many penitent and graced ones to waver and turn here and there after the world, through which he has spoiled their Christianity, the tempter, I say, thinks thus, "Does not the Son of God also have sorrow of the colon, when he has become hungry and food is not to be had." But of that place such troubles come to the tempter, so he had no room anywhere. The Saviour struck him with the sword of the spirit so that the tempter did not dare to tempt the Son of God anymore of that place. It is written, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

So it has also been experienced that penitent souls live partly on the Word of God, especially then when they are in these deep thoughts and in the right sorrow of penitance. But the Christians no longer appear to be desirous of considering the word of God, just so the enemy could not get them in some fork of the road thereby, it is troublesome for the old adam to consider the Word of God, old adam wants to eat only the prepared. For that reason Paul had to write to the Christians, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat." (Hebrews 5: 12) And it was also

another reason why the tempter commanded the Son of God to make bread of stones. If the Son of God would have begun to make stone cakes according to the command of the enemy, He would have begun to love Himself and to think, am I not something, who can make bread of stones. But a Christian need not give in at all to that which the enemy commands, no matter how sinless and innocent a work, for if he would do in a smaller matter as the enemy commands, surely he will soon do so in larger one also. If the slave of the enemy says, "Taste a little red wine, it won't hurt you," then do not taste it at all, for then he will go to say afterwards, "So, even that innocent man drank wine." Why should a Christian begin to do according to the command of the enemy such work, of which there is not sure knowledge, whether it is right or wrong?

2. The second consideration shows how the enemy tempts the children of God with honor of the world. If the place of sorrow of the colon is a firm place, by which the enemy has effected waivering in many, then honor of the world is no less a temptation. When the enemy took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and commanded Him to cast Himself down from there, it was his intention, that the Saviour should show to the world His godly power that the people would better believe upon Him. But the Saviour did not agree to that, for He did not want the vain honor of the world. Truly the enemy has not gotten the Christians to pretentious display, but that is yet another place which the enemy offers to some Chris-

tians, namely that honor of a Christian or the best Christianity, which elevates them to the pinnacle of the temple, by which they become fathers in the Christianity and begin to love themselves, especially if some also begin to believe that he is the best Christian and a leader in the Christianity. This honor of a Christian is one pinnacle of the temple to which self love and the devil of self righteousness exalts some, and for that reason the daughter of Zion is reproached in the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel saying, "You trusted in your own beauty," you began to love yourself. What the honor of the world otherwise accomplishes in the minds of the penitent and Christians is often explained and I believe that the Christians know his deceitfulness both in the confession of sins as also in the matter of speaking. Honor of the world presses the sorrowless to wrestle and compete doing work, through which they ruin their health and become sickly in middle age, when they have abused their bodies because of worldly honor and ostentation. Some because of worldly honor hold christenings and funeral feasts, some build beautiful buildings, buy beautiful horses, prepare nice serge clothes and silk kerchiefs and thereby waste their own. But the greatest honor of the world is with the lords, who rule over others and want the whole world under their rule. This is that exceeding high mountain to which the tempter took the Saviour. He thought that the Son of God should have the greatest power on the earth, that all kings and great lords should bow themselves down before Him. That same place of

honor is so great in the lords of the world, that because of the honor of the world they will do most anything, only that they would be thus exalted. But the Christians now do not have such temptation that they would want to be lords of the world, although as to many in appears that lordly Christianity is in the mind, and some want to be free lords. To that does not pertain much honor of the world but laziness and fleshly freedom, that they do not want to be slaves to other people as the Jews said to the Saviour, "We have not been slaves to anyone, we were born free." The whole world now runs after this fleshly freedom, all want to become lords, and who knows where such free lords will finally become lords. I fear that they who want to be free lords in the world, in the end can be lordly in hell. But the devil makes some sins allowable through the Word of God, for he brought from the scriptures verifications that it is allowable to cast one's self down to the ground from the pinnacle of the temple. From that is heard now that the devil reads the scriptures and if the Christians are not careful to consider the scriptures, so that they could particularly bring to the devil another place from the scriptures in answer, then he could cause them distress. The Saviour brought immediately from another place such an answer that the tempter could get nowhere.

3. The third consideration shows how the enemy tempts the children of God through self love or self-righteousness. Especially since he cannot get the Christians to give in or to consent to one or another sinful act, then he chan-

ges himself into an angel of light and says to the penitent, "There is so much evil in you, how can you come as such to the Saviour!" He does not receive such ones who are full of devilishness and filth. The devil of self-righteousness could not tempt the Saviour so much, because he was free of all inward and outward sins, but the penitent and Christians he tempts terribly, especially when they do not always have that understanding, that they could recognize what self-righteousness effects in them. When self-righteousness changes himself into an angel of light and pushes this kind of thoughts into the mind of the penitent, "God demands a pure heart, but you do not have a pure heart, therefore you do not need to think that you are acceptable to God as you are." And in that way he prevents the penitent from coming to that great Healer, who can cleanse their hearts. And when evil thoughts, lusts and desires also come to a Christian, then he causes them to think, these evil thoughts come from the heart, how then can the heart be pure, when all evil surges up from it. And for that reason the Christians begin to doubt of their condition. But the devil shoots burning darts toward the heart and from them come the evil thoughts. Behold now you few souls, who have the desire of the heart, with fear and trembling are following the bloody footsteps of that great cross-bearer, and with a heavy heart, behold that crucified and thorn-crowned king, behold how the enemy has tempted the Son of God, although He was righteous and innocent of all sins. What will he then do with you,

who are in many places so wavering, and halting on both sides, partly through unwatchfulness and partly through love of the world. When the enemy has dared to tempt the Son of God, of which there was no hope that he would win anything, how much more he tempts you who are also in so many places lacking and wavering. But perhaps the enemy has always desired to sift your soul as wheat, with that hope that he can win the Christians with outward and inward temptations and that all would become like Judas. So we yet have that hope and trust in God that the devil's angels will not receive joy over the fall of the Christians as long as that great War Hero is alive, who has won over all temptations. He battles in behalf of those souls who are able to believe upon Him, although the prince of the world, the devil goes around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Although this roaring lion yet would tear and ravage the Christian's body, he must anyway with annoyance and great wrath see the children of God die with joy and rejoicing, and with great boldness give their spirits into the care of God. When contrary to this, the persecutors and enemies must confess at the moment of death that they are going to hell. The devil does not tempt his slaves, who serve him faithfully, surely he lets them go to hell in peace. For what reason would he have to tempt his friends? It has not been heard yet that the sorrowless and thieves of grace would have lamented that the devil tempts them. But all saints have been tempted, all awakened and graced souls have been

tempted, all who do not want to comply with the desire of the devil become tempted. Luther has lamented how the devil tempted him but the slaves of the enemy they can be in peace, free of all temptations and the grace thieves can also be in peace, free of the enemy's temptations. But the Christians, to whom the devil has become angry, to them the devil gives no peace, then he tries to boil and roast, their hearts he wounds. For that reason St. Paul writes to the Christians, "Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with the truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness. Above all taking the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." Here that valiant Apostle has shown all those weapons of war with which one brave warrior of Jesus Christ must be equipped. And all these weapons of war are needed now; when the enemy has started to attack the Christians so terribly. Now everyone who wants to become saved and to save his life, needs to be equipped both against the world which has begun to hate and persecute Jesus' disciples and also against one's own flesh, from which the devil shoots his darts. But may that great War Hero, who has won over the power of the devil, support the feeble knees, strengthen the weary hands, raise up the fallen, put oil and wine in the wounds, and drip blood when wounds come into the heart, and be their Healer to those who

lie sick. Hear, you great War Hero, the sighs of all the wretched and oppressed and redeem all prisoners, that they could thank you eternally in that new Jerusalem. Amen.

Second Sunday in Lent. Farewell Sermon to the Congregation of Kare-suando, 1849.

And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. The Acts of the Apostles 20: 25-27.

When Saint Paul was about to depart for Jerusalem where he knew much suffering and controversy was awaiting him, he preached a farewell sermon to the chief men of the congregation of the Ephesians, and from this farewell sermon I have quoted a few words which are fitting material for a farewell sermon to all teachers if they have worked as faithfully in the church of God as Paul had. I cannot claim all these words of Paul for I feel that I have been an unworthy servant because of the great weakness and poverty which is in me. I have not been able to upbuild the congregation of God as I should have done. If God has effected some good through me for the edification of His church, by which means a few souls have been led onto that road they formerly did not know, it has been brought about by His own supreme power.

A few words of Paul's farewell sermon may apply to the present time. After he had said to the elect of the congregation that they should see his face no more in this world, he commenced to exhort them to take care of themselves. And finally he said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." These words of Paul may later become verified here, for if there formerly have been grievous wolves which have not spared the flock, then likewise after my departure even fiercer wolves may arise that will, indeed, not spare the flock. These vicious wolves will rend and devour the flock wherever they have the opportunity. A wolf will by no means spare the flock, in what ever shape it rovers, may it be in the shape of a man, a bear, a fox, or as a serpent. A wolf is most dangerous when he comes in the shape of an angel. People usually think that the wolf is dangerous when he comes in his own shape or as a serpent, but he is more dangerous when he comes in the shape of man, and most dangerous when he comes in the shape of an angel. Sheep can always protect themselves against those who are apparent enemies of the truth, but when Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, then it is not easy to avoid him.

We shall borrow a few words from Paul's sermon which can apply to us. He namely says to his congregation, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." I also fear that of yourselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things and thereby draw

the simple ones after them. All these words will be found written in the twentieth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Now I say as Paul did to his congregation when he preached his farewell sermon, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." These grievous wolves have already before rent and devoured the congregation of God and now they are only waiting until the shepherd goes away so they can again rend the weak sheep who are not able to stand against the fiery darts of the wicked one themselves nor to flee for their lives, because they have no one on earth to whom they might go for refuge when a wolf begins to pursue them.

Not only the vicious wolves whose bloody throats are already open and with the eyes of a cat or an owl are watching whence they might find some fickle-minded person or some soul with weak faith whom they could swallow; but also of yourselves, Paul warns, men shall arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Because of this, many of weak faith are thinking how the orphan children shall get along when they are left as sheep without a shepherd. Who will feed them when they weep and bewail in hunger because of poverty? Where shall the poor miserable sheep flee when the vicious wolves open their throats desiring to devour them? Where shall the chickadees and young swallows fly when the hawk hovers over them? Who is to preserve them from spiritual death when they cry in the claws of the hawk? To

whom shall the penitent, the poor and the oppressed soul flee when a spiritual wolf commences to rend and tear the conscience with doubts, when the burden of sin presses the sorrowing soul into hell, when there remains not one counselor who could advise and comfort with good words or speak the words of grace? Who will pour a few drops of grace into their mouths, pour oil into the wounds of the heart, bind up the wounds of the conscience and stop the hemorrhage from the heart of that miserable and trembling sheep which the wolf has rent and torn?

These poor, miserable, naked and down-pressed orphan children who are crying upon the cold floor because of cold and hunger have no other refuge than to lift up their trembling hands toward heaven and cry with such a loud voice that it will sound into heaven. Then will the merciful Lord Jesus who is the true Father of all poor orphan children lift up these helpless naked wretches from the cold floor of the world; He will wash them clean with the water of life; He will take them into His lap and teach them to suckle at His breasts of flowing grace, yet not so fast that the milk of grace should cause them to choke, but only as fast as the wretched ones are able to swallow.

O beloved Parent! How much blood has been shed from Thy heart when, while giving birth to these naked wretches, Thou didst bend Thy knees, and while bowing Thy face toward the earth, sighed so heavily that the heart did break because of agony! The greater the agony of the Parent, the greater the love toward the newly-born; the

more blood that is shed from the Parent's heart, the more burning will be His love toward the naked ones who wail upon the cold floor of this world.

Into the care of that great Creator I this day commit all these poor, miserable, naked and downcast souls who have awakened through my crying, or by my rebuking they have been able to see that their former life has not been the right kind of life, and those who perchance because of my barking have returned to that great Shepherd. I also leave those to God's care who, because of this barking, have become offended with me, and I say unto them as Paul said in the previously mentioned farewell sermon, "I am pure from the blood of all men." Not one of those who hate me because of my barking can accuse me on Judgment Day that I have not rebuked them nor told them in what deplorable condition their souls are if they do not repent.

We shall now commence to cry as did the woman of Canaan who was a young puppy dog of grace, if, like her, we are content with the crumbs of grace that fall from the Lord's table. Do not whine too much, you puppy dogs of grace, but sit, wait, watch and smell for some fragment to fall from the rich man's table, and content yourselves with that, though it may be only a small fragment. Grant therefore, O merciful Lord, that some fragment fall from Thy table so that these poor, hungry puppy dogs would cease their whining. Amen. Our Father, and so forth.

The Gospel: Matthew 15: 21-23.

By the guidance of our Holy Gospel, we shall at this hour behold how the puppy dogs eat fragments: First: How the puppy dogs sit under the table and watch for fragments. Second: How the puppy dogs whine when they do not get the fragments as quickly as they wish. Third: How the puppy dogs fight over a fragment. Fourth: How the puppy dogs long after him who has fed them when he goes away.

May the merciful Lord Jesus give us His grace so that all puppy dogs of grace might be satisfied with the crumbs that fall from His table, and that they would not fight amongst themselves.

First: How the puppy dogs sit under the table and watch for fragments. Disgraceful dogs, especially the large hounds of Jiehtanas (namely the big dogs of the evil spirit) that are accustomed to stealing and to licking human blood, do not wait until fragments fall from the table. They leap upon the table and grab the lump of butter and swallow it as if it were nothing. You cannot take it out of the dog's stomach if he has already swallowed it. Such large hounds of Jiehtanas which have lapped broth out of the kettle wherein the devil has boiled human flesh, as well as the stray dogs which eat mice and drink flowing devils's dung, do not wait for fragments but steal the food out of the hands of people, and if the parent is not with his children, these disgraceful dogs snatch the food away from the children's hands. Therefore, the Savior has said to the woman of Canaan: "It is

not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto the dogs."

Children's bread is the grace which God has promised unto the repentant children of Israel and the spiritual seed of Abraham, but some lords of this world who esteem their dogs more highly than their own children give the dogs bread and butter and allow their children to go hungry. Orphan children are in a pitiable condition for they have no one to feed them when they cry in hunger. However, the children who have such a cruel foster parent that he loves dogs more than his children are to be indeed pitied, for he has such a hard heart that he gives the dogs bread and butter and to his children only fish bones. Woe! Woe! Unto you poor miserable orphan children, if you should have such a cruel foster parent that he will waste your substance, give the dogs bread and butter, sugar and syrup, and to you only fish bones.

Let us behold further how the puppy dogs sit under the table watching for crumbs. Although the Savior said to the woman of Canaan: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs," this heathen woman had, in any event, enough understanding to realize this was a hard saying for her, and if her faith had been weaker she surely would have ceased asking when she was compared to a dog. But her faith was so strong that she did not cease pleading, even though the Savior called her a dog. She admitted she was a whelp and felt in her heart that she was no better than a dog in comparison to one who had inherited the child-right. When a penitent soul has great

humility and such great feeling of unworthiness, that in comparison to God's children he considers himself no better than a dog, then he has become a young dog of grace which sits under the table, watches and waits if some fragment of grace might fall from the table. Even though it be a small piece, the dog will cherish it. A hungry puppy dog is not so particular as the large fat whelps which snatch a lump of butter off the table and swallow grace like wolves though they are not hungry.

Secondly: We shall now consider how the puppy dogs of grace whine when they are very hungry and scent the sweet food upon the Lord's table; also how the puppy dogs of grace become impatient and commence to whine. This whining of puppy dogs signifies that they are very hungry and have great desire for food. At first they behave and are silent under the table, but finally impatience comes and they begin to whine because of great hunger. When the puppy dogs of grace begin to whine, the Lord says first, "Be silent and wait until the children have eaten; it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." But the puppy dogs of grace still whine and beg and after licking the hand of the Lord, they lay their heads upon his knees. If they could speak, they would surely say that the puppy dogs will eat the fragments that fall from the Lord's table.

The reason why the Lord does not give the puppy dogs of grace much food is that dogs which have too much to eat become lazy in barking and are therefore unfit for shepherd dogs. The puppy dogs of grace would surely eat

as much as their stomachs would hold if they could, but experience has taught that dogs who live in plenty and are too well fed are not so ready to bark as are those fed more sparingly. Such dogs that live on stolen grace bark at no one, nor do they follow the shepherd into the woods, but only watch where they might be able to steal. Thieving dogs eat the carcasses killed by wolves; moreover, they bite the lambs which linger in the woods behind the flock, either sunken in a slough or otherwise helpless. The puppy dogs of grace shall assuredly receive fragments that fall from the Lord's table, if only they are patient and wait until the children have received their portion. The Savior has said: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."

All those Gentiles who have not as yet received the child-right of God are the puppy dogs and unto them fragments shall be given if they but feel themselves to be such. But some are disgraceful dogs that are not satisfied with fragments; instead they leap upon the table and want to eat the children's food themselves. Unto such shameless dogs the Master says, "Behave and wait until it is given, for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." In this passage it is understood that the bread is the grace which God has promised unto penitent and believing souls who are children of Abraham and Israel, according to promise, and the puppy dogs are the Gentiles who have not much knowledge of Christianity. Nevertheless, they have a great feeling of unworthiness like the

woman of Canaan and they continue to cry unto the Savior, for they have firm faith, confidence and assurance that the Savior shall help them when they are in distress although they were born of poor and heathenish people and feel themselves so unworthy compared to the children of Israel that they are no better than dogs. This heathen woman had commenced to believe on the Savior only by hearing of Him, for she had not the slightest knowledge of the Bible except what she had learned from her neighbors, the children of Israel. Therefore, she is an example to us that the heathen often have stronger faith than the scribes who rely on their intellect, although their heart is unchanged and unmoved.

Thirdly: We shall now consider how the puppy dogs of grace fight over fragments. It is deplorable, although it happens often, that puppy dogs begin to fight over the few crumbs which the Master of the house casts out to them. This fighting is not to their advantage, for the puppy dogs which are stubborn fighters, often lose the fragment over which they commenced to fight. Not only do they cause damage to themselves so that the Master of the house is obliged to discipline them with a switch, but when they fight amongst themselves they tread upon the children, upsetting the food vessels, and meanwhile, the large hounds of Jiehtanas are able to rob and steal from them the fragment which the Master had given them. If the puppy dogs of grace had not pride and envy, they would each be content with the fragment given him by the Master. But

envy brings about so much that the puppy dogs of grace begin to fight and the large hounds of Jiehtanas become the victors. Then the large hounds of Jiehtanas say, "We are beaten with a staff for fighting, but these puppy dogs of grace also fight amongst themselves although they are so small." Woe unto you, you puppy dogs of grace, if you cannot refrain from quarreling and fighting because you have no one to discipline you, and so the hounds of Jiehtanas shall come upon you and tear you to pieces and seize the fragment you had received from the Lord's table. Surely you have seen how a puppy dog pleads for mercy when some large brute rushes upon him, but if all the puppy dogs would unitedly attack the great brute, they might save their lives. However, if they commence fighting among themselves, the large dogs of Jiehtanas will enter the pack and then, as is the habit amongst dogs, all will attack the one that is left under, whether he is innocent or guilty. They will bite, rend and tear the wretch, one from the head and another from the tail. Therefore, I warn you beforehand, you puppy dogs of grace, that if you do not remain in harmony, the large dogs of Jiehtanas shall come and finish you. Always keep in mind that which the Savior said to His disciples before He left them: "A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another."

Fourthly: We should finally consider how the puppy dogs long after him who had fed them. This is a delicate subject to mention. It can be seen that the puppy dogs long for him who has fed them, because they sit upon a knoll,

waiting and watching in the direction where their feeder has gone, longing for him and whining with a pitiable voice. Undoubtedly the heavenly Father hears their voices and feeds their souls when they are hungry. Who else but the heavenly Lord Jesus, who hears the sighs of all the poor, wretched and downcast ones has even until this day fed and taken care of their souls? Where else have the orphan children refuge except near the heavenly Father, who is Father over all those called by His name, both on earth and in heaven? Surely it is not I who has fed and taken care of them, but He who feeds and protects the young ravens and provides for the swallows and the chickadees. At first the puppy dogs of grace whine when they long for him who has fed them, but finally they go into a corner, rest their heads upon each other and whine there. I hope that not only will the heavenly Benefactor who gave a few fragments of grace to the woman of Canaan have compassion on these dogs of grace and give them some pieces, but also that their severe hunger might teach them to seek some food for themselves.

Now, since the time is fast approaching for me to depart and go where the Master orders, namely, to bark at other thieves, I must leave these puppy dogs of grace in the keeping of the Master with the reliance that He will not allow them to die of hunger. Since He feeds the young ravens when they cry unto Him, He will assuredly feed the chickadee, the young swallows and the puppy dogs of grace when they whine because of hunger. Farewell now into the care

of the Master, all puppy dogs of grace! Farewell, all small chickadees and young swallows! May the gracious Lord Jesus protect you from the claws of the hawk and feed you on insects. Farewell, all lambs of Jesus whom the Chief Shepherd has snatched out of the teeth of the ravenous wolf. May the Lord Jesus lead you into the best pastures and feed you on the best meadow grasses when winter comes! Farewell, all you small unripe grain that are yet growing in the Lord's field! May the Lord of the seed give you fair and seasonable weather so that the grains of wheat will fill with substance before frost comes and you may be those beautiful grains of wheat that the harvesters gather into the garner. May the Lord of the seed protect this little field from hail, storms and blizzards so that the frost will not spoil those unripe and weak grain before the harvest time arrives. Farewell, you newly-born children whom the heavenly Parent begot through great travail and shedding of blood! Farewell, you newly-born children who lie bewailing on the cold floor of this world! May the Parent lift you from that cold floor, wash you clean with the water of life, wrap you in clean linen, press you to His bosom and place His breast in the mouth of the crying children, so that they will cease from crying and with joy behold their Creator. Farewell, you winter sparrows and summer swallows! May the heavenly Parent who gives food to the young ravens in due season when they cry unto Him give you milk, butter and honey when you are hungry. May He protect and guard all the young swal-

lows from the talons of the hawk. Farewell, you snowbirds and nightingales who have sung and chirped from that precious tree to the solitary traveler! May God, in His grace, grant that I may hear the snowbirds and nightingales chirping before God and the Lamb in the Kingdom of Heaven and singing the new hymn on the tree of life. Pray also for me, who am as a solitary bird perched upon a limb, so the gracious Lord Jesus would give me power and courage to cry to all straying travelers that they would return to the road of life; and to all the sorrowing and downcast so they would arise from the sleep of sin and cry: "Lord Jesus, be gracious unto us!" Amen.

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The Corrector's Note: The word Jiehtanas above is Lappish and means a gigantic beast. In the Finnish text Jiehtanas is called Jatuni.

Mid Lent Sunday 1854.

"The children of Israel said to Samuel, make us a king, who will rule over us."

This request shows their faith, that they think they will get along better under the rule of a king, than with a judge. The prophet Samuel who had been a Judge in Israel for a long time had become old and his sons were not acceptable judges since they accepted gifts and perverted judgements. For that reason they began to demand a king who would judge them. God was no longer suitable to them for a king, for men cannot be satisfied with God's rule, when they do wrong, and do not under-

stand that they commit iniquity. The children of Israel began to quarrel with God already in Moses' time when He had put that punishment upon them that they had to travel back and forth in the wilderness because of their impatience. Then they began to murmur against God and to say, "Why does the Lord lead us to that land where we will be killed?" And also afterward one prophet imitated their saying, when he said, "The Lord does not do rightly with us," from that can be understood, that man is not satisfied that God judges him but the greater portion of the sorrowless people want a natural king for a judge, who they can see before their eyes. From that it can be surmised that God is not suitable for a Judge for the sorrowless people. But the God of the world would be better suited to them for a king and a judge, since he first urges them to commit evil and then allows them to live according to their own evil will; such a king who complies with the wishes of the people as Pilate, he is the best king to the sorrowless. For that reason the prophet Samuel became sad when the sorrowless people wanted a king, he surmised, that the people in that place made a scourge for their own backs, that they would become slaves, that they would become burdened with heavy taxes, that they would be taken for soldiers and killed in battle. But that trouble did not amount to anything along side of that honor that even they now have a king as in other countries But God said to prophet Samuel, "They have not rejected you but they have rejected me." God was no longer suitable to them for

a king. So it would happen even now if God was upon the earth, and began to keep the Judgement, then all the sorrowless would say, "God does not deal rightly with us, he is too harsh and severe in judging." But if the prince of the world came as a king, who complies with the wishes of the people as Pilate then all the sorrowless would say, "This is a good king, he is not severe to punish and judge," He is a good king who does as the sorrowless people demand. It can be seen only of the natural government, what kind of a faith the people have, if the officer of the Crown is not quick to fine the drunkards and liquor merchants then all the drunkards and liquor merchants say, "he is not quick to fine the people!" But if the officer of the Crown takes such ones to court who have transgressed the law, then all the drunkards and whiskey merchants say "this is a false and mean judge who takes away what a person has,"

And do you think that God would be a suitable judge to the world? Not at all. If such a king comes who only looks after what is legal, then all say, "He is a false judge!" But if the prince of the world comes who allows the sorrowless people to live after their own evil will then all say, "This is a good judge, he is not quick to impose a fine." We hear from today's gospel that the people wanted to make Jesus their king, when they saw Him feed five thousand people without cost. But for what reason did they want Jesus for their king? Without a doubt with that intention that he would feed them without cost. That would be nice for the sorrowless people

if someone would feed them without cost. For the sorrowless people are not satisfied with that, that God has created means of livelihood, as harvest, animals, fish, birds, and other means of livelihood by which and through trouble a person can make a living, but if God would throw a roasted chickadee in their mouth and would feed them without trouble, just then would God be a good God. And such a man would be certainly suitable to the sorrowless people for a king who would comply with the wishes of the people as Pilate and would feed them without cost.

We must through God's grace observe more broadly what kind of a man would be suitable for the children of the world as a king and what kind would be suitable for the Christians as a king. But that great King who has today fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes, feed now those five thousand souls, who have come without food, who are as needy ones who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who will die of hunger if Jesus does not come to feed them. Although some have come from far only because of curiosity, some to hear the Word of God, some to see miracles, none the less all are fed without cost, that they would better believe that Jesus is that Son of God and the Saviour of the world. The disciples are put to distribute the food substance, that all would be fed, otherwise some would be left without food. Hear Heavenly King, the sighs of those who grow faint for the lack of food, who die of hunger without bread, who have no substance for nourishing their souls. Our Father etc.

The Gospel John 6: 1-15

The sorrowless people wanted to make Jesus their king, but Jesus did not want to be their king. We must therefore through God's grace consider first, Why do the sorrowless people want Jesus for their king? and second, Why does Jesus not want to be their king?

It is strange that the sorrowless people press to hear Jesus although this people who had come out of curiosity do not understand hardly anything of His sermons, since Jesus preaches only through parables, His word goes like a hum over their heads. They do not understand anything from it. The disciples of Jesus ask when understanding is lacking, they want to know what the parables mean, but the sorrowless people do not ask about it, what the parables contain inwardly, but they peer and wonder, become confused and think, what could it be? As the sorrowless people stood around Jesus like mosquitoes, so the sorrowless people also believe, that they are the best friends of Jesus, they are so stupid that they do not know enough to be afraid of the Son of God. They nudge Him with their elbows and imagine that He will take them to everlasting dwelling places. It is then no wonder, that the sorrowless want Jesus for their king, since they imagine that He will feed them without cost and that they are friends of Jesus! Not taking into consideration that they drink, curse, fight, whore, and steal and finally cry out, "Crucify." It does not enter into their mind at all, how they live, only that they can live according to their own evil will

and to eat food without trouble. So, such a man would be a nice king for the sorrowless, not only on account of that, that he would feed them without cost but also for that reason that they could live after their own mind, the sorrowless imagine that Jesus is so merciful that He will allow them to live as they themselves want to. They imagine that Jesus would be so merciful if He came to be the king, that He would not fine anyone nor condemn anyone. And if someone came to Him and said to separate me from my brother in strife, then He would say, "Man, who put me to be a Judge between you?" If the pharisees would bring some whore before Him to tease Him, then He says, "I will not judge you." From that now the sorrowless conclude that Jesus condemns no one. But the sorrowless people do not understand, that Jesus cannot, as a natural judge, begin to listen to the trifling matters of the sorrowless, when some quarrel with their whores, and some quarrel over horses, and some quarrel over the manure pile. But the prince of the world, who in the beginning urges the people to go to court, and then says as Absalom, the murderer of his father, "If I could get to be the judge in this country, I would certainly give anyone who comes with a matter his own way," no matter who would come with a grievance, the man would be sure to say, "Your grievance is very right but there is no one to bring up your case before the king." Such a judge would be a very nice judge for the sorrowless people, who wins the honor of the world with the blood of their parent, and say to all who have matters, "Your grievance is

very right." Moses was a noble judge, but he did not have strength enough to sit the whole day and judge one sorrowless people, who quarreled about trifles. But he had to set others as judges according to the counsel of his father in law. But the sorrowless wanted only Jesus for a king and judge for they imagined that He would not judge anyone in this world naturally, as the judges of the world judge, but a spiritual judge He is, who judges all things spiritually; He also judges him who quarrels with his brother over the manure pile, but He judges so, that no one is satisfied with that judgement, for such a judge who judges both of the persons only for the reason that they quarrel over trifles, such a one is not suitable for a judge for the slaves of the world. But the devil, Oh! he is a nice judge for the sorrowless people. He says to all agents, no matter who they are, "Your case is very right take it to court." For the prince of the world gains much when the sorrowless people quarrel and go to court, he wins many souls through this quarrel, and all the false judges gain much, when the sorrowless people quarrel amongst themselves, all the wrong attorneys gain much from the foolishness of the people, and nevertheless the sorrowless imagine that Jesus is so merciful that He Judges no one. But now if two brothers came to Jesus and said, judge between us, then He would say, "Man, who made me a judge between you?" But are the sorrowless satisfied with that, that Jesus does not judge at all in natural matters? Or are the sorrowless satisfied with that, that Jesus judges both of the per-

sons only for the reason that they quarrel over trifles. No, I think that the sorrowless is not satisfied with that, that the judge does not judge at all, or that He judges both of the persons because of the quarrel, which is very trifling and brings both of the souls to hell.

Second consideration. Let us observe now why Jesus does not want to be a king to the sorrowless people? We surmise well that the sorrowless crowd has not yet changed its nature, although these sorrowless people follow Jesus outwardly, and come to Jesus for curiosity's sake and imagine they are Jesus' best friends, nevertheless it is their intention, that they through Jesus would gain worldly possessions and honor, and a fortunate rule in the kingdom of the Messiah, since Jesus is so merciful, that He judges no one. Come now all whores and thieves, come all drunkards, and whiskey merchants, come all cursers and fighters, come all who faithfully serve the devil and the world, with thoughts, words and deeds, come now all slaves of the devil to make Jesus your king; He feeds you without cost and lets them drink and fight, whore and steal, for He is so merciful, He judges no one. Will Jesus take the anointing and the crown of the head from the slaves of the devil and cry out to the world, "I am the king of the world?" I think that Jesus will give that honor to the devil and will go away to the woods, separate Himself from the company of such a group, and if the crowd of the world comes again the next day to get Him, He must say; "you do not follow Me because of the word which I have preached unto you but for

that reason you seek me because yesterday you were filled." What would the sorrowless people think of that, that Jesus flees from their company, and does not want to be their king? Does it not have to be one sign of that, that the prince of the world is a nice king for them, and if they are in need of a king, then go you sorrowless people to get and make the prince of the world, the devil, your king, surely he will take the crown on his head and give a cry, "I am the king of the world, I am that great price, whom the whole world serves." But Jesus does not want to become a king to the sorrowless people. For what reason? Yes, because after a short time they will crucify Him. If they still on Palm Sunday cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David," then on Good Friday they cry, "Take Him away. Crucify Him!" Such is the crowd of the world, if they can live in drunkenness and pleasure, then they would take Jesus for a king. But if He rebukes them of their ungodly life and barks at them as an adulterous generation, then they become angry. When the sorrowless people cry out, "Crucify", then Pilate asks, "Must I crucify your king?" For that reason Jesus does not want to be their king, that they no doubt have one king and lord of the world, who rules them, namely the prince of the world who is the father of the world and chief lord. We heard him say to Jesus, "I will give you all the world if you will serve me." No doubt he is therefore the lord of the world, no doubt he rules the whole world when he is called the leader. Although the sorrowless want to make Jesus a king, they are of that faith, that Jesus is their

king. But it is not so, but the prince of the world is their king, and he rules the world. But nevertheless Jesus is a king, as He, himself has testified. When Pilate asked Him, "Art thou a king then?" Jesus answered, "I am a king, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth, Everyone that is of the truth, heareth my voice." Here now all the sorrowless hear that Jesus is a king, but He is not a king to the sorrowless, for when the sorrowless people want to make Jesus a king, then He goes away in solitude into the woods, and does not want to become a king to such pagans, who moreover will not obey Him. But let the prince of the world be their king, as he has been thus far. Nevertheless Jesus is a King, Guess now, you sorrowless, whose King He is. The sorrowless do not believe that Jesus is the King of the Christians, for the prophets say that Christ will rule the pagans with a rod of iron; these pagans could not be the Christians, since Christ is so severe that He rules them with a rod of iron. But these pagans, whom Christ rules with a rod of iron probably will become Christians in that way that Christ rules them with a rod of iron. And this rod of iron is the torment of the conscience, which comes upon those pagans who allow themselves to be chastised. This rod of iron is one terrible word and it reveals, that Christ is not as merciful as the pagans imagine. But the pagans imagine, that the devil torments them who come into torment of conscience, they do not believe that Christ rules the pagans in such a way, with a rod of iron. But we have now seen, that the rod of iron with

which Christ rules the pagans, is one merciful chastisement and Father's scourge, with which the Heavenly Parent chastises those, who will receive the chastisement. The Heavenly Parent raises some up to be people with His merciful chastisement, and some become so humble through this fatherly chastisement, that they kiss the Father's scourge, to those the Parent takes into His lap and gives them a kiss, and gives them to suck of the grace flowing breasts, and wipes away their tears and feeds them with milk. In this way Christ becomes the king of the Christians and He finally rules them with the iron rod of love. But the sorrowless do not understand that Christ is such a king who rules the pagans with a rod of iron, but they imagine, that Christ is so merciful, that He allows the pagans to live according to their own evil will. Whores and thieves imagine that Christ is so good and so merciful that He chastises no one with a rod of iron, drunkards and wine merchants imagine that Christ will feed them without trouble, all rag devils imagine, that they will become rich in Christ's kingdom. For that reason they want to make Him a king. But finally they cry, "Crucify!" Now all the sorrowless Jews can see that Jesus does not want to become a king to the sorrowless people. And how could He be suitable to the sorrowless people for a king, moreover they do not live according to the law of Christ. But the prince of the world can be the king to the sorrowless Jews as they have been already before in the kingdom of the prince of the world, who is so merciful, he condemns no one, no matter

how ungodly they would live. Do not think that the leader of the world is quick to condemn those who serve him; whores and thieves are the best friends of such a lord, drunkards and whiskey merchants can live freely in the kingdom of the prince of the world, cursers and fighters are the best friends of the prince of the world. He is also the best king for the sorrowless people. But Christ does not want to become a king to such a sorrowless people for after a short time they will anyway cry out, "Crucify!" Christ has become the king to the Christians in that way, that He has with His own blood won, purchased and redeemed them from under the power of sin, death and the devil, He has redeemed those prisoners which the prince of the world had taken captive. He has won their souls with His own precious blood. And now precious souls, namely you few souls, who are chastised with the rod of iron in Christ's kingdom, and through true penitance are prepared to receive Christ's grace and love, the Heavenly King is anointed a King for you. He has fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. With very little you have been fed, or there has been very little substance, from which such a large multitude has been filled, that small portion to begin with has through Jesus' blessing grown in the hands of the disciples so that all, who have had a spiritual hunger have received nourishment. Take now, you nourished souls Jesus for your King and pray from all your heart, that He would not leave you like He has left the sorrowless and gone alone into a high moun-

tain. My hope is, that if He would leave His disciples for a short time to row on the billowy sea of this world, then I am assured, that He will come again to the disciples at night, when the heaven and earth are dark, when you are about to drown in the waves of doubt, just then Jesus comes walking on the water and steps into the small ship. But Peter, if you step into the deep, then be believing, as soon as your faith is lacking, you will begin to sink. And you other disciples, do not fear but take Jesus into the ship, soon you will reach the other shore, soon you will reach the beautiful shore of eternity which has no end. Anoint Jesus for your King, and I believe, that He is a King, namely your King, who have followed Jesus' bloody footsteps, and have intended to follow, and do surely follow that crucified and thorn crowned King, if you are steadfast in your most precious faith to the end. Then when you come into Christ's kingdom, through the grace of Jesus, then Christ has become your King and you the subjects of Christ, and when that great day of the Lord comes He will take His faithful subjects into the Kingdom of glory, where Christ Jesus reigns now and forever. Amen.

Palm Sunday Sermon A

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup, For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” 1 Cor. 11:27-29

These words St. Paul writes to the Christians of Corinth where some had begun to partake of the Lord’s supper in a heathenish way as many also now step to the Lord’s table unworthily to eat and drink without considering for what reason this high repast has been instituted. Many come to the Lord’s table as an eagle to the carcass, to eat and drink of the Lord’s holy body and blood without penitance, without faith, without love, without suitability. Some come only for custom’s sake to eat and to drink, not discerning the Lord’s body, and leave from the Lord’s house in the same heathen condition as they were in when they came there. Some, too overlook the medium of grace and hold themselves as worthy communion guests until a change in clergy comes. And when such a distributor of the communion comes, who does not question at all who is the betrayer, then all heathens and co-brothers of Judas become worthy communion guests. Some do not go at all to the Lord’s supper, so that no hurt would come upon the conscience, for they feel that their lives do not agree with those promises,

which they must make before the Lord’s altar. They want to run in the woods like deer and imagine that there is not such a great responsibility with those, who have never made promises of repentance. But it is unknown which one will have the greater responsibility. When one goes unworthily or improperly to the Lord’s holy supper, and there makes promises of repentance which he does not intend to keep or fulfill; the second one goes to confirm his faith with a hard and impenitent heart; the third one goes only for custom’s sake and the fourth one does not go at all to the Lord’s supper, but overlooks the medium of grace and takes that wrong assumption to himself that they will have a lighter responsibility who do not go at all to the Lord’s supper than those who do. I think, that same those who dispise the mediums of grace, can finally howl in the same den as they, who do not dispise the medium of grace but receive the dipped sop as Judas, It is one great error and wrong thought, which causes many to overlook the mediums of grace, just for that reason that they will have a lighter responsibility who do not go at all then those who go as Judas, or those who go to confirm their dead faith. Perhaps these unworthy communion guests say, We do not overlook the mediums of grace, but because of unworthiness we do not want to go. It is only a lie, that unworthiness prevents them from going, who only are waiting for a change in the clergy, such ones are only worthy on account of the clergy but not because of their sins. When such a clergy comes who allows all the bucks

and goats into the kingdom of heaven without questioning, then all the slaves of the devil become worthy; and when such a clergy comes who warns of Judas, then all the slaves of the devil become unworthy. But they are not any better, who do not go at all to the Lord's supper, whether Paul or Kaifas were the clergy. For such ones are not truly in the right feeling of unworthiness, but they have such great pride and despising, that they do not want to go at all to make promises of repentance, so that no knot would come upon the conscience, that their life is not such that it does not pay to go to make such promises which they have no intention to keep or fulfill. It is more pleasant for deer to run free than to be fastened by a leather strap and twist there, Whoever does not want to make promises of repentance, he does not want to be saved, he is so in love with sin, that he does not want to leave the devil. And such are many unworthy communion guests, they love those old bosom sins so much that they do not want to leave the devil and therefore they overlook the mediums of grace. Some certainly go to the Lord's supper as Judas but with deceitful hearts, or with such intentions, that they will fulfill their evil intentions, even if they receive warning. They imagine that no harm will come to Jesus or to the Christians, although they carry Judas' money bag around their neck. Some are so blind that they do not feel the weight of the Lord's supper at all, although they are whores and thieves, all the same they go to the Lord's supper and there steal grace, and imagine that the Saviour is merciful to

them, although they drink, curse and fight, commit adultery and steal. Such mock the parent's tears and trample His blood. All these unworthy and worthy communion guests, eat and drink to themselves condemnation and destruction, namely, first those unworthy communion guests who do not go at all to the Lord's supper for that reason, that they love sin so much, that they cannot leave the devil and his ways, and certainly know that their lives are contrary to the Word of God, that it does not pay to go and make promises of repentance with such a heart. Secondly, such communion guests, who are only worthy because of the clergy, they only become worthy through one sorrowless clergy; and third such communion guests who step boldly to the Lord's table with Judas' money bag around their neck nor do they want to part from their most dear bosom sins, or feel their sins allowable, and under the shadow of allowance practice them. All these unworthy and worthy communion guests eat and drink to themselves condemnation and destruction, not discerning the Lord's body. Such ones St. Paul now counsels in his first missionary letter to the Corinthians 11:27, which we must more broadly observe, when we first pray to that great distributor of the supper who gave Himself for a sacrifice for our sins, that he would teach us to know who are worthy communion guests and who are the betrayers. True disciples of Jesus always become sorrowful, when they hear from Jesus' own mouth that one is a betrayer, and it would always be easier to believe, that some soul would be saved, if only eve-

ry twelfth communion guest were a betrayer. But God help us, in these times there is not more than one in twelve a worthy communion guest. Oh heavenly distributor of the supper, hear the humble prayer of all the worthy communion guests when they cry unto you with sorrowful and oppressed hearts. Our Father etc.

The Gospel 1 Cor. 11: 23

In accordance with our holy text we must through God's grace consider, "Who are worthy and unworthy communion guests."

The first consideration, Are they worthy communion guests who do not go at all to the Lord's supper? The second consideration, Are they worthy communion guests, who because of the clergy do not go to communion but become worthy when a sorrowless clergy comes to allow them to communion? The third consideration, Are they worthy communion guests who often go to the Lord's Supper and nevertheless hate the Christians? The fourth consideration. Are they worthy communion guests who go to the Lord's supper with a deceitful heart, that is, with Judas' money bag around their neck? Consider now you disciples who is the betrayer; Judas wants to carry the honor of a Christian.

The first consideration. Are they worthy communion guests who do not go at all to the Lord's supper? It is difficult to say are they worthy when they keep themselves to be unworthy, but I think that their unworthiness will soon change to proudness and despising sin-

ce they love sin, and because of those sins do not want to receive the medium of grace. They feel namely that it does not pay to go to the Lord's supper with such a life, they fear that a knot would come upon the conscience if they would make promises of repentance. Therefore they are absent from the Lord's supper so that no knot would come upon the conscience, if they would go to the Lord's supper to make promises of repentance which they do not intend to keep. It is more pleasant for them to run as deer in the woods, than to take the cord of the Holy Spirit around their head and become exhausted there. If such men make promises of repentance before the Lord's altar, they would be bound to these promises and the conscience would sometimes begin to gnaw that such precious promises never become fulfilled. Although before when younger the same kind of precious promises were made before the altar of Jesus; which have never been fulfilled, but not considering those things as much, what was promised before, those promises have been and gone. God probably does not remember those promises any more, which these unworthy guests have promised, then when they stood for the first time before the altar of Jesus, no doubt God has already forgotten them long ago. How do you think, you worthy communion guests, who do not dare to come any more to the Lord's table to make promises of repentance, has God forgotten those first promises, which you have made then, when you for the first time stood before the Lord's altar? Since you yourself have long ago forgotten

those first promises of love and faithfulness, no doubt God has also forgotten them? But I think, that God has also written those promises into the book of the memory, and will finally ask you, you unworthy communion guests, when and in what way those promises have been fulfilled? Although you now avoid the Lord's supper, you imagine thereby to get by easier and with a lighter responsibility, who knows if the conscience would not begin finally to accuse you, that you have lived as deer in the woods, and overlooked the mediums of grace.

The second consideration. Are they worthy guests, who only because of the clergy have become unworthy? We do not know what sin they have on the conscience; but in the mouth they have such a faith that the wrong doctrine is preached in church, and for that reason they cannot sit in church nor go to the Lord's supper when such a clergy preaches who cries out their sins to the world; but if such a clergy would come who does not examine the communion guests with even one word but allows all the old heathens to the communion without warning them, then they become worthy communion guests and through such a sorrowless clergy all the old heathens are allowed into the kingdom of heaven; although it went contrary with Judas who also tried to become saved through the sorrowless clergy? but the brothers of Judas of this time do not take him for an example, but they always force in from that wrong opening, and thereby find death and destruction. But these brothers of Judas probably do not have such a gna-

ving conscience as Judas, for Judas confessed his sins to the clergy, but the brothers of Judas certainly do not confess their sins to the clergy not before the last breath of life is breathed and then the Saviour is not only judged but has already died, who then will forgive them their sins, when the sorrowless clergy, who are enemies of Jesus' cross, say to Judas' brothers, "What does it concern us? See to it yourself." It is dangerous, that some wretches, who because of the clergy have become unworthy and through the sorrowless clergy become worthy, go the same road as Judas, and if the conscience awakens when they can realize how much Jesus has to suffer because of them, then it goes with them as with Judas that the devil of self-righteousness gets such great power over them that he hangs them.

The third consideration. Are they worthy communion guests who go often to the Lord's supper but hate the Christians? They are not worthy communion guests, because such ones openly mock the parent's tears, they are like those children who always quarrel with each other and scratch and pull the hair and nevertheless want to sit in the parent's lap. Can the parent love such ones, who do nothing but evil to the other children? They are as the bastard Ishmael who became terrible in Sarah's eyes, when he hated his younger brother, who was born after the spirit. What does the Bible say? "Cast out the bond woman and her son, for the son of the bond woman will not be heir with the free." They who go often to the Lord's supper, and nevertheless bear

hatred toward the Christians, they are true bastards, who do not fit together with God's children, and all the same imagine that they receive grace and forgiveness of sins in the Lord's supper, but it is the devil, who forgives sins to such communion guests. With their hypocrisy they go to the Lord's supper, and the devil makes them so blind, that they themselves believe that they are true Christians, although some say with their own mouths, "We are not Christians, but they who confess themselves to be Christians have gone up too high." We know surely, that bastards cannot agree at all with the children, always a quarrel will come up between them. For the bastards cannot acknowledge themselves to be children of the right father, nor do the bastards know who their right father is. Nor can the parent either acknowledge them before the world as their children, but those he acknowledges as his children, who have come from the marriage bed. The bastards cannot possibly get anything from the parent's home, although the wretches imagine that the parent will give to them in secret that which the world and the other children do not know about. But what does the Bible say: "Cast out the bond woman and her son, for he cannot be heir with the son of the free" So all the bastards, all hypocrites, all mouth-Christians, all confessors of dead faith, who have nothing to inherit in the Parent's home, must leave when the time of the distribution of the inheritance comes, for they do not have a child-right, and such bastards cannot acknowledge themselves to be children of God, if they would yet

acknowledge as the Jews, "We are children of Abraham." They cannot nevertheless show how they have been born legitimately. If the bastards would say 10 times "We have a father, God, God has not forsaken us, surely the door of grace is still open to us" so the Bible says: "Cast out the bond woman and her son, for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the free." So therefore those communion guests are not worthy, who go very often to the Lord's supper but nevertheless hate the Christians. Such communion guests are just the true bastards, who also want to eat the children's bread and imagine thereby to become saved that they steal grace, every time that they go to communion to strengthen their faith and moreover serpent's poison drips from between their teeth as soon as they open their mouths. Such bastards are even worse than those former ones who do not go at all to the Lord's supper.

The fourth consideration. Are they worthy communion guests who come to the Lord's table with a deceitful heart, or with Judas' money bag around their neck? They are many, who in that respect follow Judas' footsteps, knowing full well, that they have ill-gotten money in their money bag, but cannot bear to part with the dear world. They, no doubt, think like Judas, that is not anything, that we have money in our bag, no harm will come to the Saviour through that. But to your own soul will probably come the greatest harm, because the ill-gotten money is so dear, that you cannot part with it. The devil of greed was the first which went into Judas Iscariot's heart, and the devil of

anger went into him after the dipped sop, and finally the devil of self righteousness went into him which drove him to the tree to hang himself. Who knows if the same Judgement will not come to his brothers who go around with a money bag around the neck, and know for sure, that ill-gotten money is behind, nor do they want to cleanse their consciences. Who knows that it will not go with them as with Judas if the conscience finally awakens, when they see Jesus condemned, so that they then throw the ill-gotten money into the temple, and even then do not get peace of conscience} but self righteousness causes them to strangle their soul. So it has gone with many who have carried the ill-gotten money until that time, when Jesus has been condemned by the world, the conscience

has received such great power to condemn? the devil of self-righteousness has received such great power to accuse, that they have had to say on their death bed as it is written, "they are not suitable for me." "A poor journey is ahead, but now it is too late." So it happens with those who go around with Judas' money bag around the neck. Now we have recounted those who have gone to the Lord's supper and those who do not go. And we have so thought that out of four different kinds of communion guests none are worthy, who have the afore-mentioned characteristics. But someone might question here, "Who would be finally worthy?" He who is truly unworthy, he is truly worthy. Here Peter's unworthiness comes before our eyes. We know that upon Peter came such a feeling of un-

worthiness when Jesus wanted to wash his feet, and this unworthiness effected so much in him, that he began to oppose, when he said, "you shall never wash my feet." But we have afterward realized that this was false unworthiness, which often effects in the awakened, although they feel that that false unworthiness prevents them from coming to Jesus, that He could cleanse them, all the same self-righteousness wants to prevent them from coming to Jesus, that He could wash their feet. Many a penitent one intends to go to the Lord's table but does not go although he has intended, when that false unworthiness falls upon him and such an effect is just the effect of the evil spirit. We say therefore to Peter, "if you do not allow your feet to be washed, you will have no part or lot with Jesus." If the feeling of false unworthiness bothers you, then you are worthy to receive cleansing, for that is not the right feeling of unworthiness which prevents the penitent from seeking cleansing, but that is the true unworthiness which compells the penitent to seek cleansing, when they begin to feel that they have no part or lot with Jesus without cleansing. And that must be a sign to all penitent, that it is false unworthiness which makes some of Jesus' disciples so stiff and so obstinate to receive cleansing; for graced Christians also need every day to have their feet washed for the reason that the dust of sin falls upon their feet when they go bare footed upon this sinful earth. Let your feet be washed now Peter and be not obstinate, you will be left out of Jesus' grace if you do not allow your feet to be washed. You are not a disciple of

Jesus if you do not allow your feet to be washed. Otherwise how can you walk upon that golden floor in that new Jerusalem if your feet are not clean. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Pray now Peter that Jesus would wash your feet for much dust of sin has fallen from the world upon them although you have not traveled any further than from Bethany to Jerusalem. Surely you need washing, although through false unworthiness do not want your feet washed; you will soon be left without your share because of that false unworthiness; soon, soon you will be left without, if you do not allow your feet to be washed, for clean feet are needed if you must walk bare-footed in that new Jerusalem, where the streets shine of pure and precious gold; clean feet are needed if you must walk upon the clean floor in the wedding hall of the Lamb, where the bridesmaids jump and the daughters of Zion dance, there all must have clean feet for the Heavenly Host will not suffer His floor to be spoiled. Amen.

On Palm Sunday 1854.

"The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven."
John 6:41.

John has written in the gospel what offense came to the Jews, when Jesus began to speak of the Lord's supper for the first time. The intellect of the Jews opposed so much that they began to murmur; but even the disciples considered it a hard saying, when for the first

time He began to speak of the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood. And from this is understood that natural man neither wants to, nor is able to, believe those things which go beyond his intellect. But lies he certainly believes. If we would take into consideration all Scriptural passages in which is written something of the Lord's supper, the intellect of man would still not reach that far that he could comprehend something of this great mystery of the Lord's supper, for it is one great mystery, hidden from all understanding. As the intellect of the Jews was offended then from this word, so has the intellect of many people afterward become offended at that same speech. Some have understood it to be only a repast of love, as if it did not have any other significance than that alone, that Christians in their meetings have kept a repast of love in remembrance of the Saviour's death. But eating of the Lamb of the Passover was one mystery already in the time of the Old Testament, which had not only been instituted for the remembrance of a significant event, as the children of Israel that night were rescued from the bondage of Egypt, when the Lord commanded Moses to prepare the Lamb of the Passover. It is not only one repast of remembrance, but therein is some mystery which demands faith, because it had to be an innocent lamb. If it would be only a repast of remembrance, then doubtless some other food would have been good enough.

But it had to be the flesh of an innocent lamb, as this innocent lamb already then signified the Lamb of God

that taketh away the sins of the world. It is already of itself a significant matter, that an animal's blood is better than soap to clean a person's body, as the comely maidens of the world have experienced, that hands become whiter and cleaner with blood than with soap. Whoever washes his hands with blood, he becomes very clean. This the whores of the world have experienced, who must have clean and white hands, that they would be very acceptable to the world. But the daughters of Jerusalem have not yet noticed that the blood of the innocent Lamb takes away all weaknesses of nature. For the Lord says through the prophet: "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me." Jeremiah 2:22 The first question therefore is this: For what reason do the world's whores have to have such white hands, and the daughters of Jerusalem not have white hands though they wash themselves with soap and with lye? Yes, in this is the reason, that the whores of the world wash their hands in the blood of creatures, but the daughters of Jerusalem do not wash themselves in the blood of the innocent Lamb, but with soap and with lye, and nevertheless their filthiness is visible. When the paschal lamb was slain, a faultless lamb was taken, and the blood of that lamb sprinkled on the doorposts, that the Angel of Death would pass by the houses of the children of Israel. Does the Angel of Death fear the blood of the Lamb? It appears as if he fears the blood of the Lamb. This is also an incomprehensible matter, as that also is incomprehensible: For what reason is

blood better than soap for cleaning black hands? This is only one natural experience, which shows that a person must believe much that he does not understand.

What now pertains to the Lord's supper, the wise of the world and the priests and the scribes have considered: In what way can a person eat the body of the Lord Jesus and drink His blood, but they have not understood it. And as the Jews said: "How can He give us His flesh to eat?" So also all of the wise of the world say: "It is nothing other than a parable: one repast of remembrance." But Luther has not been satisfied with that. He wants to say thus: It is not only a parable; it is not as some say, that the blessed bread represents the body of Christ, as in the Old Testament the lamb of the Passover represented the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. But now the true Paschal Lamb has been sacrificed in our behalf; it is not an empty parable but it has indeed happened so, and now we eat His flesh and we drink His blood. But in that reason objects; the intellect is altogether lacking when there is nothing other than the bread and wine to be seen, neither is there any taste of flesh and blood in it. And Luther asserts thus: that every communion guest must firmly believe that therein is the body and blood of Christ, although there is not other than bread and wine that you see and taste. In this has been the confusion of the intellect in Luther's time, especially when the Pope said that the bread and wine changes into the body and blood of Christ; and the reformers said that the bread

and wine represent the body and blood of Christ. But Luther said that it is the body and blood of Christ. The more this mystery is considered with the intellect, the greater the darkness becomes, and if the Christians did not have such a faith, that the communion guests truly become partakers of Christ's body and blood, then they would all drown in the wisdom of the intellect.

We must, through the grace of God, consider in faith this great mystery, so that by faith we could receive it and treasure (this mystery) in our heart. But may that great Keeper of communion, who sees and understands all mysteries, make today's communion guests worthy to receive these blessed gifts with a humble, broken and believing heart, so that they would not be guilty of the Lord's body and blood. May Judas go out after the dipped sop, and may the other disciples follow the bloody footsteps of Jesus to Golgotha, that they would better remember for what purpose the Lord's Supper has been instituted. Hear, Thou great Keeper of communion, the sighs of the sorrowful disciples. Our Father and so forth.

Gospel: 1 Corinthians 11: 23

From the guidance of our holy gospel and following that which has already been spoken we must, through the grace of God, consider: Which body is given to us in the Lord's communion?

First: Is it that body which was before the Saviour's death? Second: Or is it that body that was in the grave? Third: Or is it that body that was after the resurrection?

May that great Keeper of communion grant His grace that those few souls who remain in the Lord's supper room when Judas has gone out may be able to know and experience which body it is that they partake of under bread and wine, First: That it is the Lord's body that is given to us, of that we do not doubt; but what kind of body it is has not yet been considered much. The wise of the world, the priests, and the scribes have not considered which body it is that is given to us in the Lord's Supper: if it is such a body which the Saviour had before His death, or is it the body which was in the grave after the Saviour's death, or that body which He had after His resurrection? That body which was before death was mortal, and that body which was in the grave was dead, but that body which is after the resurrection is immortal. Of which kind of body would the communion guests now want to eat? May the conscience say which body would be best to eat. I surmise that not one would want to eat of that body which lies in the grave which is dead flesh, especially when the Saviour Himself has said in the Gospel of John (6:63): "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." If now the communion guests were offered first that body which was before death, and second that body which lies in the grave, and third that body which is after the resurrection; and a knife would be given into the hand of each communion guest, and it would be said: "Cut now a piece from which body you want, either from the mortal body or from the dead body or from the immortal body. And

take also a little blood from which body you want, either from the mortal body or from the dead body or from the immortal body,” If it would be said to all communion guests: Jesus has commanded each one of you to cut a piece from His body, and each one of you to drink a little of His blood, with that promise that: “Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.” (John 6:54) And again He said in the 53rd verse of the same chapter: “Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you”. Hence now are two kinds of offers: first if they would begin to ravage the body of Jesus and each cut a piece of His body and eat it so they will have eternal life; but if they do not want to ravage the body of Jesus nor eat His flesh, then eternal death is offered to them. I suppose that some communion guests would say as the Jews: “How can this man give us his flesh to eat? (John 6:52) The sorrowless immediately say: “We are not yet so hungry that we would need to eat human flesh. None other than wild spirits eat human flesh.” But If the sorrowless would now begin to believe what the Saviour has said: “Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,” then I say, if they would begin to believe these words of the Saviour, then to them too would come the thought: Must even we eat the flesh of the Son of Man? Although the desire to eat the flesh of the Son of Man does not come to some sorrowless until upon the death bed, some are so timid that they do not want to eat the flesh of the Son of Man, as long as they find other meat

which is tastier than the flesh of the Son of Man. But now the third offering comes to the communion guests: from which kind of body do you want to cut meat to eat? Do you want to eat from that body which is living but mortal; or from that body which lies in the grave, or from that immortal body?

I surmise that the sorrowless probably have such a sensitive conscience that they will not begin to ravage a living man’s body; anyway they do not yet remember how and when they would have ravaged the holy body of Jesus. Although they sometimes ravage even the body of a living man, especially when they become angry, nevertheless they do not yet believe that they have torn the holy body of Jesus, for they say: “The soldiers have ravaged; we have not ravaged.” If therefore the sorrowless must inevitably eat the flesh of the Son of Man, then anyway they do not begin to eat the flesh of a living man, for they have such a conscience that they cannot cut human flesh, except in anger. Therefore the sorrowless would inevitable begin to ravage that dead body; from that each one would cut a piece and eat. But from where would they get blood when all the blood has already flowed to the ground and the soldiers and Jews have trampled it? Perhaps it will go with them as with the papists, who do not give the communion guests blood at all, but only the body. They eat dead flesh and of that they become partakers. However, it is a living body which, in the Lord’s supper, is partaken of by such communion guests who themselves are not spiritually dead. It is a living body,

although the sorrowless are not able to ravage a living body except in anger. When the power of old Adam moves strongly in the heart, then surely the sorrowless can ravage the body of a living man, but not otherwise. But we have seen many examples of the sorrowless, that they do not want to go to eat the flesh of the Son of Man at all, when the power of the devil moves strongly in the heart, or when the communion devotion is spoiled. Then they have the desire to taste of other flesh that is tastier than the flesh of the Son of Man. But now comes the question when Jesus has said: "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." From which kind of body would the awakened ones want to eat? Would they have such a conscience that they would yet be able to ravage a living man's body? If it would be said to the awakened: "You must eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, but is there such a conscience that you could ravage the body of the living Son of Man?" Then they would all reply: "Surely we have already ravaged Him." But from whence do you get the flesh of the Son of Man which you must eat if you do not gather that which you have ravaged? A wolf it is that does not want to eat what he has ravaged so long as he has some living spirit unravaged. But a man must gather what he has ravaged; and if he does not do that then he is worse than a wolf. But I know that the awakened do not want to eat dead flesh, therefore they must eat the flesh of the living Son of God, wherein there is yet life, although the consciences of some resist forcefully. In this place

comes a great war with the devil, for the devil of self-righteousness says to the awakened when they intend to go to the Lord's Supper: "Are you going to ravage the Lord's body again, as you have done before?" And many a communion guest is so frightened by this reproach of the devil that he does not dare to go to eat the flesh of the Son of God. For the devil stands upon the church road and says to the communion guests: "Are you going to ravage the Lord's body again?" But what does the conscience say then when the devil reproaches thus? Yes, the conscience says: "He is worse than a wolf who does not gather what he has ravaged." Since you have ravaged the Lord's body, you must also take care of it and eat it, for so the Saviour says: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of God and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:53)

Now we know assuredly that the awakened do not desire to eat that dead flesh which lies in the grave. But of which body do they desire to eat, of the mortal or of the immortal?

Graced souls can also consider of which body they would want to eat: of the mortal or of the immortal body. And all will probably say: "I would want to eat of the immortal body." Yes! of the immortal. But what is the inward meaning of the Lord's word of institution? In that the Lord says: "This is my body, which is given for you." He has not said so: "This is my body which has been given for you." But He says that it will be given in death. And by these words is now heard that it is the body which will be given in death, thus the

mortal body. But what is the body which is given up to death? Is it not a sacrifice of reconciliation, although the papists say: "It is not a sacrifice of reconciliation." And the wise of the world say: "It is a parable, it is nothing else." And some say: "It is a repast of remembrance; it is nothing other than that the disciples should remember that Jesus has died for them." But thus the Lord Himself says: "This is my blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." He does not say that it is shed for a remembrance but for the forgiving of sins; it is not for the receiving of forgiveness of sins but for the giving of forgiveness of sins, so that in God's behalf forgiveness will be given through the shedding of this blood. But the receiving of forgiveness of sins also depends on this, if the disciples will receive this offered grace. In this way the body and blood of Christ are a sacrifice of reconciliation and the Lord's Supper is one repast of reconciliation. It is not only a repast of remembrance, but a repast of reconciliation. And therefore all the sorrowless have a great responsibility, who come to the repast of reconciliation to reconcile with God, although there is nothing to reconcile. If namely God asks of them: "My friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" then they keep silence. If He asks: "My friend, why do you come?" then there is no answer to that either. They come to give Jesus a kiss, although they guide the enemies to Jesus. The Lord's Supper is therefore not only a remembrance of the Lord's death, nor only a repast of love, to which the Christians gather

in order to kindle mutual love, but as long as the Christians are sinners and lacking in many ways, they need to receive the forgiveness of sins. For thus says that Great Supper Keeper: "This is my blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." Therefore most assuredly sins are forgiven to the penitent ones in the Lord's communion, if they have such a faith that they will receive their sins forgiven. But the sorrowless and the impenitent do not receive their sins forgiven in the Lord's communion no matter how they might believe that they there have received the forgiveness of sins. It is just there that they ravage the body of Jesus and the enemy never reproves them for this ravaging but he encourages them to go to the Lord's Supper, and says to the impenitent: "Do not fear that you are unworthy, you who are the best friend of Jesus. You have never ravaged the body of Jesus as these awakened ravage it. You have always sat in devotion of confession at the Lord's Supper. You have always leaned your head on the breast of Jesus. And although these awakened ones rebuke you of adultery, thievery, drunkenness, whiskey peddling, greed, cursing, finery, pride, deceitfulness, and all kind of sins which you have never committed in your life, they themselves are such kind. Without a doubt your conscience testifies that you are innocent of all those. And of what do they yet rebuke you, that you have drunk of the Lord's cup and of the devil's cup on the same day? That is not true. Without a doubt you see for yourself from the book or from the Word of God that whiskey is God's best

blessing found in the land. God does not forbid us from enjoying essential food; whoever calls God's best grain devil's dung and the cup of the devil, he is of the devil himself."

Behold, so the devil preaches to the sorrowless and impenitent, but to the penitent he speaks thus: "Are you going again to ravage the body of Christ?" "And are you going as such a devil to the Lord's communion?" Yes! As such a devil you must go to ravage the body of Christ, for if you do not take care of what you have ravaged, then you are worse than a wolf. You must eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood. You have truly ravaged the body of Christ, now you must eat His flesh and drink His blood, that you would have eternal life, that you would live on the journey to eternity. You have ravaged the very body of the living Son of God, and now you must also eat the very flesh of the living Son of God and drink the blood of the living Son of God as savages eat the flesh of living people and drink the blood of living people, and say that it is sweet. So must you, who the world's virtuous people bark at as wild spirits, eat the flesh of the living Son of God and drink the blood of the living Son of God, not raw or boiled but roasted before hell fire, as the Lamb of the Passover with bitter herbs, so that it would sooner digest in your body and give you strength to flee away from the bondage of Egypt when the heathens drive the children of Israel out of their houses. In this way the children of Israel have to fast and to carry the unleavened bread substance. In the Old Testament

the Lamb of the Passover was the same as the Lord's communion is to us. Paul says that the Lamb of the Passover has been sacrificed for us, which is Christ. The Lamb of the Passover is one Lamb without blemish. The Lamb of the Passover was slaughtered, and the Lamb of God has also been slaughtered. Those people who ate the Passover lamb had themselves ravaged the lamb's body; so we also have ravaged the body of Christ. The flesh of the Passover lamb was roasted before the fire; so also was Christ's, the flesh of that innocent Lamb of God, roasted before hell fire.

The Lamb of the Passover was eaten with unleavened bread, so also the body of Christ is eaten with unleavened bread. The children of Israel ate the Lamb of the Passover in traveling clothes, with their loins girt, shoes on their feet, staff in their hand, ready to travel to the promised land. So also the Christians must be in traveling clothes, when they eat Christ's flesh, with their loins girt, with shoes on their feet, with staff in their hand ready to travel to the New Jerusalem, as if this holy repast were the last meal on earth. For a slave of sin this Lamb of the Passover should be the last repast in the bondage of sin. For the doubting and prisoners of unbelief this repast should be the last repast in the prison of unbelief. For believers it should be the last repast on earth. Even as food sustains the life of the body and gives strength to the members, so also that spiritual food, which is the spiritual flesh of the Son of God, gives strength to the soul to watch, to pray, to strive, to endeavor, and to long for that eternal life. To that true Fatherland the true

children of Israel are ready to travel, when they in true and saving faith eat of the Passover Lamb, And may it be the last repast upon the earth. With this food they must live until that time when it will be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God, when they get to sit at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in that Great Supper in heaven. There also sits that Great Keeper of the Supper in heaven with the crown of glory on His head distributing communion to His faithful disciples. There that Great Distributor of the Supper says: "This is my body which has been given for you, this is my blood which has been shed for you." Judas the betrayer is no longer there, but Peter, James and John, Phillip, Andrew, and Thomas who cries: "My Lord and my God!" There are Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon Zelotes and the women who have followed Jesus from Galilee: Mary Magdalene, Salome, Johanna, and Mary the mother of Jesus. They sit at the Great Supper in the Kingdom of Heaven, and after supper sing hymns of praise. They sing praises to God and to the Lamb in that New Jerusalem.

But Judas is not in the company of those who thank, but he is in the company of those who curse themselves and their Creator. And the enemies of the cross of Jesus, who have not sung songs of praise here, can then howl in hell. Now, you Great Supper Distributor! Keep Communion with those disciples who follow your bloody footsteps from the Garden to the hill of Golgotha, and awaken them when the sleep of sin presses upon them, that

they would see your bloody sweat and would hear your prayers when you lie on your knees and pray to the Heavenly Father. And strengthen them with your grace that they would at last become partakers of that Great Supper in Heaven where they can sing hymns of praise now and forever. Amen!

Good Friday

"For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke 23: 31.

The Saviour said these words to those women who wept and wailed when the soldiers brought Him to that place where He was to be crucified: "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" The Saviour was that green tree who should have still stood and produced fruit for the kingdom of Heaven. But the slaves of the enemy have not allowed this tree to stand and grow, for this green tree was in the way so that the enemy could not drag dry trees according to his desire. A green tree will truly not burn in the fire, but this green tree was in the way so that the enemy could not drag dry trees according to his desire. For that reason he had his slaves chop down this green tree so that he could drag dry trees for firewood according to his desire. Therefore the Saviour said to those women who pitied Him, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

Truly this green tree was a great obstacle when the enemy was hauling dry trees and dragging them into the fire. The Saviour Himself was the green

tree which was in the way of the enemy. And as long as this green tree was in the way, so long the enemy could not drag dry trees into the fire according to his desire. For that reason he had his henchmen chop this green tree, so the way would be opened better and he could haul the dry trees according to his desire. And it sounds clearly from the Saviour's words that God did not chop down this green tree, but surely the slaves of the devil have done it, when He says, "If they do these things in a green tree," namely, the slaves of the enemy do so; they chop down that green tree, although it is forbidden in the law that green trees are not allowed to be cut down in order to be burned in a tar pit. But what do the enemy's slaves care about that; they chop down the green trees although there are stumps and resinous wood for tar in the woods, which burn well in the tar pit. Do you not believe that this green tree will be chopped for the reason that it was in the way when the old man, the devil, had to drag dry trees? When, namely, the devil "walks through dry places, seeking rest and finding none," then it becomes lonesome for him, especially for the reason that he is driven out from his abode, for which reason he sometimes spends the night in the woods. And all do not take him into their abodes any more, for some have noticed during these times that he is a fellow traveler to the poor, especially in that abode where he has been before. If they would take him again into their abode, as many already have done, then he will eat them out of house and home; therefore, some have begun to be care-

ful that the devil could no more get into their abode. Therefore the devil, while traveling the dry places, sometimes spends nights in the woods, and there he needs firewood from which he makes a big bonfire. But when this green tree was in the way, the devil became angry with that green tree and had his henchmen chop down this green tree, so it would no longer be in the way. And so the devil has done in all times. He has always commanded his henchmen to chop down some green trees which are in the way, so he could then haul dry trees according to his desire. He could certainly haul those dry trees which are around this church, of which there is no hope that they will become fruitful. But that green tree, which would have yet borne much fruit for the kingdom of Heaven if it could have stood and grown for a longer time, it was now in the way, and therefore the devil had his henchmen chop it down, that the road to hell would be opened better and that the old man, the devil, without hindrance, could haul the dry trees into the fire. That the daughters of Jerusalem cried and lamented over, but Jesus forbade them to cry over Him, and told them to weep over themselves and their children, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

Surely we can lament that the enemy always wants to chop down these green trees, not because they are suitable to him for firewood, but because every green tree, when it bears good fruit, is in the way, so that the enemy can not haul those dry trees according to his desire. Jesus was that green tree who bore

fruit for the kingdom of Heaven. On that tree there were not only leaves and flowers, but also fruitful branches which had been grafted into that true Vine. When now the slaves of the enemy chop down this green tree, which should have yet stood and borne fruit for the kingdom of Heaven, then many would think that the branches also would dry up and become unfruitful. Such a faith the devil's slaves had, that when the green tree was chopped down, the branches too would dry up. But the enemy figured wrong in this place, for the fruitful branches of this tree just then began to bear fruit when the tree had fallen to the ground. And it has also elsewhere sometimes been seen, that the branches of a green tree budded and brought forth leaves, although the tree had fallen. This is just contrary to nature, and man's intellect cannot comprehend it, how the branches can bud and bear leaves although the tree itself has fallen. This wonder cannot happen with a cursed tree which dries although it is not cut down. But the branches of this blessed tree become fruitful although the tree itself is cut down, for they have been grafted into the true Grape Vine and draw moisture from it. This tree is so heavy that the devil is not able to haul it, although he has had his henchmen chop it down. But take heed now, you weeping and lamenting women, what will happen in the dry trees when the slaves of the enemy do thus with the green tree. Take heed, you weeping and lamenting women, what a terrible heat will prevail in hell when all the dry trees will be cut down and cast into the fire. If there is

spirit of growth in the green tree which effects the growth of good fruit in it, for which reason the green tree will not burn in the fire, what then will happen in the dry tree, which is ready to kindle into fire from one spark which flies from that great fire which the devil has kindled. Take heed what a terrible heat is in that large furnace, into which the prince of the world, Nebuchadnezzar, has put so much wood that the soldiers who had to cast in the servants of the living God, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, those soldiers died of the heat. But the servants of the living God did not burn in that great furnace, for the fire had no effect on them. Take heed, you weeping and lamenting women, what happens in the dry tree when the slaves of the enemy have not even spared the green tree. And when we today behold what is done to the green tree which the slaves of the enemy chop in their wrath, although it should have stood yet awhile and borne fruit for the kingdom of Heaven, so let us always remember that that green tree has borne fruit in that great vineyard. He has borne such fruit from which all the laborers in the vineyard receive refreshment in their thirst. May this green tree, which is that true Vine from which all the dry branches are pruned off and all the fruitful branches are purged, that they would bear more abundant fruit. May the green tree, that true Vine, from which all the fruitful branches draw sap, allow that those few souls who today, with sorrowful and bleeding hearts follow that crucified and thorn-crowned King to the hill of Golgotha, could soon see His brightness in Hea-

ven. Hear, Thou thorn-crowned King, the prayer of the penitent robber, our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 23: 32-43

If some soul would desire to follow the bloody footsteps of Jesus to the hill of Golgotha and behold His bloody wounds, then may he take the cross upon himself and carry it after Jesus. We have seen the dreadfulness of the world, how it bursts forth in words. We have seen the tears of the women who cried and lamented when such a teacher, who had fed their hearts with the living word, was taken away because of the hatred of the world. Jews were seen who, because of spiritual hatred, thirsted for the blood of Christ. A governor was seen who, because of honor of the world and the hardened people, condemned a righteous man to death contrary to his conscience. Soldiers were seen who crucified the Lord of Glory and gave Him vinegar mixed with gall. But let us speak, at this time, only of the Saviour's suffering and death, for the upbuilding of those souls who have not yet reached the foot of the cross, when we through God's grace behold the bloody wounds of Jesus. First: Who has made these wounds? Second: What do these wounds effect? The Heavenly Parent has received death wounds because of the ungodly and hardened ones. He now opens His breast and shows His wounds to the hardened ones and says, "Behold these wounds, you hardened spirits! Because of the hardened ones I have received them." Can not these wounds move the hearts of

the hardened ones? But some spit into the Parent's face and say, "Have you received these wounds because of us? No doubt you have hurt yourself." The hardened children say thus, when the Parent shows them His wounds. But the disciples of Jesus become very sorrowful from beholding those wounds. If now all the people, who have come to behold the Crucified One, would smite their breasts and would go home sorrowful!

The first consideration: Who has inflicted these bloody wounds on the Parent? In the history of Christ's suffering it is written that the high priests, scribes, and elders of the people had gathered together and taken council how they could, through guile, take ahold of Jesus and kill Him. Therefore they had a deadly hatred in their hearts toward Jesus. But those wretches did not know that the devil had aroused and kindled this spiritual hatred, but they thought that Jesus was a disturber of the people and a blasphemer of God whom they must, by all means, destroy. Thus the devil had reversed their eyes, that they had to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was a Samaritan and that He had a devil. But how can the devil so reverse the eyes of the best men, that the Son of God changes into a devil in their eyes? Take heed now how the enemy is able to reverse the eyes of the people. Are such people living now whose eyes the devil has reversed? All hardened ones think that the devil cannot reverse their eyes so that they would begin to hate Jesus and His disciples. But the same spiritual hatred, the same thirst for the blood of Christi-

ans, is even now in the hearts of the sorrowless. The same spirit of blasphemy and the same cry of murder, "Crucify!", is heard even now in every place where the Spirit of Christ effects living Christianity. For the bloody form of the Heavenly Parent does not effect sorrow or pity in them, but it effects more hardening. When the sorrowless people come to the place of the skull, they wag their heads and mock the Crucified and say, "Let Him step down from the cross and we will believe upon Him." Who now has crucified the Saviour? Who are the murderers of the Heavenly Parent? The Jews, no doubt, who had hatred in their hearts. But I think that the same Jews are still living. Drunkards, whiskey merchants, whores, thieves, cursers and fighters are even now those who cry, "Take Him away, crucify Him!" They have a spiritual hatred in their hearts, they have a murderous mind, and hell fire burns in their hardened hearts. But those wretches do not know it, for the devil has reversed their eyes. As the former Jews looked at the Son of God as a blasphemer of God, so these Jews look at the Christians as blasphemers of God. The former Jews looked at the Son of God as a disturber of the people, so these Jews look at the Christians as disturbers of the people. The former Jews mocked the Son of God saying, "You are a Samaritan and you have a devil," so these Jews mock the disciples of Jesus saying, "You are worse than the enemy when you do not allow me peace of conscience." The former Jews tempted Jesus with one whore which they brought before Him. So also do the Jews of this time;

through whores they want to get the Christians into a snare.

What now has the beholding of the Heavenly Parent's wounds effected in those who have come to the place of the skull to see that Crucified One? Has the beholding of these wounds effected sorrow, pity, and compassion in the hearts of the Jews? Are the Jews now in penitence? Pilate thought that the pathetic form of Jesus should move the Jews' hard hearts to compassion, when he brought Jesus out and said to them, "Behold the man!" But the heart of man is worse than the heart of a wolf, when the fire of hell has been kindled. The Jews certainly saw that great Crucified and thorn-crowned King in bloody wounds, and the blood dripped from His holy body and forehead. But no mercy was felt in the hearts of the Jews; instead they cried with a loud voice, "Take Him away! Crucify Him!" Are the Jews of this time more compassionate? Would they begin to pity a Christian who would have to suffer hunger and nakedness because of Christianity? I think that they would say as the former Jews, "Others he has helped, but himself he cannot help." The gospel says that there were some secret disciples of Jesus who had not consented to what the Jews did and advised, in whose midst must be Joseph and Nicodemus. Why did these men not come to the governor before Jesus had died? Why were they mute when their word would have effected so much that the governor would not have dared to judge wrongly? If these men would have spoken before, when Jesus was living, who knows what it would have

affected. But the honor of the world and fear of the people was probably so great in these men that they, without saying a word, allowed the governor to condemn one righteous man to death. Where now was the love of Joseph and Nicodemus toward Jesus? Honor of the world and fear of the people probably put an end to all love. Perhaps they hear how the serpent's poison drips from the mouths of the Jews, then these meek men will speak nothing of Jesus' innocence. They do nothing more than listen and sit mute. Here are many Nicodemuses who have sat deaf and mute when the Jews spewed out all their hatred upon the Christians. And, nevertheless, those men are of that faith that they will become saved through the death of Jesus, when they have buried His body. It is not stated in the gospel that beholding the wounds of Jesus would have effected sorrow in the hearts of Joseph and Nicodemus. And therefore Jesus is forsaken of all. There was no one who would speak to the world some word of His innocence. Finally He had to cry out with a loud voice, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" Behold now, hardened spirits, what you have done to the Heavenly Parent. First you have lied about Him that He is a disturber of the people and a blasphemer of God. You have cried, "Crucify!" You have mocked Him and called Him a Samaritan. Now you see Him in pitiful distress. You hear Him crying out and lamenting that God has forsaken Him. But you are still able to mock the tears of the Heavenly Parent with your ungodly life: drinking, cursing, finery and blaspheming, greed,

hatred and anger. Spiritual hatred is burning in your heart. Hell fire has been kindled in your own breast, although you do not know it; but when death begins to squeeze your hardened hearts, then your eyes will open, then they can see whom they have pierced. But then penitence is probably too late, when you have not beheld the wounds of the Parent with a sorrowful and penitent heart before. Behold now, murderers of the Parent! Behold now, mockers of the tears of the Parent! Behold what your hatred has effected.

The second consideration: What the beholding of the wounds of the Heavenly Parent has effected. Nothing in the hardened hearts but a desire to mock. So we hear in the history of Christ's suffering that the crowd of the enemy received very great power to mock when they saw that Jesus was forsaken of God and man. They had mocked Him before, but not so openly, when He was teaching in the temple. But now when He was taken ahold of, then the power of the enemy was let loose. All the blood hounds pounced upon Him. The sword went through His soul, so that the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed. Are not the same examples now before us? If some Christian is oppressed by the world, then all the secret thoughts become known. There are not many anymore who would speak in his behalf, who would consider it wicked that a Christian would have to suffer. There are not many who are bold to speak the truth to the hardened ones, so little has the beholding of the wounds of the Parent effected. There are no others who pitied

Him than some women and some sorrowful disciples, who beheld those wounds with a sorrowful and broken heart. Woe, woe, hardened world, how you have sunk into deep corruption, when you can behold those wounds of the Saviour without being moved, without deploring your own misfortune. No more terrible sin has been committed than the slaying of the Heavenly Parent, of which all are partakers, both great and small. However, there are not many who now stand at the cross and behold this deed of murder with horror. There are no others who deplore their misfortune, than some sorrowful women and disciples who are now considered fools by the world. In them, beholding the wounds of Jesus has effected a sorrow which they cannot hide. And the world despises them so greatly that they are considered insane, and if they would speak some word to the world of Christ's innocence and of the need for penitence, then they can immediately hear that they have spoken against Moses, and soon will be taken before the worldly court. Now drunkards are held to be wise, Jesus' sorrowful disciples are considered fools; whiskey merchants are honorable in the world, Jesus' sorrowful disciples are reviled and despised. Whores are kept in honor, but Mary Magdalene does not dare to open her mouth.

What now do the wounds of the Heavenly Parent effect? Nothing in the hardened hearts, nothing at all. When they have mocked and laughed for a time, they go to have a good time with liquor and drinking, with whoring, cursing, and slandering. But the sorrowful

disciples of Jesus do not dare to be in such a crowd. They must hide their tears. How distressful is this beholding of the wounds of Jesus to those sorrowful souls, despised by the world, who do not dare to open their mouths amidst such a crowd. Woe, woe unto you! you sorrowful Mary Magdalene, how your tears are despised and mocked when you behold with a bleeding heart those wounds, which Jesus has received because of His love toward the poor congregation, when He gave His soul for redemption, gave His body to the soldiers, that your soul would be saved from perdition. How it went like a sword through your soul, you Mary, Mother of Jesus, when you saw the Son of God upon the cross in great tribulation and heard Him cry, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" And you John, who, leaning your head on the breast of Jesus, have laid on His bosom in the Lord's supper, what do you now feel in your heart when you see the Son of God in the death struggle, you see the soldiers piercing a sword into His side? I think that this beholding of Jesus' wounds effects such a sorrow in the hearts of the disciples, which surely brings doubts with it, but also tears their hearts loose from the world and prepares their hearts to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay together now, you few disciples of Jesus! Weep and lament when Jesus dies! It is necessary for you, that you would once come to know how you have thanked Him for His good works. Love of the world had seized the disciples' hearts, therefore Jesus died, and they remained longing and sorrowing when He had died. But

remember nevertheless, you sorrowful souls, that Jesus has not died eternally. If you will only be able to cry so long that God will hear your sighs and awaken that great Crossbearer and thorn-crowned King, then you can with joy and rejoicing feel His gracious presence, then the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, will come, which will remind you of all that He has said formerly. Amen.

On Good Friday 1852

“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” Psalms 69:21

Christ complains through the mouth of David, that the world gives Him bitter drink, namely gall and vinegar, and the gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have written that the soldiers have offered the vinegar and gall mixture to the Crucified One; it is such a sour and bitter drink, which He is not able to drink. It is not written whether it was gall of a bear, or fish gall, or beef gall; but gall, whether it be gall of humans or animals is always bitter. Nor is it heard, that such a drink is offered to other people, but to Christ the world's soldiers have offered vinegar mixed with gall; that is the world's hatred, which has come from the dragon's gall; because in the gall lives the devil of hatred, and someone becomes so angry, that he vomits green gall. From the dragon's gall drips also spiritual hatred which has come out from the seed of the dragon, because the seed of the serpent hates the seed of the woman, and yet now spiritual hatred drips from the dragon's gall, which

reveals itself in the world toward Christ and His disciples. But He will not drink that sour drink, which the world and the soldiers of the devil offer to Him.

Even now the soldiers of the devil offer Christians vinegar mixed with gall, and that spiritual hatred, which always has been in the world toward Christians, doubtlessly it has dripped from the gall of the dragon. Certainly the dragon and his seed have a great gall: therefore some people become so angry at Christians because of the dragon's seed, that they vomit green gall upon them: and this gall is that spiritual hatred, which the seed of the serpent vomit upon the Christians. But as Christ was not able to drink that sour drink that was mixed with gall, so the Christians also are not able to willingly drink that spiritual hatred, which the world and the soldiers of the devil offer, but they must nevertheless taste of that sour drink, which is mixed with gall.

In the book of Tobias it is written, that the angel commanded the younger Tobias to take fish gall and anoint the eyes of his blind father, and so he also did: and when he had anointed the blind wretch's eyes with gall, it smarted at first, but a little while afterward the blind wretch's eyes opened; in this way fish gall is suitable for eye ointment to those, who have become blind for that reason, that the swallows have dunged in their eyes. And I have seen that the eyes of many blind wretches have opened through that ointment that has come from their own gall, so that many have come to notice their own corruption, and from that hatred, that has drip-

ped from the gall of the dragon, from that many have come to notice what a poor condition he is in. And many a blind wretch has from that same gall received eye ointment and enlightenment, that he has gotten to see what a poor condition he is in. If gall would not have been like an eye ointment, many a blind wretch would certainly even now be sitting in blindness, nor would he know, that he is under the rule of the devil. In this way gall is certainly an eye ointment to many, especially to such ones, who have become blind for that reason, that the swallows have dunged in their eyes, when they have laid down and begun to sleep directly under the swallows' nest. But gall is not suitable as drink, nor can there be even one, who willingly drinks the vinegar and gall mixture, although the soldiers offer such a sour drink to Christ and to his disciples: for it is written: that He did not wish to drink.

I know that close to Jesus's cross are yet many soldiers who offer Him vinegar mixed with gall; but near Jesus's cross also stand a few sorrowful disciples who look with pity upon Him; there stand also a few sorrowful women, who weep and lament, beholding His suffering, but the wretches are not able to help Him, nor do they dare to say much in the midst of such a crowd, who blaspheme and shame the Crucified One. There is only one man, who has opened his mouth to speak of the innocence of Jesus, and that man is himself crucified. It is one penitent robber, who first began to rebuke the other because of his blasphemy, although the children of the world see that to be

wrong, that one sinner rebukes another, and even such kind of sinner, who has not yet become a Christian. But so it has happened then, that one robber rebuked the other, and received through that rebuking such boldness to speak of the Savior's innocence and righteousness, that finally he boldly entreated that crucified and thorn-crowned King, that He would help him from the darkness of eternal death. Because the penitent robber first rebuked the other, who blasphemed the Crucified One with his prayer, afterward he spoke of the Savior's righteousness and finally prayed to Jesus, saying: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!" But the sorrowless see that as wrong, that one robber rebukes the other. If namely one impenitent robber blasphemes the Crucified One with his prayer, and one penitent robber rebukes him, saying: "Dost not thou fear God seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Then present-day robbers say to the penitent: "Shut your mouth, you are not any better than I am, you have not yet become a Christian yourself; how can you rebuke me, who are yet a worse whore and a thief than I am." Such answers the present-day robbers give to the penitent ones, and in these answers the devil's gall is dripping. But they war so much in behalf of God, that their countenances change like with Cain, and the black blood of selfrighteousness rises to the head; but they do not feel that they are yet more cruel, than the impenitent robber, who received the rebuke of the other in quietness; but he has not been so hardened as the present-day robbers, who cannot suffer the

truth to be spoken, but lies they certainly hear willingly.

Today we must behold how the blood drips from the Savior's wounds, how He cries in great distress: "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If there would be some sorrowful disciple who would get to behold this sadness with a sorrowful heart, that the heart would become broken and shattered from Christ's suffering; if there would be some sorrowful Mary Magdalene, who now stands close to the cross, with a broken heart, beholding that crucified and thorn-crowned King, bleeding and sitting in the blood bath because of sinners, so they from that would get to receive greater sorrow and diligence to strive, to hasten, and to crawl to the foot of the cross, that some drop of that precious reconciling blood would drip upon their conscience and heart, for cleansing and for eternal salvation, that not all of the Parent's blood would flow to waste upon this sinful earth. Hear, Thou great Crossbearer, and thorn-crowned King, the sighs of the sorrowful disciples. Our Father, and so forth.

The Gospel: Luke 23:32

By the cross of Jesus stand: First: Soldiers who crucify Him according to the paganish judge. Second: That crowd of passers-by, who mock Him along with those of the high priest. Third: A few sorrowful disciples and women, who have believed on Him.

Let us behold by the guidance of these words: For what reason and with what conscience have these various groups come to the hill of Golgotha to

behold that crucified and thorn-crowned King.

First: For what reason have the soldiers come there?

Second: For what reason have the sorrowless crowd come there?

Third: With what conscience have the disciples and women come there? If only the crucified Lord Jesus would shout by so high loud that the Centurion and all blasphemers would strike their breasts and go home with sorrow and fear.

First: For what reason have the soldiers come to the hill of Golgotha? They have come to crucify Jesus, These soldiers are the servants of the lords of the world. One great worldly lord has, according to the request of the Jews, condemned Jesus to death. This worldly lord has gotten that authority over Jesus, that he condemned Him to death. But from where has Pilate gotten such authority over the Savior? Jesus said to Pilate: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." From these words of the Savior we hear, as if God would have given the paganish judge that power, that he is able to judge; but who knows who or what god has commanded the pagan to condemn an innocent man to death contrary to his conscience. Very truly God has allowed this, that Pilate was able to kill the body; both the body of the Son of God and of the Christians, through worldly judges, the devil gets to kill; but God has not commanded one paganish judge to condemn one innocent man to death contrary to his conscience, but God has said to the judge: Judge right judgement for

the Lord! In this the enemy caused greater danger to himself, when he effected so much in the mind of Pilate, that he because of worldly honor condemned an innocent man to death contrary to his conscience. The enemy thought through this to do great damage to God, but he caused himself great trouble. The world's lords say that they have power to crucify and they have power to release, but they would not have any power, if it would not be given from above. And that power which they have been given from above, that the world's lords use wrongly, and receive from it the greater condemnation.

But the soldiers are the servants of the world's lords, they come to crucify Jesus: and their hands are bloody. The blood of Jesus has sprinkled upon them; but it will burn their consciences eternally; because they have caused the Parent's blood to flow according to the command of the devil, and witnesses have to swear to that great justice that on their hands is seen the Parent's blood, and they are not able to wash themselves clean of that blood, although they would raise water from the well of the abyss. The soldiers have also trampled the blood of Jesus under foot and have left bloody footprints behind, these bloody footprints follow them to hell; Let us see, who will wash their feet clean in hell?

Second: For what reason has the sorrowless crowd come to Golgotha? The evangelists remind that the passers-by would mock the Crucified One, they wagged their heads and Said: "woe to you, loftily you destroy God's temple, and on the third day thereafter

build it"; These disciples of the devil had wrongly twisted the words of Jesus, as they yet now snap up some word from a Christian's mouth and twist it wrongly, so they had then also snapped up some word from the Savior's mouth, which they would ride upon; and now the devil's angels received joy, when in their minds they got the Savior to be a liar: it was like sugar would be placed in their liver and spleen. But certainly yet this lie must burn both liver and spleen, when the angels of the devil get to see who they have mocked and whose words they have twisted with a wrong mind. It is not surprising, that the rough crowd comes to mock the Crucified One, when they didn't have a spoonful of sense in their minds; but when even the chief priests, scribes, and elders come to mock the Crucified One, that is surprising. Peter preached to that rough crowd that had cried, "Crucify!" "I wot that through ignorance ye did it"; but the high priests, scribes, and elders, who should have had a better mind and a better understanding, they have not done that in ignorance, but from plain meanness; now they get to vomit out gall and dragon's poison upon that man, whom they already earlier bit with their teeth and poked with their sly tongue. And were the chief priests, scribes, and elders better than the blind and crude paganish nation, who mocked the Crucified One? They who contrary to their understanding fetched light from hell, with which to see to make sausage of Christians blood. The rough paganish nation, that is as stupid as a newly born calf, that has just fallen into the gutter; what do such

people know of the ways of the world or of the wisdom of the world? But the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people, look, they understand how and in what way they can get the Son of God to be a blasphemer of God. The same men understand how they can get Stephan to be a lawbreaker. And evens now they understand best how they can get the effect of God's spirit to be the effect of the devil's spirit. What does the rough pagan nation understand otherwise than to scream and cry: Crucify! Although in broadcloth suit and silk skirt, one crude peasant nevertheless does not understand anything else than to war in behalf of the devil with fist and knife, or axe and log, against the Christians, and such ones the Christians can possibly avoid; but the chief priests, scribes, and elders, who are like the best men in the congregation, these the Christians must not avoid, who would want to live afterward with a clean conscience. Because they have such legal hooks, with which they twist and distort the natural law, that a Christian must become a lawbreaker, no matter how innocent he would be. And after that, when they have first gotten Christ judged by the power of the law, then they come right away to blaspheme the Crucified One and say: "if he is king of Israel, then step down from the cross, and we will believe upon him". Certainly the devil has schooled his priests how they must blaspheme the Son of God. And this blasphemy David has revealed in the 69th Psalm, 20th verse: "Reproach hath broken my heart and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was

none; and for comforters, but I found none." Who would there now be, who could pity the Crucified One, or would dare to speak one word in behalf of that innocent man, when His own disciples are mute, and Nicodemus is mute, who nevertheless knows the natural law as well as other lords of the world: what does he care of Jesus when His life is in danger? Nicodemus does not want to offend the minds of the world's lords. There can be no other, who dares to speak of the innocence of the Savior than one penitent robber, who himself is crucified; but what does his word affect in the midst of such a crowd?

Do you have the desire to blaspheme the Christians, thou Shimeis, sons of Gera? Do you now have the desire to lap Christian blood, you meek whores and you sober drunkards? Give to your dying Parent the vinegar and gall mixture that you would get proper joy, when the dying Parent cries out in pain: "Eli, Eli! lama sabachthani!" Certainly mockers yet will get to mock the dying Parent before He dies. And this is certainly joy to the angels of the devil, who hear even in hell, that they are able to cry; "Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him".

Third: For what reason have the disciples of Jesus come to the hill of Golgotha? Have they that belief, that the crucified and thorn-crown-ed King can help them in their sorrow and in their doubt? You have come with a sorrowful heart to Golgotha's hill. Do you now have that belief that He can help you from the hands of your enemies; namely from sin, from death, from hell, and from under the rule of the devil.

And thou sorrowful Mary Magdalene! Are you able to believe, that you must yet see the Crucified One alive? Are you able to believe that you must take Him around the knees, that you must yet give His feet a kiss and wet His feet with tears of love? And thou Peter, who formerly had such a strong faith, that you intended to go to death with Him. How is it now with your faith Peter? When you watch as the whole world would reject and give your Savior up to death, and you even have heard Him cry: "My God! Why hast thou forsaken me!" Do you believe any more that He would be seen alive? So it appears from your behavior like your faith would be lacking. You sorrowful disciples, it appears like your hope has become lost. You have begun to follow Jesus, you have left the vain worldly course in that hope, that with the help of that great and powerful Son of God you would get to sit in the kingdom of heaven and judge the twelve tribes of Israel; but now all your hope for the kingdom of the Messiah has become lost. Nor can others have that belief, except the penitent robber, that this thorn-crowned and world-hated Jesus of Nazareth can help them from hell. But this can be needful to all of you, that you go for some time in sorrow and grief; that you would feel, what a great distress it is, to be without the Savior. Isn't that also a great distress, to be so far from the Savior, namely in the world? Isn't your Savior already in another world? How do you feel you sorrowful disciples who today have come to behold His wounds? How does it feel, John, who formerly leaned your head on Jesus's breast at the

Lord's supper? Is your Savior already dead? And thou sorrowful Mary Magdalene, who formerly anointed His head with the expensive ointment, is your Savior now dead? Have you already prepared the sweet-smelling herbs to anoint Him? Or have you first kept the Sabbath rest? I see, that the disciples are certainly sorrowful, but their Savior is like in another world, and therefore they are doubting and like behind locked doors. The Parent is in the grave, and the children have soon forgotten the first love; the Parent has left great possessions, but the children do not agree about the inheritance. It would be best if you would go first to cry upon the grave of the Parent, until then, when the dawn begins to glow; who knows what the tears of Mary Magdalene affect? If they do not awaken Him, then no other kind of tears affect anything. But we hope, that an angel will come from heaven, and move the stone away from the door of the grave, and Mary Magdalene must cry so long, that she is able to take Him around the knees and give His feet a kiss; then must tears of joy and rejoicing flow from your eyes and you must say: "Rabboni, my Lord!" Amen,

Easter Day sermon 1853.

The chief priests said to Pilate: Sir, we remember that the deceiver said, while he was yet alive. After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure untill the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Matthew 27: 63.

These words of the Pharisees are written in the gospel of Matthew, and we hear of these words what the lords of the world fear. They do not have such belief that Jesus still will rise from the dead, or from the grave of the dead faith. But they have that fear that the disciples say to the people: He is risen. They give him still such a name: They call him a deceiver, and formerly they have called him an agitator of the people.

This tells us clearly in which esteem they keep him. The spiritual hatred makes them so blind that they must give shameful names to the confessors of the truth. And the more they could vomit their poison on them, the better it would be. Such is the nature of those who in their hearts have spiritual hatred toward Jesus. They do not know how they had to blaspheme and ridicule him. They come therefore to Pilate and accuse Jesus even after his death and say: Sir, we remember that the deceiver said. After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure untill the third day.

Do the Pharisees now keep him in better esteem? I guess that the Phari-

sees keep him even now in the same esteem as before, even if the Pharisees of this time believe that they are the best friends of the Savior. But their life shows that they are of the father devil. When they drink, curse and fight, commit adultery and steal, then the Pharisees are the best friends of the Savior. But those who are penitent and make repentance might be the friends of the devil.

So the blind world believes and thinks. They imagine that the drunkards and liquor dealers are in highest esteem in the kingdom of heaven. Next to them are the meek whores and honest thieves, but those who have the lowest esteem are the christians who are blasphemed by the name of pietist. And when they have blasphemed the founder and fullfiller of this Christian faith by the name of a deceiver and agitator of the people, then it is no wonder if they call his disciples pietists and wild spirits.

The Savior himself has said: The disciple is not above his Master. If they have blasphemed the Master by the name of Belsbub, so surely his disciples will get the same name. However the Pharisees and Scribes fear that his disciples will steal him at night and say to the people: He is risen. It sounds that the Pharisees and the Scribes have such belief, that he is not risen though he has already said when he was alive: After three days I will rise again. But the belief of the Pharisees is such that the disciples will steal him at night.

Therefore they go to the heathenish judge and ask him to put soldiers to protect the grave of the dead faith so

that Jesus would not be able to rise. Of course the heathenish soldiers try to protect the grave of the dead faith. But even if the Pharisees and Scribes lock this grave by the seal of the intellect, they have not powers to keep him in the grave. He surely rises up.

But he will not rise up to the world, but to the disciples and to the believing ones he rises up, and therefore the world consider the last error to be worse than the first. Through the latter error some souls, even if they are few, have begun to believe that Jesus really is risen. And it troubles the slaves of the world when these disciples began to thunder so powerfully that the slaves of the world do not get peace to sleep.

Surely the lords of the world and the chief priests try and always have tried to protect the grave of the dead faith, in which the natural meekness, Josef and Nicodemus, have put him. Let the Pharisees and Scribes still try by the seal of the intellect to seal that large stone which the men of meekness have put on the grave. Let also the soldiers protect the grave so that Jesus would not be able to rise up.

But indeed he rises up and becomes living when the angel from heaven rolls off the stone from the door of the grave. Now the angel sits on the stone of meekness, and you, Mary Magdalene, need not more worry about, who will open the grave for you by rolling off the stone from the door of the grave. You do not need to do anything else but weep beside the grave until that moment when the crucified and now arisen Lord Jesus comes and asks you: Woman, what are you weeping for, whom

are you seeking? For sure you are allowed to weep beside the grave as long as you weep of love and shed tears of missing. But you shall not seek the living among the dead.

And now, you sorrowful Mary Magdalene, turn yourself to the crucified and thorn-crowned Savior. Fall on your knees in front of him and pray that great Crossbearer that he would open your eyes, you wretched one, so that you would not imagine that he is the gardener, but that you would recognize him, the crucified one, the crossbearer.

Hear therefore, you crucified and from the grave risen Ruler of life and death, our Father etc.

The gospel: Mark 16: 1.

By the guidance of the gospel of today and in consequence with the writing in the history of the gospel we shall through God's grace in this holy hour consider the resurrection of Jesus. First (consideration). Who has rolled off the stone from the door of the grave? Second (consideration). Who has said that Jesus is resurrected? Third (consideration.) Who has wept beside the grave? Fourth (consideration). Who has first seen him resurrected?

If only all the soldiers would die when the angel comes down from heaven. We hope also that the eyes of the sorrowful and penitent Magdalene will become opened, when she sits near the grave, so that she feels that the crucified Savior is living and therefore she does not any more seek the living among the dead.

First consideration: Who has rolled off the stone from the door of the grave? An angel of the Lord has come

down from heaven and rolled off the stone of meekness from the door of the grave. The meek men, Josef and Nicodemus have put that stone there. The outer side of this stone of meekness is smooth but the inner side is almost rough. And it is also so heavy that the women have not powers to roll it off from the door of the grave. That is why they must ask each other: Who will roll off the stone for us from the door of the grave?

But an angel of the Lord lifts off that stone and sits down on it. And the heathenish soldiers become dead when the angel comes down from heaven. They are not more able to fight even if they have come with the purpose that they must protect the grave of the dead faith so that Jesus would not be able to rise from the grave.

Jesus has lain in that grave since the Jews and pagans have crucified him by their ungodly life. He has lain there in the grave of the dead faith since the men of meekness, Josef and Nicodemus, took him down from the cross. Even if these men of meekness have not crucified Jesus as the Jews, Pilate and the heathenish soldiers, they have indeed because of the honor of the world been mute dogs when they should have barked at the lords of the world and the sorrowless crowd because of the terrible and horrible murder of the Savior.

But no one have wanted to openly confess that Jesus is innocent, except that penitent robber, for what reason he received promises of grace and salvation. But Josef and Nicodemus have then been mute dogs when they should have

barked at those who murdered Jesus. Why did they not defend Jesus when Jesus was alive? At that time they have not said one word about the innocence and righteousness of Jesus. But after the death of Jesus they have gone to Pilate and asked him if they would get permission to put the body of Jesus in the grave.

They have thus shown their love to the dead body of the Savior but not to the living Son of God. And therefore they have done so many good works for the dead body of the Savior that they do not need to regret that they have been mute when they should have spoken to the world, Jews and the heathenish Judge, that Jesus has not done anything evil.

Who shat the mouth when they should have said the truth to the murderers? Is it not possible for anyone to become saved by that life, that he puts the dead body of Jesus by means of the cover of meekness in the grave of the dead faith, and does not care to speak to the murderers of the Savior because of the honor of the world.

Second consideration: Who has said that Jesus has resurrected? The whole world knows that Jesus has died on the cross. But this knowledge does not help the world to be released from hell, because the world does not want to believe that Jesus has resurrected. And how can the world believe it, when Jesus' own disciples have not been able to believe it before they with their own eyes saw him? Who has now said that Jesus has resurrected? Yes! The angels have first said to the women: Why do you seek the living among the dead?

He is not in the grave but he resurrected. And the women believed it partly, namely those women who had followed Jesus from Galilee.

But the disciples have not believed before they were allowed to see the Lord themselves. Mary Magdalene did not believe before she saw (the Lord), but she has first told to the disciples that Jesus is not more in the grave. And the disciples, Peter and John have also come running to the grave. But John, who was younger, run faster and came first to the grave, and peeked (there in). But Peter came afterwards and began probe the linen clothes and the napkin. What did Peter find now in the grave of the dead faith when he jumped there in?

Nothing but the linen clothes. And those linen clothes maybe still are in that grave. No other marks of the Savior have been left in the grave of the dead faith than only the linen clothes and the napkin. And those things the confessors of the dead faith serve now. They do not feel that the Savior is resurrected but they always probe those linen clothes and then they believe. But what do they believe? Yes! They believe that the body of Jesus is not in the grave. But they do not believe that Jesus is resurrected and alive in the hearts of those who believe.

But have the soldiers not reported to the lords of the world and the high priest how the matter has happened with them? It is true that the soldiers have told it, but the lords of the world will indeed not believe that Jesus has resurrected, but they want to make that matter vain, because they give money

to the soldiers and teach them to lie. The high priests and Scribes want by all means prevent that such belief would come upon the people that Jesus is resurrected from the grave of the dead faith.

And naturally the heathenish soldiers do what the lords of the world command. They will by no means tell the people that Jesus has resurrected, but as they have been taught to lie, they also lie against their knowledge and conscience even if they are not quite sure if he has resurrected or not. But they know that much, that an angel came down from heaven and that they became died and that the dead body had disappeared. But they do not tell it to the people, but they say as they have been taught to lie that the disciples came at night and stole him.

Third consideration: Who has wept near the grave? Mary Magdalene has wept near the grave, and I suppose that she is still weeping there. If I know her right, so I suppose that she is weeping the tears of love and missing. But her eyes are so covered that she considers her Savior as the gardener. She does not recognize Jesus even if she is weeping for his sake.

Isn't it curious that a sorrowful and for Jesus' sake weeping soul will not recognize Jesus even though he is standing beside her. Tears flow so richly that she does not see that crucified and thorn-crowned King, but believes that he is a gardener.

What does thus the wrong wordly sorrow effect in the heart of a blind wretched one, when even this soul who was broken by the love of Jesus and

downpressed by missing, sorrow and longing, was not able to recognize him who had let his blood shed for her and other penitent souls' redemption.

Oh, no! Oh, no! You sorrowful Mary Magdalene! Why do you now sit beside the grave of Jesus unhappy and grieved, brokenhearted, weeping while you miss the dead body of Jesus? Have you not already heard from the angel's mouth that Jesus has resurrected? Why do you still seek the living among the dead? Turn around yourself and look to the opposite side of the grave. See, that crucified and from the grave risen Lord Jesus stands alive beside you and asks you: "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?"

You must now by your own mouth confess that you are seeking Jesus; that your heart has a burning desire and missing to (see) Jesus. But you do not recognize Jesus even if he stands beside you, because you do not believe that he has resurrected now, but you continuously believe that he is dead. However you have loved him by a pure heart. And your sorrow and your tears effect so much that he must reveal himself to you.

Fourth consideration: Who saw first Jesus alive and who saw him last? Sorrowful Mary Magdalene stands or sits so long time beside the grave that the crucified Lord Jesus must come in front of your eyes; and it must be as a sign for all sorrowful ones who are missing Jesus.

After the death of the Savior the faith of the disciples ended. They were not more able to believe that he has resurrected. And this unbelief will still

torment the disciples when the sin, the world and the devil kill their Savior. The selfrighteousness rises up to the head when they feel that Jesus because of sin died in their hearts. They are not more able to believe that Jesus is living, when the crowd of the devil has crucified him.

But now the crucified Savior reveals himself for such sorrowful and doubting disciples and says: "O, fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" And he explains them the scriptures. And they began little by little to understand the word of God. And even if they do not yet know the Crucified one, they indeed begin to love him.

Listen now even you sorrowful disciples, how he explains the scriptures to you. Hear and understand, you fool and slow of heart to believe, so that your hearts would become burning of love, and you had to pray him when you come nearer the village into which you are travelling: "Abide with us; for it is toward evening and the day is far spent."

Do not let the unknown expounder of the Bible go away even if he makes as though he would have gone further. Do not let him go away, you sorrowful and doubting disciples, but require him to come with you into the village where you are travelling to. Perhaps your eyes will be opened so that you will know him in breaking of bread. But do not lay down to sleep there but go and tell this glad tiding to the other disciples who have not yet seen him. Amen.

Easter Sunday 1854.

“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a new lump. Therefore let us keep, the feast, not with old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” 1 Cor. 5: 6-8.

St. Paul takes in this place a parable of dough, which the children of Israel carried with them when they were in a great haste to leave the bondage in Egypt, that they could not begin to make bread from dough. They had to carry new dough with them and to eat unleavened bread. They could not begin then to make the dough to work or leaven when the enemies were attacking them, but they had to start out on their journey at night, carrying new and unleavened bread substance with them. Of that unleavened dough, Saint Paul now took a parable and writes to the Christians (1 Cor. 5th Chapter) “Know ye not that a little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump?” In how many congregations is the Passover festival still kept in the old leaven? In how many places is the old leaven still left unpurged? Also here, all people have kept the Passover festival in the old leaven and even now all those in heathenism eat spiritual bread which is leavened and has become sour. Although the Lamb of the Passover is sacrificed, although the Lamb of God is now slain and all who have been baptised in Christ should now purge out that old leaven which flows out of the trough, and to keep the Passover festival, not with old leaven, but with the unleav-

ned bread of sincerity and truth; all the same many love that old leaven which they have been accustomed to eat since their childhood. But all, who are of the lineage of Israel, arise up at night to purge out that old leaven and to prepare the unleavened bread substance, when they must flee from that heathen land. But many want to carry the old leaven with them, and from that little leaven the whole lump becomes sour. To them Paul says in his first missionary letter to the Corinthians; purge out that old leaven, that ye may be a new lump. We well surmise, that sin is that old leaven, which spoils the whole lump. If sin is allowed the rule, so the whole Christianity changes to hypocrisy and dead faith. Christianity is such a substance which is compared to a dough, but sin and old Adam are compared to leaven, especially mixed companionship and wrong order which contains within the substance of egotism, it is injurious to spoil the substance of Christianity. Now Paul says that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. If egotism and love of the world gets to rule, then the whole Christianity is spoiled. Therefore Paul counsels the Christians to purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump. Regrettably that old leaven wants to spoil the whole lump, if the trough where the old leaven has been is not well washed and cleansed. Many makers of bread are lazy and slovenly they do not take heed, how clean the trough is when they put into it new and unleavened food substance. In their mind it is a great trouble to purge out the old leaven. Therefore they put the new and unleavened food substance into the old

trough, from which the old leaven has not yet been scraped, and although they want to avoid that old leaven, the whole lump is nevertheless spoiled since the trough is not scraped and cleansed, before the new dough is mixed. It is the substance of old adam which spoils the Christianity of many, when egotism rises against the Christians, and also a secret aversion, therefore from that comes discord and a different order of grace, a different faith although there should be no more than one road to heaven. From whence does discord come? Yes, the old leaven has fastened to the trough, although Paul says, "purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." But the lazy one does not care to scrape that old leaven and cleanse the trough. A lazy and slovenly old woman puts flour into the trough although the old leaven has fastened and dried up on it. When, therefore, the new dough is mixed in, the old leaven comes and spoils the whole lump and the bread substance becomes sour and that bread, which is made of such substance, becomes sour. But such bread is not suitable for communion bread, and such sour bread the heathens eat on their Passover festival. But the true children of Israel prepare for the Passover festival, unleavened bread, which has not soured. And for that reason Saint Paul counsels the Corinthians to purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump.

How formerly the new lump was mixed in the old leaven, is known to all, but now it is necessary that the old leaven is purged out of the trough before the new lump is mixed. Formerly the

bread makers were lazy and slovenly. The new dough is mixed in the old leaven. And this old leaven has spilled over and that which has spilled over, that the slovenly bread makers have again scraped up and put back together with the dung into the trough. That bread which is baked of such leaven has not been suitable for dogs or swine for food; but certainly the baptized heathens have not complained of this old leaven, certainly the old leaven has been suitable to them for Passover bread no matter how sour and leavened it would be. And even now the old leaven is suitable for Passover bread to one who has not been accustomed to eating unleavened bread. One slovenly person first digs the devil's dung with his fingernails and then with the same fingers with which he has dug the devil's dung, mixes the bread substance in the old leaven. And when this old leaven begins to work and spill over, with his black nails he scrapes the new dough into the trough together with the dung. And from that old leaven he makes black, sour loaves for Passover bread. Do the people still eat of the old leaven? Is that sour bread still suitable for them which the black bread maker has baked in the stove of the abyss? It appears that the old leaven is still satisfactory to those who keep devil's dung as a delicacy; to them the old and sour leaven is acceptable for Passover bread. But those few souls who are of the lineage of Israel and have started to flee quickly from bondage in Egypt, carry new bread substance with them in the wilderness, leave the old leaven in Egypt, and eat unleavened bread on the

way, along with the Lamb of the Passover, which is sacrificed for them, whose bones should not be broken. You few chosen ones from the lineage of Israel, who dry shod reach the other side of the Red Sea, and through great danger travel in the wilderness, carrying new and unleavened dough until that time that manna begins to rain from heaven, purge out the old leaven, from your hearts; leave the devil's dung for the Egyptians, who drink it gladly, leave that sour leaven for Passover bread for the heathens, which they gladly eat, and eat unleavened bread, that ye may be a new lump. And keep the feast of the Passover not with old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. We hope, that the chosen of Israel will finally reach the land of Canaan, although through great pain and tribulation when all the heathens drown in the waves of the Red Sea. Purge, therefore, that old leaven, you few souls, who have gone out from bondage in Egypt, and eat unleavened bread until that time when manna rains from heaven. Do not murmur against Moses, you weary travelers, for he has to lead you by way of Mt. Sinai according to the Lord's command. You must travel in the wilderness because of your impatience and all the Egyptian fleshpots must be left. You must weep and lament but the world rejoices: And this weeping and lamenting of the disciples comes from that sorrow which is after the mind of God, when they long for Jesus' merciful presence. When the sorrowful disciples of Jesus see, how their Saviour is tormented and distressed by the world, they must weep and lament

but their sorrow will be changed to joy when they can see Him again. Who knows, perhaps today, this evening Lord Jesus will reveal Himself to His sorrowful disciples. Who knows, perhaps today, they will see the Lord.

When we now through God's grace keep the Passover festival, some in the old leaven, some in the unleavened dough of truth and Christianity, then the intention is to consider, How Jesus' sorrowful disciples, who with tears of penitance and longing wet the bread of the Passover, give the Saviour honey cake, when He reveals Himself to them. May God and that Great Crossbearer, who today has arisen from the dead, that all sorrowful disciples, who because of fear of the Jews have sat behind the closed doors, can today first hear and finally with their own eyes see, that crucified and thorn-crowned King is still alive. Therefore, hear gracious Lord Jesus, the sighs of the sorrowful and weeping disciples, and come soon to them before the sun sets. Our Father etc.

The Gospel Mark 16:1

We hear from our Holy Gospel which was read that those women who went to the sepulchre early in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus, heard from the mouth of the angel that the Saviour had arisen from the dead. And from the other Evangelist's relatings we hear, that Mary Magdalene was the one who saw the Saviour first arisen, but Thomas last. Accordingly we must through God's grace consider, How the

disciples can see the Saviour arisen, but not all at the same time.

The first consideration: for what reason are the children of the world not able to see Jesus after His resurrection. For that reason the children of the world cannot see Jesus after His resurrection because they crucified Him, and yet gladly would have allowed that Jesus would have died eternally. The children of the world fear that the disciples will come at night and steal Jesus' body and say afterward to the people, that He arose, therefore they ask the governor for soldiers to guard and keep the sepulchre so that the Saviour would not get to arise. They fear namely that the last madness will be worse than the first if the people would begin to believe that the Savior had arisen. When namely the lords and high priests have that belief that the doctrine of Jesus is one madness, that it is one wonderful superstition or wild disease, by which people become insane, then it can be surmised, that the lords of the world and high priests ask from the governor for soldiers to protect the grave, so that Jesus' doctrine would not be able to spread if the people would begin to believe that He has arisen. Certainly the lords of the world do not believe that, that Jesus has arisen, but they fear, that the disciples will come at night to steal Jesus' body, and then afterward say that He has arisen. The lords of the world only fear that the latter madness will be worse than the first if the common people would begin to believe that the Saviour has arisen. First the devil has reversed their eyes because of that spiritual hatred which

they carry in their hearts toward Jesus, that they behold Jesus as an agitator of the people and a false prophet, who counsels people on the wrong road; Second the enemy has given them such a faith, that the doctrine of Jesus is one madness, which will become even worse if people would begin to believe that He has arisen. The lords of the world and high priests have so first crucified Jesus; and secondly they try to prevent that His doctrine, which they keep as madness, would begin spreading and that they think they can win through the natural government. When they fear that Christianity, which they keep to be madness, would get to spread through the disciples, they ask the governor for soldiers to guard the grave or to detain Jesus' body, so that He would not be able to arise. How can the Saviour reveal Himself to them, who hate Him and His doctrine, hate Christianity, also hate His disciples and the Christians? The sorrowless and hardened people of the world do not want to see Jesus. And if He would reveal Himself to them, they would unitedly attack Him and would kill Him again.

But Joseph and Nicodemus, did they get to see Jesus after His resurrection? It is not written in any place, that these men would have seen Him, although these men were Jesus' disciples, nevertheless secretly because of the fear of the Jews; And although they showed love toward the Saviour, when they prepared and buried His body into the grave, He nevertheless did not reveal Himself to them, for these men had only natural meekness for the foundation of salvation. How does it happen

that the Saviour does not reveal Himself to those meek and pious men who had also with their own means prepared and buried His body in the grave? These men had done a good deed to Jesus and the natural intellect beholds it to be reasonable that He should have thanked them for that good service, and say, "Many thanks for that good work!" But it is not written anywhere that the Saviour would have thanked them for that good work. We surmise now why did Jesus not reveal Himself to Joseph and Nicodemus. First they were naturally meek people, but this natural meekness was also their foundation of salvation they did not have such a confidence in the Saviour as the disciples. These men believed only that the Saviour was a great teacher, or a teacher sent by God, as Nicodemus himself confessed, when he came to Jesus by night, but these men did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Second, they were Jesus' disciples, nevertheless secretly because of the fear of the Jews, worldly honor was more dear to these men than the Saviour, if they would have confessed openly that they were Jesus' disciples, they would have become blasphemed and hated by the lords of the world. These men thought as many even now say, "Let each take care of himself, there is no need to cry out to the world," But the Saviour Will probably not acknowledge such ones as true disciples, who because of worldly honor keep their Christianity secret and do not dare to confess before the world that they are disciples of Jesus, although otherwise they would be naturally meek and

pious, although they otherwise do good to Jesus and His disciples, nevertheless they do not come into the company of the Christians and their names are not found in the book of life. These men, Joseph and Nicodemus were therefore naturally meek and pious men, were also Jesus' disciples, nevertheless secretly because of the fear of the Jews, they also showed their love toward Jesus when they with their own means prepared and buried Jesus' body in the grave; but the honor of the world prevented them from openly confessing their Christianity, and therefore they were without a Saviour. Jesus did not reveal Himself to them, nor can the Christians acknowledge Joseph and Nicodemus to be Christians. And since even now such people are found, who because of honor of the world want to keep secret their thoughts about Christianity, who say, "it is not necessary to cry out to the world and let each take care of himself," so I think that Joseph and Nicodemus are still living now who are naturally meek and pious; who are still supposedly Jesus' disciples, but because of the honor of the world do not care to reveal their Christianity, not to the Christians who do not take secret Christians into their company, or also to the world who cannot stand such who openly go on the Christian's side. But I fear, that Joseph and Nicodemus can never see Jesus after His resurrection, for their names are not mentioned in the numbers of Christians. Why did the Saviour not come to thank them for that good work which they had done toward Him? The natural reason looks at this as impossible that Joseph and Ni-

codemus should be in hell; but where are they then, when in this time of grace they have not become Christians? And for what reason are they excluded from the numbers of the Christians although they were pious men and secret disciples of Jesus? Because worldly honor was more dear to them than the Saviour. Naturally meek people do not want to miss out on their honor because of Jesus. They want to go to heaven with their honor. They do not want to become so foolish as the disciples who cried and lamented longing for Jesus' merciful presence.

The second consideration: Who first saw the Saviour? Mary Magdalene, What good had she done to the Saviour? Nothing. Why did the Saviour reveal Himself to Mary first? No doubt for that reason that Mary had the greatest sorrow and greatest distress after the Saviour. Why did Mary Magdalene see Jesus first, who had done nothing good to Him, but Joseph and Nicodemus had done so much good toward Him, and did not receive anything for their trouble? Should the Saviour not thank those, who do good to Him? Joseph and Nicodemus had done such good work toward Jesus which not many people would have done. How many people would now have taken such trouble upon themselves, which these men took upon themselves? With their own means these men put Jesus into the grave. With their own money they bought linen and myrrh, almost a hundred pounds. That burial came to cost them quite a large sum, and even for that reason the Saviour did not come to them to thank them for that

good work. But Mary Magdalene, who had done nothing good to the Saviour, received that great grace to experience that she saw first that crucified Saviour. From that can be surmises, that the Saviour does not care for man's good works but the tears of penitance and longing repay more in the Saviour's eyes, than many good works, which one naturally meek person does. We cannot say, that Mary's tears merited this great grace, but the merciful heart of Jesus could not, was not able, could not endure to hide Himself any longer; One sorrowful heart effects so much that the Saviour must reveal Himself. Behold you sorrowful soul, where the road goes to heaven. It goes through the valley of sorrow, through the strait gate; with tears and sighs you must open the door of heaven.

The third consideration: Who sees Jesus resurrected last? Unbelieving Thomas, who does not believe what the other disciples testify. All of the other disciples had already seen the Lord, but Thomas had remained without seeing, when because of his unbelief, he did not want to believe at all the testimony of the other disciples. Even so that great grace happened to him that the Saviour showed him His wounds. Here you see, you doubting soul, that the Saviour reveals Himself, not only to the sorrowful, penitent and oppressed, but also to the doubting: Although unbelief is a great sin, which often troubles the penitent, and effects that they doubt of God's grace. But dead faith is even worse, through that Peter and also the other disciples became deceived, for dead faith is sometimes supposedly so

strong, that death itself cannot break it. To those who lie in unbelief and doubts, the Saviour is so merciful, that He shows His wounds to them, and they must finally believe but the confessors of dead faith, who without penitence and without repentance own for themselves God's promises of grace, to them the devil is merciful. Surely the devil saves and pardons those, who live in dead faith, they never doubt of their salvation, but those he torments and oppresses with doubts, who because of the Saviour's suffering and death, cry and lament. Those sorrowful and penitent souls, the enemy causes them to doubt, that the Saviour is not even alive. To those sorrowful disciples the enemy has become angry, The enemy can not stand it at all, that the sorrowful disciples of Jesus cry and lament longing for Jesus' merciful presence. But to the murderers of Jesus the devil is merciful. To them he promises a good reward in hell, who suck the blood of Christians. To those enemies of the cross of Jesus the god of the world gives devil's dung and old leaven as Passover bread. But these friends of the world cannot see Jesus, nor can the naturally meek people, Joseph and Nicodemus, but only those few souls, who cry and lament longing for Jesus' merciful presence, Mary Magdalene first and Thomas last, who because of doubt could not believe the testimonies of the other disciples. This wretch is "still in unbelief and doubts, he is still not able to believe, that Jesus is resurrected, but has sorrow surely and a great longing after Jesus. If self righteousness was not so great in him, if he would under-

stand, how much he troubles the crucified one with his unbelief, then certainly he too would believe that the Lord is truly resurrected, and also to him would come joy of Jesus' resurrection. But we have such a hope, that Jesus' glory will be shown to Thomas, and that he will finally have to believe. Merciful Lord Jesus, reveal yourself to your sorrowful disciples, before the sun sets, show them your wounds, that they would believe that you are that crucified and thorn-crowned King! Breathe upon them that they would receive the Holy Spirit! Open their understanding to understand the Scriptures! And you sorrowful disciples if Jesus asks for food of you, give Him a little honey cake, you probably have no other food on Easter Sunday than a little honey cake, which is unleavened and made of pure substance. Be assured of that, that the Lord Jesus, who today has revealed Himself to you, and asked you for food, will give you heavenly honey cake, when you can step up into heaven with Him and be with Him eternally. Amen.

Second Easter Day Sermon A

And Philip said to one Gentile who was reading the Scriptures, "Understandest thou, what thou reade-dest?" And he said, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"
Acts 8:30,31

One Jew or Gentile, the eunuch of the queen of Ethiopia, had come to Jerusalem in the time of the Apostles, and there he had bought himself a Bible; he had also heard something spoken of Christianity, as it is believable that at that time much was surmised about the Christian doctrine, which the slaves of the world kept to be false, and only those few souls, who themselves had experienced the power of faith, kept it to be right. So the eunuch of the queen had bought for himself a Bible, and he sat in his chariot and read the Bible, not with that intention to find justification for sin, nor did he read the Bible with that intention that he could overthrow the Christianity, as some do at this time; they read the Bible and other books with that mind that they would be able to overthrow the Christianity and oppose the Christians. For the devil also reads the Bible with that mind that he could twist the Word of God into wrong understanding, and the same schoolmaster also teaches his slaves to pervert and understand wrongly the Word of God to their own destruction. They search for allowance for sin from the Word of God and expound the Scriptures like the devil himself, and the more they read, the more blind they become, and say, "Are we also blind?"

But this man read the Bible with that intention that he would get the right enlightenment, but he had to confess that he did not understand what he read. So it probably goes with many Jews and with many Gentiles, that they read the Bible but do not understand what they read. However to this previously-mentioned man a desire had come that he would be able to understand, when he begged of Philip that he would expound that place in the Bible which he was reading. But many a Jew is so wise in his own mind that he does not want to hear any expounding, for the Jews and Gentiles think they understand the Scriptures so that they do not want to hear how Jesus' disciples expound the Scriptures. The Jews of this time say thus, "Surely we can see for ourselves from the book, you need expound nothing for us." But this man, however, said he did not understand what he read, he therefore confessed his blindness in the matter. But the Jews of this time do not confess that they understand nothing from the Bible, but they say, "Surely we can see for ourselves from the Book." They say, therefore, as the Jews, "Are we also blind?" Then the Saviour said, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin, but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." So said the Saviour to those Jews, and so we must say to the gypsies, who here fight against the truth and say, "Surely we can see for ourselves from the Book" What do the blind wretches see, who have been born blind and have traveled blindly for 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70 years. They do not see their own destruction, but in the lives of the

Christians they surely see faults, as the Jews of that time saw faults in the lives of the Saviour and the disciples. The same optometrist who then had prepared eyeglasses for the Jews has also prepared eyeglasses for the Jews of this time, with which they see the faults of the disciples very well. They say that they see from the Scriptures that adultery and drunkenness are allowable; who knows, stealing and whiskey trade will also become allowable when such men consider the Scriptures, whose eyes the devil has reversed that they must believe lies and hate the truth. To such men who expound the Bible as the devil, Peter has written thus: "The unlearned and unstable wrest Paul's writings as they do also the other Scriptures unto their own destruction." What do such pagans understand of the Scriptures, when they live contrary to the Scriptures and speak contrary to the Scriptures. They get such a comprehension of the Scriptures that the Saviour is a false teacher and a disturber of the people, who drives out devils through Beelzebub. It would be better if they confessed their blindness as this eunuch of which we were speaking in the beginning; he confessed to Philip that he did not understand since there was no guide. But certainly the Pharisees and scribes understand that it is blasphemy of God that Jesus confessed Himself to be a child of God. And the same kind of enlightenment the Pharisees of this time have received from the Scriptures, that it is blasphemy of God when a Christian confesses himself to be a child of God. But some blind wretches do not want to confess that they are

blind and lack understanding. Some again bring forth the excuses of the intellect and say, "It is not such a great wonder that we do not understand the Scriptures, when the disciples did not yet understand the writings, although they had gone to the school of the Saviour for so many years. But why do they say then, "We surely can see for ourselves from the Book." What can they see from the Book, who are born blind like the wolf whelps? It is surely true that the disciples did not yet understand the writings before the Saviour opened their understanding. But the sorrowless do not want to confess that they are without understanding, but they think they understand, although they understand all matters in reverse; there the devil is able to expound all matters in reverse and then they say, "We surely can see for ourselves from the Book." But the best counsel would be that all blind wretches would confess their blindness and lack of understanding as the queen's eunuch did. It would be the best counsel that they would begin to pray to that great Cross-bearer that He would open the eyes of all the blind wretches to see and the ears of the deaf to hear where the road goes to heaven, for not many before this time have understood the writings before that great Expounder of the Scriptures has begun to expound about Moses and the prophets to the sorrowful disciples on the road to Emmaus, how Christ must suffer all this and afterwards go to glory. And you sorrowful disciples on the road to Emmaus, pray to that great Expounder of the Scriptures, that He would remain with

you, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. Hear, Thou unknown Expounder of the Scriptures, the sighs of the sorrowful disciples. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

We hear from today's gospel how the disciples are fools and slow of heart to believe what the prophets have spoken, and therefore the Saviour began to expound to them all the writings of Him from Moses and the prophets. In accordance with this we must at this moment consider: "Why were the disciples such fools and slow to believe the writings?" Our hope is that the great Expounder of the Scriptures would open their understanding to understand the Scriptures as long as they are on the way, that they finally would begin to recognize Him in the breaking of bread.

The Saviour said to the Jews, "Search the Scriptures, for they testify of Me." But the Jews read the Scriptures as the devil himself and say to the Christians, "Surely we can see for ourselves from the Book." What do you see from the Book, you Jews and sorrowless pagans? No doubt you see that the Saviour is a disturber of the people and one great sorcerer, who drives out devils by the power of Beelzebub.. What else do you see from the Book, you Jews and sorrowless pagans? No doubt you see from the book that this Christian doctrine, which has received its beginning from Jesus of Nazareth, is one devilish doctrine, and therefore you must carry tales to the governor Pontius Pilate, that He teaches the people be-

ginning from Galilee up to here. And what do you yet see from the Book, you Jews and sorrowless pagans, when you say you can see from the Book whence the way leads to heaven? No doubt you see from the Book that drinking and whiskey trade are allowable, when you have found so many faults in the lives of the Saviour and the disciples, when you can reproach Him of drinking and say, "Behold what a glutton and winebibber this is, a friend of publicans and sinners." Place yet eyeglasses on your nose, namely those eyeglasses which the noted optometrist of the world has made for you, then the letters will become bigger, you will then see many faults in the lives of the disciples; and you can say to the disciples of Jesus as you have said before to their Master, "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil." From where have the Jews received such sharp eyes to see faults in the lives of the Christians? Right from the Book they see how these Christians are false prophets and wild spirits, who do not allow honorable people peace of conscience. But the drunkards whores, thieves, and whiskey merchants: behold, they are the Christians who have to suffer so much because of their faith. Grace thieves also have the same faith, who have seen from the Book that penitence and repentance are necessary, but nevertheless become angry with the penitent who demand a true penitence. The seeds of the serpent squirm at the bottom of the heart when judgement is proclaimed to the grace thief. He has such an expounder of the Scriptures in his breast who shows him that the effect of the Holy Spirit is the

effect of the devil's spirit. The same expounder of the Scriptures shows a grace thief that one penitent soul is a false prophet and wild spirit, who must be dragged out of the house and beaten with a stick. The Jews are so holy and pious that they will not go into a Gentile's house, nor will they salute him, but all the same they bear hatred toward the Saviour, and pick up rocks when He reproaches them of hypocrisy. The Jews say, "We have one Father, even God," but they intend to kill the Saviour when He says, "You are of your father, the devil." And although they bear spiritual hatred in their hearts toward the Saviour and intend to kill Him, all the same they say, "Who intends to kill you?" The blind wretches do not know that they have hatred in their hearts; although they pick up stones and take cordwood, all the same they say, "We have love in our hearts, we lie every day at the foot of the cross of Jesus." Who knows at the foot of whose cross they are lying, since the seeds of the serpent squirm at the bottom of the heart. But nevertheless they say that they can see from the Book where the way goes to heaven. Such a love the Jews and grace thieves have, that on Palm Sunday they cry: "Hosanna to the Son of David," and on Good Friday they cry, "Take Him away! Crucify Him!" And such an enlightenment they have received from the Scriptures that the murderer Barabbas must be set free, but Jesus must be destroyed. And if Philip comes to ask them, "Understandest thou what thou readest?", they say, "Surely we can see for ourselves from the Book." They certainly can see

from the Book that much, that drunkenness and cursing are allowable, adultery and stealing are allowable, greed and whiskey trade are allowable. Murdering the Saviour and persecuting Christians are allowable, but the preaching of the disciples is not allowable, rebuke for sin and judgement are contrary to the Scriptures, although all the prophets have rebuked and condemned. The Jews understand that much from the Word of God that true penitence and tribulation of conscience are the effects of the devil's spirit. But if a drunkard vomits the Lord's body and blood along with liquor, that is the effect of the Holy Spirit. Such enlightenment the Jews and grace thieves now receive from the Scriptures, that spiritual hatred and blaspheming Christians is the right truth. And if they fetch fire from hell, they receive that kind of enlightenment that they see to make sausages from the blood of the Christians. But now the Jews and pagans can ask, "How did the disciples of Jesus understand the Scriptures when He reproached them saying: O ye fools and slow of heart to believe what the prophets have spoken. Neither did they understand the Scriptures better than we. And if we do not believe what these wild spirits speak to us from the Scriptures, neither did those disciples believe what the prophets had spoken about the Saviour, when He had to reproach them for unbelief." In this place a sorrowless person thinks that he has something to take ahold of. If some fault in a Christian's faith or life is recognized then immediately the devil's angels receive joy from that, for they think that

the disciples of Jesus are perfect, especially when they begin to crawl. But the matter is not as the devil's angels think, for there are still many shortcomings in both the faith and in the understanding and life of the disciples of Jesus. But Jesus disciples certainly do not deny that they are slow to believe and poor at understanding what the prophets have written about Him. But the disciples of Jesus do not mock the Word of God when one unknown Stranger expounds it to them, as Jesus was then yet unknown to them when their eyes were holden because of sorrow and doubt. If the disciples had been like the sorrowless of this time, they would have said to that unknown Expounder of the Scriptures, "Why do you have to speak to us? We have a book of our own and we can see from it." But the Pharisees and scribes did not see, although they had a Bible in their hands. They only became enraged with Jesus when He took one place from the Scriptures which fit them well and expounded it to them. They drove Him out of the church and began to push Him over the cliff. The Old Adam got such a great speed when one place came against him. However, the disciples did not become angry with the Expounder of the Scriptures, although He was unknown to them, but they began to love Him more when He expounded the writings to them. And certainly all true disciples of Jesus would wish that someone would expound the Scriptures to them, for first they are, in behalf of understanding, poor in understanding, and then also slow of heart to believe all that which the prophets have

spoken of Him. This lack of understanding comes from that, that in their own heart there is one wrong expounder of the Scriptures: it is love of the world, which reverses the words of the Scriptures so they cannot understand how Christ must suffer all this, and afterwards enter into His glory. The disciples confessed their faith, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel"; but it was only a dead faith as long as their Saviour was alive, but when their Saviour died, they were no longer able to believe, but fell into doubt. How is it with you now, you disciples of Jesus, who travel on the road to Emmaus and are sorrowful? You have no refuge in the world which you have left. But it seems that you have no true refuge in heaven either, since your Saviour has died. How will you get along when there is no refuge, not in heaven or on the earth, or under the earth? One unknown Expounder of the Scriptures travels with you and reproaches you, "Oh, ye fools and slow to believe what the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory." This unknown Expounder of the Scriptures opens your understanding to understand the Scriptures, and you feel some love toward Him, although your eyes are holden so that you do not know Him. Pray therefore, you sorrowful disciples, that this unknown Expounder of the Scriptures would go with you into the village to which you are going, for the evening has come and the sun has set. That unknown Friend, who expounds the Scriptures to you, is one pleasant companion in your sorrow

when you are in doubt, since the Saviour has died in your hearts, and you no longer have any refuge, neither in heaven nor on the earth nor under the earth. Then the Expounder of the Scriptures is one pleasant companion for you, who makes your hearts burn. Who knows, you will get to know Him in the breaking of bread, when you come to the village. Pray to that unknown Expounder of the Scriptures, you sorrowful disciples on the road to Emmaus, that He would follow you into the village, and say, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening and the sun of grace will soon set, soon this time of grace will end, soon darkness will come; abide with us, you unknown Expounder of the Scriptures and follow us into the village." And our hope is that that merciful Friend, although unknown to many, and true Expounder of the Scriptures will hear the pleading and prayer of the doubting disciples, rejected by the world, and will go with them and that their eyes will be opened. Amen.

Second Easter Day 1854 (Second Sermon)

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. Isaiah 42:1-3.

Prophet Isaiah speaks in the 42nd chapter of the Savior to whom God had

given life, that He shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles. That signifies that He must teach the Gentiles to know what is right and to avoid iniquity. Although some Gentiles are so hardened that they do not receive teaching no matter how they are taught, the Gentiles have another schoolmaster in their own breast who teaches them to oppose the true doctrine. But Prophet Isaiah has said that Christ shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles. He must teach the Gentiles to understand judgement so that the Gentiles could not say, "No one has taught us." From this passage in the Bible evangelist Matthew has taken testimony of how the Savior has lived and traveled in the world. But the crowd of the world also thinks they receive support from this place in the Bible, namely when the Prophet says, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." The sorrowless get such an understanding that the awakened ones cry out in the streets when they admonish the sorrowless ones to repentance. The sorrowless also take this place from the Bible as a testimony that it is not fitting to cry out in the street, since the Prophet has said that the Savior has not cried out in the street like these awakened ones cry out. And from that the children of the world conclude that no one needs to cry out to the world, but let each one keep to himself what he has received, for not even the Savior has cried out in the streets. So the slaves of the enemy conclude that this passage of the Bible is entirely against the awakened, for the awakened supposedly cry out in the streets and lanes, but the Savior has not cried out.

We see from the gospel of Matthew that the writer of the gospel has not understood this passage of the Bible in that way like the throng of the world understands it. The Prophet's intention has been that the Savior has not cried out like the children of the world cry out when whiskey rises to the head. The drunkards of the world cry out in the streets and lanes when they come out of the liquor merchant's house, crying their drinking songs and adulterous songs. They cry out in the streets and lanes, "Devil!" and "Satan!" Sometimes they howl like wolf whelps. The Savior has not cried out in the streets like the drunkards cry, but He has preached the Word of God to the people of the world; and the children of the world have become angry with Him. But if a Christian wants to follow the Savior's example and to preach the Word of God to the sorrowless crowd of the world, then the people of the world say, "There is no need to cry out to the world, let each one take care of himself." And the sorrowless also take testimony from the Bible saying, "Not even the Savior has cried out in the streets." It is true that the Savior has not cried out in the streets like the children of the world cry out when whiskey rises to the head. But the Savior has certainly cried out in the streets and houses so that the sinners have been able to hear into which place they will go if true penitence and repentance do not come. When drunkards holler their prattle in the streets and their drinking songs, the children of the world do not keep this to be anything strange. But if a Christian begins to remind the

sorrowless of death and that accountability which will come to impenitent and unconverted ones, that they keep to be evil and say to the awakened, "The Savior did not cry out in the streets like you do." But who has cried out repentance more than the Savior? For that reason the people of the world have become angry and borne hatred, just as the crowd of the world even now becomes angry with Christians, when they follow the Savior's example and preach the Word of God to the sorrowless. The people of the world cannot stand to hear that, but the drunkards they certainly can stand to hear for the drunkards cry out that which all the sorrowless willingly listen to.

What Prophet Isaiah says of the Savior: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench", that passage of the Bible the grace thieves own for themselves although it does not belong to others than to the penitent ones. When God's severe righteousness is proclaimed to grace thieves, then they own for themselves God's grace and say, "God is merciful, He will not put us into perdition either. A bruised reed will He not break and the smoking flax will He not quench." But is a sorrowless person a bruised reed, he whose heart is as stout as a lion's heart? Is he that smoking flax? A bruised reed is, in a spiritual sense, a broken heart. But does a sorrowless and impenitent one have a broken heart? The smoking flax signifies that the lamp of faith has gone out. Dead faith is so strong that nothing else than the Savior's death is able to steal it. Through the Savior's death the discip-

les' dead faith became lacking. Before they had a firm faith, but through the Savior's death the former dead faith ended and unbelief came in its place. They no longer believed anything; then they were in great doubt, and at that time their hearts were like one smoking flax. But when do great doubts come to sorrowless people so that they doubt of their salvation?

All grace thieves have such a firm faith that they certainly do not doubt of their salvation, but even then they do not dare to say they are ready to die. How can a sorrowless and impenitent person own for himself those places from the Bible which do not belong to them but only to penitent souls? Yes, in this way he can, when he steals grace and thinks thus: I am penitent, although penitence has never occurred. I have a broken heart, although the heart has not been broken. My heart is like a bruised reed, although it is firm as a rock. My faith is so weak it is like a smoking flax, although the faith is so strong that nothing else than death can rob them of it. Behold, in this way a sorrowless person can own for himself those passages of the Bible which belong to the awakened and penitent, but those which belong to the sorrowless they throw to the awakened. When the Prophet says, "he does not cry in the street" like drunkards cry out, then the children of the world take that testimony and say, "The Savior has not cried out in the streets like the awakened cry out." But nevertheless the Savior has preached repentance on the streets. The sorrowless think thus: "Even if the Savior would have preached repentance on the street,

others cannot do likewise for that reason.", although the Bible indicates in every place that a Christian must follow the Savior's example and live like He has lived. The sorrowless crowd do not concede but they want that all would be the same kind as they are. If the sorrowless go to hell the Christians will come after them. But if the Christians become saved then the children of the world will also become saved. Such is the faith of the children of the world, that the Christians and the sorrowless are in one and the same pit of destruction and no one is any better than another.

Today we must consider what difference there is between the disciples and the Jews. Or what difference there is between the enemies of the cross of Jesus and the Christians.

When we, with a sorrowful heart, leave to go to the village of Emmaus to consider those remarkable happenings which have occurred during these days, our hope is that that bruised reed, of which Isaiah speaks, is a broken heart which the merciful Savior does not want to break, and that the smoking flax is a small spark of faith which He does not want to quench. Do not quench the smoking flax, dear Savior! Do not quench it, but blow upon it, that it would begin to burn and would give light to those sorrowful disciples who sit in darkness and await the break of day. You smoking flax, do not be quenched. You small spark of faith, do not go out! You bruised reed, do not break! You sorrowful heart, do not despair. For the Maker of the candle has said, "the smoking flax will I not quench". Do not

quench, you heavenly Lighter of the candle: do not quench, you smoking flax, before the Sun arises. Our Father who art in the heavens, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 24:13

The disciples on the road to Emmaus revealed in today's gospel what kind of faith they had before the Savior died. From their speech it is also heard that their faith has ended, but when their eyes opened and they knew the Savior in the breaking of bread, the faith that the Savior was living came to them again.

We must now take an example from the disciples and consider: First: What kind of faith did these disciples have when the Savior was alive? Second: What kind of faith did they have after the Savior's death? Third: What kind of faith did they have after the Savior's resurrection?

We hope that the Savior will come as a companion to those sorrowful disciples who travel to the village of Emmaus and expound the Scripture to them, and that they will get to know Him in the breaking of bread. First; What kind of faith did these disciples have before the Savior died? They had the faith that He should redeem Israel; not from under the rule of the devil, but from under the rule of Caesar. The disciples had the intention that the Savior will come to be their king, and that they through Him would become rich and become great lords. They had the world on their mind as long as they were in that dead faith. They did not think that through the Christianity they would

lose possessions and honor, but they imagined that they would gain worldly possessions and honor through Christianity. The same faith is still with other confessors of dead faith, that through Christianity they will gain possessions and honor. Not one in that condition believes that he will lose honor and possessions because of Christianity. It did not come to mind to those wretches that a spiritual Savior was more necessary than a natural Savior. And how would they have known then that they were subjects of the devil? They only kept it to be troublesome and a shame to be subjects of a Gentile government and to pay taxes to the Gentiles. It hurt their honor greatly that they should even serve a Gentile government and pay taxes to the Gentiles. The disciples kept themselves to be Christians already then and how does that fit that a Christian must serve the Gentiles and pay taxes to them? Wouldn't it be more fitting if the Gentiles would pay taxes to the Christians? Even now all confessors of dead faith think thus, who keep themselves as Christians although even then they do not dare to confess themselves to be children of God. They complain that taxes are burdensome, that the law is severe, that the rule is evil: they want to be free from burdensome taxes. They do not feel that the devil's taxes are even more burdensome than the taxes of the king or Caesar. To the devil they gladly pay taxes, but they do not want to pay taxes to the natural king. And if such a lord would come who would promise them freedom from all taxes and obligations, and would also feed them and would give them liquor, he

certainly would be suitable to them for a savior and they would believe upon him. But such a lord who barks and reproaches for iniquity and for ungodly living and also accuses tax thieves and whores, according to their minds such a lord would be worse than the devil himself. Now if the king or Caesar was still a Gentile, then all would say, "Is a Christian duty bound to pay taxes to Gentiles?" No, but a Christian should be free of all taxes and the Gentiles should pay taxes, but not the Christians, to the Gentiles. Such a faith the disciples now had that the Savior would come to redeem Israel from under the rule of the Gentiles but not from under the devil's rule. And how did they then know that they were under the devil's rule? Those people who drink and fight, commit adultery and steal certainly do not know that they are under the devil's rule. They imagine that God is merciful to them. But the law of the land which punishes such is severe and wrong, and such a government which would allow all whores and thieves to live in peace, that truly would be a good government. Since now the hearts of the disciples were entirely fastened to the world they awaited such a savior who would rescue them from under the rule of the Gentiles and would make them judges and lords.

Second: What kind of faith did these disciples have after the Savior's death? They had no faith. Formerly they believed upon the Savior through whom they thought they would gain worldly possessions and honor, but when the Savior died, their faith was entirely gone. They could no longer be-

lieve upon that former Savior. Even if their faith was supposedly so strong that even death could not take it from them, their old faith finally became so weak that there was no longer hope that they would see the Savior in this world. Therefore from that we see that under the former old dead faith, which is supposedly strong and unbreakable, lies a secret unbelief, which does not come out before that earthly savior dies. In this mortal atmosphere all unconverted people rely upon a false savior; they rely upon a perishing and mortal savior; they imagine they will gain possessions and honor through the Savior. They thank the Savior with nice prayers when in peace they are able to serve that god who lives in the colon. A thief also can thank God, that his thefts have prospered and that no one has seen him stealing. A whore can also thank God, that no one has overtaken her in her pure devilry. But what god is it to whom impenitent whores and thieves pray? Is he the God in heaven or in hell? I fear that the god of the sorrowless and impenitent is in hell. But they trust the best upon that savior who feeds and sustains them. The liquor merchants trust the best upon that savior who has taught them to keep a liquor business and to gain by crookedness, and that god who teaches them to keep a liquor business is in the colon. Whores and drunkards imagine that God made them poor when they have wasted their substance because of the lust of the flesh. They do not believe that the god who made them poor is in the colon, although the devil has taught some to become rich through crooked-

ness and some he has made poor. A natural man is so stupid that he thinks that through the Savior he will gain goods and honor. But now when this natural Savior dies, then all faith ends. When the conscience awakens, sins begin to crucify the Savior. The Savior is crucified in a person's heart because of sin. And then that Savior, upon whom a person has formerly trusted, dies and unbelief comes in place. Where now do the sorrowful disciples have refuge since the parent died, from whom he imagined he would receive sustenance. The orphan children must now die of hunger. How can they live since the Savior upon whom they have trusted has died and the world has become horrible, the heart has become sorrowful, people have begun to hate, sin has begun to smart, the enemy has begun to attack. there is no longer refuge in the world nor in heaven since the Savior has died. Just now distress has come to the disciples since faith has ended, love has ended, meekness has ended, and prayers have ended. If the Savior does not come soon to the disciples they will die of sorrow and doubt. But certainly Jesus cannot allow the sorrowful disciples to perish in doubts, but then when distress is the greatest. He comes to expound Scriptures to them and finally He reveals Himself to them; they know Him in the breaking of bread.

Third: What kind of faith did the disciples of Jesus have after the resurrection? A living faith and the assurance of God's grace and of the forgiveness of sins. This faith is certainly not as firm as that former dead faith when they imagined that through the Savior

they would gain worldly goods and honor. But that living faith is often weak and united with great warfare so that after Jesus' resurrection the disciples traveled hurriedly to reveal to the other disciples how the Lord was known of them. In that faith, which comes to the disciples after the resurrection is first great fear and zeal, sometimes sorrow and longing, sometimes joy and rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, sometimes severe temptations and doubts. And what more are the characteristics of living faith? A great desire to reveal to the other disciples their experiences and to speak of Christianity. Formerly in dead faith nothing was spoken of Christianity and, although the Savior then spoke much of His suffering, at that time they knew nothing of reconciliation, penitence, and new birth. Then it was only a vain trust on that Savior through whom they imagined that they would gain worldly goods and honor. As in dead faith there is a great spiritual blindness, so they understood the Word of God very wrongly; they understood the Bible perversely; they thought the promised Savior would come as a natural king although the prophets had spoken of a spiritual Savior. And although the Savior had spoken many times of His death they did not understand of what He spoke. So it happens even yet to all confessors of dead faith, that they turn the Word of God around; turn to natural interpretation all that pertains to spiritual. But after the Savior's death great sorrow came to the disciples. When the conscience awakens, the Savior is crucified in a person's heart because of the multitude of sins, and then the awa-

kened ones get a great desire to hear how the Word of God is expounded. That unknown Visitor who expounds the Word of God of Christ's suffering to sorrowful souls is dear to awakened souls. They begin to pray to Him, "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." You sorrowful disciples on the road to Emmaus who travel with Jesus although your eyes are holden because of sorrow and doubt, nor do you recognize Him: begin now to fervently pray to that unknown Expounder of the Scriptures that He would go into the village with you, since the sun of grace has set; before that great spiritual darkness comes. Pray to that unknown Companion that He would go with you into the village where you are endeavoring. Who knows! Your eyes which are holden because of sorrow and doubt will be opened at the village of Emmaus. Who knows if you will know the crucified Savior in the breaking of bread. Pray to that unknown Companion that He would open the eyes of the blind wretches to understand the Scriptures when He expounds the writings of Moses and the prophets of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. You poor and weary journey-men! You sorrowful disciples, despised by the world; pray to that unknown Expounder of Scriptures that He would not leave you in sorrow and doubt when the sun of grace has set and the evening of death has arrived, but that the unknown journey Companion would follow you to the village and would be with you when that spiritual darkness comes upon you, when you no longer see to travel onward. Oh, you

unknown Expounder of the Scriptures! Open the understanding of all blind wretches. Expound to all sorrowful and doubting disciples of the writings of Moses and the prophets of Christ's death and resurrection, that their hearts would become burning, that their eyes would finally open and they would get to know You in the breaking of bread. Amen.

First Sunday after Easter.

At that time when there was a great famine in Samaria, it happened that a woman because of hunger had boiled her son and ate him, but the other woman would not allow her son to be slain. When the Samarian or Israelite king heard this terrible thing, that because of hunger a woman had boiled her son and eaten him, he became angry with the prophet Elisha who had promised, in God's behalf, that the Israelite nation should become rescued from the war of the enemy. The king thought that the prophet had lied, and therefore he intended to kill the prophet. But prophet Elisha said to the elders of Israel, "See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away my head?" Then the messenger of the king came down unto him and said, "**Behold this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?**" (2 Kings 6, 25-33.)

Natural man awaits the Lord as long as all goes well with him, but when the Lord does not come quickly to help, he says, "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" That is to say

that nothing comes from God. And then he begins to hate those who have encouraged him to await help from God. So that evil king thought that it was the prophet's fault that such great famine came to the city that a woman boiled her son and ate him. But the prophet again gave a merciful promise in God's behalf, that the Lord will truly save the city, and that grain will be sold very cheap the next day. But the king's counselor did not believe God's promise through the mouth of the prophet, but said, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" Then the prophet said to the king's counselor, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shall not eat thereof." And so it happened according to the prophesy of prophet Elisha, that the king's counselor could see with his eyes the grain of God, but he could not taste of it, for he was trampled to death by the people. These matters and happenings are written in 2 Kings, 6th and 7th chapters. The effects of unbelief are of many kinds, as this king's counselor showed his unbelief openly when he said, "Behold, this evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" It is heard that impatience is the first fruit of unbelief. When a person cannot have things as he wishes, he becomes impatient and becomes angry with God. He does not become angry with the devil who made him unfortunate, but he becomes angry with God, who does not help as soon as a person wishes. This evil king did not become angry with the enemy, which surrounded the city and caused famine to the people, but he became angry with the

servant of God, who had promised them help in God's behalf. And when hunger pressed the people so greatly, that some woman lacking a conscience boiled and ate her son, then the king became angry with the prophet, as though he would have been the cause of the enemy surrounding the city. Or was the prophet the cause of that, that the woman lacking a conscience ate her son because of hunger? No doubt the evil king so thought, that the servant of God was the cause of all the misfortune and wretchedness which happened to the people. When the devil reverses the eyes of the unbelieving ones, they begin to accuse the Christians that because of them God punishes the heathens, although some sorrowless have the belief that because of the Christians the world is being preserved. But the heathens also have that belief that God protects them from all misfortune, not because of the Christians but instead because of the meekness of the heathens, for the heathens have such a faith that heathens are no worse than Christians, and heathens do not consider Christians to be people at all, as long as Christians condemn the heathens. But if the Christians would stop condemning the heathens and would begin to drink, whore and fight with heathens, only then would the heathens believe that Christians are the right kind of people. And the hatred of heathens would especially cease if the same kind of faith would come to the Christians and the same kind of life as heathens have. Prophet Elisha had rebuked the people of Israel of their ungodly life, and the king was also angry toward him. Nevertheless

the servant of God could live so long as the outward distress was at hand, and the prophet had also promised in God's behalf that the enemy would not get to ravage the city. But all patience ended as soon as one unruly woman, lacking a conscience, slew her son and ate him because of hunger. The king's intellect became offended by that, and now he decided with his blind intellects that the prophet was a false prophet when help did not come soon, according to the promise of the prophet. Now he had to teach that false prophet, who had supposedly lied when he had encouraged the king and the people to await help from above, and this help did not come as soon as the king hoped. Then all patience ended, all faith, all hope; and that false prophet, who had supposedly lied, must now first receive his well-merited punishment, but that unruly woman who committed such an abominable deed was freed of all punishment. Such is the faith and order of salvation of a heathenish person: a Christian who encourages to repentance must be killed, but he who does such abominable deeds is freed of all punishment. A heathen becomes angry with the Christians for that good teaching, but he does not become angry with the enemy nor with other heathens who commit abominations. This evil king cast all his hatred upon the prophet who was innocent, but he was not angry with that murderer who had boiled and eaten her son. There is also another example of the unbelief of the king's counselor, which shows that he did not believe at all that the Lord can help the people from famine and the oppression of the

enemy. This counselor especially showed his unbelief also with those words when he said, "Behold this evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" No doubt he thought that it no longer pays to trust on the Lord, when the Lord punishes so severely that parents because of hunger eat their children. But also another word showed his unbelief, when the prophet gave him that promise that flour would be coming the following day, and so cheaply as it had never been before, then the king's counselor said to the prophet, "Behold if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" This was only a natural matter, and therefore more possible than spiritual ones are, which are difficult to believe, although many say that a person cannot trust his body in God's care. But how then can he trust his soul if he cannot trust his body, which is nevertheless the less valuable part of a person. Surely, for that matter, all heathens easily trust both when there is no distress, but in time of distress they do not trust either.

Through God's grace, we must more broadly observe the effects of unbelief, and how terribly unbelief has become rooted in the heart of man. May that great Author and Finisher of faith, who has saved many unbelieving souls from the bog of unbelief and doubt, draw and raise up those wretches from the bog of doubt, who are sinking there up to their armpits. And you unbelieving Thomas, put your finger into the prints of the nails, if you dare, or cover your eyes and go away in shame. Only watch out that you do not

tear the wounds of Jesus anew if you begin to dig at his wounds with black fingers. Hear, you great Author and Finisher of faith, the sigh of the doubting ones. Our Father who art in the heavens, etc.

The Gospel: John 20:19.

Since many a Thomas still struggles with unbelief, although he is truly a disciple of Jesus, so through God's grace at this time we must take heed and consider: Why does Thomas not want to believe that Jesus has arisen, even though ten witnesses testify to it?

Put your finger into the prints of the nails now, Thomas, if you do not want to believe otherwise.

Thomas has surely seen Jesus dying on the cross, he has stood with the other disciples near the cross, he has wept and lamented with the other disciples. Therefore Thomas's old faith has entirely ended, he is no longer able to believe, no matter who would tell him that Jesus is living. Thomas does not believe that others too have seen the Lord. There now is one fruit of unbelief, that Thomas does not believe that the other disciples were in a better condition; he does not believe that the other disciples have seen the Lord. But where was Thomas when Jesus appeared the first time? Was Thomas then in the liquor merchant's house? We cannot believe that either, that he was in the liquor merchant's house, for the soldiers and murders of Jesus usually go to the liquor merchant's house on Easter Day. Is Thomas then in the wedding halls when he is not among the disciples on Easter Day? I believe that Thomas has such great sorrow over the

Saviour's death that he is not able to run after whores. For the whores, and especially those meek whores, prepare marriages and weddings on Easter Day. But the sorrowful disciples of Jesus, who are in penitance and in doubt, for that reason are not able to run after whores on Easter Day. Or had Thomas gone to Nicodemus to consider where the body of Jesus had been taken? Even that is not believable, that Thomas was able to go to a meek lord of the world, but some natural trip was before him, when he was not with the other disciples in the meetings of the Christians. I think that Thomas was traveling alone then, for he truly was in great doubt, but he was such a spiritual ox who wants to travel all alone, and to seek the way to the kingdom of heaven alone. Such a person does not stay in the company of the disciples, nor does he again stay in the crowd of the world, but he sometimes comes to the Christians meetings, and if the other disciples speak something to him of Christ's resurrection, then he says immediately: "Except I shall see in His hands the prints of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

You are unfortunate, Thomas, you poor thing! since you do not believe at all that the other disciples have seen the Lord. You do not believe them to be Christians, you do not believe that the other disciples have a spark of living faith, you do not believe that the other disciples now have joy in their hearts over Christ's resurrection, although you have nothing else but doubt, sorrow and unbelief. Woe, woe, you wretched

Thomas! You are so unfortunate with that unbelief, and if Jesus did not have such great love toward you that He wants to draw even you up from that wretched state of unbelief, than you would soon go to hell with your unbelief. You would soon go to follow Judas' footsteps. And if you knew, Thomas wretch, how much you vex Jesus with your unbelief, then you would immediately go into the corner to be ashamed.

But now Thomas says, "I know that Jesus has truly died, but I cannot believe that he is truly resurrected, no matter who would tell it to me," But do you know, Thomas, what great anguish Jesus has over you because of your unbelief? Since you cannot or do not want to believe what the other disciples testify of Jesus' resurrection, then your pitiful condition of soul comes as great anguish to Jesus. You trouble Jesus so much with your unbelief that you cause Him to be sorrowful. Such great sorrow has already come to Him over that unfortunate Judas, who through deceit left that small flock, and in that way one unfortunate lost sheep went into the woods of sin, and became meat to all the beasts. He had to receive sorrow also from Thomas, who also has come into sorrow, and nevertheless loves Him and would want to believe, but nevertheless does not believe for self righteousness has risen to the head and preaches there in the intellect that Jesus has not been resurrected, and "Except I shall see in His hands the prints of the nails and put my finger into the prints of the nails, I will not believe."

And for what reason do you not believe, Thomas, that Jesus is arisen? Yes, for that reason you are so unbelieving, that you have an intellect in your skull which is too large. Selfrighteousness and egotism rose to the head and you now believe what selfrighteousness preaches in the intellect, but you do not believe what the Bible testifies; you do not believe what the other disciples testify. Do you believe that the other disciples have seen the Lord? You probably do not even believe that. Or do you have such a feeling that you are not worthy to see? Don't worry. You are truly not worthy to see, but you must see nevertheless that you will finally believe, for otherwise you will go to hell with your unbelief. And if you knew, Thomas, how much you vex Jesus with your unbelief, you would immediately go into a corner to be ashamed.

But since you have vowed, Thomas, that you will not believe before you put your finger into the print of the nails, then try now, Thomas, to see how bold you are to thrust, when Jesus comes and commands you to thrust. Who knows if you will even dare to thrust although you have vowed to. Who knows if you have such clean fingers that you would dare to begin to feel the Saviour's wounds with those fingers. Take heed, Thomas, of how clean your fingers are before you go to feel the wounds of Jesus. You must remember, Thomas, before you go to feel the wounds of Jesus with your fingers, you must remember that with those fingers you have formerly sometimes mixed the old leaven, and sometimes dug

devil's dung, and who knows, you have even dug whores' butts, and now you have intended to begin to feel the wounds of Jesus with those fingers. Who knows, Thomas, do you dare to put your fingers into the prints of the nails? I think, Thomas, that you must go into the corner to be ashamed when the Lord Jesus, Himself, that crucified One, shows His wounds to you and asks you to feel them. Why did you not feel them now, Thomas? Be not unbelieving but believing; who knows how many times the Crucified Lord Jesus will show you His wounds before He will ascend into heaven, and you remain on the earth to long and to cry out, "Jesus, thou Son of David." Does He hear your sighs any more in heaven, when He is so far away from you. Does He hear the cry of the penitent and doubting ones any more, since He has gone to heaven and has already here shown His wounds to the doubting souls, and they have not believed.

How many times has the Crucified One shown His wounds to those wretches who, because of unbelief, sit in the cave of darkness and sigh? How many times has He reproved the prisoners of unbelief, who have not believed that He has arisen? But those wretches always vex that heavenly Parent, they always cause Jesus to be sorrowful, they always shut themselves out of the kingdom of heaven. They always want to make liars of the disciples of Jesus. They always allow the blood of the Lamb of God to flow to the ground in vain. Who knows how many more drops will fall from the wounds of Jesus any more. Who knows if the last

drops are already dropping upon the sinful earth from the wounds of Jesus. From where then will the doubting ones receive cleansing when all the blood of the Lamb of God is gone? The sorrowful disciples of Jesus are slow to crawl to the foot of the cross. The sorrowful disciples of Jesus are fools and slow of heart to believe all that which the prophets have written of Him. They are slow to believe what Jesus has already earlier testified of Himself. Who knows how many times that merciful Lord Jesus will show you His wounds any more, you doubting souls. He has showed His wounds already many times to the world and said, "Behold, you hardened ones what kind of wounds I have received because of you." But the world only laughs and says, "Certainly not because of us have you received those wounds; no doubt you have hurt yourself." Now He still shows His wounds to the sorrowful, penitent and doubting ones, and those who are despised by the world, but not even those wretches can believe that Jesus has received those wounds because of them. And even if they did believe that Jesus has received those deadly wounds because of them, they cannot believe that He has risen from the dead; especially Thomas, who wants to make all the other disciples liars. Is it not a great sin and a shame, Thomas, that you want to make the other disciples liars, who have testified and said, "We have seen the Lord." Why have you not believed those testimonies? Put your finger now into the prints of the nails, if you do not want to believe otherwise. Put out your hand and thrust it into His side, or go

into the corner to be ashamed. But you did not dare to thrust it; did you not have to begin to believe without thrusting. So we think that you have to believe against your will, against your intellect, against your nature, and against your feelings. You must believe against your former words, and now you must go into the corner to be ashamed because of your unbelief and say, "My Lord and my God," "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." Amen.

Second Sunday after Easter

"And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep and there came a lion and a bear and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him and smote him and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him and slew him." 1 Samuel 17: 34-35

This noble deed shows that David had strength and boldness to fight against lions and bears, that he would protect his sheep. But all shepherds do not have such boldness to fight against lions and bears as David had, but most shepherds are such, that they flee away when the wolf comes, especially a hireling, when he sees the wolf coming he flees and lets the wolf ravage the sheep. But David had such boldness, that he went to fight with the lion and bear, although this was a very dangerous war, for both the lion as well as the bear are terrible beasts, who soon would rend

the shepherd as you have seen and heard. The lion is such a beast, that nothing can stand against its strength; if it attacks a person, he will tear a person to pieces. But the lion also depends upon its strength and so overlooks a person and therefore David got to smite him. Neither is the bear a beast to be overlooked; whoever he pounces on must be well protected if he wants to protect his life. But then when he has just taken a sheep or some other animal from the flock, it is said that his nature is such that he does not then attack the shepherd, for which reason the shepherd can sometimes strike him, and this no doubt was one quiet lion and one quiet bear when through them no harm came to David. And from that happening David now made such a decision that he could slay that uncircumcized Philistine, for he was no more terrible or more fierce than a lion or a bear. There probably are not many such shepherds who will begin to fight with a lion and a bear just for the sake of one sheep. Our Saviour says in today's gospel that the hireling flees when he sees the wolf approaching. And so it has also happened, that the hireling has always fled when the wolf has come to rend and ravage the sheep. Some shepherds do not care at all about the sheep. Some hate the sheep and love goats. Some are so blind that they are not able to distinguish a sheep from a wolf. Such a shepherd does not care for the sheep at all. But he feeds the goats well, that he would receive much milk. Some certainly see the wolf coming, but do not protect the sheep, but let the wolf tear and ravage the sheep. Such

now are the hirelings and paid shepherds, they do not begin to fight with the lion and the bear, but let the wolf rend and ravage the sheep. David was the first shepherd who began to fight with the lion and the bear and was able in that way to protect the sheep, and even snatched some sheep from the lion's teeth. But there have not been many after the time of David who have been able to protect the sheep from the teeth of the wolf, except that great Shepherd of Israel, who gave Himself into the battle with that terrible beast and was able with His own blood to save some, although few souls from the teeth of the wolf. That great Shepherd of Israel yet travels heavy, troublesome and bloody steps on the mountains of Israel, in the valley of Sharon, and near the River Jordan, calling and lamenting, but the lost sheep do not want to hear His voice, although He has sought them with sorrow and longing both in the Old and the New Testament. He has truly found some, but the greater share is still lost. And there is no knowledge of where he must find those wretches, who are now lost and in the desert of sin. His trouble is probably in vain; in vain He must cry out, to seek and long, when no footprints are seen, not on Mount Sinai, or in the valley of Sharon, or on Jordan's shore. Finally this world becomes dark and he must cease seeking those lost sheep. Then comes the wolf, then comes the bear, then comes the lion, and then all the beasts of the world come to tear, rend, and ravage those wretches who have not allowed themselves to be found in the daytime, who have not answered when the

Shepherd has called out. O, great Shepherd of Israel, there are still many of those lost sheep here, who have not heard the Shepherd's voice, and if some would have heard, then however have not answered. There are also wolves, bears, lions and other beasts who ravage, destroy, and rend the sheep. Where is David now, that faithful shepherd who snatches the wounded from the mouth of the lion? Where is the Shepherd of Israel, who travels those heavy and troublesome steps, seeking those wretches who are lost. I hope that the great Shepherd will protect those lambs who bend their knees when the desire to such comes and sigh with humble and broken hearts. Our Father who art in Heaven, etc.

The Gospel: John 10:11-16

We must now through God's grace consider how the hireling flees when he sees the wolf coming, but the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. May that great Shepherd of Israel allow that some sheep would be saved from the teeth of the wolf!

The hireling is such a shepherd who sees the wolf approaching, he is not altogether blind as some goatherds are, who do not see at all that the wolf is in the flock. But this hireling of which the Saviour has spoken sees the wolf coming. He sees, for example, how the liquor wolf ravages and rends the congregation, but he does not dare to give himself to fight with the liquor wolf, for he fears that the liquor wolf will attack him if he wants to steal some soul from his mouth. The liquor

wolf will not spare the shepherd if the shepherd really does begin to fight with him. But the hireling is such a shepherd who cares not for the sheep, but herds only for wages? he flees before the liquor wolf and allows the liquor wolf to ravage and destroy the congregation. Such a shepherd does not dare to bark at the drunkards or whiskey merchants but lets them drink and fight in peace, so that he would not become hated by the congregation. Namely, it is known to all that when the best men in the congregation are whiskey merchants, then they become angry with all who spoil their trade, and the drunkards always bear spiritual hatred to those who bark at them for drunkenness. This hatred of the liquor wolf the hireling fears, and flees, he dares say nothing, not to the drinker or to the whiskey merchant, although he surely sees how the liquor wolf rends and ravages the congregation. If the wolf of whoredom comes into the congregation, then again the hireling flees, for he fears that the wolf of whoredom will kill him and certainly the wolf of whoredom will attack him if the shepherd wants to prevent him from rending and ravaging the congregation. We know that the wolf of whoredom came upon John the Baptist, for the royal whore had become so angry with John, that she had to ask for John's head on a charger. When a whore cannot fulfill her lusts in peace, she becomes black in countenance as a female devil and swears through body and life that she must get revenge. Although not one person is so unfortunate in time and eternity as one old whore, however her lusts burn like hell fire, and because

of that lust she puts on all her finery so that she would be acceptable to the whorebuck. When the wolf of adultery comes into the congregation, then many poor come upon the congregation, not only those old whores who carry the devil's dung, but also those seeds of the whores who go around the countryside begging; these seeds of the whores do not know who their right fathers are. The devil of adultery also brings the poor upon the congregation of those who because of the lust of the flesh go into wedlock destitute. They have a strong faith in God, that surely God will feed them, but God has not promised to feed without a medium. Food does not come from nothing, but the devil of adultery also confuses the mind, that some become so blind that they cannot see their finger ahead into what kind of conditions they are allowing themselves, where poverty inevitably must follow. All these we see even with the intellect. But the whiskey merchants and whorebucks do not care about that, that they make poor people for the congregation and help lazy, unfortunate souls to hell before the allotted time. They only say, "Let each one answer for his own work, and let each one take care of himself." The hireling certainly sees them, he sees how the liquor wolf and the wolf of adultery destroy the congregation, but he does not dare to give himself to war against them. He would sooner flee from the congregation, before he would begin to fight with the liquor wolf or to battle with the whores, for he knows well that the best men in the congregation will begin to hate him if he would begin to fight with them. If

the devil of greed comes into the congregation, which through foolish trading takes even the last money from the congregation, then again the hireling flees and says, "I will not begin to fight with them who bring merchandise into the congregation. Who wants to buy a silk kerchief, buy it, I will not begin to bark at them as silk whores. And they who bring fancy goods into the church need to earn through their trade. Although now everyone can see and understand even with his intellect that the silk whores must finally eat this excrement of worms, which they have bought when they were young, in which they have put all their earnings, but the other silk whores do not thereby become any wiser. Some silk whores, who firmerly in their youth have gone around in broadcloth and silk, can finally go around in rags; they can go along the roads and beg, but the others will not thereby become any wiser. The silk whores are always seen in the temple, on the streets and lanes, always such silk whores are seen who show their finery to the world, although they do not have a clean thread on their naked body when they come before God's judgement. Behold, thus now they live in the world, and although the hireling sees the wolf coming, he says nothing, but allows each one to live as the devil commands. The liquor wolf, the wolf of adultery and the devil of finery are certainly visible, and everyone who has an intellect should understand that such sins bring along with them poverty, nakedness, and natural distress already in this life, but the Saviour has said, "If I have told you earthly things and ye be-

lieve not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" If, namely, the hireling flees when he sees the liquor wolf coming, what will he then do when he sees other devils coming which are incomprehensible to him? If the devil of honor comes to invite him to some festivity, as a celebration, a christening, and wedding, that the hireling does not understand to flee, but gives himself into the company of the devil of honor, eats and drinks with him and says, "God does not deny innocent joy. Didn't the Saviour also go to eat and drink in the house of Simeon the leper, who was a chief Pharisee. The Saviour ate with publicans and sinners. He did not overlook God's blessing as these wild spirits that do!" Is that so? Is it written anywhere in the Scriptures that christenings and celebrations were held then? "Well" say the slaves of the world, who gladly keep their belly as their God and worship their colon; if a person is born, they must serve it, if someone dies, they must serve that same god of the colon. "Jesus went to the wedding." And why not, when the wedding was kept in fear of God? But now weddings are kept for the honor of that god who lives in the lower heaven; now they drink, curse, and fight at weddings, now they commit adultery and dance at weddings, now the devil receives honor when people are married. Was Jesus called as a guest to such a wedding? No, but the devil is called to such weddings where God's grain changes to devil's dung. As he has thus far taught the people to spoil God's grain, from now on he will teach them to spoil God's grain. When the hireling

sees the whiskey wolf coming, he flees. When he sees the devil of honor coming, he goes along. Surely the hireling will not say to the devil of honor, "Get thee hence Satan, or confess your sin." The hireling does not say to the devil of greed, "Recompense your evil deed." The hireling does not dare to fight with even one beast. The liquor wolf ravages the congregation, but the hireling says nothing to the liquor wolf. If the devil of greed comes to fleece the congregation, the hireling says nothing. If the devil of honor comes to ravage, the hireling says nothing. If the devil of adultery comes to defile the congregation, the hireling says nothing. If the devil of finery comes to ravage, the hireling says nothing. All wolves can freely, and without interference, ravage the sheep. And when he sees the wolf approaching he flees. So it is true what the Saviour says in today's gospel, that the hireling cares not about the sheep or for the sheep. But our hope is, that the great Shepherd of Israel Himself will take care of His sheep in all places when they have scattered in the mountains of Israel, for as far as the hireling is concerned, all the beasts can rend and ravage the sheep. No doubt that great Shepherd of Israel takes care of His sheep and brings them to the best pastures, and protects them from the teeth of the wolf and also from snow storms and tempests, that they could for a short time rest near the cross on the hill of Golgotha, and finally on Mount Zion where the lame leap as deer and the lambs rejoice with the ewes forever. Amen.

Third Sunday after Easter, Sermon A.

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception, in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." Genesis 3:16

God placed this punishment upon the woman, that she must bring forth children with pain. This pain of delivery came upon the woman because of sin. If the woman had not eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree, she would have been able to bring forth without pain. But because of sin this pain of delivery came upon her.

From this natural pain of delivery, the Saviour has also taken a parable when He said to His disciples, "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come, but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." (John 16:21)

Here He speaks of that spiritual travail of birth, which came to the disciples through the death of the Saviour. A great spiritual sorrow came to the disciples after the death of the Saviour, and this great spiritual sorrow or travail of birth is placed upon him because of the fall into sin. For we hear in the third chapter of Genesis, that the Lord first placed travail of natural birth upon the woman for the reason that she had eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Secondly, from this travail of birth a parable is taken of how the travail of birth comes upon the disciples in a spiritual sense, when spiritual sorrow comes to them. The Saviour says, namely, in today's gospel, "ye shall weep and la-

ment but the world shall rejoice, and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Every disciple has experienced that the sorrow which is after the mind of God "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of". The disciples have also come to experience that their sorrow will be turned to joy. So also is this travail, which was placed by God upon woman because of sin, also placed upon those who are reborn. All the prophets have spoken of this travail of birth, and the Apostle John in the Revelation saw a woman who cried in the tribulation of birth, who had a crown on her head, she was clothed with the sun and the moon was under her feet. All these places speak of that tribulation of birth which, in a spiritual sense, must come upon the disciples of Jesus, but we know that the woman must first become pregnant before the tribulation of birth can come upon her. God says, namely, in the third chapter of Genesis, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception." From which also follows, that no tribulation of birth will come to others than those who have become pregnant. But the whores of the world do not want to become pregnant. They want to commit adultery, but not become pregnant; they want to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, but do not want to give birth. How could tribulation of birth come upon those who do not want to become pregnant? God laments through the prophet Ezekiel that Israel is one spiritual whore, who committed adultery with many idols and allowed the Egyptian whorebucks to squeeze her breasts. So also the devil's whore has allowed

the devil to squeeze her breasts and has lain in the bosom of the devil for many years, and has committed adultery with many idols. She has committed adultery with so many that she has finally become unfruitful or an inappeasable harlot. Such an inappeasable harlot does not become fruitful, although she would lie near the Holy Spirit every night. And how could tribulation of birth come to such a one who is unfruitful? And such unfruitful ones and inappeasable harlots are first the wise of the world, who look at the effects of the Holy Spirit as the effects of the devil's spirit. The devil has squeezed their breasts so long, that they have hardened. The devil has kept them in his lap so long that they have given in, and having been persuaded so long, finally consented also to commit adultery. How can these devil's whores become fruitful, who have committed adultery with so many idols that they become inappeasable harlots? When the whores of the devil become old, the devil causes them to carry dung, through which they become shameless whores, and such pour the urine pot on the bridesmaids of the Saviour, but certainly they are anyway meek and beautiful before the world, and become terribly angry if someone reproaches or barks at them as being devil's harlots. They intend to ask after their honor if someone would bark at them as whores and thieves, for they know they are innocent.

The devil has made them innocent and given them that assurance that they are innocent. Otherwise they confess themselves to be great sinners, but God is merciful, namely that god of the

world whom they have served. The god of the world is so merciful to them, that he forgives their sins without sorrow, without grief, without penitence. And when the devil has forgiven their sins, then they believe upon the Saviour. They also attend the Lord's Supper and there give the Saviour a kiss, but behind the church they give Baal a kiss. They are godly in church and ungodly behind the church, bless in church and curse behind the church, drink from the Lord's cup in church and from the devil's cup behind the church, are meek in the church and commit adultery behind the church. Such are old Christians, and such meek and honorable people are kept in high esteem in the world. They are the chief men in the congregation, who think they are the friends of God when they drink, curse and fight, commit adultery and steal, keep a whiskey trade, build beautiful buildings, go about in broadcloth clothes and become lords. Such meek and honorable men do not have any sin to repent of. And whoever does not have sins worth being penitent over, he need not be sorrowful, he never becomes heavy hearted, he probably will not become pregnant of the Holy Spirit. And how could tribulation of birth come to him who is not pregnant?

But the sorrowful disciples of Jesus are in tribulation of birth until the new man is born. But when the new man is born, they no longer remember the tribulation because of the joy that a man is born into the world. In today's gospel the Saviour now speaks of that tribulation of spiritual birth. Namely, He says to His disciples, "A woman when she is

in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come, but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." That is, you will become sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy. Therefore, thus the Saviour has explained in this place how the new birth happens. It happens with sorrow and grief or with pain and tribulation. Because of sin both the natural and spiritual tribulation of birth are placed upon man. But as it has been said, to the unfruitful no tribulation of birth will come. And how could tribulation of birth come to those who have never conceived or become pregnant. Peter writes to the Christians, "Ye have been born of incorruptible seed." And with these words he makes it known that without seed no one can become fruitful. David testifies "that he was born of sinful seed." That is, the old man which was given under corruption. The old man is born of sinful seed, and therefore the old man always remains sinful as long as he lives, but the new man is born of incorruptible seed and therefore there should be no corruption in him.

And now when many have become partakers of that incorruptible seed, then it would be necessary to examine how many in this place have become pregnant and fruitful of that seed, so that some whore who has the desire to hide her pregnancy would not get to destroy her fruit. It is better that all gossiping women in the village would get word of that, how many have become pregnant during these times and fruitful of that incorruptible seed, so that they

need not guess so much who the father of the new man is. Who knows if all who have brought forth children have known it correctly. But now all honor must be stripped from those who have become fruitful of that incorruptible seed, for not all are able to so squeeze themselves, that it could be hidden. I give that good advice to all who are in that blessed condition, that they reveal themselves and would tell all the people of the village who has made them pregnant and fruitful. I advise all bridesmaids of the Saviour, that they would confess with tears and sighs who has made them pregnant and fruitful. Confess, daughters of Jerusalem, confess, daughters of Zion, who the true father of that new man is. Confess with tears and sighs, that of the incorruptible seed the fruit has had its beginning, and especially when the tribulation of birth begins to come upon you severely, then cry out with such a loud voice, that all gossip women would hear, and say boldly who the true Father is. And do not come to church in the manner of a whore, but pray the true Father of the new man that He who, under the promise of marriage, has made His bride pregnant and fruitful with that incorruptible seed, would take you into the church in the manner of a bride and would give you an engagement ring to wear, and put a crown of honor on your head, when you gave your heart to Him for an everlasting time. Hear, Heavenly Groom, when your poor bride cries out your name in tribulation of birth, Our Father, who art in the heavens, etc.

The Gospel: John 16:16

With the guidance of our holy gospel we must today, through God's grace, speak and consider: "How the bride of the Saviour, who has become pregnant with the incorruptible seed, cries out in tribulation of birth." First: How the bride of the Saviour becomes fruitful of that incorruptible seed. Second: How the bride of the Saviour behaves herself in that blessed condition, and third: How the bride of the Saviour cries out in tribulation of birth and confesses the name of the true Father.

May God give His blessing to all pregnant and those in tribulation of birth, that they would be able to carry the load with patience, and that the new man would be born into the world fortunately.

The First consideration: How the bride of the Saviour becomes fruitful with the incorruptible seed. When Apostle Peter writes to the Christians that they are born of the incorruptible seed, he understands the incorruptible seed to be the Word of God, which in many places in the Bible is compared to seed. But the Saviour Himself is called the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, of which it is understood that with the incorruptible seed is meant the Word which became flesh and that Word which effects in the heart one wonderful change or the beginning of a new man. We know that not one woman will become fruitful without a seed. So also God's congregation, which in the Scriptures is compared to the bride of the Saviour, cannot become fruitful without seed. The bride of the Saviour becomes fruitful when she lies near the Holy Spirit or

in the Saviour's lap; He then pours the incorruptible seed into the heart of the bride. And if that person, into whose heart this incorruptible seed is poured, is a pure virgin, she would immediately become fruitful. But there is no other pure virgin than the virgin Mary. All others are the devil's whores and some have committed adultery with so many, that they have become unfruitful. But of those devil's whores the Saviour must choose someone for a bride, who will become fruitful through His Holy and incorruptible seed. One upright man does not willingly want to take another man's whore for a wife, but the Saviour must take the devil's whore as a bride. Have you, devil's whore, merited this great love? Are you worthy as such to sit in the lap of the Son of God? Are you, devil's whore, worthy to bear the crown of glory? Surely you are not worthy. Is it a long time ago when you lay in the lap of the devil and laughed like a magpie and mocked the heavenly Parent's tears? How have you now become the bride of the Saviour? When you lay in the devil's lap, then you were beautiful before the world: gold necklaces on the neck, a gold heart in the breast, silk skirts on. When you have no longer been acceptable to the devil for a whore, the Saviour took the devil's whore for His bride. The devil's angels spit upon her and said, "Is that the kind the bride of the Son of God is, who now shamelessly barks at honorable people?" One naked, scabby, and old whore, full of smelly wounds from which the pus of devilry runs, is no longer acceptable to the devil for a whore, what then for a bride for the Sa-

viour. So the meek whores of the world think, who think themselves fitting for the Saviour's bride. Now all the angels of heaven also come to see how beautiful the bride of the Saviour is. Paul says, namely, that the reconciliation is one great mystery, which even the angels desire to see. Joy comes to the angels of heaven over one sinner who becomes converted and is healed. Certainly they are kept as wonders, that one whore of the devil is acceptable to the Son of God for a bride. But her beauty stands basically in that, that she is so sorrowful that she washes the Saviour's feet with her tears, that she kisses the Saviour's feet, that she loves so much, and therefore so much sin is forgiven to her. But although some of the devil's whores now become fruitful with that incorruptible seed, do not believe that there are many who remain in wedlock. God commanded one prophet to take one whore for his wife, and the prophet pleaded with her, that she would be satisfied with one man. But the harlot did not restrain herself, she loved other men as before. Can one upright man love a harlot who is a whore to many men? And such a harlot was Israel.

Second consideration; How does the Saviour's bride behave in that blessed condition? That woman who has become fruitful is said to be in a blessed condition. And surely the promised bride of the Saviour is in a blessed condition, when she has become fruitful with that incorruptible seed. But with this blessing also follows great hardship. The Lord said to the woman, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy

conception.” Under this trouble, the bride of the Saviour becomes impatient and heavy hearted. Sometimes she trusts too much upon her strength. Some do not even know when and how they would have become pregnant. They only feel that they have a heavier state of being than before. They themselves complain and the women of the village complain that they are not in the former state of being. And when they as yet do not have ties of marriage seriously with a man, such a pregnant condition becomes shameful. They do not dare to reveal their condition to anyone. Some spiritual harlots cause abortion of the fruit with quicksilver, take internally fat of the serpent, mixed with devil’s dung and the slime of dead faith, or squeeze their abdomen so intensely, so that people would not see in what condition she is. And this trick of the devil has often killed the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We mentioned before that whores do not want to become pregnant or fruitful at all; they only want to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For that reason they commit adultery with many idols, and all the same want to bear the name of the bride of the Saviour. They think that they love Jesus. Before the altar they give the Saviour the kiss of Judas, but behind the church they give the devil a kiss. They come before the altar of Jesus to make a new covenant and reassurance that they must be faithful unto death, but behind the church they make a new covenant and determination with the devil that they will never leave him. And when they see that the bride of the Saviour is so sorrowful that she weeps and sighs carrying Jesus’

cross, then the devil’s whores think: “May God protect me from becoming so crazy.” When the bride of the Saviour is in tribulation of conscience, then the devil’s whore thinks: “This is nothing else than the effect of the devil’s spirit. They make themselves that way.” But although the devil’s whore does not want to become pregnant or fruitful at all, it happens sometimes that they become that way against their will, for everyone who takes pleasure lying in the lap of the devil stands at first against the effects of the Holy Spirit. He does not want to tear himself loose from the claws of the devil at all, although the heavenly Parent is on His knees, weeps and sighs saying, “Come away; for goodness sake, do not lie in the devil’s lap.” But the devil’s whore does not hear; she lies in the devil’s lap and laughs and allows the devil to squeeze her breasts before the eyes of the whole world, and in that pleasure of the flesh she blasphemes the tears of the heavenly Parent, and says to the sorrowful Parent, “Come and strike me if you dare!” But it happens sometimes that the heavenly Parent by force snatches His child from under the devil. And then great shame comes to the devil’s whore, that she must cover her eyes from before God and people. Man does not resist at all when the devil begins to give his consent with the world and love of the flesh. The devil does not need to lift her into the bed by force, but the whore herself lies down, bares her breasts, and lifts up her own skirt, also removes her shirt if so needed, and says to the devil, “Come now near me if you have the de-

sire.” But when the Son of God wants her for a bride, then the devil’s whore is shy. The devil’s whore does not allow the Son of God to even come near, the Son of God cannot even touch her hand, to say nothing of the breast. When the Son of God begins to speak to her of marriage and of having a wedding, then the devil’s whore sometimes becomes red like liver, and sometimes becomes white like a corpse. When the Son of God says to the devil’s whore, “If you want to enter into matrimony with me, then you must strip yourself naked and I will give you white wedding raiment and a crown of glory.” Then the devil’s whore becomes angry and says to the heavenly Groom, “Must I strip myself naked before You and the whole world? That I will not do, even if I would receive three heavens as a reward, I will not begin to show the most shameful places to the world; I do not want to become honorless.”

Surely you have lain naked with the devil in the darkness and under the covers of meekness, but at that time you knew nothing of your nakedness. But when the Son of God demands that you must strip yourself naked in the light of Christianity, before the eyes of the whole world, then you are so shy that you cover your face because of worldly honor. But I say to you, you devil’s whore, you will never receive wedding raiment if you do not strip yourself naked before the whole world. Surely the meek whores of the world can see how terrible one devil’s whore is, when she stands naked and bared, scabby and full of smelly wounds before God’s throne and before the eyes of

all the holy angels. The meek whores of the world ask, “Is this the kind the bride of the Son of God is?” Yes, such she is, she is no better than one female devil. And then the meek whores of the world begin to spit upon her and say, “Go to hell. Is such a female devil the bride of the Son of God?” Yes, such she is, she is no more beautiful. The meek whores of the world think that the bride of the Son of God should be beautiful or like an angel. But she is no better than a female devil. But the devil’s whore, she is really beautiful before the world. She is so beautiful, she shines with gold of meekness. She has gold necklaces on her neck and a gold heart in her breast, and gold rings on every finger, then also ear rings, bared breasts, silk ribbons, breast plate; how otherwise would she be befitting to the devil for a whore, unless she was beautiful. It is the opposite of the Saviour’s poor bride, who has nothing with which to cover her nakedness.

Third consideration: How the Saviour’s bride cries out in tribulation of birth and confesses the name of the true Father. When one devil’s whore, as it has been said, becomes fruitful against her will with the incorruptible seed of the Holy Spirit, then the tribulations of birth come, which God placed on the one giving birth, naturally and spiritually. Some can go for a longer time pregnant, sorrowful and down-pressed by the load of sin, before that time comes that the new man is born. “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow” says our Saviour, and He explained to the disciples in this way, that this pain is one spiritual anguish which

the true disciples of Jesus cannot escape. "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." This weeping and lamenting came to the disciples of Jesus when they longed for Jesus' merciful presence. And this sorrow, which is necessary for all, is according to the mind of God, which worketh repentance unto salvation, which a person does not regret. It is called tribulation of conscience and is a spiritual anguish which goes before the new birth. But as soon as the sorrow and weeping come to the disciples of Jesus, then joy comes to the world. The magpies begin to laugh when the disciples of Jesus weep, and this lamentation of Jesus' disciples in the ears of the forest devils sounds like the howling of the wolf. When the tears of the penitent burn the conscience of the sorrowless, then the confessors of dead faith say, "What howling is this?" And how do those blind wretches know for what reason the poor disciples of Jesus weep; they think that such tribulation comes to the awakened from the devil. But when they themselves howl in the whiskey merchant's house, then they say, "This is the effect of the Holy Spirit." But the joy of the world is not long-lived. When, namely, the disciples' sorrow is turned into joy, then all magpies become angry and think they themselves are being mocked.

But cry out in tribulation of birth, you bride of Jesus; cry out boldly, weep, sigh, and lament, so that your voice will be heard from the depths to heaven. Do not cease sighing and lamenting, until the Groom comes and presses you against His breast. Take Him around the knees and bow your

knees in the Lord Jesus' name and say, "Crucified and Thorn-crowned King! I am unworthy of that grace and faithfulness which you have shown toward me. I have before mocked your tears, and trampled your blood. I am therefore not worthy to lean my head against your breast, but do not remember the former time, but take me now as your bride into the church, and take me with You into your kingdom." Amen.

Third Sunday after Easter Sermon B

The Saviour speaks in today's Gospel of that new birth which must happen to the disciples through the Saviour's death. He takes a parable from natural birth and says, "**A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come.**" John 16:21

We see from all aspects of the matter that the sorrow and pain of heart, through which the new man is born, had not then yet happened, although some imagine that the disciples had living faith already then, when they confessed their faith that Jesus was the Son of God. But all baptised heathens can confess this, that Jesus is the Son of God, and especially such who have dead faith in the skull. But they are probably few who have wept and lamented because of the pain of new birth, as did the disciples. Jesus said, "Ye shall weep and lament." Jesus has not spoken, nor is it mentioned in any place, that the disciples would have had sorrow of penitence before Jesus died.

And how can a person be reborn and come into living faith without sorrow? But that sorrow which is according to the mind of God came to the disciples after the Saviour's death: then they wept and lamented when the visible Saviour died. And so it must happen to all who intend to become Christian; they must weep and lament, or be in the right sorrow of penitence before they can be reborn. For without the right spiritual sorrow, no one can come into living faith. This the Saviour indicates when He says, "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow!" A woman has great pain because of giving births this all true disciples of Jesus have felt. Surely the old man must have pain when the new man must be born, but some have greater and some have less pain; nevertheless there must be pain, otherwise no one could give birth. And when the Saviour Himself has taken an example from a woman's pain, then it can be seen that this pain will not be light; surely such pain must be felt, otherwise birth would not take place. But because the disciples now weep and lament, "Then the world rejoices," And it has been seen in all places where the disciples of Jesus weep and lament: there the children of the world rejoice; they ridicule and laugh when they see Jesus' disciples weeping and lamenting. But who knows what will finally follow such ridiculing and laughing? Who knows if eternal weeping and lamenting will not finally follow for the scoffers and laughing men? Jesus has, however, promised the sorrowful disciples that their "Sorrow shall be turned into joy," What do you think, you scof-

fers? Do you think that your joy will last in death and in hell? Do you imagine that you will be able to ridicule any more when you see yourselves in destruction and Jesus' sorrowful disciples rejoicing in the Kingdom of Heaven? Then the scoffers' laughter and jesting will end. but the sorrow of the mournful disciples will be turned into joy, nor will anyone take their joy away. If someone would ridicule one woman who is in pains of birth, then all people would say that such a scoffer is of his father the devil. But he who ridicules a penitent scul who cries out in pains of birth is even more terrible: he is just a disciple of the black spirit. Nevertheless, the spirits of darkness are yet able to ridicule, but who knows how long they will ridicule before weeping and lamenting begin. For when Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice," then it is to be surmised that the world is joyous and laughs when the disciples of Jesus weep.

This has happened already then, nor have those that have come after taken heed that things have gone wrong for those former scoffers already in this life, when the enemy came with a sword upon their necks and shed their blood. The sorrow of the disciples has been placed upon them by God and it is very necessary for them, for without this sorrow the new man will not become born; as a woman cannot give birth without pain, so also new birth cannot take place without pain. It has so happened because of sin, for God said to the woman soon after the fall into sin: "I will greatly multiply thy

sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children,” (Genesis 3:16) This natural pain has come upon the woman because of sin, as also spiritual pain, when a person is in pains of conscience or new birth, is unavoidably one punishment for sin. But the devil does not effect that, as some spiritual quacks imagine that pain of conscience is from the devil. But it is an effect of the Holy Spirit, it is one spiritual chastisement through which the Heavenly Parent wants to call His children back from the broad road of destruction. It is the chastisement of the Father and without this chastisement no one can become humble before God. But all do not receive the Father’s chastisement although some are whipped and chastised; they are, nevertheless, proud and ill-behaved. Spiritual sorrow has not been able to so humble them under the mighty hand of God that they would become truly humble and broken before Him; for if they at times weep and lament-then again after a short time they are in pride. Some children are so ill-behaved that they will not receive chastisement no matter how often they would be chastised. Oh, how difficult it is for the Parent to chastise such children who will not receive chastisements; However, it is our hope and confidence in God that as long as the children are so small that they fit into the Parent’s lap, they will weep every time that the Parent switches them and will hasten again to the Parent’s lap although they have been switched. But when the children grow up, they begin to oppose and harden the more the Parent chastises them, and finally they be-

come so terrible that they curse their Creator and say, “Come and strike me if you dare!” Now you sorrowful disciples, “Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice,” When the Saviour dies and disappears from your hearts, then you must weep and lament; you have no other refuge nor other comfort than weeping and tears when your Saviour goes away and leaves you as orphans in this world. The world rejoices and ridicules you for the reason that you have begun to follow Jesus, Your sorrow is necessary, for until this time you have been without sorrow, but you will not receive the Holy Spirit unless Jesus goes away for a little while. You must therefore weep and lament when Jesus has gone away, but you must once see the Crucified and Thorn-crowned King arisen from the grave; as already ten disciples have seen Him alive, so must also the unbelieving Thomas see Him at last, and he must believe then, although now he does not believe before he places his finger into the print of the nails. Pray now, you sorrowful disciples of Jesus, that the Heavenly Lord Jesus would give you His Holy Spirit, who would always lead you on the right road, that you would press upon your hearts the last words of the dying parent. When the world mocks His tears and tramples His blood, then the sorrowful disciples of Jesus stand at the foot of His cross, and Mary Magdalene and the mother of Jesus, and the disciple whom Jesus loved, they stand with broken hearts beholding His bloody wounds, pitying Him. But their sorrow will turn into joy when they can see the Crucified and Thorn-

crowned King arisen from the grave of dead faith: then they can rejoice and no one can take their joy away. On the Mount of Ascension they can finally, bowing, pray to Him that the sorrow of the mournful disciples will soon turn to joy, that with living eyes they can soon behold Him face to face. Hear, you crucified and resurrected King of Israel, the sigh of the sorrowful disciples. Our Father, which art in Heaven, etc.

The Gospel: John 16:16

By the guidance of our Holy Gospel, we must by God's grace consider; How the disciples become sorrowful when Jesus goes away, and how they become joyful when He returns.

The first consideration: Why do the disciples of Jesus become so sorrowful when Jesus goes away? First, they do not understand at all this whole speech when they are in that dead faith and think that Jesus will never go away. Then they surmises what is it when He says to us "After a little while?" We do not know what He is saying. And how will such a person know, who is yet in sorrowlessness and entirely fastened to the world; what does such a person understand of Jesus" going away, who has not yet experienced how it is to be without the Saviour. Such a person thinks that he believes upon the Saviour although only the world is on the mind. He thinks that through the Saviour he will win goods and honor in the world. Such a faith the disciples then had, that they will become governors and great officials when the Saviour becomes king So also

does many a confessor of dead faith believe that Jesus will so bless his work that he will get along well in this world, but he does not think of this, that this earthly Saviour will be taken away from him, and that he must once come into such an unfortunate state that he will no longer see any Saviour, neither in heaven or upon the earth. Such a confessor of dead faith does not at all understand Jesus' speech of His going away to the Father, but he begins to surmise as the disciples, "What is this that He saith, A little while? We cannot tell what He says." If a Christian says to such a confessor of dead faith, "After a little while you must feel that in that sorrowless and impenitent state you have no trust upon the Saviour, or such a faith which will stand in death," then he says, "Have I no faith upon the Saviour? I do not know what he is saying;" after a little while you must feel that you have no Saviour at all, as long as you trust upon Him with a false faith. You have trusted entirely upon the world and your own strength, although you imagine that you have trusted upon the Saviour; the visible Saviour cannot help your soul. And this visible Saviour will be taken away after a short time: Then you must all weep and lament, who have not yet been in sorrow of penitence. This speech a confessor of dead faith does not understand, but he surmises: "What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says."

But the time will once come, that they must understand what it is: "A little while and ye shall not see me." When the visible Saviour is taken

away, then it is no longer easy to believe upon that Saviour who is dead. Namely, when a person has that dead and vain trust upon one visible Saviour, as the disciples had before the spiritual sorrow came, then the world is on the mind; he then believes that God has so blessed his work and trouble that he has received honor and goods in the world. But through this faith the world becomes so dear that he does not remember death, Judgement, and eternity; instead he builds for himself everlasting habitations in the world. But when this visible Saviour goes away, then faith begins to be lacking. And when the visible Saviour dies, then sorrow comes, then doubt comes: nor were the disciples of Jesus any more able to believe anything after the Saviour's death, before He became alive.

Where did this sorrow and severe doubt come from to the disciples after the Savior's death? It came from that, that they had built their temporal fortune upon Him, but of salvation of the soul there was no knowledge. When now this temporal fortune disappeared and all of their hope of riches and worldly honor was lost, then came a sorrow and longing after a spiritual Saviour; but in this sorrow was such great doubt that they were no longer able to believe upon that Saviour who was in the mind before. They also confessed their faith on the road to Emmaus, saying, "We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel," but this faith was now lacking. And so it must happen to all disciples of Jesus, that their faith must be lacking through the Saviour's death: they must weep

and lament when the Saviour has died. Jesus dies also in the hearts of the Christians through love of the world; when the world become dear and beautiful to the hearts of the Christians, then the Son of God dies. And then this word of Jesus is fitting: "A little while and ye shall not see me." From where do the Christians feel the power of Jesus in their hearts any more, when, because of love of the world, He has died. Because of love of the world they must become sorrowful when Jesus dies. The Son of God is not alive in that person's heart, in whom love of the world has become lord of the heart. Such was the disciples' condition then when the Saviour died. Love of the world was in the heart and mind and when one devil had gotten into the heart, surely others followed after. Namely, although great sorrow came to the disciples when they felt that Jesus was no longer alive in their hearts, Jesus however remain dead as long as self-righteousness effects in them such a great unbelief that they are not able to believe that the Saviour, who had once died, should any more become alive. But the children of the world know nothing of that sorrow, for Jesus says in today's gospels "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." And why does the world rejoice? Yes, for this reason the world rejoices: that the false prophet and disturber of the people has not been seized and brought to the council. The world rejoices over this, that the same man, who has barked at them before as an adulterous generation and a generation of vipers, is now about to be condemned; for that reason the world is joyous. And

row they cry, "Crucify! Crucify!" And as the devil then incited his slaves to rejoice over Jesus' death, so he even now sets his slaves to rejoice when the world's lords begin to hate and persecute Jesus and His disciples: then the world rejoices. Even those also who have before in hypocrisy cried "Hosanna" begin on Good Friday to cry, "Crucify." For as long as He was teaching in the temple, they all did not care to show their hatred but when He was brought before the court, then the hatred came out. Then the thoughts of many hearts were revealed. What was the distress now when the Disturber of the People had been seized; now the enemies of Jesus can get peace of conscience: He is no longer barking at them as an adulterous generation and a generation of vipers. Now the drunkards and liquor merchants can go to hell in peace. They do not think that after this joy will follow weeping and gnashing of teeth. Woe to those wretches who rejoice and laugh at their own misfortune! But surely they can once see whom they have pierced. Still they cry out God's punishment upon themselves, they even challenge God's vengeance upon themselves when they say, "May His blood be on us, and on our children." That is: surely God can punish us if He is innocent. The devil had already strengthened their faith, and who else strengthens their faith but the devil, who forgives his children all their sins, only that they ridicule and oppress Christ. Not in the least will the devil begin to reproach them for sin who cry, "Crucify!" For the enemies of living Christianity are the devil's best friends. And I think that

he gives flowing devil's dung even after death as a reward for that, that they have ridiculed, hated, and persecuted Christians, Woe to the unfortunate wretches who always ridicule and laugh when the sorrowful disciples of Jesus weep and lament. Will not the tears of Jesus and His disciples yet begin to burn you? How do you think that you will stand in death and on Judgment Day? Then must the tears of the sorrowful disciples of Jesus burn your consciences eternally, if in that time of grace you do not cease ridiculing and persecuting those who cry repentance to you.

The second consideration: Let us observe now how the sorrow of the disciples is turned into joy.

When the disciples weep and lament because of the death of Jesus, then these wretches feel how unfortunate they are without a Saviour. The world no longer cares about them, for they are the disciples of that false prophet; and when Jesus has died, they have no refuge in heaven. And although they have heard many times those gracious promises that He will arise and give them the Holy Spirit, they are no longer able to believe those promises, but fall into doubt. But through this sorrow and distress of heart, the heart is prepared to receive that unspeakable Joy and foretaste of salvation when Jesus becomes alive and says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghosts Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." Then the sorrow of the disciples is turned into joy and no one will take their joy away any more, although at times they can feel how terribly the devil

tempts them, as Peter writes to the Christians, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:18) This same Peter writes also to the Christians that, "The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." These temptations of the devil every Christian has been able to experience. However, through these strivings and temptations with the devil and his followers, the disciples must follow Jesus' bloody footsteps, bearing His cross, and, nevertheless, rejoicing in hope, as often as the great Cross-bearer looks compassionately upon them and says, "Today shalt thou be with me In paradise." Although truly a Christian does not always have it so pleasant when the enemy attacks him terribly through outward and inward temptations, as also through hatred and persecution, however, the Christian's sorrow will finally be turned into joy when the great war Hero gives him victory over the enemy. Therefore now we have seen how the words of Jesus are fulfilled when He said to His disciples: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." It has happened just as Jesus has said. The sorrowful disciples of Jesus have wept and lamented, and the world has ridiculed and laughed at them. Even now the sorrowful disciples of Jesus may often weep and lament because of the world, when they see how the world's slaves hate and persecute Jesus. When because of sin and unbelief, He dies in their hearts, then the sorrowful disciples of Jesus can weep and lament in longing for Jesus' merciful presence. Then the world

mocks and laughs at the sorrowful disciples of Jesus; the children of the world and the devil's angels mock their tears. But once these tears of the repentant ones will burn their consciences, who have ridiculed, and they can finally see whom they have pierced.

But the sorrow of the disciples will be turned into joy when that great Cross-bearer and Thorn-Crowned King becomes alive in their hearts, and they can feel the effects of His grace. Then they can also feel to be true what Jesus has said: "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come, but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." Rejoice and be exceeding glad, you sorrowful disciples, when you see the Lord, Be joyful, you sorrowful Mary Magdalene, when you get to grasp His feet and to embrace His knees with joy, and go with joy to remind the disciples that the Lord has arisen. And you, unbelieving Thomas Place your finger into the prints of the nails if you dare, or put your hand into your mouth and be silent. And you, Peter, throw yourself into the sea and swim to the shore, where Jesus stands to receive you; He stands now on the beautiful shore of eternity and waits for His disciples when they come. However He asks, "Simon, son of Jonah, lovest thou me?" He asks all who have denied Him with their unfaithfulness: "Simon, son of Jonah, lovest thou me? Simon, son of Jonah! be ready to answer. Jesus desires love from you, who before were like cold and wavering; now He wants to know how much the

Christians love Him: be ready to answer. Who knows if love of the world has effected So much that you would begin to deny Jesus before the world. But say now: "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." And be faithful in this confession until the very last moment: "Lord, Thou knowest that I love thee." Amen!

Fourth Sunday after Easter, Sermon A.

"Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." Jeremiah 2:19.

In this second chapter, 19th verse of Jeremiah, the hardened and disobedient children hear for what reason they are chastised. No doubt the hardened children think that they are chastised without reason. But we hear in the Prophet Jeremiah's aforementioned words that because of your wickedness you are rebuked, and because of your disobedience you are chastised. God laments in many places that the children of Israel had become disobedient and did not receive the chastisement. Who knows, have the children of men now become better than then in the Old Testament, when the heavenly Parent had to chastise the children of Israel very severely, namely with wars, famine, and sickness, and nevertheless they were so hardened that they would not receive chastisement. They did not be-

lieve that God was chastising them so because of their wickedness, but they thought that God was chastising them without reason. They also often said, "The Lord does not do rightly with us." In their minds God was too severe in punishing, and was a wrong judge, who did not esteem their good works but punished meek people without reason. Therefore the children of Israel did not make repentance no matter how severely they were punished, but only hardened. They finally ceased from worshipping visible idols, when God had so severely struck them that they had no more strength to oppose. But hypocrisy and evil of the heart only became worse through God's chastisement; they would not humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, although some confessed their sins and promised to make repentance, when after the captivity of Babylon they ceased from worshipping visible idols. They then went to hypocrisy and became hypocrites like the Pharisees, who sometimes prayed in the open so they would be seen of men. But have people now become better than when God had to chastise them with harshness because of their disobedience? I think that the people of this time become worse through God's chastisement, but not better. For God has truly chastised the hardened at all times with sickness, famine, and hard times, but through that chastisement no repentance has come, not even in the outward life. The sins of drunkenness, finery, pride, or adultery have not lessened because of one or two bad years; no matter how scantily food would have been in the land, pride

has not therefore been lowered, nor vanity or drunkenness lessened. Surely during bad years the people have been able to drink and fight, commit adultery and steal; no one has thought that this punishment has come from God because of our disobedience and because of our unruliness, but the more the people have increased in violence, the more God has punished them with famine and hard times. If sickness has come into the congregation, and some have fallen to the ground, pride and finery have not thereby lessened, but others have increased more in wrong-doing and also cursed when God has punished them. Devil's dung has been drunk upon the graves of the deceased, and children have quarreled over their parent's belongings. No one has stopped to think that this sickness must be a reminder from above that we must take heed of where a person's soul will go with this kind of an ungodly life.

I have seen some hardened children mock their parent's tears and say, "Ah! Come and strike me if you dare!" So also have old Adam's children mocked the heavenly Parent's tears and said, "Ah, come and strike me if you dare!" When the Parent has chastised them with famine and hard times, they have said as one peasant when he went to church on a prayer day, "Him we must worship, and this kind of a year has come!" His intention was without a doubt this, that it is fitting to worship God when a good year has come, but it would not be necessary to worship Him when a poor year comes. However, that man had the faith that it is God who gives the harvest, but all hardened do not

have that faith that God gives and God takes away, but they think that man himself merits it with his work. So we therefore have seen that a person does not obey the scourge at all, although a horse or an ox goes where he is driven with a whip. But man has such a hardened skin, that no matter how God punishes him with sickness, famine, and bloodshed, he nevertheless will not flee in that direction where God wants to bring him, but he wants to live only after his own mind, no matter how wickedly he would live. Therefore the Lord also laments through the prophet Isaiah 1:3, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

Thus people have despised God's merciful chastisement; the natural chastisement has effected no repentance in them, for the more they are whipped, the more they have hardened.

But in the hand of the heavenly Parent there is also another scourge or spiritual chastisement, with which He has been able to get some, although few, souls to flee for shelter, but not many receive this chastisement. For when God wanted to chastise the children of Adam with His spirit, as for example Cain, they received at first a great fear of death. When the Lord severely rebuked Cain, he became frightened and said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." That is, My sin is greater than can be forgiven. But Cain did not long remember the rebuke of God's Spirit, although he first had such a great fear of death, that he imagined that everyone was going to slay him,

and then also such great doubt came to Cain, that he did not believe he could receive his sins forgiven. But this fear did not stay with him long, for Cain himself and his children became worse and worse, so that God had to say, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh." And how can God's Spirit reprove man anymore, when a person hardens through that rebuke. So it then happened and so it happens now, that the Spirit of God ceases to reprove, when a person does not receive the chastisement. The Spirit of God then reproved the hardened through the mouth of the righteous Noah, but the ungodly people of that time did not receive his warnings. After that the Spirit of God rebuked through Moses, but the men of that time became angry with Moses and said, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses?" And some said to Moses, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy." In their minds, all the people were holy, although these people were proud, lascivious, stiff-necked; although they danced around the golden calf, as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and rose up to play."

The Spirit of God rebuked the world through the mouths of the prophets, but because of this rebuking the people became angry with the prophets and persecuted them. Then the Spirit of God rebuked the world through John the Baptist, but the lords of the world said, "He has a devil." Especially the meek whores were angry with John because of that barking, and one honorable whore could not get peace of conscience before John's neck

was severed. Finally the Spirit of God rebuked the world through the Saviour, but then the husbandmen said, "This is the heir; come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." (Mark 12:7) And so they also did; they killed the King of Glory. And when the Spirit of God finally rebuked the world through the mouths of the Apostles and the Christians, then the sorrowless world really hardened and began to suck the blood of the Christians.

But those few souls, who through the rebuking of the Holy Spirit have come to realize that the former ungodly life is not acceptable, receive the merciful chastisement of the heavenly Parent with humility and thanksgiving, that He can raise them to be people. If they would become so humble that they would kiss the Father's whip, then the Parent would take them into His lap again and press them against His breast and give them a kiss, and wipe away their tears and put them to sit at His table and give them butter and honey for reconciliation. Bow your knees, you chastised children whom the Parent has taught to obey with a whip. Pray to Him, that He would forgive you all your misdeeds and sins, with which you have offended Him and wounded His heart. Hear, dear Parent, the sighs of the penitent, sorrowful and down-pressed. Our Father, who art in the heavens, etc.

The Gospel: John 16: 5-15

In our holy gospel the Saviour says to the disciples, "And when the Holy Spirit is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgement." Therefore we must,

through God's grace, observe: How the Holy Spirit reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement.

We hear from today's gospel that the Holy Spirit does not reprove the disciples of Jesus, but the Holy Spirit is their Comforter and leads them in all truth. The hearts of the disciples are filled with sorrow when Jesus goes away and leaves them to weep and to lament, longing for Jesus' merciful presence. If the Holy Spirit would not come to them for a Comforter when Jesus is gone away, then they would faint because of sorrow and grief. But when the Holy Spirit comforts them and gives them that testimony that they are children of God, although the world and the enemy often want to rob them of their faith and sink them into doubts, nevertheless the Holy Spirit gives them boldness to speak of that Crucified Saviour, and because of this boldness the disciples of Jesus are hated and persecuted by the world.

The first consideration: The Holy Spirit reprove the world of sin. What sin is it now, for which the Holy Spirit reprove the world? The Saviour Himself has said that the Holy Spirit will reprove the world because of sin; surely, "because they believe not on Me." Here, we hear that the Holy Spirit reprove the world because of unbelief; and Luther has also testified that unbelief is the greatest sin against the Saviour. But the grace thieves, who own for themselves God's promises of grace without penitence, think they believe upon Jesus, and say, "We lie every day at the foot of His cross; the Holy Spirit does not reprove us of unbelief. But

these awakened, who never speak of faith or love, but only come upon the people with judgement and cursing, they probably do not have much faith of their own and therefore they also want to take away from others even that spark of faith which they have." So the thieves of grace think that such ones the Holy Spirit now reprove of sin, that they do not believe upon Jesus and therefore, no doubt, they whine in church. But never mind, grace thief, although you now have a strong faith, who knows how strong your faith is if it would come under trial. If the conscience of the grace thief would awaken, then that dead faith which is now in the skull would be taken away, and then it would go with him as with Peter, who was such a hero of faith before his faith came under trial, but in time of temptation was entirely lacking. The Holy Spirit now reprove the world, and especially the grace thieves, because of sin, for they do not believe upon Jesus, although they themselves think they do, but they suck their own breasts when they think they are sucking Jesus' breasts. They lie at the foot of the devil's cross when they think they are at the foot of Jesus' cross. The devil has reversed their eyes, therefore they look at the effects of the Holy Spirit as the effects of the devil's spirit; and the Christians, in the eyes of the devil's slaves, are changed to wild spirits. The Jews also had a strong faith upon God, but all the same they have hated and persecuted the Christians. So even now there is spiritual hatred in the hearts of the grace thieves. The grace thief hates the Christians because of that matter

especially, that the Holy Spirit reproves them through the mouths of the Christians because of sin. The Holy Spirit reproves them through the mouths of the Christians of drunkenness, cursing, of greed, of pride, of hatred, of adultery and finery, which all come from unbelief. But of that rebuking of the Holy Spirit the sorrowless and grace thieves become angry and say, "You are in pride, you are a wild spirit when you do not give people peace of conscience. However it happens with the grace thief as it is written in the proverb, "The crow calls its own name." He himself is in pride and thinks others are; he himself becomes angry and thinks others are angry; he himself, the grace thief, is a wild spirit and thinks others are.

The second consideration: The Holy Spirit reproves the world of righteousness, for God's righteousness is now revealed through the death of Jesus. When God has not spared His only Son, but has given Him to suffer the punishment of sin which we should have suffered, thus, then God has revealed His severe righteousness. But the sorrowless and thieves of grace do not care about God's righteousness, but they speak only of grace and think that in the Parent's heart there is no anger, but only love. But that in the Parent's heart there is a terrible anger against sin, the Heavenly Parent Himself has revealed when He sweat blood in the Garden, and also allowed His blood to flow to the last drop. How else could the severe righteousness of God have been appeased? When the Parent because of sin becomes angry with the disobedient and hardened children, who

mock His tears and say, "Ah, come and strike me if you dare," but however, does not have the heart to drive such cursed whores, thieves and murderers from His house, then the grace thieves say, "The Parent's heart does not bear anger, otherwise He would have driven us away to hell if He had been angry with us, but He has not become angry with us at all, although we are whores and thieves." Is that so, has the Parent not become angry with you? But if He had not become angry with you, then He would not have needed to suffer the pain and tribulation of hell because of you. But He had become so terribly angry with the ungodly and hardened children, that if love had not prevented Him, He would have allowed them to go to hell. If there had not been anger in the Parent's heart, but only love, then He could have forgiven them their transgressions without trouble, but because of anger, or because of that severe righteousness, He had to go to hell Himself, into which the ungodly and hardened children have plunged Him. And laugh now besides, when you have plunged your Parent into hell. When the children do some damage in another's house, then the Parent must pay for the damage.

But now the Holy Spirit reproves the world because of this righteousness. Although now the damage is paid and God's severe righteousness is appeased through the death of the Saviour, the sorrowless and hardened do not even care about that, but they also laugh upon His grave and say, "Let the Parent come now to chastise us if He is angry with us." The murderers of the Parent

urinate and dung upon His grave and say, "Rise up and eat now if you are hungry." I think that the devil himself must rebuke such ones, unless the Holy Spirit reproves them. But what do such hardened spirits care about reproof; they only harden the more and say as the chief priests said to Judas, "What is it to us? See thou to that."

The third consideration: The Holy Spirit reproves the world because of judgement, for the prince of this world is judged. Namely, through the suffering and death of the Saviour, the prince of the world is now judged, although that man is such a great lord that he will not receive the judgement of God. He has such a great egotism and spiritual pride, that he cannot confess himself guilty; he will not take upon himself any iniquity, but always maintains that he is the same angel of light as in the beginning. And when he will not take any sin upon himself, he thinks that God is in pride, who would throw such a meek and pious man into hell. However, he is now judged, and because of that judgement he has become terribly angry with the Heavenly Parent, not only because the Heavenly Parent has driven him out of His house, but also the devil has become angry because the Parent does not drive the penitent souls out of His house, although they are whores and thieves. So the devil, the accuser of God's children night and day, accuses God of wrong-doing and says, "I am the oldest child, and have done no wrong against you, although you have cried out to the world that I am a killer of men and the father of lies, but you have driven me out of your

house, and commanded me to go to hell, and this prodigal son, who has wasted all his substance with harlots, and comes back as some rag devil, him you take back with joy. It is not done rightly," says the devil. Now God says to the devil, "I myself have stepped down into hell; I have suffered the pain and torment of hell in behalf of this prodigal son. I have, therefore, for a great and precious price redeemed him from under the dominion of the devil. What more do you expect of me? No doubt you are an upright and honorable man, although you are a great crook. No doubt you are now satisfied with that price, which you have received." But the devil is not satisfied yet with that price, but he demands that all children must be driven away from the Parent's house, although the Parent has paid the devil the full price of their redemption. And because of this redemption, the devil has no more power over those children of God who now do not deliberately give themselves into the care of the devil. But the children of the world do not want to turn back from the kingdom of the devil, although the Heavenly Parent has paid the full price of their souls' redemption in their stead. They have become so estranged from the Parent's house, that they keep that robber as their true Father, who has taken them when they were small from the true Parent's house. They have so forgotten the goodness and love of the Parent that they do not know Him anymore. If now the Parent comes with a whip and wants to bring them home from the enemy's house, then they become angry with the Parent and say,

“You are not our right father when you come to whip us. Look, this is a better father who does not ever whip us.” So say the children of the world when they see someone in pain of conscience, “God does not punish His children in that way, it is the devil who effects such pain.” Although now the Scriptures say in many places, “Whom He loveth, him He chastiseth,” the children of the world do not believe, however, that God chastises in that way, but they say that it is the devil who effects such. Now the Holy Spirit reproveth the world for that reason that people do not want to turn back to the Heavenly Parent, although He has redeemed them with His precious blood and given them birth with great tribulation and shedding of blood. They always want to live in the enemy’s house, although the prince of the world is judged, that he would have no power over even one soul, if all would begin to turn back to the Parent’s house through true penitence and repentance. But the children of the world for so long have become accustomed to serving the devil, that they do not want to come back to the Parent, whom they have forgotten long ago. Only those few souls, who receive the chastisement when the Holy Spirit reproveth them through the tribulation of conscience, come to the Parent’s house poor, naked and as rag devils, like that prodigal son, who had wasted His Father’s substance, and spent all his living with harlots, must finally come to the Father and say, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be Thy son, but make me as one of Thy poorest

hired servants.” Behold now, you few souls who have felt the Father’s chastisement, when the Holy Spirit reproveth you because of sin, and because of righteousness, and because of judgment. Behold, how the prodigal son is received with joy by the Parent, when he comes to the Parent’s house humble and penitent. Pray, you few who have come back to the Parent’s house as such, that He would protect you from the enemy’s temptations, that the enemy could not attract you with his cunningness to go another time to the house of the enemy. Stay at home now, children; stay at home, you prodigal son. Do not go a second time away from the Father’s house, so that the Parent would not have greater trouble because of you. Amen.

Fourth Sunday after Easter

“Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.” Hosea 6:1

Prophet Hosea shows how God’s paternal chastisement happens for man’s repentance, when man accepts God’s merciful chastisement. God had tried often and much to chastise the children of Israel; sometimes by war, sometimes by famine. But He often had to lament that they did not accept chastisement, from which it is also seen that man is not such a creature, that he accepts chastisement. An ox flees before a whip sooner than man does. How often has God chastised mankind with war, famine, and hard times, but

through that outward chastisement, repentance has not come. Instead, mankind has just hardened more, the more that the Lord has whipped them. However Prophet Hosea exhorts the children of Israel to return to the Lord after that severe chastisement which they had to suffer outwardly when their kingdom was destroyed and their city was burned and the greater part of the people were killed, and those that were left were taken as prisoners into a pagan land. Prophet Hosea exhorts the people to return to the Lord and begin to worship Him more faithfully than before, when he preaches in the aforementioned passage: "Let us return to the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us, He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." (Hosea 6:1)

If the Christians of this time would now take one edifying example from these words of the prophet and would think of what good work the Lord has done to them, when He has inflicted them with both outward and spiritual chastisement. Namely, first through awakening, when the Lord has scourged them through distress of conscience; with that iron rod with which Christ rules the pagans, and also through outward chastisement the Lord has begun to chastise us, If Christians would take heed of this merciful chastisement and would return to the Lord and would entrust with all their heart, both the body and soul into the care of the Lord, then such great temptations would not come to them, nor fear of temporal distress. But those who struggle with unbelief are not able to believe so much that God draws unto Himself through

outward chastisement also, and wants to tear their hearts loose from the world. But as a child turns again to the parent's lap although the parent has switched him, because he has no refuge elsewhere; so also must a Christian turn again to the Heavenly Parent's lap every time the Father has chastised him. If he could yet kiss the switch of the Father and thank for the good chastisement, then the Parent would take him Into His lap and give him a kiss and would allow him to suck from His grace-flowing breast. To this Hosea encourages also In the sixth chapter, first verse: "Come and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up," Christians do not anyway have refuge elsewhere than with the Heavenly Father. And now when the Parent has begun to chastise His disobedient children with hard times, and Christians have to suffer want and shortages along with the heathen people, then there is no other counsel for the Christians than to return to the Parent's lap as a child that has been switched, and to pray that these trials of the last times would be shortened for the elect's sake. We have that hope and confidence In God that He will not place a heavier burden upon us than we would be able to bear. Hear, Thou great Ruler of heaven and earth, the sigh of the sorrowful, penitent, and those in distress. Our Father which art in heaven, etc.

The Gospels John 16: 5-15

In today's Holy Gospel, Jesus speaks of His going away to the Father, for

which reason the disciples' hearts are filled with sorrow, but He promises a Comforter to them, who will lead them in all truth.

Following that, we must at this moment of grace, through God's grace, examine: How the hearts of the disciples become filled with sorrow when Jesus intends to leave them.

The first consideration shows how the disciples become sorrowful when Jesus goes away. When the disciples have begun to follow Christ in that hope that through Christ they will become fortunate in the world, then it is to be surmised that they will become sorrowful when He goes away. It happened then in a visible way, that Jesus went away to the Father through death. The disciples' hearts were then attached so firmly to the world, that they could not be without mourning when their earthly refuge died. Jesus died and left the disciples in great sorrow. This matter happens now in this way, that when Christians are attached to the world, then Jesus dies in their hearts, and sorrow comes to the disciples from that. Or, as the Saviour says in the Gospel, their hearts are filled with sorrow when they notice or feel that Jesus has died.

The hearts of the disciples were entirely attached to the world when Jesus died, but after His death a heartfelt sorrow came to the disciples, which tore their hearts loose from the world. So it happens even now when Jesus dies in the hearts of the Christians because of love of the world, then sorrow and a great longing for the Saviour come to them. But if sorrow does not come to the disciples when they feel that Jesus

dies in their hearts, then they will go entirely into the world. Unfortunately, it has gone so with many during this time, that Jesus has died in the Christians' hearts, and sorrow has not come to them from that death, but they have been satisfied with that dead state. They have not wept and mourned in their longing for the merciful presence of Jesus. And their Saviour now lies in the grave. And some who have wept and lamented because of Jesus' death are no longer able to believe that He will arise. Such ones surely peer into the grave, but they do not find anything from there, either. What does it help you, Peter, that you jump into the grave and feel the sweat cloths, when you are not able to believe that Jesus is living although He has been seen by the women? What do you surmise, Peter, when the, women's Saviour is living and your Saviour is still dead? The women are in joy and you are in sorrow. The women believe but you do not believe that He is living. When you know assuredly that Jesus has died in your heart, but you do not feel assuredly that He is living. Although you would believe that He would be living, with this knowledge you must go to hell although you weep and lament, although you are very sorrowful, although you would wonder and think with your intellect how Jesus' body has come out of the grave. All of this wondering, jumping into the grave, and feeling the sweat cloths does not help you become saved as long as your Saviour is dead. Although you will not go into the world because of that great sorrow, you will

not go to heaven because of your great unbelief.

The second consideration: How joy must come to the sorrowful disciples from Jesus' resurrection. We assuredly know that sorrow has come to all disciples of Jesus from Jesus' departure, but will joy now come to all from His resurrection? Yes, to all who have truly begun to follow Christ, but this Joy does not come to all at once. First Mary Magdalene who loved Jesus so much in the house of Simon the Leper, who had received so much forgiven and who poured precious ointment of spikenard upon His head. This old whore was first able to know and see that great Cross-bearer and thorn-crowned King arisen. But do not think, you old whore, that you are always the best Christian, even though you have been able to see the Lord first on Easter Day. You do not have that power of spirit, that you could best help the kingdom of Christ forward. You are not the rock upon whom Christ has intended to build His congregation. But Peter is that rock upon whom Christ has intended to build His congregation, and John is that disciple whom Jesus loves. Although you are the first to whom Jesus reveals Himself, you are not, therefore, the best Christian. Although Peter and John now weep and lament and you are joyous, surely the Lord will show Himself to them, too, and their sorrow will end. The disciples become joyous by that, when they see the Lord. But Thomas, who still goes on his own journey, does not stay with the other disciples at the Christians' meetings. When will he come to see Christ? I think that he will

not get to see Christ before he comes to the disciples meetings. If Thomas abides alone and seeks Christ in solitude, will Christ come to seek him there? I think, Thomas, that you must first come to the Christians' meetings before Christ will come to show His wounds. You will not, in any case, become a partaker of the grace of resurrection before you come into the congregation. No matter how you would read the Book in solitude and keep prayers at home, you will surely not become a Christian there. But come first to the Christian meetings and seek first the congregation before you will find Christ. And we have the hope that Thomas, who has a heartfelt and true sorrow from Christ's death, must see and believe that Jesus is yet alive when he comes to the disciples' meetings and abides with them. But Nikodemus and his brothers in faith, who put Jesus' body into the grave of dead faith with their virtuousness, and go straight to God, nor do they come into the house of those fools who weep and lament. No matter how unrepachable they would be before the world, and would not have agreed to the deed and counsel of the world's group who cry, "Crucify", Christ will not become alive to them in either this world or the world to come, but their Saviour remains in the grave now and forever. They do not have heartfelt sorrow from Jesus' death nor joy from His resurrection. But those few souls who remain together weeping and lamenting when Jesus has died, longing for Jesus' merciful presence, they can feel the joy of resurrection; they receive the Holy Spirit, they receive

ve power to preach the Gospel to all the created ones, and they follow Jesus' bloody footsteps to mount Zion, where they can see that great Crossbearer and enjoy blessedness from beholding Him now and forever. Amen!

Fourth Sunday after Easter

“Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.” Hosea 6:1

Prophet Hosea shows how God's paternal chastisement happens for man's repentance, when man accepts God's merciful chastisement. God had tried often and much to chastise the children of Israel; sometimes by war, sometimes by famine. But He often had to lament that they did not accept chastisement, from which it is also seen that man is not such a creature, that he accepts chastisement. An ox flees before a whip sooner than man does. How often has God chastised mankind with war, famine, and hard times, but through that outward chastisement, repentance has not come. Instead, mankind has just hardened more, the more that the Lord has whipped them. However Prophet Hosea exhorts the children of Israel to return to the Lord after that severe chastisement which they had to suffer outwardly when their kingdom was destroyed and their city was burned and the greater part of the people were killed, and those that were left were taken as prisoners into a pagan land. Prophet Hosea exhorts the people to return to the Lord and begin to worship Him more faithfully than

before, when he preaches in the aforementioned passage: “Let us return to the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us, He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.” (Hosea 6:1)

If the Christians of this time would now take one edifying example from these words of the prophet and would think of what good work the Lord has done to them, when He has inflicted them with both outward and spiritual chastisement. Namely, first through awakening, when the Lord has scourged them through distress of conscience; with that iron rod with which Christ rules the pagans, and also through outward chastisement the Lord has begun to chastise us, If Christians would take heed of this merciful chastisement and would return to the Lord and would entrust with all their heart, both the body and soul into the care of the Lord, then such great temptations would not come to them, nor fear of temporal distress. But those who struggle with unbelief are not able to believe so much that God draws unto Himself through outward chastisement also, and wants to tear their hearts loose from the world. But as a child turns again to the parent's lap although the parent has switched him, because he has no refuge elsewhere; so also must a Christian turn again to the Heavenly Parent's lap every time the Father has chastised him. If he could yet kiss the switch of the Father and thank for the good chastisement, then the Parent would take him Into His lap and give him a kiss and would allow him to suck from His grace-flowing breast. To this Hosea encourages also In the sixth chapter, first ver-

se: "Come and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up," Christians do not anyway have refuge elsewhere than with the Heavenly Father. And now when the Parent has begun to chastise His disobedient children with hard times, and Christians have to suffer want and shortages along with the heathen people, then there is no other counsel for the Christians than to return to the Parent's lap as a child that has been switched, and to pray that these trials of the last times would be shortened for the elect's sake. We have that hope and confidence In God that He will not place a heavier burden upon us than we would be able to bear. Hear, Thou great Ruler of heaven and earth, the sigh of the sorrowful, penitent, and those in distress. Our Father which art in heaven, etc.

The Gospels John 16: 5-15

In today's Holy Gospel, Jesus speaks of His going away to the Father, for which reason the disciples' hearts are filled with sorrow, but He promises a Comforter to them, who will lead them in all truth.

Following that, we must at this moment of grace, through God's grace, examine: How the hearts of the disciples become filled with sorrow when Jesus intends to leave them.

The first consideration shows how the disciples become sorrowful when Jesus goes away. When the disciples have begun to follow Christ in that hope that through Christ they will become fortunate in the world, then it is

to be surmised that they will become sorrowful when He goes away. It happened then in a visible way, that Jesus went away to the Father through death. The disciples' hearts were then attached so firmly to the world, that they could not be without mourning when their earthly refuge died. Jesus died and left the disciples in great sorrow. This matter happens now in this way, that when Christians are attached to the world, then Jesus dies in their hearts, and sorrow comes to the disciples from that. Or, as the Saviour says in the Gospel, their hearts are filled with sorrow when they notice or feel that Jesus has died.

The hearts of the disciples were entirely attached to the world when Jesus died, but after His death a heartfelt sorrow came to the disciples, which tore their hearts loose from the world. So it happens even now when Jesus dies in the hearts of the Christians because of love of the world, then sorrow and a great longing for the Saviour come to them. But if sorrow does not come to the disciples when they feel that Jesus dies in their hearts, then they will go entirely into the world. Unfortunately, it has gone so with many during this time, that Jesus has died in the Christians' hearts, and sorrow has not come to them from that death, but they have been satisfied with that dead state. They have not wept and mourned in their longing for the merciful presence of Jesus. And their Saviour now lies in the grave. And some who have wept and lamented because of Jesus' death are no longer able to believe that He will arise. Such ones surely peer into the grave, but they do not find anything

from there, either. What does it help you, Peter, that you jump into the grave and feel the sweat cloths, when you are not able to believe that Jesus is living although He has been seen by the women? What do you surmise, Peter, when the, women's Saviour is living and your Saviour is still dead? The women are in joy and you are in sorrow. The women believe but you do not believe that He is living. When you know assuredly that Jesus has died in your heart, but you do not feel assuredly that He is living. Although you would believe that He would be living, with this knowledge you must go to hell although you weep and lament, although you are very sorrowful, although you would wonder and think with your intellect how Jesus' body has come out of the grave. All of this wondering, jumping into the grave, and feeling the sweat cloths does not help you become saved as long as your Saviour is dead. Although you will not go into the world because of that great sorrow, you will not go to heaven because of your great unbelief.

The second consideration: How joy must come to the sorrowful disciples from Jesus' resurrection. We assuredly know that sorrow has come to all disciples of Jesus from Jesus' departure, but will joy now come to all from His resurrection? Yes, to all who have truly begun to follow Christ, but this Joy does not come to all at once. First Mary Magdalene who loved Jesus so much in the house of Simon the Leper, who had received so much forgiven and who poured precious ointment of spikenard upon His head. This old whore was first

able to know and see that great Cross-bearer and thorn-crowned King arisen. But do not think, you old whore, that you are always the best Christian, even though you have been able to see the Lord first on Easter Day. You do not have that power of spirit, that you could best help the kingdom of Christ forward. You are not the rock upon whom Christ has intended to build His congregation. But Peter is that rock upon whom Christ has intended to build His congregation, and John is that disciple whom Jesus loves. Although you are the first to whom Jesus reveals Himself, you are not, therefore, the best Christian. Although Peter and John now weep and lament and you are joyous, surely the Lord will show Himself to them, too, and their sorrow will end. The disciples become joyous by that, when they see the Lord. But Thomas, who still goes on his own journey, does not stay with the other disciples at the Christians' meetings. When will he come to see Christ? I think that he will not get to see Christ before he comes to the disciples meetings. If Thomas abides alone and seeks Christ in solitude, will Christ come to seek him there? I think, Thomas, that you must first come to the Christians' meetings before Christ will come to show His wounds. You will not, in any case, become a partaker of the grace of resurrection before you come into the congregation. No matter how you would read the Book in solitude and keep prayers at home, you will surely not become a Christian there. But come first to the Christian meetings and seek first the congregation before you will find

Christ. And we have the hope that Thomas, who has a heartfelt and true sorrow from Christ's death, must see and believe that Jesus is yet alive when he comes to the disciples' meetings and abides with them. But Nikodemus and his brothers in faith, who put Jesus' body into the grave of dead faith with their virtuousness, and go straight to God, nor do they come into the house of those fools who weep and lament. No matter how unrepachable they would be before the world, and would not have agreed to the deed and counsel of the world's group who cry, "Crucify", Christ will not become alive to them in either this world or the world to come, but their Saviour remains in the grave now and forever. They do not have heartfelt sorrow from Jesus' death nor joy from His resurrection. But those few souls who remain together weeping and lamenting when Jesus has died, longing for Jesus' merciful presence, they can feel the joy of resurrection; they receive the Holy Spirit, they receive power to preach the Gospel to all the created ones, and they follow Jesus' bloody footsteps to mount Zion, where they can see that great Crossbearer and enjoy blessedness from beholding Him now and forever. Amen!

Fifth Sunday after Easter. Sermon A.

"When one prayeth, and afterwards curseth, how can the Lord hear his prayer?" Sirach 34:29 (Finnish Bible)

In this place Sirach writes of those who sometimes pray and sometimes curse; and Sirach thinks that how could

God hear them. It seems as though Sirach is doubting that God can hear their prayer. He also speaks of those who sometimes fast because of sin, and then again commit sin, as at this time of the world there are some who sometimes are penitent and again at times commit adultery or steal. And Sirach finally says, "Who hears their prayer?" And we must also ask, "Who hears their prayer?" The sorrowless think that this place in the Scriptures does not pertain to them, who never pray nor ever are penitent, but to them who come from prayer to curse the sorrowless and after being penitent commit sin, when through barking they encourage the sorrowless to anger. And it is true that the awakened bring cursings from the Scriptures and set the curse of the law before their eyes, that the sorrowless would come to know that they are cursed. But if the conscience would awaken, the sorrowless certainly would understand better to whom this place of the Scriptures pertains, which is found written in Sirach 34:29, where he says, "When one prayeth and again curseth, how can the Lord hear his prayer?"

It is true that vulgar sorrowless do not pray to that God which is in heaven, whom they do not know, but nevertheless the Pharisees pray and also curse when they stop praying, and against them Sirach has written. Likewise the grace thieves of this time also pray and curse by turns, and against them Sirach has written. But the enemy has persuaded some sorrowless that all awakened are Pharisees and all Christians are grace thieves, and then all vulgar sorrowless now say, "We do not want to

become hypocrites as these awakened; we do not say we are better than we are.”

And there now is the boast of the slaves of sin, that they are not hypocrites, they do not want to become better than they are. When the vulgar sorrowless want to go boldly to hell, then it doesn't help to force this place from the Scriptures on them, but the Pharisees, who pray and also curse as is fitting, and the grace thieves, who sometimes get up at night to pray, although they hate the Christians and sometimes let out cursings when the old adam rises, they nevertheless can own these aforementioned words of Sirach, “If a person prayeth and afterwards curseth, how can the Lord hear his prayer?” If a person fasts because of his sins, and again commits sin, who hears his prayers? The sorrowless people sat down to eat and rose up to play, but the Pharisees keep, their prayers and again begin to curse. They fast and again commit sin. Who hears their prayers? That god who is in the lower heaven, namely the god of this world, but surely that God who lives on high does not hear the prayer of the thief. If one who-re also prays to God that no child would result from her whoredom, what God is it who hears the prayer of the shameless whore? No other than the devil himself, who teaches his children to pray that some harm would come to them with whom he has become angry. When the devil of anger gets into a person's heart, then a person gets the desire for revenge. And when he himself is not able to take revenge, he prays to God that some harm would

come to his enemy. But we hear from the doings of the disciples that such a prayer the devil has, but it is not acceptable to God. When the disciples were still in natural blindness they also received the desire for revenge. They went to one village to buy food, but when they could not get food in exchange for their money, they said to the Saviour, “Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? But Jesus turned and rebuked them and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” (Luke 9: 54-55) From that we can see that the disciples did not yet understand anything of that true Christianity when they wished evil to their neighbor because of this desire for revenge. But surely even now many grace thieves pray to God that God would avenge those who do evil to them. But a Christian, does not pray so that evil would befall them who hate him, but he sprays that tribulation of conscience would come in the time of grace to all enemies of the cross of Jesus, so that they would not have to suffer the tribulation of conscience in eternity.

We hear in many places in the Scriptures that not all kinds of prayers are the right prayers, although the sorrowless say, “Surely God hears our prayers; God will not reject our prayers.” For sure God would hear their prayers, if they would ask of Him such things which would be fitting and good for them. But when, in their blindness, they pray for the impossible, how can God hear their prayers? So, for example, one blind wretch prays thus, “May God protect me from becoming as crazy as

these awakened ones are.” Where now is the god who hears such a prayer? Is not that god in hell? Some blind wretches pray thus, “If only God would do so well, that all these awakened would begin to drink and fight.” Is not such a prayer very acceptable to the devil? And for sure many an enemy of the truth has thought so, that he would even give a large amount to the church and to the poor, if I or other awakened ones would become drunkards or thieves. But we hope that God does not hear such prayers which the devil’s angels pray. Surely all, everyone prays, but with what intention do they pray, when the heart is fastened to the world and full of seeds of the devil? The devil surely hears their prayers, who cry out in his name and take the name of God in vain. When a drunkard becomes godly and penitent from drinking, then even he prays to his god and blesses that gift of god which makes him joyous. But what god is it who hears the drinker’s prayer? It must be that god who lives in hell, but that God who lives on high is horrified with such prayers. A person who is disabled in behalf of body, also prays to God, and it is said that the poor pray to God often but the rich never. But I think that the poor pray to that god often who is in the colon, as long as he worries only about his belly. If the rich do not pray to God, then on the contrary the prayer of the poor is acceptable to the devil as long as the poor serve him, for both the rich ones’ prayers as well as the poor ones’ prayers are acceptable to the devil as long as they pray according to his mind. For a poor whore and a rich who-

re are both devil’s whores, as long as they serve him. A poor drunkard and a rich drunkard are both slaves of the devil, and there is no other difference between them than only that one is rich, receives more honor from the world and can, who knows, better cover up his iniquity from before the eyes of the world, for a poor whore and a poor drunkard are despised by all.

In today’s gospel the Saviour counsels His disciples to pray in His name. And we hope that the disciples’ prayer to the Lord is acceptable, when they pray to the Father in Jesus’ name. The disciples have not been able to pray in the right way before they begin to pray to the Father in Jesus’ name, that is, through the Saviour, who has with His precious blood purchased them free from under the power of sin, death and the devil. Just then, when the penitent sinners begin to feel that they are freed from the power of the devil through that precious reconciliation which has happened in Jesus Christ, do they begin to pray in Jesus’ name, and everything which they then ask for is given to them. Therefore, bow your knees and hearts, you sorrowful and oppressed by the world, those weighed down under the burden of sin, those who cry out in tribulation of conscience, those who are in the devil’s temptations, and those who sigh from the depths of hell, those who crawl to the foot of the cross, praying in Jesus’ name, that He would give you and all the weary journeymen strength to war and conquer the temptations of the devil! Hear, You great, powerful, blood-sprinkled and thorn-crowned King, the sighs of the penitent

and graced souls. Our Father, which art in the Heavens, etc.

The Gospel: John 16: 23.

With the guidance of our holy gospel, we must through God's grace consider, First: How and in whose name the children of the world pray? Second: How and in whose name the disciples of Jesus pray?

Oh that the great Crossbearer, who has taught the disciples to pray in His name, would give all of us understanding, how we should pray rightly, so that we would not pray wrongly through His name, and that we would pray to Him from the heart and not only with the tongue and lips: this we pray. Hear us, oh merciful Lord God.

First: How the children of the world pray is shown to us in many places in the Scriptures, but especially in that gospel which is for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity, where the Saviour reminds how the Pharisee prays. He thanks God that he is not such a great sinner as other people, he is not a robber, he is not unjust, he is not an adulterer. And how could the Pharisee have stolen, when he is no thief: The Pharisees of this time pray to God with the same intention, although with little different words. Namely, they confess with their mouths that they are great sinners, but when the question comes of how and in what way they committed these sins, they take back the words and say, "I have not stolen, thanks to God. I have not committed adultery, thanks to God." Here you hear, you good Pharisee, what beautiful

words the enemy puts in your mouth, and what beautiful prayers come from your heart. You again thank God for that, that He has protected you from adultery, stealing and iniquity, and especially you thank that you are not so poor as this penitent publican. But that is still worse, that you must go out of the church when the sighs of the publican begin to burn your conscience and spoil your Christianity. You finally begin to pray to the god of the world, that he would protect you from becoming so crazy that you, too, would begin to sigh so heavily as this publican. And when you come out of the church, anoint your throat with flowing devil's dung, so that you would not catch the publican's epilepsy. Such prayers are without a doubt beautiful, but what they effect for the Pharisee's repentance is unknown. When a meek whore prays to her god that no one would overtake her while under the whore-buck, then she thinks that God hears her prayer. And surely the god of the world hears such prayers, for he gives the whore boldness to cover up her sin and to show her pass to the awakened; there is namely a receipt to show that she has received all her sins forgiven by the devil and is innocent. An honest thief also prays to his god, that his stealing would prosper, that no one would overtake him red-handed. The thief has no fear that God sees his deeds, for in his mind God who is so old is blind. Neither has the thief fear that the devil will take back from him through drunkenness all that he has brought in by stealing. But of that the thief has the greatest fear, that people

would see him, through which he would become honorless. Surely the prayer of the thief is beautiful to hear when he says, "I have not stolen, thanks to God." But how beautiful will the prayer of the thief be in hell, when the theft begins to burn his conscience; that is still unknown. One honorable whiskey merchant also prays with great devotion that God would bless his business, that his stock would move well, and that much whiskey would be bought. But sometimes he curses when his stock does not move anymore. Such prayers surely come from the heart, but what they effect for the whiskey merchant's repentance is unknown. But the prayer of one poor drunkard is more beautiful than all other prayers. For other children of the world pray only with their thoughts and hearts what their inward desire is, but one poor drunkard prays also with his tongue and lips when he falls on his knees before the whiskey merchant and laments of what a sad distress he is in. He also becomes penitent from whiskey, and then he weeps like a quiet child, but where those tears belong, that is also unknown. It is difficult to recount all the prayers of the children of the world. That we know for sure, that the devil of greed teaches some to pray that worldly goods would always be increased. The devil of envy teaches some to pray that harm would come to his neighbor. The devil of honor teaches some to pray that they would succeed in becoming lords. But hardly anyone is so zealous in praying as one whorebuck, who falls on his knees before the whore and sighs from love. What one Pharisee prays and

thanks, that he is better than other people, that is nothing along side of that which one poor drunkard prays and thanks the whiskey merchant and one whorebuck, his whore. But all these beautiful prayers certainly come for honor to the devil. I have seen some grace thieves praying with a humble and pitiful voice and especially when people were present, as the Pharisees' custom is, who in their self-deception keep such beautiful prayers, that one publican in spiritual poverty, who has prayers of no account, could begin to think, "If I, too, could pray so beautifully, surely soon there would come an opening into heaven." But what do these beautiful prayers effect, which one hypocritical Pharisee repeats, when after praying he goes into the saloon and there repeats a different kind of blessing for the honor of the devil? Certainly the devil allows a person to be godly and pray, even if he would read the whole prayer book through, just so he can rule the heart. But if the heart is touched, then the enemy becomes angry and says, "Have you come to trouble me before the time! What are you digging for in the heart? Are you the Son of God and a forgiver of sins when you ask me about sin? I am not duty bound to confess my sins to such a disturber of the people, who goes from village to village and cries out to the world." Behold, thus the devil speaks when his den is disturbed. And then all the beautiful prayers cease and curses come in place. Is this not the unfortunate state of mind which is depicted in the Bible when Sirach says, "When one prayeth and afterwards curseth, how

can God hear his prayer?" And James says, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing."

Second: How and in whose name do the disciples of Jesus pray? The first united prayer of the disciples is written in the Acts of the Apostles, 4th chapter, 24th verse. When the world had started to hate them for Jesus' name sake, to them came such a fervency and great power of prayer, so that the place where they were gathered was shaken because of the great power of God. But the disciples of Jesus have not at all times had such great fervency and such great power of prayer. For sometimes the outward persecution ceases when the disciples themselves give the world peace; then the world surely does not hate them. Often one awakened person can feel that all fervency ceases, faith ceases, love ceases, power of prayer ceases, spiritual sorrow ceases. Then a great spiritual poverty and spiritual darkness comes upon him so that he must doubt of himself that, am I possibly on the right road. However the Holy Spirit leads him through spiritual poverty, that he must feel that high movements are not the foundation of salvation, but only the merits of the Saviour. When, therefore, the disciples of Jesus are in spiritual poverty, then they feel that the prayers come from a cold heart, that their prayers are not of much account. Nevertheless we have that hope that God hears those poor prayers, although they are unworthy nor do they merit us anything. If a Christian always had good and beautiful prayers, he would soon become too rich and begin to pray as the two sons of Zebedee, that they

would get to sit one on the right and one on the left side of Him in His kingdom. Who knows if they can drink of that cup of which Jesus has drunk, although they want to become the best Christians. But the sorrowless need not think that the sons of Zebedee are or will remain in hell, although such terrible Christians, whom the enemy has taken to the pinnacle of the temple, who strain at gnats and swallow camels, who cast the Christians into the kettle and stand on the lid themselves, such terrible Christians think that the sons of Zebedee are in hell because of that foolish request and because of that ignorant prayer, which the Saviour did not hear. But they were then still blind, and they must be an example to all grace thieves, of how ignorant an unawakened one is at praying, when he has not received the Holy Spirit. He then prays as a foolish child and asks for such impossible things, which are not suitable to receive. The sons of Zebedee wanted to become chief lords in the kingdom of the Messiah. Just that is the goal of the sorrowless always, to become lords, rich and honorable. And when the peasant does not have a trade, that he would thereby become a lord, then he puts on lordly clothes and imagines himself to be a lord when he goes about in broadcloth and silk. O, you Baal! You are a great god and there is no deceit in you.

Our hope is that the true disciples of Jesus would begin from now on to pray to the Father in Jesus' name that all knees must bow themselves in Jesus' name, those which are in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth, and

all tongues must confess that Jesus is Christ for the glory of the Father. The disciples of Jesus have tribulation in the world, but be of good refuge, Jesus has overcome the world. And because of this tribulation they must bow their knees in Jesus' name and cry out with a loud voice, that the great Crossbearer, who with great travail and tribulation has given birth to their souls of that incorruptible seed, which He has sown in these last days into coarse ground, and on rock and among thorns, and in the good ground, would help the sorrowful and penitent ones from all natural and spiritual distress, when they pray through Jesus' name and with the spirit of the elect children cry out, "Abba, dear Father." We believe that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hears the prayers of the penitent, for His Son has said, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou has given Me."

And believe now, you sorrowful disciples, that Jesus prays in your behalf and prepares a dwelling for you in the Father's house, and you will soon reach there to pray and thank forever. Amen, and Hallelujah! and Hosanna! and blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

When the Savior was in great tribulation and torment in the Garden, He first began to tremble and was stricken with terror at the dreadfulness of the sinner, and in that distress of the spirit He Himself prayed and also commanded His disciples to

watch and pray so they would not enter into temptation. Matthew 26: 36-41.

From this it is understood that prayer is the key to the kingdom of heaven both in temporal as well as spiritual distress. Without prayer nothing happens; without knocking nothing is opened. David cried from the depths unto the heights when he was in spiritual distress, and the Savior prayed on His knees when He was in spiritual distress because of our sins. In all distress and tribulation, all saints have found the best help and refuge in prayer. But all sinners do not pray to God with the intent that they would be helped from that distress from which they first should be helped. For the impenitent thief also prayed in distress of spirit, but his prayer became blasphemy since he did not comprehend his sin but only the pain of body. If the impenitent thief would have had some kind of spiritual distress, he certainly would have repeated some other kind of prayer, but he felt no distress of soul for he was sorrowless even though death was right before his eyes. As this impenitent thief prayed even though he was sorrowless, so also some sorrowless pray to God now although they have no distress in behalf of soul. For the sorrowless do not know their sins since the enemy has covered them, so there will never come any distress because of their sins which they cover up and deny. But one awakened person cannot cover up or deny his sins, and therefore when an awakened person prays to God, he prays especially in spiritual distress. We see in

the second book of Samuel, twelfth chapter what distress came to David when he wanted to cover his sin. He had committed adultery with Bathsheba secretly, and also arranged things so that Bathsheba's husband was slain in battle. His conscience did not accuse him of that deed as long as it was covered from the world. But God threatened him through the mouth of the Prophet Nathan, so that his own son had to commit adultery with David's wives in broad daylight. God said to David through the mouth of the same prophet, "For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun". 2 Samuel 12:12.

How will it go then with whores and thieves who have committed shameful deeds in darkness and secretly, when the sun begins to shine through and the whole world knows what they have done here? No doubt they think they will reach heaven with their honor. But I am afraid they will reach hell with their honor, and just from there they will go into everlasting shame. When they here cover up their sins so that no one would know how they have lived here, they can finally cry out in hell with such a loud voice that all hell will shake. "Behold, thus I have lived in the world, thus I have committed adultery, thus I have stolen, thus I have drunk liquor." Then all of the devil's angels and she devils will come to mock him and to torment his conscience. Then all meek whores will begin to dance in the lake of fire, all honest thieves will begin to chew their nails, all temperate drunkards must drink that blue flame with which they have ap-

peased their consciences here. Finery and honor will begin to burn their consciences in hell. Honor of the world effects so much that they who here say, "One need not cry out to the world," can cry out in hell so that all of the devils angels and she devils can hear how they have lived. It would be the best advice for you, wretched man, that you would become honorless here through a true confession of sin, so that through true penitence you would receive your honor back from the King of heaven, who because of you has become honorless in the world.

Although now the valiant Apostle James has said in his missionary letter (5:16) "Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, ..." the meek whores and honest thieves of the present time do not want to confess their sins to anyone, for they would rather go to hell with their honor than go to heaven honorless as whores and thieves. How then can they pray for one another or for their neighbor that he can be healed? James places the confession of sin and foreprayers for our neighbors in this order, consecutively, indicating that when a penitent sinner is beaten so much through torment of conscience he must confess his sins before the congregation or to the Christians, that through such a confession of sins the devil of honor can no longer hide his sins. When, say I, a penitent sinner has been beaten so much that he must confess his sins, then the second part of James's admonition follows: where he commands to pray for your neighbor that he would be healed from that spiritual sickness which sin brings with it. Many

an awakened person suffers the torment of conscience so greatly that he has to lament, but the devil of honor will not allow him to confess his sins before great spiritual distress forces him to. Some can be in torment of conscience many times before they can confess their sins. The devil of honor is so determined to cover up sins that some do not confess their sins at all, even though they are in torment of conscience. The devil of honor also takes the devil of hatred for a companion. When the devil went into the heart of Judas Iscariot after the dipped sop, he went out in the middle of the meal before the hymn of thanks was sung. It was the devil of hatred that caused him to go out. And so it is even now, as it often happens that the devil of honor and the devil of hatred cause some to go out of that house where the Christians attack their honor. Some cause the devils of hatred and pride to suck the blood of Christians.

But when the conscience awakens and sins begin to burn the conscience of the sinners so much that the devil of honor is no longer able to cover sins, then a sinner must confess his sins, not only to those against whom he has transgressed but he must confess those sins also which no one has known about. When a penitent sinner, through his confession of sins, has become honorless before the world, he can receive his honor back from the Savior, if he flees with a humble and broken heart to the foot of the cross and begs for grace. When a penitent sinner suffers that spiritual sickness in torment of conscience, James commands the Christians to

pray for his soul that he would be healed. For the prayer of the righteous availeth much when it is true. Although the children of the world are astonished when they see some person in torment of conscience and think that he is possessed of the devil's spirit, some offer liquor and some force grace upon them, some mock and some curse. So according to James's advice we want to encourage those who are in torment of conscience to follow the example of the Savior. When he was in great pain and in tribulation He fell on His knees and prayed, "Abba, Dear Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me!" He also commanded the disciples to watch and pray with Him although the sleep of sin was so heavy upon them that they were not able to watch. Nevertheless I hope that those few souls who are watching would pray for those who suffer that spiritual sickness in torment of conscience that they would be healed; not with liquor but through that sweet wine of which the disciples of Jesus were drunken on the first Pentecost day when the world's crowd said, "These men are full of new wine." Therefore confess your sins one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed, for the prayer of the righteous availeth much when it is true, that the crucified Lord Jesus hears those prayers of the righteous who are justified through His blood, who pray through His name. Also the prayer of them who are great sinners is acceptable to Him when they come from a humble and broken heart. So cry out all you sorrowful and down-pressed, thoroughly beaten, wounded and troubled

in spirit, that the great Crossbearer would help the weary journeymen that they would reach the hill of Golgotha with the cross. Hear the prayer of all the sorrowful and distressed ones. Our Father who art in the heavens etc.

The Gospel John 16:23

In today's gospel the Savior teaches His disciples to pray the Father in His name, for which reason this Sunday is called prayer Sunday. We must, therefore, according to our holy gospel and through God's grace, speak about prayer. First Consideration: What do the children of the world pray? Second consideration: What do the children of God pray?

The children of the world and especially grace thieves also pray to God: but what do they pray? We hear from the Savior's mouth what the Pharisee prayed when he came into the temple to pray. "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." So the Pharisee prayed. And although the Pharisees of the present time do not pray with these words, their thoughts, nevertheless, are the same kind. Namely when some Christian asks them: Are you a whore? They answer, "I am not, thanks to God!" If asked: Have you stolen? They answer, "I am no thief, thanks to God." If asked: Are you a drinker? "I am no drinker, thanks to God." So they thank God that they are not like other men; whores, thieves, and drinkers. They do not realize that they are reciting the Pharisee's prayer. Often a sorrowless person leaves out the Pharisee's prayer from his mouth when,

namely, he is accused of sin: like adultery, stealing, or other such. Then he says, "Thanks to God I have not committed such sinful deeds. God has protected me from both adultery and theft." But the sorrowless one does not realize that he is reciting the Pharisee's prayer when he thanks God that God has protected him from both adultery and theft. Through natural meekness the devil has taken away the memory so that they do not remember at all how and when adultery and theft would have happened. Some confess that through thoughts it has happened but not with deeds, although hardly no one is free from these sins. As the life is now in the world, all are certainly both whores and thieves and those sins have happened not only with thoughts but with pure devilish work. Perhaps in the sorrowless condition the devil has covered up all the shameful deeds that a sinner should not remember nor regret before in eternity. When now the sorrowless children of the world unknowingly recite the prayer of the Pharisee with which they beautify their ungodly life before the world, then it can be surmised what kind of prayers they recite in solitude. For that is not a person's prayer which he recites in church or among people, but that is a person's true prayer which he recites in solitude: namely the desire of the heart or what a person's desire or will is, that is a person's prayer. We hear from the Savior's own reminiscing that the Pharisee's prayer is much more beautiful than the publican's sigh. And I have seen some Pharisees who are in that dead faith and who have so much love

for the Savior that they intend to take Him around the neck and give Him a kiss. They have such beautiful prayers and they pray with such great humility and fervency that if the publican would have such nice prayers there certainly would come a big hole in the church roof and even would have come a big hole in heaven. Although now some Pharisees have such beautiful prayers, they nevertheless hate Jesus and His disciples and are ready to suck the blood of the Christians as soon as they are reproached for sin. And when they have made sausages of the Christians' blood they can go to church again to pray and to thank God that they have hated the Christians and have beaten them bloody and that through this shedding of blood they have received peace of conscience. The seeds of the serpent do not stop squirming at the root of the heart nor do the enemies of Jesus' cross receive peace of conscience until they can lap Christians' blood. And when they have lapped Christians' blood they come to church to thank God for that good work and also to strengthen their faith in the Lord's Supper and also to pray to God that He would protect them and their children from becoming so insane that they would begin to make true penitence and repentance. A drinker always prays to God that there would always be sufficient for him to drink, that liquor would never be lacking. If the law takes hold of him for drinking, he prays to God that he would not be fined; and when no other advice helps he takes an oath to hell that he would go free of paying a fine. A liquor merchant thanks God who has blessed his busi-

ness that his liquor has gained even the last quarter from a poor wretched drunkard. Although the drunkard's wife and children weep at home in hunger those tears do not bother the liquor merchant's conscience; but if liquor runs out that bothers his conscience so greatly that he must make a trip to town to get more liquor. If he is fined for selling liquor he swears his soul to hell from the liquor fine and also threatens vengeance to his accusers; and upon that work he thanks God who has protected him from harm. A whore prays to God that she would not be overtaken in the act of adultery and that children would not result from her adultery. But if the whorebuck is taken to court by the whore, the whorebuck puts his soul as ransom with the devil and vows that he is innocent, so that he does not need to pay for the child's food. If someone becomes angry with his neighbor he prays to God that some misfortune would come to his neighbor in behalf of body or spirit or to his animals. Behold, such are the prayers of the sorrowless. If a hole does not come into heaven from their prayers surely a hole will come into the bottomless pit even if the gate to the bottomless pit were closed. Then, however, the doorkeeper of the bottomless pit would have to open the gate to hell when the meek whores, honest thieves, temperate drunkards, and honorable liquor merchants knock upon it with such fervent prayers that hell's gate would break into a thousand pieces if the doorkeeper of hell would not draw aside the iron boom of hell and open the door to these wretches who come, many thousand in one bunch and

knock with such fervent prayers and also call many thousand devils to their aid. When whiskey rises to the head then they cry out, "Satan!" and "Devil!" who is their God whom they serve night and day. But surely these servants of the devil come into the church to recite the Pharisee's prayer, namely, "I thank you God that I am not as bad as other men are: unjust, thieves, adulterers or like that publican who sighs there." They also go to the Lord's Supper and give Judas's kiss to the Savior and weep serpent's tears there and make promises of repentance and faithfulness. But when they come out of the church the drinkers go to drink liquor, the liquor merchants go to pour out the flowing devil's dung into glasses, the fighters go to curse and fight, thieves go to steal and whores go to commit adultery behind the church. That they do from year to year until death comes and squeezes their hearts. Then they call the minister to them and ask him to give them the Sacrament. Then they think they are ready to step into the kingdom of heaven after an idle and ungodly life. Just in this way they have lived even in this congregation and in that way the sorrowless intend to go on living. They have no intention of making penitence and repentance, they only mock and become angry if someone says to them that this kind of life will surely bring one to perdition if a change and repentance do not come. Woe, what a terrible fright when the devil has received such power that he drives them like a herd of swine into the channel at Gadarenes near the sea of Gennesaret to drown.

The Second Consideration: How do the disciples of Jesus pray? Since the Pharisees pray to God with such beautiful prayers as we have heard that they thank God that they are not as bad as other men are; namely, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican, so the present day Pharisees also thank God that He has protected them from adultery, stealing, murder, and other cruel sins. They think, say I, that the disciples of Jesus have even nicer prayers than the Pharisees but what do they say now when we confess that the disciples of Jesus have prayers of very little value. One true disciple of Jesus who goes to the school of the Holy Ghost is no better than the publican in the time of penitence who didn't have half the amount of prayer than the Pharisee had. The publican was not able to pray much of anything, but only sighed, "God have mercy on me a sinner!" "That is remarkable, however," says the Pharisee who stands and prays so nobly and seriously, "Don't the children of God have better prayers than these words, 'God have mercy on me a sinner!'" Not at all. A penitent soul does not have any better prayer than what you hear here. For the Savior did not have nicer prayers when He was in that great spiritual war. He had no more prayer than only three words; Abba, dear Father, if it is possible that this cup pass from me. And the Savior did not pray among people more than only three times. But what he sighed in solitude, that we do not know. And what a penitent soul sighs in solitude, that we do not know. But Paul says, the spirit prays in our behalf with unutterable

sighs. A penitent soul has no true distress as long as he has beautiful prayers. But when all faith must come to an end, all power of prayer must come to an end so that a penitent soul becomes void of all spiritual gifts, just then is spiritual poverty at hand. But the Pharisees have not only meekness, but also much faith and love that they can take the Savior around the neck and give Him a kiss, and such beautiful prayers so that with their prayers they can make a hole in heaven. The Pharisees overlook the publicans who do not have beautiful prayers but only sigh and say, "What Christian is that who is not able to pray? That is no Christian who cannot pray." But we can also ask of the Pharisee, "What kind of a Christian is that who has beautiful prayers and terrible cursings and both come out of the same mouth?" What kind of a Christian is that who is so loving to the Savior that He would take Him around the neck and give Him a kiss but all the same is so angry with the brothers of the Savior that he would punch them in the ear and beat them until bloody. Such Christians are now found in every place who weep in church and laugh behind the church, bless in church and curse behind the church, are meek in church and commit adultery behind the church, drink of the Lord's cup in church and of the devil's cup behind the church, are loving toward the Savior in church and fight behind the church. Such are those Christians who have beautiful prayers and lengthy blessings and profuse tears, but penitent souls do not have these. He who is traveling on the road of Christianity so-

metimes becomes so poor and empty of all spiritual gifts that he has no faith, no love, no prayers, no tears; but only sin, doubt, temptations, oppression of the heart, and on top of all the hatred of the world. And all this adversity on the way of life forces him to sigh like the publican, "God have mercy on me, a sinner!"

Nevertheless we hope that the publican's sighs are heard farther than the Pharisee's beautiful prayers. We hope that as there has come a big hole in the conscience of the penitent sinner through which he has fallen from the meekness of the world into the bottomless pit of sin, his sighs must also make a hole in the ceiling of heaven when he sighs so heavily that all hell shakes and cries out with such a loud voice that the voice is heard from the depths of hell unto heaven. And then when he is drawn up from the bottomless pit of sin through the wounds of the Savior he must pray to the Father in the Son's name and all that he asks for from the Father in the name of that crucified Savior he will receive. Although the publican's sighs are not as beautiful as the Pharisee's prayer, however the Savior has said that the publican went to his house more justified than the Pharisee, from which can be well surmised that the publican's sigh was heard in heaven and all that penitent and graced souls ask for in Jesus' name they will receive, for they ask for that which Jesus knows they need. The Pharisees of this time pray that God would protect them and their children from becoming so insane that they would begin to sigh like these publicans sigh. The Pharisees

pray that they could always live in sorrowlessness and dead faith. However, the sighs of the penitent and graced ones are heard in heaven. They pray also for those who trouble them, that these enemies of the cross of Jesus would receive such a prick in the heart and a big hole in the conscience that it would begin to smart and bleed, that they would become so sore that they would have to smite their breast and sigh like the publican, "God have mercy on me, a sinner." And we believe that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hears the sighs of the penitent and distressed ones when they pray to the Father in Jesus' name that Satan's kingdom would fall to the ground. And the joy of the sorrowful disciples will become perfect, when they can see the crucified King ascend into heaven and there pray to His Father in our behalf. Amen.

Ascension Day.

When Jesus confessed that He was the Son of God and said, "**I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coining in the clouds of heaven**". Then the high priest rent his clothes and saith, "**Ye have heard the blasphemy. What need we any further witnesses?**" Mark 14: 62-64 (The History of the passion of Christ, Third Part.)

From these words we hear what a terrible hatred rises in the children of the world when the Son of Man confesses Himself to be the Son of God. The chief priest rent his clothes with anger

and wonder when a son of man must be so bold that he dares to confess Himself to be the Son of God, and also intends to go up to heaven to sit on the right hand of power. In their minds it was only a terrible pride and blasphemy of God. But even now the natural intellect becomes terribly offended when some child of man dares to confess himself to be a child of God. The crowd of the enemy can not stand such pride, for the enemy wants to be the father of all, of those who are in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth there fore he can not stand that some snot-nosed brat confesses himself to be a child of God: first, for the reason that he believes it impossible that some slave of the devil could become a child of God anymore, and second, he sees it to be terrible pride, that a sinful person dares to confess himself to be a child of God. The slave of the world is immediately dumbfounded and says, "Is that what kind the children of God are; an old whore, upon which an honorable lord of the world can not bear to look. A meek devil especially becomes terribly angry when some old whore or thief confesses himself to be a child of God. The intellect in this place opposes so that the meek devil becomes dumbfounded and angry and says, "Now you heard how he blasphemed God," — for a meek devil does not dare to confess himself a child of God, neither does he believe that others are better than he, therefore he overlooks other poorer ones. As the Pharisees despised the publicans, nor did they have fellowship with them, so also an old Christian despises those awakened ones who have

now appeared and says, "They are not Christians who keep themselves as Christians, but they are Christians who do not cry out in the streets but keep their Christianity hidden." Do you now hear, Pharisees, what kind your Christianity is? You call that blaspheming if someone confesses himself to be a child of God, who has in truth received the child right of the children of God, but that is not blasphemy when you lead a twofold life, are godly in church, and ungodly behind the church. As the former Pharisees and the enemies of the cross of Jesus were godly in church and ungodly behind the church, so also are the Pharisees of this time godly in church and ungodly behind the church, they are meek in church and whore behind the church, bless in church and curse behind the church, drink of the Lord's cup and of the devil's cup on the same day. Such are the old Christians, who keep that as blaspheming God, if some Christian confesses himself to be a child of God. They bear hatred in their hearts toward the children of God, and this spiritual hatred makes them blind. The devil reverses their eyes and paints such pictures before their eyes, through which the Son of God becomes a blasphemer of God and a disturber of the people. Christians become false prophets and wild spirits in the eyes of the Pharisees. But the false prophets become spiritual teachers in their eyes. What will the Pharisees then think, when the Son of Man sits upon the right hand of God? What will they think, when they see the children of men, whom they have despised and made mockery of, stepping up into hea-

ven and sitting on the right hand of power? We have taken notice of what the sorrowless do when some Christian is ill. Then the sorrowless come to watch how it will go now with his soul if he is taken up into heaven through living faith, or if, through doubts, he sinks into hell. That is what the sorrowless come to watch when they also come to see a Christian's death; the wretches do not think that this Christian, who now can die with Joy, will be taken up into heaven, but they only come to watch if the Christian would have some form of doubt on his deathbed, so they would get to cry out to the world that his faith did not stand in death, although he kept himself to be a Christian. But if the sorrowless would first look upon the Son of God and take heed for what reason He also cried out a short while before His death, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" If the sorrowless of that time had taken that faith for themselves, that He cries for Elijah, but still less the sorrowless of this time would come to peer at the death of a Christian with that mind, that they would get to confirm their own false faith that this Christianity is not right, when doubts come even to them in death, who hold themselves to be Christians. Behold! The sorrowless now come to peer at a Christian's death with that mind, that they could topple the Christianity, if even to a Christian would come doubts of his salvation before he dies. But let the sorrowless first explain why such a doubt came to the Son of God a short while before He died, so that He had to lament that God had forsaker Him. If this kind of a doubt has come upon the

Son of God a short while before He died, certainly to many Christians distress can come on the death bed, when the enemy attacks him so powerfully with doubts, that he must lament like the Son of God, that God has forsaken him. And nevertheless God allows His merciful sun to shine just at the moment of death, that he can die fortunately, since contrarily the sorrowless can not cry out at the moment of death, as the Son of God, "It is fulfilled," for at the moment of death they must condemn themselves to perdition and confess that they are on a poor road.

We must today observe how the Son of God ascends into heaven, when we first look into heaven and bow down, praying that great King that His true disciples would go with joy and rejoicing to the Mount of Ascension to preach to all created, as our hope is, that the disciples of Jesus always await the coming of Jesus to judge the quick and the dead. Hear, Thou King, crucified and resurrected from the dead, and ascended into heaven; the humble prayer of the disciples, when they bow down praying to You on the Mount of Ascension, and come back again shortly to judge the quick and the dead. Our Father which art in the heavens, etc.

The Gospel: Mark 16: 14-20

We hear from our Holy Gospel that there were only eleven gathered together when Jesus was taken up into heaven, but other evangelists have testified that other disciples also have seen Him ascend, into heaven. And Paul has written that He was seen of upward of 500

after His resurrection, of whom some of them doubted. We do not know if all were then present when He was taken up, or were there only those 120, who then immediately afterward were gathered in one house, when Peter began to speak of Judas, who fell away through deceit. But that we know assuredly, that there were not sorrowless there when Jesus was taken up into heaven, and we might therefore ask, why were not the sorrowless informed of this through the disciples, that they also could have come to see, when now Jesus ascends into heaven. But it appears as though the grace was only given to Jesus' disciples, that they could see Jesus after His resurrection. Surely the sorrowless would have come to peer if they had been informed that Jesus is at such and such a place, but no information was given to the sorrowless until just afterward, when the Apostles began to preach to the people that Jesus is arisen, that they have eaten and drunk with Him after His resurrection. Let us observe now, through God's grace, why the sorrowless were not given information of that place where Jesus appeared to 500 disciples.

The first consideration: The disciples of Jesus did not dare to reveal to the flock of the world before they had received the Holy Spirit. We well surmise that those 500 disciples who have seen Jesus after His resurrection have received word through the Apostles, in what place they must be gathered together and at what time they must be at that place. But all of these disciples have been so faithful, that they have not revealed that matter to the world, alt-

though the Christians seem to be so poor at watching over their tongues that they can not keep any secrets to themselves, but reveal everything to the world, even if it were forbidden, that they should not reveal all to the world, especially such mysteries through the revealing of which there could come great harm to all the Christians unitedly and especially to those to whom the matter pertains. We have seen from the gospel that the sorrowless cannot keep a secret, where it is written that the Saviour often said to them, "See that ye tell no one," and so He forbade them from crying out to the world about the good works of Jesus, for that reason especially that Jesus did not, want to gain vain honor of the world, and secondly for the reason that the lords of the world would know what Jesus did in the sickly. But it is also written in the gospel, that the more He forbade and warned them from speaking, the more they proclaimed it, and so we have seen that the sorrowless cannot be without speaking of all that they have comprehended of Jesus and of this Christianity. But from that the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees found reason to persecute Jesus when the sorrowless wretches always proclaimed to the world what Jesus did, although Jesus had forbidden them and said, "See that ye tell no one." When, namely, the sorrowless always proclaimed to the world the works of Jesus, finally envy arose in the hearts of the chief ones when they began to surmise after the bringing of Lazarus back to life, "This man doeth many miracles and all the people run after Him; look men, what do ye intend

to to with Him." If even those sorrowless wretches, to whom Jesus did good works would have been quiet, as Jesus commanded, persecution would not have come so soon upon Jesus! But the more he forbade it, the more they proclaimed it, and through this proclaiming, envy arose in the hearts of the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees. But in that place the disciples of Jesus were very watchful over their tongues, that they did not tell the flock of the world where they could see Jesus. And for what reason did the disciples of Jesus not reveal this to the world? Yes, for that reason that they feared; it is written in the gospel that they spoke nothing to anybody, for they were afraid. But He only told it to the disciples and all of the disciples could surely keep it a secret, so that the world's throng did not know where they could see not Jesus. But why did Jesus not reveal Himself to the sorrowless crowd of the world after His resurrection? It appears as though the sorrowless would have finally believed that He truly is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world if they could have seen Him after His resurrection.

Who knows if the sorrowless and hardened would have believed better even if they had been shown. In the last chapter of the gospel of Matthew it is written that some of the disciples doubted; what then would the sorrowless crowd have done if the Saviour would have revealed Himself to them after His resurrection; would they have believed better? I think that they would have killed Him another time. For the nature of the devil is such that he be-

comes terribly angry if his most cruel works of murder do not prosper. Many a murderer has shed serpent's tears when the person to be murdered has not completely died. And so it would have happened if the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees would have seen that Nazarene teaching in the temple even after His death they would have become so angry and aroused to fury that they would have killed both the earthling and also his hearers. It can be seen from that how they become angry with Jesus' disciples when after Pentecost they began to preach to the people about Jesus's resurrection, how terribly angry the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees became over that matter.

But now comes the second consideration: Why were the sorrowless people not seen worthy to see Jesus after His resurrection? And why did not Jesus give word through the disciples that in such and such a place and on such and such a day, all who wanted to could see the Nazarene, that great disturber of the people, ascend into heaven? I think that the sorrowless people have such a great desire to peer, that they would have gathered from every village if they would have received word. But surmise now yourselves, you sorrowless, why they were not given to see that Man, whom they themselves have slain and crucified. Let the sorrowless ponder now themselves, why that crucified Nazarene did not show the world's crowd His wounds anymore after His death, as He showed them to His sorrowful disciples and especially to that doubting Thomas.

I think that the sorrowless would have all become frightened and thought that it is an earthling. As we have heard that all the sorrowless fear the earthlings, although they themselves are living earthlings and without a doubt will become earthlings after death, if a true conversion and repentance does not happen here in the time of grace, then all sorrowless, all hypocrites, and all grace thieves will become earthlings after death. As they already here fear those dead and earthlings, they would have feared the Nazarene if they would have seen Him after His death. And if they would have realized that He had flesh and bones, they would have certainly killed Him again, that He would not haunt and walk anymore on the earth. Did not such a fear even come to the disciples when they saw Him the first time after His resurrection? They thought they saw a spirit they thought that it was an earthling who came to them. What then would the sorrowless have thought if the Nazarene would have again preached repentance to them after His death? They would have surely said, "That is an earthling who has been raised up upon us." They would have gone to seek sorcerers who could relieve them of the earthlings. Although the rich man in hell had such a faith that his brothers would believe better if someone rose from the dead, nevertheless it is not so; the sorrowless do not believe, no matter who would come from hell to remind them what kind of a life is there. Those who do not believe Moses and the prophets, would not believe if someone rose up from the dead. Here are now two

reasons why the sorrowless are not worthy to see Jesus after His resurrection. The first is, that the sorrowless do not believe even if someone rose up from the dead to preach repentance and penitence; the sorrowless greatly fear the dead and the earthlings, although they themselves are living earthlings, for their lives are like the earthlings' lives in hell. But secondly, they would kill Him again if they came to know that He has flesh and bones. The sorrowless and slaves of the world are not worthy to see Jesus after His resurrection, when sorrow has not even come to them over the Saviour's death, although that crucified Saviour is portrayed before their eyes. If the sorrowless would have had a conscience, then sorrow should have come to them over the death of Jesus. But they have no conscience, therefore they can be without seeing, but certainly they can once see whom they have pierced.

Now we must yet observe those signs which come to those who believe. The first sign is this: that through Jesus' name, devils are driven out. This has happened then and happens even now, that devils are driven out of people through the Word of God, Namely, when the awakened people attain faith, then the devil of selfrighteousness is driven out of the heart, then the believing ones also begin to speak with new tongues, although not naturally like then, but spiritually; they speak of God's powerful works and of that great grace which has happened to them. The third sign is this: that they must drive out serpents. Oh, if all the Christian girls would drive away those serpents

who come to thorn in the form of a suitor. Certainly they could do that? the power is given to them, but often they carry the serpent in their breast and thereby become deceived. And if they drink some poison, it will not harm them. This has then happened naturally, but now spiritually, that the poison of sin can no longer harm the believers, although spiritual hatred is often offered to a Christian, which is that true poison of the serpent which the dragon spews upon them. It does not harm the believers, no matter how the dragon spews out poison upon the believers; the poison does not make them swell, it is as if it did not even touch the believer's hearts. The fifth sign is this: they they must lay their hands on the sick and they will be healed. This sign has not happened naturally in these times, but spiritually it, too, happens, for all who are ill because of selfrighteousness will be healed, when the Christians encourage them to believe upon that great Crossbearer and thorn-crowned King, who has suffered for all, has been in hell for all and sweat blood for all, has cried out for all, cried in behalf of all hardened ones, although certainly these tears help no one, when they do not take heed of them in the time of grace. They do not help unless those same tears become burning in the time of grace, and those countless drops of blood, which have dropped from His holy body upon this sinful earth, do not help them who always trample His blood and mock His tears.

Now that great Crossbearer has ascended into heaven to prepare a place for the disciples, but how can He prepa-

re a place for the enemies of the cross, who blaspheme and continually oppose? For them the devil has prepared a place in the lake of fire. But to those few souls who stand and gaze up into heaven at His going into the Father's kingdom, for them He has gone to prepare a place in the kingdom of heaven to them He also sends His Holy Spirit, and through that they will be clothed with power from on high to preach of Jesus' resurrection and ascension until the time He comes from there to judge the quick and the dead. So return now with joy and rejoicing from the Mount of Ascension, you few disciples, and await the promise of the Father, which Jesus has told you. Wait until the fiftieth day is fulfilled, wait until that time when you will be clothed with a greater power from on high. Wait until then, when the promise is fulfilled which the angels have promised, that Jesus of Nazareth will come from heaven even as you have seen Him go up. Then all the enemies of Jesus' cross will see whom they have pierced. And all disciples, who have labored faithfully in the Lord's vineyard and in God's congregation, can then receive their merited wage, that allotted penny for the day. Amen.

Sixth Sunday after Easter, Sermon A.

Jesus said to the Jews, "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God. Ye do the deeds of your Father." Then they said to Him, "We

be not born of fornication: we have one Father, even God." John 8:40,41.

We hear from these words of Jesus, which are read in the gospel of John, the true reason why the Jews killed Jesus, namely, because of the truth, for the children of the devil cannot stand to hear the truth. The seed of the serpent becomes angry especially with those who speak the truth to them. For the devil has reversed their eyes, so that they must believe lies. The devil has painted such pictures before the eyes of the Jews that the Son of God becomes an enemy, and the enemy changes into a god to them, whose words they hold to be true, but God's truth they hold that it is a lie and false reproach. If the Son of God reproves the Jews of sin, namely, that they do the deeds of their father, they answer, "We be not born of fornication, we have one Father, even God."

In this place the Jews own for themselves the child-right of God's children; the Jews do not want to confess that the devil is their father, as the Jews of this time say, "Surely the door of grace is open; it is not closed to us." In that place the Jews or sorrowless now own for themselves grace which does not belong to them, for the grace of God is not promised to the sorrowless, the hardened or the enemies of the cross of Jesus, who bear spiritual hatred toward Jesus and His disciples. The Jews said to Jesus, "We be not born of fornication." And nevertheless the prophets reprove the Jews that they are bastards although they own for themselves the child-right of God's children. A bastard is such a one who the father does not want to confess to be his. But

nevertheless the bastard calls him his father, whom he thinks is in place of his father. And how does a bastard know who his true father is? God reproves the Jews through the mouths of the prophets that they are bastards; namely such bastards who are born of the bed of adultery. Their mother has been a whore, although she has had a man she has nevertheless committed adultery with some other man. And such a whore, who has married a proper man, will surely not begin to confess that she has committed adultery with others. She does not confess to her husband nor to her children, she does not confess to anyone that she is a whore. How then does a bastard know who his true father is? He thinks that his father is that man who the true children confess to be their father. The same faith was with the Jews, that they are the true children, when Abraham and the prophets were God's children. The Jews did not remember that God had a long time before reproached them as seed of a whore. And the Jews of this time have the same faith even now, that God is their Father although God has rejected them long ago. And since when would their mother have confessed that she is a whore? God has already in the Old Testament painted before the eyes of the children of Israel how Israel, that is the congregation, was His chosen bride, with which He had gone into matrimony, but He laments in many places, that this betrothed bride was unfaithful and allowed the Egyptian whore-bucks to squeeze her breasts. Such a whore surely does not confess to her children that they are bastards. But the father, with

whom that whore has gone into matrimony who cannot bear to see those whore's offspring before his eyes, he reproaches them often of being bastards. But bastards do not believe that they are children of another father. Therefore the Jews said, "We be not born of fornication." And so all grace thieves say, "We be not born of fornication, we have one Father, even God." How do you now know this, that you have one Father, even God? Have you been born of that incorruptible seed? Paul writes, "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." Why does spiritual hatred always boil in the heart of the sorrowless when the Christians come to talk to them? Why does the old adam rise every time that a Christian speaks the truth to old adam? The Saviour reproves the Jews of that desire to murder, that they seek to kill Him when He speaks the truth to them. It is such a place, that when the bastards and thieves of grace separate themselves from God's congregation and avoid fellowship with the Christians, certainly they have an iron spike in their hearts, they bear spiritual hatred in their hearts. The children of God and the bastards do not fit into the same house. Between them is raised a high fence, and each is in his own pen. We know that the sorrowless have the same thought as the Jews: "We be not born of fornication, we have one Father, even God. The door of grace is open to us." But we hear from the Word of God that the door of grace is not open to others than to penitent souls, who knock upon it with tears and sighs. How then could

the door of grace be open to the enemies of the cross of Christ, who bear hatred toward the Christians and seek to kill Jesus? The door of grace was not open to the Jews when the enemy came and destroyed their city and burned their church. There was no more grace when they had to pray to their enemies. How could the door of grace be open any better to the hardened ones now than then? It is a vain thought. No matter how the grace thieves would say, "We have one Father, even God." as long as they bear hatred toward Jesus and His disciples, they surely are the devil's children. Why did Jesus say to the Jews, "Ye are of your father, the devil," although the Jews had that faith that God was their father? Now the grace thieves have such a faith that God is their father, and nevertheless are of their father the devil, not only openly sorrowless, as whores and thieves, drunkards and whiskey merchants, cursers and fighters, but also such who have awakened a little and again slept, who have taken for themselves from the first signs of grace such a vain presumption that they are now children of God, although a change of heart has not taken place. Such are the worst enemies of Jesus cross, who say they lie at the foot of Jesus' cross although they lie at the foot of the devil's cross, who imagine that they are cleansed in the blood of Jesus, but are only cleansed in the blood of the dragon, and such now speak only of Jesus, although they hate the Christians. Some confess themselves to be Christians, but do not come into the Christian congregation. They are as those who are over the edge, un-

der the edge, and near the edge, who certainly do not bear a good heart toward the Christians. However such ones say, "We have one Father, even God," but they must be such bastards as the Jews, who said to the Saviour, "We be not born of fornication," — but if the old man would have killed his fruit after birth? Of them come bastards, those whom the old man has killed immediately after birth.

When now there are many kinds of people who bear hatred in their hearts toward the Christians, namely first, the baptized pagans, who have never awakened; second, the half awakened, who have come out of the egg too soon, or been born prematurely; third, such bastards whom the old man has killed immediately after birth; and all of these have become enemies of Jesus' cross. So today we must observe who and what kind they are, who think they are doing God a service when they kill the disciples of Jesus. But we must first pray that great Crossbearer, that He would give the disciples of Jesus strength and power according to the richness of His grace, that they would be able to suffer and withstand the hatred and persecution of the world, that they would be able to war in faith and strive in that great battle and striving, that they would win the crown of eternal life and blood-red clothes, justified in Jesus' blood. Hear Heavenly Parent, the sigh of the sorrowful and penitent. Our Father, who art in the heavens, etc.

The Gospel: John 15:26-16:4

In today's gospel the Saviour has revealed to His disciples how the world hates and persecutes the disciples of Je-

sus, when whosoever kills them will think they are doing God a service. There would be no devil in the world if Jesus' disciples could preach the gospel in peace. But it is just an awful and terrible matter, when the prince of darkness must have such great power on the earth, that he can first arouse such hatred and persecution against the disciples of Jesus, and through this hatred reverse the eyes of his slaves, that they imagine they are doing God a service when they kill the disciples of Jesus. Just there the dragon shows his nature. And if they were ignorant peasants who hated and persecuted Jesus' disciples so, then there would be nothing to say, or if, they were unbaptized and uncircumcized heathens, who had heard nothing of Christianity, who so terribly thirst for Christians' blood. But they are such people who have received the greatest enlightenment of the Word of God, who read and consider the whole Bible, namely the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, and elders of the people or the best men of the congregation, who the devil has made so blind that they look at Christianity as the effect of the devil, and the Christians become false prophets and wild spirits in their eyes. There have been some Christians throughout the times from the time when Christianity appeared in the world, but in every place where Christians have appeared, there the devil's crowd has also hated and persecuted the Christians, and everywhere the Christians have been held to be false prophets and wild spirits, and everyone who has killed them thought they were doing God a service. In Luther's king-

dom the Christians have not been killed as in the pope's kingdom, but they have been driven out from the kingdom, put into prison, fined, and tormented in many ways, so that the catholics now reproach the confessors of the Lutheran faith that the Lutheran believers are no better than the catholics in that matter of persecution.

Let us observe now, through God's grace, why the sorrowless are so angry with the Christians, and why they think they are doing God a service when they kill the disciples of Jesus.

The first consideration; Why do the sorrowless hate the Christians?

The second consideration; Why do they think they are doing God a service when they kill Jesus' disciples?

If all the sorrowless would see their image now in this picture, that they would become horrified when they hear how the blood of Abel cries out vengeance from the earth over his brother's murderer!

The first consideration; Why do the children of the world hate the disciples of Jesus? Or why do the children of the devil hate the children of God?

Above all the abominations which the children of the devil already do, this spiritual hatred is the greatest horror and worst abomination which the slaves of the devil already do upon the earth. If God were as severe in punishing the hardened ones as He was in Moses' time, when He intended to destroy all the people because of the pride of some, He would have long ago destroyed all the black leeches which suck the blood of the Christians. But God is so merciful that He allows the

leeches to suck the blood of the Christians until they burst, for so it has happened in all kingdoms where the black leeches have sucked the blood of Christians, that they have finally burst. As the enemy has split open the Jews, so also the leeches in the pope's kingdom have been split open, and the enemy has squeezed their innards so hard that they have had to vomit out and excrete the Christians' blood so that the leech could not long enjoy the blood which it had sucked. For in those kingdoms where the Christians were molested the most, there the false faith of the sorrowless has been strengthened that the Christians are false prophets and wild spirits, and then finally that rough paganish people have become agitated and have risen in terrible rebellion against the government, and have killed officials of the king and the government and the lords of the world. They have shed the people's blood like a stream. And so the devil has squeezed from their intestines the Christians' blood which they have sucked, so that not one drop was left which was not dug out of their veins. So it has happened in those kingdoms where Christians have been persecuted, although they then thought they were doing God a service when they killed the disciples of Jesus. But afterward they have been able to see what God it is to whom they did service. And this persecution of Christians has always had its beginning from the peasant class. When, namely, some from the Libertinian synagogue and the Cyrenian synagogue and the Alexandrian synagogue rose to dispute with Stephen and were not able to resist

that wisdom and that spirit by which he spoke, then they suborned men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." When the sorrowless could not hold their own disputing with Stephen, they set up false witnesses and brought all kinds of falsehood upon the Christians. It is written in the epistle for the second Christmas day that they set up false witnesses which said, "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law." The sorrowless could not come upon the Christians with the power of the law otherwise, but they always found false witnesses and six mark men, who gave false testimony without paid wages and lied about the Christians, and through these falsehoods incited government officials upon the Christians; and they again brought the Christians before the church council, where sometimes one wise Gamaliel is, who prevents the persecution of the Christians with these words, "Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men and let them alone, for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Acts 5:35,38,39.

There now is a mirror, you persecutors of Christians, how it has happened before, and so even happens today in these times. But nevertheless, the sorrowless do not receive peace of conscience. The crowd of the devil was not then satisfied before Stephen was sto-

ned, and then the devil's crowd can get to really suck the Christians' blood. Some persecutors of Christians were taken ahold of powerfully, for example Saul, but just there the Jews were terribly angry when the best hero of faith became a Christian.

The second consideration: Why do the devil's crowd think they are doing God a service when they kill the disciples of Jesus? Because the devil has reversed their eyes. They have received that enlightenment from hell that the Christians are false prophets and wild spirits, who do not give honorable people peace of conscience. Paul's gospel was an offence to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. The heathens said that the Christianity is a peculiar superstition. The heathens also said that the Christians were possessed of evil spirits when they saw the Christians moved. The effect of Christianity, in the eyes of the heathens, changed into the torchlight of the devil's spirit. Look how the devil has reversed the eyes of his slaves. When true Christianity is changed to a terrible wildness in the eyes of the heathens, then in that way the devil makes his servants believe that they are doing God a service when they kill the disciples of Jesus. The blood of the Christians is sweet as syrup in the mouth of the dragon, although afterwards it smarts in the stomach like poison, so that in some kingdoms he has had to vomit out the Christians' blood which he has sucked before. When namely the devil's sect first lies so much about the Christians, that it is able to get the government to become angry and believe lies which the

six mark men testify, then the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees get to persecute the Christians by the power of the natural law, and through that persecution the coarse people are strengthened in their false faith that the Christians are the worst people on the earth. Along side of the Christians, the whores and thieves are like angels of light. The people asked that the murderer and robber Barrabas be freed. And through that the devil gets such great power over the people that rebellions bloodshed, and civil war are not far from that kingdom where Christians are persecuted, when the coarse people are incited. And from those persecutors of Christians come the true wild spirits, who no more spare the scribes, nor the Pharisees, nor the sorrowless priests, nor the lords of the people either, as the history of the destruction of Jerusalem also shows. Who reads this, let him understand! Thus the black worm and the leech of the Christians' blood must vomit out the Christians' blood which it has sucked. Thus the enemy squeezes the intestines of the black worm, that blood squirts from both ends. God has given the persecutors of the Christians into the care of Satan, that they begin to fight amongst themselves and kill one another, when God's severe righteousness puts them into the winepress of His wrath and presses the sour grapes so that the blood flows the distance of 1,600 furlongs. Fear now all you black worms, be terrified all you who suck blood, and observe how it has gone with the former persecutors of the Christianity.

You think that you are doing God a service when you kill the disciples of Jesus, but what God is it to whom you do service? Yes, it is the god of the world, it is that old worm which is called the devil and satan, who deceives the whole world. And what angels are they, who persecute the Christians most? Yes, meek whores, honest thieves, temperate drunkards, and merciful saloon keepers are the devil's best friends, who think they are doing God a service in that way, that they kill the disciples of Jesus. Through such people the beginning of persecution comes. They must be from the Libertinian synagogue and the Cyrenian and Alexandrian synagogues who first became angry with Stephen. When these devil's slaves cannot hold their own in disputing with Stephen, then they incite the people, scribes, Pharisees and chief priests upon the Christians, and then they seek for six mark men for witnesses that Stephen has spoken against the law and against the faith of Moses and Luther. What God is it that these leeches serve, who think they are doing God a service when they kill Jesus' disciples? It must be that god who lives in the lower heaven, where the fire of the brimstone of sin burns, from which the persecutors of Christians fetch fire with which they can see to make sausages of Christians' blood. Do you not yet understand, you persecutors of Christians, what a terrible torment awaits you when the blood of the Christians must burn your consciences forever, and the tears of the Christians must trouble your consciences, and the sighs of the Christians must ring in your ears?

When the blood of the righteous Abel cries vengeance over the murderer of his brother, then all of Gain's carnal brothers and cousins must flee from before the face of God and cry out like the murderer Cain, "My punishment is more than I can bear." And so the brother's murderers can cry out in all eternity, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Amen.

Sixth Sunday after Easter Sermon B.

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matthew 5: 11, 12.

Here a great reward in heaven is promised to Jesus' disciples when the people of the world revile and persecute them and say all manner of evil against them falsely, for Jesus' sake. We know that the Christians have been hated since the beginning of the world and this hatred will remain as long as the world stands. In every place where true Christians have been, there they have been persecuted, and if they had not been persecuted, then the Saviour's words would have been vain. But as far as the eye can see and the ear can hear, there has been this persecution of the Christians. But where true Christians are not found, there all grace thieves are allowed to be in peace. The world has never hated those who bear the name of Christians and live as heat-

hens. The world does not hate those who drink, steal, commit adultery, curse, and fight: such are dear Christians and beloved friends of Jesus, just so that they are baptized. But as soon as someone confesses himself to be a Christian and child of God, the Pharisees immediately get bright eyes to see faults in the Christians so that they would be able to accuse the Christians. And when the devil's servants have not found any lawful reason, then they have had to lie about the Christians so that even in this way they would be able to oppress the Christians and injure them. From this is surmised what terrible hatred is in the hearts of the children of the world when the enemy induces them to lie about the Christians so that at least they would be able to suck the blood of the Christians. But now the Saviour says in the gospel of Matthew, 5th chapter, 11th and 12th verses: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." For the disciple of Jesus, who is sorrowful and despised by the world, this is a great promise of grace, which can uphold his hope when the power of the devil attacks him and there is no one in the whole world who is able to save him from the flames of the fiery furnace. Then has the merciful Lord Jesus so strengthened the faith of His disciples, that they have not feared the world, or the devil, or death, or hell, but they have been able to die with joy and rejoicing. And so we hope that the merciful Lord Jesus will yet strengthen the faith of those few souls who suffer mockery, persecution, hunger, naked-

ness, and shedding of blood for Jesus' name's sake. Our hope is that those few souls who have been strengthened in their most precious faith would be able, through God's grace, to sacrifice themselves; sacrifice their bodies and their possessions, and even their lives also for the sake of the name of Jesus. For as the great Crossbearer has not spared, a single drop of blood which He has not allowed to flow for the redemption of sinners, so the true Christians have not spared their lives for Jesus' name's sake, but have allowed their bodies to be ravaged, boiled and roasted, drowned in the depths of the sea, torn by beasts, and cast into a burning furnace. And the great Creator, the great Crossbearer, has so strengthened their faith that they have not felt much bodily pain. And with their own blood and their death they have sealed their faith when they, with joy and rejoicing, could die for the sake of the name of Jesus. Are there now many souls who would be eager to leave crying spouses, crying children, crying brothers and sisters, and go to death for the sake of the name of Jesus? There are not so many who could leave beloved spouses, dear friends and relatives and small children. There are not so many who could tear themselves loose from their embrace and their necks and go to the place of massacre. But God be thanked that the hope has not altogether ended, that the merciful Saviour would yet be so merciful and make some, though few souls, so firm and strong in their most precious faith, that they could leave parents and spouses and children and could tear themselves loose from their

necks and with joy and rejoicing go to the place of massacre and give their lives and blood for the sake of the name of Jesus. So our hope and confidence in God is, that He would yet strengthen the hearts of these few with the power of His grace and knowledge of salvation, so that they would be able with a blood-red martyr's garment to go to heaven and relate salutations to the angels of heaven and all the blessed souls from those believing souls who yet remain on earth, awaiting that blessed moment when they also are able to greet the angels and precious redeemed souls who sing the hymn of victory at the wedding of the Lamb upon Mount Zion and in the new Jerusalem, to where all redeemed souls strive, hasten, and long, some more quickly, some very slowly, and some even crawling. "Blessed are ye," precious redeemed souls, "when the people of this world revile and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." If the prophets had not formerly been persecuted, if Jesus had not before been murdered for the sake of confessing the truth, then it would probably have been difficult for the disciples of Jesus to believe that they have a great reward awaiting in heaven, when they are thus mocked, reviled, and harassed for the sake of their faith and their Christianity. But when the prophets formerly have gone to heaven with blood-red garments, whose bloody footprints are still fresh on the road of life, and then the

great Crossbearer and thorn-crowned King has traveled that same way of life and death, from whose feet the bloody footprints still feel fresh — when, say I, the disciples of Jesus and those few souls, who are of their faith, behold the bloody footsteps of the prophets and also of the great Crossbearer from the Garden to the hill of Golgotha, then they can be assured that all who follow those bloody footprints will find the prophets and the great Crossbearer in the kingdom of heaven. So follow now those bloody footsteps, you few souls, you chosen disciples of Jesus, and you chosen bride of Christ, whom the blood-red King has purchased with His own blood from the prince of darkness, and with His death has set free from bondage.

Follow now, you daughter of Zion, your King and your Saviour. Follow now, you chosen bride of Christ, His bloody footsteps which yet appear fresh. Behold, you daughter of Zion, how the blood has dripped from His forehead and His heels with every step that He has trod on this sinful earth. If you follow these bloody footprints, then you will certainly find Him on Mount Zion with the heavenly wedding company. If weariness sometimes wants to come, if the knees begin to faint and the hands and feet begin to tremble under the burden of the cross, then bow your knees in Jesus' name and cry with such a loud voice that the voice will be heard even to heaven, and pray that the great Crossbearer would give you power and strength, that you would yet be able to follow His bloody footsteps from the Garden to the hill of

Golgotha. If even the whole world and all the powers of hell would begin to move, always remember those comforting words: "Blessed are ye when the children of the world revile and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." So hear, You blood-red King, the sigh of the sorrowful, penitent and down-pressed ones when they sigh unto You. Our Father, which art in the heavens, and so forth.

The Gospel: John 15:26-16:4.

In the gospel for today our blessed and thorn-crowned King has made known to His sorrowful disciples what the world will do with them when they begin to follow Jesus' footsteps. "They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."

This prophesy has already been fulfilled ten times. First by the Jews, then by the heathens, and finally by the papists, and ten times ten makes a hundred times. The first persecution began in Jerusalem, where Stephen first received the martyr's crown, as did many other confessors of truth in the first congregation. Then began a persecution of Christians in Caesar Nero's time, and one can count ten more cruel persecutions in which many thousands of Christians have received the martyr's crown, who are now clothed in white garments and await their brethren whose number is not yet fulfilled. Finally in the kingdom of the pope there was a great persecution against the Christians, in which many thousands of Chris-

tians were killed and some were burned alive. And it should be a testimony to the Lutheran congregation that as many souls as have been murdered in the kingdom of the pope because of the Lutheran faith, that so many bloody scratches the Lutheran congregation has received. But it is remarkable that when the kingdom of the pope arose from the first congregation they themselves began to persecute the Christians, and it is yet more remarkable that the Lutheran congregation also began to persecute Christians although, in the beginning, it had to suffer so much itself from the papists.

Thus have Christians been persecuted throughout the times, all the way from that time when the first Christianity began to appear. The Jews have begun to persecute the Christians, then the heathens began to persecute, and when the heathens stopped, then the papists began to persecute. And when the papists became tired, then the Lutherans began, and who knows who will yet begin to persecute the Christians before the last persecution comes.

Let us now by God's grace behold how the disciples of Jesus have to suffer hatred and persecution, mockery and shame from the world, when the time had come that everyone who killed them thought he was doing God a service.

First consideration or examination: Have they been Christians who during persecution have gone to death with joy and rejoicing for Christ's sake? Second consideration: Are they Christians who during persecution do not dare to go to death for Christ's sake?

The great Purger of the floor, who has a casting scoop in His hand with which He purges His floor, has always, during time of persecution, separated chaff from wheat kernels through sifting, because the great Purger of the floor has wanted to gather unmixed wheat kernels into His garner. He is not so careless as some farmers in these times, who put mixed grain and chaff into the grain bin. And they who eat those weed seeds smell like snow buntings.

First examination: Are they true Christians who during persecution go to death with joy and rejoicing? The heathens have said that the Christians' boldness at the moment of death is a terrible hardening and wantonness against the faith of the nation and against the government, which should be a clear sign of this, that the Christians are possessed of evil spirits in the greatest measure when the greatest bodily punishment has not effected a change in their faith, and not even fear of death has been able to make them take back their words and beg the authorities for forgiveness for their wildness. The heathens have mistaken the Christians' valor and boldness to die for their faith to be a great terribleness and cruelty. It is written in the second book of Maccabees, 7th chapter, where seven brothers were sacrificed one after another by the heathenish king because of their faith. The heathenish king became terribly angry when these brothers were not at all terrified by the cruelty of death, neither obeyed the heathenish king's orders in matters of conscience and faith. So also have other heathenish

kings taken the Christians' courage and boldness to die because of their faith to be a terrible cruelty, for example king Nebuchadnezzar, when the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not obey the heathenish king's idol worship. And there are many other examples in the history of the martyrs which show how terribly the devil's slaves have become angry at the Christians, when the Christians were not able to obey the commands of the heathenish authorities in matters of conscience and faith. The devil has given the heathens that enlightenment from hell, that the Christians' boldness in death has been a sign of a possessed person. The heathens have received that enlightenment from hell that the Christians were so terribly possessed by evil spirits, that they did not understand to fear death. The Christians' boldness, courage, and joy in death have been a terrible wantonness and obstinacy against the laws of the land and the faith of the kingdom. In the heathens' minds, the Christians have despised the heathens' faith, worship of God, and the heathens' holiest ordinances. So also have the papists considered the Christians' boldness in death to be a terrible wantonness against the faith of the kingdom. When Christians have not wanted to give up their faith, then have the papists taken such a horror from it that they have burnt the Christians alive. Especially there the devil's power in the world can be seen. But among the Christians, that person has always been considered the best Christian, who with joy and rejoicing has gone to death because of his faith, who has not given up

his faith because of persecution. And we can also say from all the heart, that he is truly a Christian who does not give up his most precious faith no matter how he would be tormented, hated, and persecuted for Jesus' name's sake. To this pertain not only the Saviour's own words: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven", but also the book of Revelation's great testimonies of the martyrs' salvation testify that every Christian who gives his life and blood for the sake of the name of Jesus is blessed in time and eternity.

Are the heathens able to go to death because of their faith? Are the papists able to go to death because of their faith? It has not yet been heard that heathens would have died because of their faith, although the papists have forcefully compelled the heathens to convert to the pope's doctrine; as for example, Erik the Holy, one Catholic king in Sweden, who attacked the Finns and with fire and sword compelled them to convert to the Catholic faith. But it has not been heard that the old Finns would have then given their lives for the sake of their heathenish faith. And although the Jews were so zealous in their faith that they bared their necks before Pilate and commanded him to kill them, nevertheless Pilate has not killed the Jews because of their faith, but because of their natural pride. Surely we have heard that heathenish word also, that the Christians have been killed, not because of their faith, but be-

cause of their pride, because of their wantonness, because of their disobedience toward the government. But it is altogether a lie, even though the devil paints the matter so before the eyes of the heathens. Already formerly the devil has painted and even now paints such things before the eyes of the heathens, that Christians are heathens, they are false prophets, they are wild spirits, they are possessed by evil spirits, they are enemies of God and man, they are proud, they are stiff-necked, they are disobedient to the government, they are wanton, they are the true despisers of God and mockers of God. Otherwise how would the devil have been able to give his slaves that enlightenment from hell, that everyone who kills them thinks that he does God service. But on the other hand, the Christians have had the belief that everyone who persecutes another person because of his faith, is of his father the devil. But the heathens also imagine that the Christians persecute them. The whiskey merchants imagine that the Christians hate and persecute them, the thieves imagine that they are persecuted when they have to stand in stocks, virtuous whores even cry over their honor when they are barked at innocently, and temperate drunkards complain that the Christians persecute them. Has a stranger thing been heard than that the Christians would begin to persecute innocent people? Oh, you wretched devil, how much you must suffer without cause! The Christians are persecutors; they do not give honorable people peace of conscience.

But now comes the second examination: Are they Christians, who during

persecution deny their faith? Much has been surmised of this in the first Christianity. Some Christians have said that such need not be taken into the company of the Christians, who during persecution have denied their faith, no; matter how true a penitence and repentance would be made. But other Christians have taken such ones also to be Christians, who after the fall have repented. We well surmise, not only from the Saviour's words, but also from the Christians' own experiences, that those fickle souls, who under persecution give up their faith and, like Peter, deny that they know Jesus, have not yet come to a true and saving faith; they have not become freed from the world. Jesus has said, "He who loves his life more than me is not worthy of me." And how could he be worthy of Jesus, who because of love of the world gives up his faith and denies Jesus during time of temptation. Just in that is the trial; there is the fire in which the gold is refined. Many have been Christians according to their own mind when there has been no distress because of Christianity, but when such a trial has come before them that they must give up the earthly or temporal life for Jesus' sake, then they have stepped back and begun as Peter to swear that they do not know Jesus. Perhaps Peter has thought that he does not deny Jesus with his heart, although he denies Him with his mouth before the world. But just there is the place — that one lies against his heart, and also lies against God and sins against his conscience. It is entirely a willful sin when a person does or says something against his conscience, even

if it would be no greater matter than one horse's dung, he nevertheless falls from grace when he says other than what he knows to be true, but especially in the confession of the Christian faith, which costs more than all the world's joy. But they who in such a way deny their knowledge as Peter, these wretches have not yet come to a knowledge of truth, they have not yet been baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, they have not yet been in the refining fire. There is only one thought which might possibly come to the Christians under trial, namely this thought: whether a person who has followed with the Christians for many years, as Peter had followed Christ, and has consented to the Christian doctrine as Peter, has even felt his unworthiness as Peter, but has not yet felt true sorrow of the soul, as Peter had not yet felt that sorrow when he denied his knowledge of Jesus, if such a person can say directly against his conscience that he rightly knows Jesus, not only according to the outward form, but also according to inward feeling. If, say I, a person who has not yet become partaker of the Holy Spirit, neither has tasted of the power of the world to come, if such a person says he is a Christian and is not one, he then lies before God, even if he confesses before the world that he knows Christ. It would be better for him that before the world he would confess only as much as he has felt and experienced, and then may the devil do with him what he will. If the devil's slaves kill him only because of that confession, that he confesses that this Christianity is right, then it could be possible

that in that place the Holy Ghost could fall upon him and that he could receive such strength and such boldness that he could with joy go to death for the sake of the name of Jesus. Such things have truly happened during time of persecution, as we hear from the history of the martyrs, that many a heathen who had not formerly belonged to the Christian group has been taken ahold of just at the place where the Christians were killed and has suddenly received such power from on high, that he has confessed himself to be a Christian and at the same time has been dragged to the chopping block. Such wonders the great Creator has been able to do, and not even the Christians have any longer doubted of his salvation. But the blind devil who now has come upon the earth, who even formerly has troubled them, sees nothing of those who are of God's Spirit. This blind devil, who leads the sorrowless along the broad road to perdition, does not believe, at all, that the love of Jesus compels the confessors of His name to go in the fire if it would be so demanded, although at first it is terrifying to think how terrible the devil's throng must be and what terrible hatred the devil's children must have, when they imagine they are doing God a service when they kill the disciples of Jesus. But thus have the slaves of this world done from the beginning of the world, and thus shall they do up until the end of the world. Although now there is not such severe persecution as has been formerly, nevertheless, in every place where there is true Christianity, there is also hatred and persecution, if not in one way, then in another. If

there is not burning as in the kingdom of the pope, then some other punishment has been placed upon the Christians. Some are driven out of the country, some fined, some must sit (in chains) with bread and water, some are excommunicated or banned from the Lord's communion and the unity of the congregation. And the devil's apostles are certainly always found in every place, who try to bring forth lies and accuse the Christians of one thing and another, although we cannot complain that we have yet up until this time been severely persecuted. Has God then, in His wisdom seen that we would not be worthy to suffer more severe persecution for the sake of the name of Christ, or is He still sparing those few souls who could bear the blood-red garment, or has He, in His wisdom, seen that many would not be able to bear a martyr's crown? But if such a time would come, that the merciful Lord Jesus would find it necessary to try the disciples' faith, then our hope is that He, of His great mercy, would grant them power and strength to suffer and to stand manfully in the great war and strife, armed with the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, and the shield of faith, with which they could quench the fiery darts, well knowing that the great war Hero before us has traveled those weighty and bloody footsteps from the Garden to the hill of Golgotha, and many thousand souls before us have followed those bloody footprints to the hill of Golgotha, who now are clothed in white garments and, with palms in their hands, they sing the new song on Mount Zion. Amen, Hallelujah! The

bridesmaids, elegant and beautiful, wipe blood from the wounds and the tears from the eyes of those who have been wounded for Christ's sake. Small angels, white and shining, prepare the bread of heaven from the tree of life for those who have suffered hunger for the sake of the name of Jesus. White garments are given to those who have been stripped naked for Christ's sake, and to Jesus' poor bride, upon whom the showy whores of this world have spit, is given a golden crown upon the head, the morning star upon her breast and rings on her hand, and the blood-red garment is washed snow-white. And the poor bride of the Saviour, who here in the time of grace has been taken into the church in the manner of a bride, shall there be placed upon the bride's throne, and the Saviour's bridesmaids will dance around her on the clean floor of heaven, and all the holy angels will rejoice and be exceeding glad with them when the wedding of the lamb is held, and the small innocent children shall cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Amen.

Pentecost Sunday.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations."

Thus says the Lord through the Prophet Ezekiel (36th chapter 26th and 31st verses) from which we hear that He intends to take away the stony heart out of their flesh and to give them a new spirit, and when they receive this new spirit, they shall remember their own evil ways, they shall loathe themselves for their iniquities. This prophecy was truly fulfilled then, when the Holy Spirit was given to Jesus' disciples. And the same prophesy is still fulfilled now, so that to many a new heart and a new spirit are given and many have also loathed themselves because of their iniquities, but all the hardened have not yet loathed themselves. But they have become angry with the Christians, who do not allow peace of conscience to honorable people. When we hear that the Lord intends to take away the stony heart from their flesh, and to give them a heart of flesh, we surmise that a natural man has a heart of stone, as all awakened have experienced. But a sorrowless person does not know that he has a heart of stone before the Holy Spirit knocks upon it with the hammer of the law. A natural person does not know at all of what substance the heart is made. The heart lays in a sorrowless person's breast as a stone without conscience, he does not feel good nor bad of such which are of the Holy Spirit. But when a sorrow less person awakens, then he begins to feel that he has a stone-hard heart which does not move any more than a stone, before God takes away the stony heart. But when God takes away the stony heart, then he feels, that the heart has changed, although he must often loathe himself because of

unbelief. And it is also necessary for a Christian, to whom God has given a new heart, it is necessary for them, that they would remember how they have lived formerly, so that the devil would not take away their sins from their memory. The Lord also says that they must loathe themselves, when they are given a new heart, but the sorrowless and baptised heathens do not loathe themselves but they loathe the Christians. And how could the devil abhor himself, when he has lived so decently, that he needs not ever regret his own deeds. If the devil abhorred himself he would become penitent. God became penitent because of man, it is written, in Genesis, 6th chapter "it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth," when He saw that the imagination of the thoughts of his heart were evil right from his youth. It grieved God that the devil had spoiled His work; but the devil cannot regret what he has done, for the devil has never yet confessed that he has done wrong. And as the devil is innocent of all evil deeds, so also are his children as long as they serve their foster father.

God has namely in the beginning created man as good but the devil spoiled God's work, as some malicious ones spoil the possessions of man and then laugh yet besides, so also the devil has laughed when he was able to deceive man and to cause the parent's heart to be sorrowful. Think of yourselves parents, what harm it does to the parents' heart when one old scoundrel entices his children and steals them from the parent's house and takes them to his own house. There those wretches forget

who has given birth to them with great travail, they do not know who their father is, but he they keep as a true father, with whom they are and what he puts them to do, that they do. If he puts them to steal, they do that, if he puts them to drink devil's dung, they do that, if he puts them to commit adultery, they do that, if he puts them to laugh, they do that, how pleasant it is then for the parent when after a long time of searching, he finally finds his child in the devil's house, where they are taught all iniquity! And when the parent with tears begs those wretches that they would leave with their lives and come back to the parent, they then only laugh in the lap of the devil and say to the sorrowful parent, "Ha, come and strike me if you dare. And are you feeding us?" Such is now the condition of the sorrowless. He has been stolen from the heavenly Parent's home when he was so small that he does not remember what kind that Parent is, who has given him birth with great travail. In that way, he does not know who his right father is. He has long since forgotten the Parent's love, and now he must remain in the devil's house, where he is taught all iniquity. Those brothers and sisters who have been brought up in the right Father's house also come, they come to speak to those unfortunate wretches who carouse in the devil's house; those children, I say, who are the servants of the Heavenly Parent come to get the devil's foster children and say, "Dear brothers and sisters, the Parent asks you to come home immediately," but the devil's children answer, "Look at your ass. The Parent has

not asked you.” Finally the Parent Himself comes into the devil’s house and takes some by the hair from the devil’s house and the Parent then has a spiritual scourge in His hand with which He whips those ill-behaved ones, who do not stay at home but as soon as the Parent has whipped them and the back is turned, they run back again into the devil’s house and there they laugh, grimace and mock the Parent’s tears. How many times now must the Parent go and get you before He tires of running after you? Woe, woe to you, you unfortunate wretches who always lie in the lap of the devil and laugh there! How many times have the tears of the Parent been shed for you? How many times have the Parent’s servants come to bring you home? And how many times has the Heavenly Parent, Himself, told you to come away from the devil’s house, but you have not wanted to? You always lie in the lap of the devil and there laugh at your own misfortune, until the time that your foster father, who has estranged you from your right Father’s house, takes and roasts you upon the coals. Such is now the condition of the sorrowless wretches. The devil has squeezed their breasts so much, that they probably will never get a new heart, although the Lord has promised to give them a new heart and a new spirit to those who will receive it. That old, decayed heart is so full of iniquity, that there is not more room for the new spirit. And so they must die eternally with that old heart, namely those unfortunate souls, who have already before hardened, so that the new spirit can no longer find room in their hearts. But those few souls,

who have received that new heart and new spirit, to them it has happened according to the prophet’s prophecy, when namely God has given them a new spirit, then they have loathed themselves for their iniquities. When namely a person has received a new spirit, he also begins to remember and think of this former life and then he must abhor himself, when he realized what great harm he has committed to his own soul. He knows also that the old foul smelling spirit has come from the old decayed heart which is full of devil’s dung and other devilishness, But when a person begins to truly think about his former evil life, then the new spirit is already effecting in him and then he also abhors himself and that devilish spirit, which has come out of his mouth. Then he also feels that he has a heart of stone, but he cannot change that stony heart or take it away before the stony heart becomes broken by the power of the Holy Spirit. But the old stony heart is not so flimsy that it breaks immediately. Sometimes the Holy Spirit can knock upon it for a long time before it finally becomes broken. In many the heart becomes harder and harder the more the Holy Spirit knocks upon it, and finally such people harden, then their hearts become as cold iron in time of frost, when it is pounded with a hammer, the hammer flies back but there is no mark from the hammer. So the Jews hardened, when John the Baptist and after that the Saviour tried to knock upon their hearts. And such a hardening has come upon those also in this time, who have not taken heed of the cry of repentance. Where God’s law is rightly

preached so that the two-edged sword is put to the breast, there hardening must come to some and to some a powerful awakening. But the promises of God have been fulfilled through the prophets and are fulfilled in every place where the Spirit of God moves. He gives a new heart to all of those, who come to the foot of Jesus' cross through a true penitence and repentance. He takes away the stony heart from their flesh, who through the knocking of the Holy Spirit become humble and broken and reconciled with God. Although some harden through Christianity, as the Lord said to Moses, "I want to harden Pharaoh's heart" and old Simeon, when he took the blessed child in his arms, said also, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be spoken against," and Paul says that the word of the cross is to some a savour of death and to some a savour of life. And this savour of death is that evil spirit which comes from the old heart, which stinks so bad before God that He must flee far away from their company. And although it appears so pitiful that those hardened spirits, who have that old decayed heart and that old foul-smelling spirit, have not yet received a new heart and a new spirit, although the Holy Spirit has labored so long upon them. Nevertheless those who have received a new heart and a new spirit must pray for those souls, who appear to have hardened although the evil spirit and devil's dung smells from their mouths, that the new heart which today for the first time was given to the confessors of Jesus' name and then afterward to ot-

hers, who confess His name in truth, would be given also to those wretches, who are decaying with an old heart. And that that new spirit, which today for the first time was given to the sorrowful souls and then afterward to others who sigh in the right sorrow of penitence, would be given to those unfortunate souls in whom that old, foul-smelling spirit is yet present. Hear you Spirit of truth and grace, the sighs of all the penitent and graced souls. Our Father, who art in the heavens, etc.

The Gospel John 14:26

The Saviour says in today's Gospel, "But the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." In accordance with this we must by the grace of God observe, How the Holy Spirit teaches Jesus' disciples and reminds them of all that Jesus has said.

But when Jesus has said in the end of this Gospel, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me," so we must also take one upbuilding example and take heed of these words, how the prince of this world teaches the children of the world to kill the Saviour and reminds them of all which the devil has spoken before.

Surely both need to be reminded for Jesus' disciples would have long since forgotten Jesus' words if the Holy Spirit would not have reminded them and taught them. For the children of the

world remember sooner what they should answer, than the children of God remember what they should speak. And if the devil's disciples would sometimes forget some word, that they sometimes become mute, surely the devil will remind them the next time of how they must oppose. Jesus' disciples often forget what Jesus has spoken of watching, when they must watch in the garden and pray, then sleep wants to come upon them, for the garden is that place where they should watch and observe how the drops of blood drip from the holy body of the Heavenly Parent and how the bloody sweat runs down His face. But in that place they want to become distressed with sleep, there they fight with sleep so much, that they almost forget to watch; for which reason also the devil gets to almost sift their souls as wheat. But the Holy Ghost has reminded them of that great war, in which the Heavenly Parent has then been in, though this matter has always been dim, so that in the conscience of the disciples a reminder has been left of better watching at the foot of the cross. But this beholding of the Saviour in the Garden is not so bright as the beholding of the Saviour on the cross; for in the Garden they were wrestling with sleep, but at the cross they were watching. But surely the slaves of the devil are able to watch better, when sleep tends to come upon Jesus' disciples; then is Judas also vigilant, when he gets to direct the enemy's crowd into the Garden. Judas knows best that place, where Jesus watches with His disciples and surely the devil would remind him if he would have forgotten. Did the de-

vil not remind the high priests how they should guard the grave. They said to Pilate, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, after three days I will rise again." The devil's disciples had a better memory there than Jesus' disciples, who at that time remembered nothing of the resurrection. But surely afterwards a better memory of everything came to the disciples of Jesus, when the Holy Spirit began to remind them. The Holy Spirit also reminds Jesus' disciples of their sins, for example of Peter's fall, when he denied his Saviour. And they remembered also that sin, when they had said to the Saviour, "Lord wilt thou that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them." The Holy Spirit also reminded Peter of those first signs of grace, when he wrote to the Christians, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And how could the evangelists have written Jesus' sermons after so many years, if the Holy Spirit had not reminded them.

That the Holy Spirit also teaches Jesus' disciples, how they must preach the Gospel and what they should answer when they are taken before the law, we hear from the Saviour's works to them that they do not need to worry, what they should answer, for the words will be given them. The Holy Spirit also reminds Jesus' disciples of their mortality. For when the love of the world wants to creep upon them, the Holy Spirit comes and brings to mind, death and eternity, and then for a moment the love of the world leaves. So

the Holy Spirit reminds Jesus' disciples of all that Jesus has spoken.

But the spirit of the devil reminds his disciples of all that he has formerly taught them to do. They themselves do not truly remember their wrong-doings but the devil sometimes gets them to relate of their own foolishness, how they at that time and at that time were clever to deceive people, and then they strut with their finery, but the devil does not bring their sins to mind with that intention that they would regret them, but with that mind he brings some of their devilish works to memory so that they could show off with them and others would then laugh. The devil's spirit also teaches his disciples how they must oppose and mock the Christians; and he has especially schooled the heathens how they must torture the Christians, but there the devil, himself, received the greater misfortune, for when some heathens saw how patient the Christians were, and with what boldness they went to death, the heathens themselves were frightened, and many heathens became Christians just through that, that they had seen with what joy a Christian dies. But the slaves of the devil do not always have what they should answer, for they become mute and when they should have argued with Stephen about Christianity, they could not withstand that spirit and that wisdom with which he spoke. But when the slaves of the devil are not able to win an argument, then the devil taught them to take him to court so that he could there get to lie before the authorities, how the Christians speak insolent words against the law and the

church. That truly is the best refuge of the devil's apostles, the worldly law, which they twist and turn so that it must fall upon the Christians, although all the sorrowless have transgressed the king's vow, and committed such acts which merit fines and punishment through the authorities, if the Christians would care to take the heathens to court. But the heathens do not become any more humble through that, that they would be punished by the authorities but they harden the more. And let that be upon their accounting, that they hate and persecute the Christians, surely they can once see whom they have pierced, But the Holy Spirit does not therefore cease to rebuke them through the mouths of the Christians, and as long as they travel upon the earth, they must hear of what spirit they are children of, so that in eternity they cannot say, that they were not warned and counseled. What else pertains to the office of the Holy Spirit, you know, that the Holy Spirit has two offices namely, first, it reproves the world because of sin, because of righteousness and because of judgement. But this speech the world cannot stand, because when the Holy Spirit reproves the world because of sin, then the devil rises to oppose and says, "you must not rebuke me, for I will not thereby become any better" and all of the devil's slaves repeat after the devil, "We harden by that severe rebuke." And nevertheless the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Peter came through rebuke, on the same day when Peter had received the Holy Spirit, he began to rebuke that world's throng, which had come to mock the first ef-

fects of the Holy Spirit saying, "They are full of new wine." Peter reproached them of being murderers of the Saviour. Why did Peter not speak nicely and properly to them? As the sorrowless say, who counsels properly, him we will listen to, but Peter could not speak properly to the murderers of the Saviour, when that is the office of the Holy Spirit that he must reprove the world because of sin, if they hear or not, who hardens because of reproof, let him harden; whoever is evil, let him be more evil still. But did Peter not win many thousands of souls for the kingdom of Heaven through that first severe sermon, that sermon effected so much, that many became pricked in their hearts and began to ask, "What should we do that we would inherit eternal life?" But not many of the sorrowless throng become pricked now anymore, no doubt the devil has forged breast plates for them who have not awakened, and God has rejected them to judgement of hardening. But we do not need to believe, that there were more awakened ones then in the Apostles' time than here, for there were so many people compared to what are here now, that if for that matter we would calculate how many awakened there were then, then in the highest calculation one in a hundred became a Christian in the Apostles' time. And those awakened souls who became Christians then, they fled away from the whole country, before the destruction of Jerusalem happened. But the Jews of this time do not need to rejoice that at that time not many more became Christians, but rather they should have a greater fear, that

it would not go for them like it did for the former Jews, who were slain by their enemies because of their hardening. But surely some of the wise of the world have surmised that the whole doctrine of Christ cannot be right since so few people have become Christians, and also the Christians are of the poorest class of people, some wretched whore, some rag drunkard, some tramp from that poorest crowd has become a Christian, but none of the lords, none of the wise of the world, nor have hardly any of the meek people become Christians in the Apostles' time. From that many of the wise of the world have concluded that the whole doctrine of Christ is false and that the world would have got along so much better if that foolish doctrine had not come into the world. And most certainly the devil's kingdom would have better remained in power, if that foolish doctrine had not come from Galilee, so until now. And also the heathens of this time take great testimony of that, that few have become Christians and still fewer are able to remain steadfast. From that can be seen, what a narrow place that strait gate is and with what great fear and trembling those few souls must travel on the road of life, who have found it, for the devil has not slept, nor is he very sweet to those, who endeavor to lessen his kingdom, he has showed his teeth to everyone who does not give him peace of conscience and if this awakening would have happened elsewhere, where there were many high priests and lords of the world, surely the devil would have drowned the Christians long ago.

But the Holy Spirit also has another office, for which reason He is called the Comforter. He comforts the sorrowful disciples when they are hated and persecuted by the world. When the devil attacks them like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, when the devil of self-righteousness attacks their faith and wants to press their souls away from the cross of Jesus, then the Holy Spirit comforts the penitent and sorrowful and those who wrestle with doubts, as Jesus has said in today's Gospel, "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 afraid, Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you." Hear now this word, you sorrowful and penitent, if Jesus sometimes goes away, He has promised to come again. Many times it happens so to one sorrowful disciple of Jesus, that Jesus goes away for a little while, that he covers the grace of His face, that a Christian does not always feel Jesus' gracious presence, and then the devil also attacks a Christian with terrible temptations and the devil of self-righteousness wants to destroy his faith. But Jesus has intended to come back to comfort the sorrowful disciples and He then again leaves them His peace which wins over the temptations of the world. And I know that the true disciples have received this peace. But the devil does not allow them to enjoy this peace but he attacks them terribly and wants to take away that peace which Jesus has given them. Then the Comforter the Holy Spirit comes and reminds them of all

which Jesus has told them of the kingdom of Heaven, which the eye has not seen, nor the ear ever heard, nor has it entered into the heart of any one except those who feel a foretaste of the kingdom of Heaven. Now since the world is so horrible and the devil so terrible, the flesh so weak and death so near, we should pray to that great Crossbearer who has suffered and died, that He would give us the Holy Spirit so that we would be able to strive in that great war and striving, that we would be able to bear to the mercy seat when death presses us much, and that that gracious Lord Jesus, who with His own blood has fought and won over the world, would give strength and power to war and strive in our most precious faith and to win over the devil and the world that we could finally get to sing the hymn of victory won. Amen.

Second Pentecost Day Sermon A.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:19.

With light is understood not only the right understanding and right knowledge in spiritual matters, but also the right experiences and right Christian life. But with darkness is understood not only lack of understanding and wrong knowledge, but also the evil will of sorrowless men and an ungodly life. When the Saviour now says that "men loved darkness rather than light," then it is to be understood that natural men

do not wish to come into light, they do not wish to reveal their evil deeds, they do not wish to confess their sins. In this way Augustine, that renowned teacher of Christians, has understood this Bible passage, that the sorrowless and heathens love darkness so much that they cover and deny their sins, which nevertheless will someday come into the light. We well know that thieves and whores hate even natural light. If someone comes upon a thief with a candle when he is stealing, then he tries to extinguish the candle so that he would not be recognized. So also do whores hate natural light and become angry at those who come upon them with a candle in their pure devilishness. But they hate that spiritual light even more. When Christians demand of them a true confession of sin, then they want to cover their sins and deny them, saying, "it is not necessary to confess, nor does one need to cry out to the world." Why has Augustine understood this passage so, that it pertains to confession of sins, that all the deeds of darkness must be brought into light? But grace thieves do not at all wish to confess their sins. They do not want to come into the light; they love darkness more than light because their deeds are evil. With light is also understood right self-knowledge. But how can grace thieves come into self-knowledge, who do not know that they have spiritual hatred toward Christians in their heart, nor do they know what the devil of honor effects in them when they want to cover up their sins? How then could they know what the devil of greed effects in them and what the devil of self-right-

eousness effects? With light is also understood the right understanding of the Word of God. But the sorrowless and grace thieves do not wish to come into that light, for some of them expound the Scriptures like the devil. Not even Nicodemus understood what new birth is, although he was a master in Israel. And the scribes understood all of the prophets' promises of the kingdom of the Messiah wrongly. How then could the sorrowless understand the Scriptures rightly when Apostle Paul, who was such a man of Scriptures, did not understand more than that Christians were one wrong heresy and a sect of the Nazarene, which wanted to change that old ordinance of Moses and bring false faith into the kingdom. Why did Paul begin to understand the Scriptures differently as soon as his conscience had awakened? But the Jews became terribly angry at Paul as soon as the change took place in him. Are not the sorrowless and grace thieves of this time able to guess that it is the devil, but not Luther, who expounds God's Word to them wrongly. But they must now be in darkness because they love darkness. With darkness is understood also that natural blindness and darkness in spiritual matters, in which the sorrowless travel the broad road to destruction. Although some do feel that they are on a poor road, nevertheless they do not become free from Satan's snares. Some depend on this, that Christians are false prophets and wild spirits; therefore the sorrowless are then true prophets. The sorrowless, no doubt, understand God's Word correctly when they say, "Surely we see for ourselves from the book."

What do you see for yourselves from the book? No doubt you see as much as the Jews saw, who had received that enlightenment from hell that John the Baptist had a devil and the Nazarene had a devil and Christians were false prophets. That much a sorrowless person sees from the Book. If he would not love darkness, if he would have a desire to come into light, then he could, however, receive that enlightenment from the Book that he himself is a false prophet and wild spirit, but he does not wish to come into that light, for he loves darkness more than light, "because his deeds are evil." One sorrowless person loves darkness more than light because his deeds are evil. It is one sign of darkness, that he loves his old bosom sins and holds them to be permissible. We see that drunkards love even whiskey and consider it to be sweet, although all rational people know that such a desire makes a person into an animal. So also whores love their own flesh more than God. They want to live as animals and they also die as animals. It appears as though drunkards and whores would have received that enlightenment from hell, that they have the best right to step into the kingdom of heaven. But they probably do not have a soul at all when they live like animals and die like animals. Such ones hate Christianity the worst, which is spiritual light. But neither do the liquor merchants love the light, but they love darkness because their deeds are evil. And this now is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men love darkness more than light because their deeds are evil. If this light had not

come into the world, if this Christianity would not have come, then they would have had less responsibility, and such a severe condemnation would not have come upon them. Then they would have been able to go to hell in peace under the shadow of ignorance and lack of understanding. It would have been easier for them on Judgement Day, as for the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, to whom was not preached so much of penitence, repentance, and faith as to these Jews. But just for this reason, that the light has come — just for this reason that these sorrowles and hardened ones have heard and seen so much Christianity, therefore one terrible condemnation will come upon those who have not believed that light has come into the world, who have not believed that this light is the true enlightenment and true Christianity. When so much has been spoken to the hardened Jews of penitence, repentance, and living faith, and they have not yet been able to believe that all enemies of truth, all scoffers and opposers will receive condemnation upon themselves, just for the reason that this light has come into the world. For the sorrowless and hardened ones will not be able to say on Judgement Day: "We have not known or understood how we should have lived." These sorrowless and hardened ones cannot say on Judgement Day as the men of Sodom and Gomorrah: "It has not been spoken to us of repentance. It has not been preached to us of penitence." The doubting ones and prisoners of unbelief or self-righteousness will not have reason to say: "It has not been preached to us of faith." Perhaps the

greatest grace thieves will say, "It has not been preached to us of faith," but they lie, for grace thieves want to go unto Christ without penitence and without repentance. But Christ has not accepted Pharisees and such grace thieves who say, "We have one father, even God." To them Christ Himself has said, "Ye are of your father the devil." To such grace thieves has been preached such a gospel as John the Baptist preached to the Pharisees: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt 3:7) But to the penitent, sorrowful, doubting, and downpressed souls the gospel has been preached; we know assuredly that the gospel is preached to the poor, but judgement is preached to the rich. And upon this confidence, we now bow our knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Father of light, praying with humble and penitent hearts that He would yet allow this light to enlighten those who sit in darkness and under the shadow of death, that they could yet see this light which has now come into the world. Although it makes those blind who love the darkness, nevertheless the children of light rejoice as the young of swallows, who begin to sing early when the sun rises. Hear, Father of light, the sigh of the penitent, sorrowful, and doubting ones who still sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death, awaiting the dawning of the day. Amen. Our Father, which art in the heavens, etc.

The Gospel: John 3:16-21.

We must now, through God's grace, consider: What living beings are they who love darkness more than light. First consideration: What living beings are they who love darkness more than light? Second consideration: What kind of condemnation will they receive? If now the Father of light would enlighten this whole atmosphere, that all the living beings of darkness would see this light, and that all who are lonely in that darkness could come into light. Amen.

First consideration; What living beings are they who love darkness? All those people who live under the earth, as elves and earthlings and bastards who screech in the dusk and frighten the living and those people who live upon the earth. So also the magpies and forestdevils who laugh at and curse the light. First the elves or rulers of the earth who, under the earth, dig the earth with their fingernails and imagine that they will find a treasure trove there, but when this treasure trove is brought to light, it is nothing more than a charcoal pit. The daughters of elves are said to be in clothing of broadcloth, and they wear silk scarves and other finery with which they draw whorebucks to themselves, as rings, earrings, gold chains, with which the devil of adultery has bound them to an iron collar. They are also said to have long hair and beautiful singing voices, although they cannot sing anything except adulterous songs. If many a youth has become deceived by their beauty when he has become drunken from the wine of adultery, surely also many a Christian daughter,

through adultery, has gone under the earth to live in darkness when she has taken an elf's son for a husband.

Have you not heard how elves steal the children of men before they are baptized, and even afterwards they exchange the children of men on whose breast a cross has not been placed? For elves cannot bear a cross to be placed upon the breast of their children; elves surely swaddle their children, but it is not allowed in the kingdom of the elves that the swaddling bands would be put to cross upon the child's breast. It is well known from that, that elves are enemies of Jesus' cross, and how could the elves carry the cross, who eat devil's dung and the manure of old adam. After that drinking they are so filthy and drowsy, as if they would have eaten dung, but just the same they consider devil's dung sweet although it stinks as poison a quarter of a mile away. When these elves drink a lot of that flowing devil's dung, they finally end up in the underworld, although elves imagine, in their blindness, that some sorcerer has raised up earthlings upon them. But it is a well proven matter that everyone who sees earthlings has drunk too much devil's dung. Earthlings have sunk even deeper into bottomless depths than elves have, because earthlings have come from those souls who have borne the name of a Christian upon the earth, but through unwatchfulness have fallen away from Christianity and become earthlings. These earthlings frighten living people with their apparitions and even after their spiritual death they keep a church attendance and burn candles, for which

reason they are called "church goers" by some. But what does church attendance help them any more after death, when here in the time of grace they have sat deaf and dumb in the Lord's house. The Word of God has gone over the head, past the mouth and past the ears, and never toward the heart. To this same group of earthlings belong also the bastards, who soon after birth have become lifeless. The old man has had opportunity to kill the new man shortly after birth; therefore these bastards have never suckled at the Parent's breast, and they have died without baptism. Now they screech in the dusk and long for baptism and the name of a Christian, but no one can give them the name of a Christian except elves and earthlings; they give bastards the name of a Christian. Saint Paul testifies that those children whom the Father does not chastise are bastards and not sons. This is now the crowd of darkness, who love darkness and hate the light because their deeds are evil. Into it also come magpies and forest devils, who love darkness and hate the light. Magpies laugh if some living person speaks to them of penitence and repentance. But forest devils curse the Christians and gnash their teeth as the Jews did who spoke with Stephen. They gnashed their teeth and stopped their ears, that they would not be able to hear such terrible words of blasphemy as Stephen spoke. For the words of one Christian sound so terrible in the ears of a forest devil, that he cannot bear to hear them at all. Some forest

devils are so holy, so pious, and so godly, that they cannot bear to hear a

Christian's curse, but let them begin to read their lessons themselves, and then surely cursing will become blessing and their blessing will become cursing. Otherwise a forest devil is said to be quite some whore; certainly the daughters of men can guard themselves from him. Some who hate the light are like owls, who crane their necks and peer. Owls fly around the houses in the twilight and eat mice and terrible things, as prophet Isaiah testifies of them, and with that mouseflesh they imagine that they will live in eternity. Trappers of mice are such who watch for faults of Christians, as the Pharisees who always were watching Christ's faults, and with these they kept their spirits alive. These owls do not care at all about those who drink, curse and fight, commit adultery and steal; such ones are often the Pharisees' best friends. But Christians are always an offense, and the Pharisees watch their life if they could get from them some mouse that would be quite sweet food in the owl's mouth. Such is the nature of a Pharisee, whose foundation of salvation is self-righteousness: he strains at gnats and swallows sharp-finned fish; he certainly sees small faults in the Christians, but his own sins he loves, covers and hides; he demands, therefore, the holiness of angels from Christians; no doubt he thinks that Christians are hypocrites as he himself is. But do not look for mice, good Pharisee. Do not look at the mote in a Christian's eye as long as a beam is in your own eye. First take the beam out of your own eye; take the hatred and greed and envy out of your own heart, for these sins will take you to hell. And

you, grace thief, who began to watch for faults in the Christians and to catch mice, take the iron spike out of your heart. It swells your heart and makes it so fat that you no longer fit through the strait gate. How would he, who no longer fits into the Christians' meeting house, fit into the kingdom of heaven? It is impossible. Who therefore are those living beings who love the darkness? Yes, they are elves and earthlings, bastards, magpies, forest devils, and owls. Elves, or slaves of mammon, who dig the earth with their fingernails and imagine that they will find a treasure trove there; then earthlings are those who have borne the name of a Christian but have lost that power and become seven times worse than before. Then bastards are those who the old man has killed shortly after birth, who have never nursed at the Parent's breast. They have died without baptism and now long for the name of a Christian. Then magpies, who with laughter and blasphemy repay Christians' warnings of judgement and condemnation. Then forest devils, who are quite some whores, cursers, tax thieves, drunkards, and fighters; they are such men who go boldly and with great speed to hell. Then the owls, or such Pharisees or self-righteous Christians, who eat horrible things and catch mice; they strain at gnats and swallow camels, watch Christians' faults and, like devil's angels, rejoice over the fall of Christians and say, "Such are the Christians." All these love the darkness more than the light because their deeds are evil.

The second consideration: "And this is the condemnation, that light is

come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." If light would not have come into the world, then the lovers of darkness would have gotten by more easily; such a great responsibility would not have weighed upon them. But now light has come into the world: they have seen the powerful works that have been done in the people, so much has been spoken and preached to them of penitence, repentance, and faith that they have become tired of hearing and have hardened. Just this hardening, which has come to the opposers through Christianity, should be one sign that this Christianity is right, for old Simeon has said: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against." Thus have the Jews hardened during the time of John the Baptist, in the Saviour's time, and in the time of the Apostles; the more they were preached to, the more they hardened. The devil resists so firmly when he cannot be at peace in his den that he makes his heart swell, makes it so hard, wicked, and hardened that nothing can pierce it anymore, neither the law nor the gospel. It is the same as if it would be preached to that wall. The world's slaves certainly reproach the Christians for that hardening, saying, "You yourselves have hardened us; answer now for our souls." But it is not so, good Pharisee, it is not as you imagine. The Christians have not hardened you, but the devil has hardened you. The Lord said to Moses, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." Has the Lord then hardened Pharaoh's heart? No, say I,

but the devil, the devil of pride, the devil of hatred, and the devil of self-righteousness harden the heart. And now Jesus says, "It shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, then for you — for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes." (Luke 10:12,13) Can the sorrowless of this time say that neither the law nor the gospel have been preached to them? Can they say, "The Christians have not spoken anything to us of penitence and repentance"? Come now to accuse the Christians already in this time of grace, that they can, in those places, correct their faults, where there truly is correction to be made.

Therein is now the condemnation for the hardened ones: "That light is come into the world, and men love darkness more than light because their deeds are evil." The Jews cannot say, "Judgement has not been preached to us", nor can the poor say, "the gospel has not been preached to us." We know assuredly that condemnation has been preached to the Jews, namely the condemnation that follows hardening and spiritual hatred and persecution of Christians. So also has the gospel been preached to the poor, namely to the poor in spirit; that is to the penitent, sorrowful, doubting, distressed, and down-pressed souls the gospel has been preached. And for this reason, that this light has come into the world and just the same men have loved darkness more than light, just for this reason the hardened and enemies of Jesus' cross are now condemned, that they would

not in any way be able to say that they are blameless. If this light would not have come, then their judgement would have been lighter: they would have been able to have this excuse, that the way to heaven was not made known to them. But now it has been made known to them. And if so much would have been preached in the pagan land of penitence, repentance, and faith as has been preached here, then they would have long ago been penitent and made repentance in sackcloth and ashes. And those pagans who live in Gog and Magog will rise up on Judgement Day to judge these baptized pagans and say, "If so much would have been preached to us of penitence and repentance and faith, then we would have become penitent." But those few souls who have believed the gospel can, nevertheless, try their consciences, whether there is still in them that fault, that they have not spoken so diligently to the pagans in these last years as they should have. We have heard that some pagans have already accused the Christians that they no longer visit the homes of the pagans. And what will they then do in eternity if Christians do not warn themselves against laziness and carelessness in that place. Then the pagans will truly have reason to accuse the Christians on Judgement Day, Although pagans here do accuse the Christians, that Christians come to curse and condemn them, but only in eternity will the eyes of the hardened open, and they they will surely accuse the Christians that they have not rightly barked at and condemned them. But our hope is that those few souls, who here have confessed the truth and

freed their souls, will see God in the light, and the pagans must condemn themselves that they have not accepted that good counsel. And then they must see the confessors of truth in the light, on the right side of the Son of God. Amen.

Second Pentecost Day

Our Savior says in the gospel of this day: "**God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.**" John 3: 17.

These words of the Savior belong especially to the penitent souls, who are not able to believe that God is merciful, even if the gracethieves own these words for themselves and imagine that it is written to them. But we know that these words are written to the doubting and penitent souls, who are not able to believe that God is merciful to them.

The Savior has indeed spoken these words to Nicodemus, but he has not spoken to Nicodemus with that purpose that Nicodemus himself would have been according to his body or soul in any kind of tribulation or in lack of faith. As the gracethieves and the servants of selfrighteousness imagine, that Nicodemus was penitent and doubting or condemned by the conscience, but the Savior has explained the order of grace to Nicodemus, so that he would comprehend why the Savior has come into the world. "He has not come to condemn the penitent souls but he has come to save them.

No matter how much the world own these words to itself and say: "It is

the world Jesus has come to save,” he has not come only to save the penitent souls, but he has come to save the world. Therefore we must put the words which are written in the same gospel in front of the eyes of the world, namely “this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

How can the world therefore own for itself consolation of these words: “God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world,” when the condemnation is immediately proclaimed to the world. He says namely: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Certainly the Savior has come into the world to save sinners who really recognize that they are sinful. But the world becomes angry when it is rebuked for sin. How can the world then become saved by him?”

The world does not need any Savior, but the penitent, sorrowful, disheartened whom the world hates and despises, they feel that they need a Savior, and for their sake Jesus said to Nicodemus: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

But this kind of order of grace Nicodemus did not know, even if his brothers of faith wanted to say that the Savior has said so to Nicodemus. He has neither said so to the penitent souls nor to his own disciples, but to Nicodemus. But Nicodemus brothers of faith shall not think that these words fits best to

them: “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world,” because Nicodemus is so virtuous man that he does not tolerate to hear the condemnation. But his brothers of faith imagine that the Son of God has not come to condemn them, but only the publicans and sinners.

But we hear of other words of the Savior: “That he has not come to call the righteous ones into repentance, but the sinners.” Nicodemus was a righteous man, and all who are in the faith of Nicodemus are also so righteous that they do not have any sins to regret. They are the ninety-nine righteous who do not need to make repentance. Thus the publicans and sinners are allowed to own these words: “God sent not his Son to condemn the world.” As long as the penitent publicans and sinners are able to own these words they are free from the condemnation. But if they because of unbelief and selfrighteousness are not able to own these words of grace, then they own the other words: “He that believeth not, will perish.” And “he that believeth not is condemned already.”

Which words do you own now, you sorrowful and penitent souls? And you doubting souls! Which words of the Savior do you own: “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world”, or these other words: “He that believeth not is condemned already?” I think that the penitent, sorrowful and doubting souls have by own experience felt how true these words are: “He that believeth not will perish.” They certainly have experienced that the unbelief presses the penitent souls into hell, and

on the other hand even the believing souls have experienced the power of this word: "He that believeth will not be condemned." Which words the penitent and doubting (souls) own now? I think, because they still are many who doubt even if they certainly feel how unhappy they are in that state (of soul) but indeed have the desire to become blessed for ever, (I think) that they make Jesus sorry and they also plague the Crucified (one) if they even let his blood shed in vain, if they even turn their eyes away from his wounds and say: "The Son of God has not come to save us, but he has come to save the world."

When Jesus said to his disciples: "You are not of the world", could they think that Jesus is not their Savior. When he said to Nicodemus: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world" could the disciples of Jesus think in this way: The Son of God has not come to save us but (he has come to save) the world. Or can the doubting (souls) now think in this way: "God has not sent his Son to condemn the world, but (he has come to condemn) the penitent souls? Such a belief will come upon some doubting souls and prisoners of unbelief. When the devil of self-righteousness gets a real power to rule over the penitent souls, they receive that kind of belief that the Son of God came to condemn them, but it was the world he came to save.

The one who accuses the children of God day and night is the devil of self-righteousness. And the penitent souls he accuses all the time and he says: "It is no idea that you believe that the Son

of God cares of you as far as you are such you are." And he makes himself so righteous that the penitent (souls) are not able to think anything else but that it is the conscience which condemns them. The devil of self-righteousness requires a pure heart before he allows the penitent (souls) to go to Jesus. Where will the penitent (souls) receive a pure heart from except by Jesus who alone is able to make their hearts pure?

Do not plague Jesus anymore, you unbelieving (souls), but come now such as you are, and believe that God has not sent his Son to condemn you, who were already condemned before he came. If you still plague him by your unbelief, then it can happen that Jesus dies because of sorrow and you must die for ever.

Hear, you author and finisher of faith, the sigh of those who are sorrowful, penitent and doubting. Our Father etc.

The gospel: John 3: 16.

In the first part of the gospel of this day are (written) quite sweet promises of grace, but in the latter part is the condemnation (proclaimed). We shall now by God's grace consider who can own these promises of grace which are written in this gospel.

First consideration. Can Nicodemus own these promises of grace? Second consideration. Can the grace thieves own these promises? Third consideration. Can the penitent (souls) own these promises of grace?

We know that by the world is meant the people who are in the world, na-

mely the Mohammedans and the pagans, the Jews, the Scribes and the Pharisees, the publicans and the sinners who live on the Earth. If all of them would now own these promises of grace, all of them would without doubt become saved. But the Bible shows that the promises of grace do not belong to all, even if all would own them. It depends not only on owning but it depends of the state of soul the people are who own these promises of grace.

First consideration: Can Nicodemus own for himself these promises of grace: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved?" We do not know how Nicodemus understands those words of the Savior, but I suppose that Nicodemus and his brothers of faith own for themselves these delightful promises of grace as the words would have been spoken especially to them. Nicodemus is not so angry with the Savior as the Scribes and the Pharisees. Nicodemus has come to Jesus at night in order to ask him how he could become saved.

Nicodemus confesses his faith even if he does not (really) believe that Jesus is the Messiah or the Son of God, but he believes however that Jesus is a spiritual teacher, or in other words, that he is sent by God as a teacher. But sorry to say, Nicodemus has no sins to regret. Nicodemus does not feel that he is under the rule of the devil. He does not know that the rebirth is necessary to him. And therefore Nicodemus is far away from the feeling of grace.

But for sure he owns these promises of grace, that God sent not his Son

into the world to condemn the world. Nicodemus has lived so virtuously that not even the devil can condemn him. How could he then become condemned by the Son of God, who is so merciful to the whores and thieves, publicans and sinners, that he does not even condemn them. How could the virtuous people be condemned by the Son of God, who did not even condemn that whore whom the Pharisees brought to him? Of this follows that all Nicodemus' brothers of faith, all virtuous people own these delightful promises of grace for themselves, even if these delightful promises of grace do not belong to them, but only to the penitent (souls).

Second consideration. Can the gracethieves own these promises of grace? Yes, for sure, because the gracethieves are such people who without penitence and without repentance own for themselves God's grace and the forgiveness of sins, just like the Jews who believed in Jesus said to him: "We have one Father, even God. We be not born in fornication."

When such bastards whom the old man has killed immediately after the birth hear from Savior's own mouth that "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world," they say: "Do you not hear, you severe judges, that the Son of God has not come to condemn the world. Why do you then come and condemn us? If the christians would still say to the gracethieves: "He that believeth not is already condemned," then the gracethieves answer: "We believe in Jesus, we are every day lying on the foot of Jesus' cross." Oh!

so! You are lying on the foot of Jesus every day. If your consciences would become awakened you would see whose cross it is, on which foot you are lying.

But how can the gracethieves own these promises of grace, when they hate Jesus and his disciples? It happens in this way. The devil has reversed their eyes so that they consider the Christians as false prophets and wild spirits who do not give peace of conscience to the gracethieves. The gracethieves are of same kind as the sorrowless people who followed Jesus and believed in him as far as he preached about grace. But when he said some sharper words, they rejected him and said: "This is a harsh speech, who can tolerate it?" And when a blind poor wretch began to shout: "Jesus, Son of David, be gracious unto me!" then the sorrowless people commanded him to be quiet.

Such are the gracethieves they can not tolerate that someone shouts with higher voice to Jesus. This shouting plagues the gracethieves, and however they say: "We have one Father even God, we be not born in fornication." But they had to own these Saviors words: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Certainly it is now easy for the gracethieves to own these promises of grace, but who knows how easy it then will be to own grace when the conscience becomes awakened.

We say point-blank, if the gracethieves own these promises of grace before the conscience becomes awakened, before the right penitence takes place, before the devil and the world begin to

accuse them, if - say I - the gracethieves begin to own these promises of grace before they have cried in the pain of conscience, then they own (these promises of grace) wrongly and they go to hell, how firm their faith ever would be.

Nicodemus and his brothers of faith own these promises of grace therefore that they have lived virtuously. Because the selfrighteousness is the foundation of their salvation, they think in this way: "The Son of God has not come to condemn but to save us." From which distress has He come to save you? Do you really have a spiritual distress? Has the enemy tormented you? In the same manner the gracethieves own these promises of grace and say: "The Son of God has not come to condemn but help us." From which distress has he come to help you? Do you really have a distress? Is the devil plaguing you? Do you have the pain of conscience? Do you have doubt and lack of faith? Do you have a fear of death and destruction?

Nothing such has yet been heard from the mouth of the gracethief, but only this is heard, that he has faith and love and good works. And such people need no Savior because neither the devil nor the world accuses them (saying) that they are false prophets and wild spirits. But the Christians, they are false prophets and wild spirits, a cursed crowd which neither the devil nor the world can tolerate. With them the devil and the world has got angry. Without doubt the Savior has come to condemn them, but He has not come to condemn the sorrowless or the virtuous people, or the gracethieves.

Why did the Savior said to the Jews: "I do not condemn you but there is one that condemns you, namely Moses in whom you thrust." Moses has proclaimed God's law to all Jews and gracethieves. And the law of Moses shall condemn them because the sorrowless people and the gracethieves trample God's law under their feet. They believe and live in fornication. They believe and steal. They believe and drink. They believe and hate the Christians. And the devil himself forgives such people their sins and confirms their faith that they surely will be saved without penitence, without repentance, without trouble, without distress of heart. But once they will see for sure, in whom they have believed.

Third consideration: Can the penitent souls own these promises of grace: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved. These promises of grace belong surely to the penitent souls, but they are not always able to own these promises of grace. It depends on the fact that the devil of self-righteousness has got so terribly angry that he comes to accuse them that they have become locked out from God's grace. The devil of self-righteousness condemns them and says: "The Son of God does not receive such who are so great sinners. They must have a pure heart whom the Son of God can give his grace. Such who have so evil heart and so much evil thoughts, lusts and desires, are not acceptable to the Son of God.

The devil of self-righteousness wakes first other devils to tempt the peni-

tent (souls), for example the devil of whoredom, the devil of wrath and the devil of covetousness, and then he comes himself as an angel of light to preach to the penitent (souls): "You are not better than the devil. The Son of God must condemn you." In this way the self-righteousness preaches to the penitent (souls). And that is why they are not able to own these precious promises of grace: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved."

That word "the world" is a peculiar word, which those who are of the world have easier to own than those who are not of the world. If the Savior had said to Nicodemus: "God sent not his Son to condemn the penitent and doubting souls, then the sorrowful and penitent souls would have had easier to own these promises of grace. But those who are of the world own this word "the world" and say: "The world is not condemned. Why has the Savior said to Nicodemus: "God sent not his Son to condemn the world?"

But the doubting (souls) can not by any means own this promise of grace, even if the world owns it. The unpenitent whores, the unpenitent thieves, the unpenitent liquor dealers, the unpenitent drunkards are certainly able to own these promises of grace. But the penitent, sorrowful and distressed souls are not always able to own these promises of grace, because the devil of self-righteousness is so terrible to accuse and condemn the penitent souls that they sink into doubt, even if the whole Bible shows that by "the world" in this

place is meant exactly such souls who are in sorrow, pain, trouble and hard distress, and do not see anything else but death, condemnation and the abyss in front of them. These promises of grace are thus written for them: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

But immediately in the following verse is written the condemnation to the doubting souls: "He that believeth not is condemned already." Now the penitent and doubting souls surely feel this condemnation which belongs to the unbelieving ones. They feel their unhappy condition while they doubt about God's grace. They feel as if they were in hell, but however the devil of selfrighteousness presses them so powerfully that they sometimes cease with all hope, all trust, all striving, all crying and knocking on the door of grace. Some become quite strengthless according to body and soul.

But hear now, you doubting and into unbelief pressed souls. Jesus has said: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You are now that world, for which sake he has given his only begotten Son. God sent not his Son to condemn the world. You doubting ones are the world which the Son of God has come to release from sin, death and the rule of the devil. You are the only souls in the world whom the Son of God can pardon and receive. You are the only souls in the world who feel your unhappiness, your distress, your nakedness. You are the

only souls in the world, for whose sake the Son of God has come down from heaven. You are the prisoners of death whom the Son of God has come to redeem.

Receive now the Son of God, when he has come to give himself to you. He has been captured that you might be released from the chains of the death and the devil. He has given himself to death (so) that you might live. He has gone down into hell (so) that you might be released and go to heaven. Receive now the Son of God and do not plague him by your unbelief anymore. Do not make him sorry by your unbelief.

See, now the Son of God dies of sorrow if you do not come to him such as you are: naked, lame, like the devil. Do not let his blood shed in vain for your sake, but take heed of the blood of God's Lamb, you sorrowful, penitent, doubting and distressed souls, before the blood of his body runs out, before Josef and Nicodemus puts his dead body into the grave of the dead faith.

Follow his bloody footprints from the Garden to Golgotha, and stand near the cross and consider his pains until you are allowed to feel in your hearts the power of his blood. Shout, you wretched ones: "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us!" Shout, you blind, before Jesus Nazarene passes by, and believe that for your sake the Son of God has come into the world, and for your sake he has been in that great pain and tribulation. Believe that you are that world, which God has loved so much that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting

life. You penitent souls, you sorrowful and doubting (souls), you are that world, which the Son of God has not come to condemn.

And you graced souls whom that great grace has happened, that you have been able to believe in Gods' only begotten Son. You hear and comprehend that the Son of God has not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world. You are also that world which the Son of God has come to release from sin, death and the rule of the devil. You are that world, which the Son of God can not condemn.

Pray for all doubting (souls) who sigh under the shadow of death, that all prisoners of unbelief would become free, that all unbelieving (souls) would begin to believe, that all sorrowful (souls) would become able to rejoice, that all naked wretches, who have begun to follow Jesus, would together with you come to the Fatherland.

We hope that God who has so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. We believe that he hears the sighs of the penitent, sorrowful and distressed (souls). We believe that they shall see God's Son glorified on Mt. Sion. They shall see the great Cross-bearer and thorn-crowned King in blood-red garments treading the wine-fat pressing red grapes in order to taste that sweet wine that is grown in the Northland. And then the wedding of Lamb will be celebrated on Mt. Sion and the bridesmaids will dance on the pure floor of heaven and sing eternal and never ceasing song of thanksgiving and

praise to God and the Lamb for the great and infinite love that he has loved us with. Amen.

Holy Trinity Sermon A

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” John 3: 7 - 8

When the Saviour wanted to explain to Nicodemus how new birth takes place, He takes a parable of the wind which bloweth where it listeth and although man does not know from whence it cometh, nevertheless he hears the sound thereof. Likewise when the spiritual wind blows, man knows its sound or its effects although he does not know from whence this spiritual wind comes nor where it goes. That much we understand of this parable, that with the wind is understood the effects of the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost as a mighty rushing wind and the people heard the sound of it but only the disciples of Jesus felt its effects in their hearts, but they did not know from whence this spiritual wind came; only this much they understood, that it came from Heaven. But the sorrowless made mockery of these effects of the Holy Spirit and said: “These are full of new wine.” The heathens of this time do not care to say that the Christians are full of new wine, but they sometimes surmise that the effects of the Holy Spirit are the effects of the devil's

spirit, and some imagine that they make themselves to be like that. But we hear that the wind of the Holy Spirit bloweth where it listeth and you hear the sound of it, namely, that person who is not deaf hears its sound but the deaf do not hear the sound of the wind. A person who does not have a conscience does not feel the effects of the Holy Spirit. But many a person who hears the sound of the wind of the Holy Spirit does not quite know where it comes from. When the Holy Spirit through His preceding grace blows upon him a spiritual sorrow which is after the mind of God, many think at first that it means or prophesies misfortune. But many also war against the effects of the Holy Spirit thinking that the wind of the Holy Spirit will carry him to the billowing sea of unbelief and will drown him in the waves of doubt.

But do not fear, you person who has been moved by the wind of the Holy Spirit, that this wind will carry you to perdition. The wind of the world, to which you have formerly spread out your sail, will carry you to that boundless sea from where you shall never escape to the harbor if you do not begin to row more quickly against the wind of the world, especially now when the wind of the Holy Spirit has begun to blow so strongly that the large fish flee to the ocean's depths, and the swallows are raised up in the air although they do not move their wings, for the wind carries them. And even the stouter trees begin to bend when that powerful wind blows upon them. Now it would be the best time for the weary travelers, who have

strayed so far from the Fatherland on this world's billowing sea, to turn back to the harbor before the spiritual wind ceases to blow. Who knows if tomorrow or next week on Friday this wind will have turned or ceased to blow and then it will go according to the Savior's words: "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." Here we should consider what it signifies that the wind comes and goes. Many a seaman sailing with a favorable wind towards eternity would surely wish that the wind would come when he has turned back toward the Fatherland. He prays God that this spiritual wind would carry him to the longed-for harbor. But if the wind ceases to blow, then the ship also stands in one place and the seaman, who surely wishes that the wind would blow so that he would soon arrive at the Fatherland, must himself begin to row when the wind ceases, but this rowing becomes so heavy for the lazy one that he must begin to doubt whether he will ever reach the Fatherland. In that circumstance he must think about where the wind went which first blew. But the Saviour has said: "Thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." But no doubt the journey is slow for a seaman, when he himself must row, how shall it then go when he must yet row against the wind? When the wind of the world blows so powerfully against them that the waves of doubt pour in, then the disciples come into distress and they are finally compelled to wake Jesus with their prayers

and say: "Lord save us, we perish." We do not know why Jesus allows His disciples to sometimes be in great distress because of doubts, but it is probably beneficial for them that they are sometimes in such a circumstance, for at least they must begin to pray the Great Still-er of the wind of the world, that He would still the hard wind and would yet let that wind blow which is favorable. If the disciples would always have a favorable wind, they would have no distress, but then neither would they pray to Jesus but would always think, "Now there is a favorable wind, surely we will soon reach the harbor." Such travel is surely easy and pleasant, but the Lord has seen it necessary that the disciples may often be in distress because of the severe wind of the world, and cry: "Lord save us, we perish!" The god of this world raises such a tempest on the world's billowing sea that the waves of doubt want to drown them in the depths of the eternal sea. And then they are compelled to awaken the Great Hero with their prayers, who stills the wind with His word and it again becomes calm for a short time. Such is the travel of Jesus' disciples upon the sea; they must often struggle with tempests and sail against the wind. Therefore their traveling also becomes slow so that they must often doubt whether they will ever reach the Fatherland. But the children of the world always have a favorable wind and they also sail with great speed to eternity until their ship crashes into a rock and goes to pieces. And then they cry out and swear and some finally become godly and begin to pray to the unknown god of whom

they have never given thought. But it is too late to begin to seek the unknown god when the ship crashes upon the world's biggest rock. It would have been better if even those wretches would have looked ahead at where the dangerous places are. The proverb says: Surely there are wise men on the land when an accident happens on the sea. However, this world's seamen are not wise on land either, for when they sometimes come to land they drink, swear, fight, commit adultery and dance and are joyous. But when they again set out to sea in a state of drunkenness, then they spread out all their sails to the winds of the world. And if they, at this speed, meet some small ship in which the disciples of Jesus struggle against the wind, then this world's seamen ridicule Jesus' disciples and say: "You have such a small boat." and also call them fools who sail thus against the wind. If one of Jesus' disciples cries out to the world's seamen, "Watch out for yourselves! Burning rapids are before you, do not sleep at the brink of the rapids.", then they answer: "Just keep going, there is no distress." And if the disciples of Jesus yet cry: "Do not go so boldly to hell", then the children of the world answer: "There it is warm for the asses!" And so they go with great speed into the burning rapids.

Now those few souls who have heard the noise of the spiritual wind should pray the Great Ruler of the Wind and Weather, that He might still the tempests of this world and give them to understand from where this spiritual wind has come and to where it has gone. For the Spirit of God is pro-

bably not in that powerful wind, nor in the thunder, nor in the earthquake, but in a still small voice. (1 Kings 19: 12), nevertheless it is not good for the disciples of Jesus to travel if the spiritual wind ceases to blow and a strong head wind also rises up on the world's billowing sea. Then distress comes to the disciples of Jesus and they must awaken Jesus with fervent prayers and say, "Lord help us, we perish." Oh, Holy Spirit, Creator, and Refuge for the cold hearts, Oh bright fire and flame, kindle in us burning love, to keep Your word and teachings, and to hold fast to them in all temptations. Kyrie Eleeson. Our Father, which art in Heaven, and so forth.

Gospel John 3: 1-15

With the guidance of our Holy Gospel we shall through God's grace consider: How and in what manner an old person can go into his mother's womb and be born again.

First consideration: That which is born of the flesh is flesh.

Second consideration: That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

May the true Father of the new man grant His grace that all who are in the tribulation of new birth would be able to cry with such a loud voice that the voice would reach the Parent's ears and that the new man who is born with great tribulation may be like his Father, not a bastard nor like the one who is born before time. May the old man die and may the new man live! Amen.

First consideration: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." With the

flesh is understood man's corrupted nature and evil desires, not only inherited sin which has been inherited from Adam and Eve, but also committed sins, which are committed with thoughts, words, and deeds. From the flesh through the heart come evil thoughts, evil lusts and desires, fornication, theft, envy, greed, wrath, honor, and self-righteousness. It is the old man or old Adam which in this place is called flesh, and this old man is, in a natural state, so large that he scarcely fits through the church door, and so virtuous that he cannot even endure the mention of fornication and theft. He is so honorable that he asks about his honor when he is barked at innocently. For even if perhaps he had committed adultery during the night, no one is allowed to reproach him for that in the day. Even if he has stolen in the night, no one is allowed to rebuke him in the day for that deed. Said in a word: Old Adam is such a great lord that not many are equal to him in power and lordly dominion. He is so virtuous that the angels in Heaven have not lived as virtuously as he. He is so honorable that God does not have as much tenor as does old Adam. Surely for that matter with his mouth he confesses himself to be a sinner, although he has such a poor memory that he does not remember at all what sins he has committed. But this confession of sin he reads only before God, for he has received such enlightenment from the word of God that no one needs to cry out their sins to the world. If he would need to know anything of spiritual matters, then he goes during the night to Jesus to display his

Christianity, so that the lords of this world would not bark at him as a Galilean. Once Nicodemus tried to speak something as in defense of Jesus, but when the other lords of the world began to ridicule him for the sake of his Christianity and to say: "Are you also a Galilean?", then Nicodemus became silent and spoke nothing more of Jesus. He let the lords lie against Jesus before the church council as well as before Pilate. If he has not consented to their council and deeds, neither has he spoken anything in Jesus' defense nor spoken a single word which would have been for the Saviour's honor. Surely for this reason the brothers in faith of Nicodemus are severely provoked if someone doubts of Nicodemus' salvation. They imagine, namely, that Nicodemus was saved because of this, that he was helpful to Joseph in burying the body of Jesus. But now the question is this, which constitutes the sum of Nicodemus' faith: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:4) This is now the sum of Nicodemus' faith, that an old person cannot go into his mother's womb and be born. And this is also the sum of the faith of those who now take Nicodemus into the kingdom of Heaven, they have not gone into their mother's womb. And how could such a great lord fit in his mother's womb? Would he not suffocate? That is just what the brothers in faith of Nicodemus fear, that old Adam would suffocate if he would go into his mother's womb. But there you must go, good lord, and old Adam must become small so that he

would fit in his mother's womb. Otherwise no one can be born again. That which is once born of the flesh is flesh. But such a pious roan will probably not have sin worthy of penitence. Therefore I think that Nicodemus and his brothers in faith probably do not have sin even though they confess themselves to be sinners out of custom. But what sin have they committed? They probably do not feel that to be a sin that they go to Jesus at night when for the sake of honor they do not care to go during the day. The Saviour has once said: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven." And should it not become a sin to Nicodemus and his brothers in faith that he is a dumb dog when he sees how Jesus and His disciples are tormented by the lords of the world? Without a doubt Nicodemus shows his love best when he lays Jesus' body honorably into the grave. And most surely the disciples mention this and consider it good, but afterwards Nicodemus did not fit anymore in the Christians' meetings, for he was not mentioned afterwards in the Acts of the Apostles. And how could such a lord fit in the Christians' meetings when he does not fit in his mother's womb that he could be born again? So it seems from all circumstances, that Nicodemus has never become a Christian although he otherwise was a decent old man. And for this reason neither can the others who always hold fast to Nicodemus' coattails ever become Christians because of this, that they being old cannot go into their mother's womb and be born again. In this way,

these weighty words are imputed to them: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

But if Nicodemus has not become a Christian, then where will the others go who openly are enemies of Jesus' cross? And to which place did Judas go, who was so loving toward the Saviour that he gave Him a kiss? And to which place did Herod and Pilate go, of whom one made mockery of the Saviour and the other condemned Him against his conscience? Could all of these be in the Kingdom of Heaven, although we do not believe that? So think the wise of the world that if someone would be so unfortunate that he would fall into hell, then without a doubt God will pull him up from there; God would surely not be almighty if He would not be able to pull up from hell the unfortunate souls who fall down there. But some do not wish to come up from hell, especially such who say to the Christians: "Let us go to hell in peace, there it will warm the ass."

Second consideration: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." With the spirit is understood in this place all the effects of the Holy Spirit which were first revealed on the day of Pentecost and afterwards effected in the Christians' hearts in every place where the true Christianity has been found. But as then the effects of the Holy Spirit were first ridiculed by the world's throng and then hated and persecuted, so it happens even now. The Spirit then effected power to speak with new tongues and so it happens even today; the Christians still speak with new tongues such words which a sorrowless wretch pro-

bably cannot understand. The Spirit then gave Peter power to rebuke the world's throng and condemn them as murderers of the Saviour. And so the Spirit even now gives power to rebuke and condemn the sorrowless. But this condemnation the world cannot endure, therefore they become angry at the disciples of Jesus and bring them before the court. The Spirit even then effected through the word a true repentance in some so that they received a prick in their heart and began with heartfelt sorrow to ask the disciples: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) So the Holy Spirit yet today effects a true sorrow and grief in those who have not hardened. But the devil's spirit effects so much ridicule, anger, and hatred in the hearts of the sorrowless that they begin to hate and persecute the Christians and because of this hatred and persecution they receive a terrible condemnation. The Spirit also effected a burning love between the Christians so that they had one heart and one soul. But the devil afterwards got to dispurse the sheep through inward strife, for which reason the heathens had occasion to accuse the Christians and say: "They do not agree between themselves." But nevertheless all Christianity did not come to naught because of this although the heathens imagine that the Christians are false prophets and wild spirits when they do not give peace of conscience to honorable people. But the heathens strive the most between themselves and also with the Christians before the court. The heathens drink, curse and fight, commit adultery, and steal, and then

they say to the Christians: “You are false prophets and wild spirits, but we live according to God’s word and the door of grace is open to us as well as to you.” If we now behold how those live who are born of the flesh, then we see that the works of the flesh are manifest which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, persecution, variance, envy, wrath, strife, discord, heresies, malice, murders, drunkenness, gluttony and such like. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. (Galatians 5: 19-23) Without a doubt from these characteristics it is known who have been born of the flesh and who have been born of the Spirit. But those few souls who have been born of the Spirit and the incorruptable seed which He has sown in our hearts, let them pray the true Father who has given them life that this Spirit of truth may always remain in their hearts and the Spirit of the elect children, whereby we cry: “Abba, Dear Father”, that Spirit which testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God. Oh dear Parent who has given us life, protect the weak spirit of all newly born ones so that the enemy would not be able to kill them, or the cold wind of the world chill them. Swaddle the newborn in clean linen and let them suckle your grace-flowing breast that they would cease crying, and smile at Him who has given them birth, resting in His bosom. And when they begin to crawl after their Parent and to cry His name that you, Oh dear Parent, would help them up from the cold floor of the world and would

carry them into the eternal joy of Heaven. Amen!

Holy Trinity Sunday, Sermon B.

“We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen: and ye receive not our witness.” John 3:11.

Thus spoke the Saviour to Nicodemus, who came to Jesus at night thinking about these spiritual matters. But he was so ignorant, although he held himself to be wise, that he thought the new birth impossible and also not necessary for an old person. No doubt Nicodemus thought as other sorrowless also, that the new birth has happened in baptism, that no one who has been baptized needs to be born again, no matter how many times he would have broken the covenant of baptism. “We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness.” Such ones as Nicodemus will not receive the testimony from people, nor from God either. We have seen such people who certainly hold themselves to be wise and think they know where the road goes to heaven. And if some Christian would tell such a man what he knows about the new birth, no doubt they then say as Nicodemus, “How can a man be born when he is old? Namely, it is impossible for an old heathen to think about this whole matter of new birth. Because first, he does not think that new birth is necessary since he, in his mind, has already been reborn in baptism, and secondly, he thinks that matter to be impossible when he, like Nicodemus, feels how big and fat an

old person is. How can such a big old Adam become so small that he can fit into his mother's womb? Therefore he grumbles that he has already once been reborn in baptism, and that he needs no longer to be reborn another time. All those go along with this intellect who cannot entirely bypass this place, for Nicodemus was a master in Israel and consequently had read the Scriptures. Therefore he could not tell the Saviour that new birth was not necessary; he knew from the Word of God that new birth was demanded. It is not known if Nicodemus had ever experienced this place so far that he, from his own experience, could have felt the new birth necessary. It is hardly possible that Nicodemus has had that knowledge, for he built so much upon self-righteousness that he could not have experienced the whole matter to be necessary. There are many in this congregation who feel this matter to be necessary, but they also feel that the old man is so big and fat that it is not possible to fit into the mother's womb and be born again. Some again do not feel this matter to be necessary, for they think that the new birth has already happened in baptism and that one need not be born again. The first ones who feel that the new birth which happened in baptism does not help, think in general that it will happen yet before they die, and in that supposition the time of grace is spent. And when death comes they feel that it is now impossible to be saved and to be born again, since it has not happened before. Those grace thieves and servants of self-righteousness, who rely upon that new birth which has hap-

pened in baptism, live boldly, and when death comes they must condemn themselves and say, "Now it is too late, nothing will help anymore since it has not happened before." Then even that reliance they had in the grace of baptism ends. Such an end has come to many a despiser of Christianity and we have seen that; and therefore we confess and testify "what we have seen, but ye receive not our witness." We have also seen such ones who at one time felt the grace of new birth to be very necessary, and at that time they had a great desire to become saved. But because of love of the world, the sorrow of penitence ended and they went back into the world and became worse than before. What kind of an end has come to them? We have seen that a poor end has come to them, and therefore we testify what we have seen, and ye receive not our witness. We have also seen such ones who have once been born again and come into a condition of grace. How has it gone with them, when through unwatchfulness they have fallen from grace and do not care to arise? They became seven times worse, and when death came upon them, the door of grace was closed, and the devil of self-righteousness began to condemn them terribly that there was no possible hope other than destruction, judgement and a curse. All this we have seen. "And we speak what we do know and testify what we have seen, and ye receive not our witness." We have seen such fools who live like animals, drink, curse, laugh and mock the truth, and are joyous when they commit evil. What kind of an end will come to them? They

have here laughed at their own destruction, and when death comes they begin to become delirious and to curse. They ask the devil to come and take care of them. They also curse on their death bed and other pagans say, "That was a nice death." The sorrowless pastor makes a beautiful obituary, so all believe that the soul became saved. All this we have seen, "and we speak what we know and testify what we have seen, and ye receive not our witness." And now when these matters have not happened secretly, but openly, that all have seen how unfortunately it has happened to those who have not received our testimony, so we must place all these matters before the eyes of the sorrowless and remind them of their mortality, to show them a picture of those who have during these years left the world in unbelief and doubts and condemned themselves on the death bed, although we know that the sorrowless no longer care for any example. No matter what they would see or hear, they do not believe that hell is hot before the skin gets hot. Those few souls who are assured of the new birth and have thereby been born of that incorruptible seed into the heavenly truth, and have received the child-right and the spirit of the elect children, wherein they cry, "Abba, dear Father", these few souls surmise well that in this place it is not fitting to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. But we must speak to the brothers in faith of Nicodemus as the Saviour spoke to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of Heaven." (John 3:3) Our hope is that

those few souls who have truly been born again and have wept in that new atmosphere, awaiting that the Heavenly Parent, who is their true Father, would soon take them up from the cold floor of the world into His lap, and would wrap them into clean linens and allow them to suckle the grace-flowing breasts, and would wash them clean in the water of life, will pray also in behalf of those who are in that strait gate, that they would become so small that they would fit through. Hear, Thou Father of the crying children, the sighs of those little ones who are so small that they fit into the Parent's lap. Our Father, who art in the heavens, etc.

The Gospel: John 3:1-7.

We must now, through God's grace and in accordance with the above-read holy text, consider why Nicodemus cannot believe that the old man must be born again. First, he does not believe that it is possible. Second, he does not know how it can happen. Nicodemus is no fool who blasphemes Christ and the Christianity. He is no saloonkeeper who gathers the drunkards around him and metes out to them the drink of the fools. He is no drunkard that he would, on Saturday or even on Sunday, go to the saloonkeeper to pray that the gracious saloonkeeper would open his tap and draw strength for the spirit from the barrel. Nicodemus is not such a man who runs after whores and feels their breasts. He is also no curser or light-minded one, not a lover of finery of the world, but he is very meek, honorable, and on top of that, a master in Israel, a

valiant teacher who expounds God's law and God's ordinances to the people, and is kept in high esteem among the other lords. Nicodemus is not angry with Christ like the Pharisees, but he kept Christ as a spiritual teacher and consequently must have believed His doctrine to be right, but that place of the new birth he does not hold to be right, for in his mind it is impossible to believe that an old person can be reborn. For he asks, "How can a man be born when he is old?" And why did he not believe it to be possible that an old person can be reborn? However for the reason that he knows how big and fat the old man is, how hard and stiff the old man's heart is, how wicked and stubborn the old man is to comply to that. If Nicodemus would have known the evil, stiffness and hardness of his heart, he would have surely confessed to that Spiritual Teacher his pitiful condition and asked, "What must I do that I could inherit eternal life?" But it appears that Nicodemus was far from self-knowledge; he who was meek and pious had, without a doubt, founded his salvation on self-righteousness. Nicodemus certainly had no doubt of his salvation as the palsied man. He had no sorrow like the disciples after the death of the Saviour, but it is believable that he came to show his Christianity to Jesus, whom he kept as a spiritual teacher. And even then he kept the talk of new birth to be strange, when Jesus spoke with him so, who was already reborn in the time of circumcision. Such speech would have been befitting to the heathens who had not yet been circumcized or baptized, but Nicodemus had

that faith that when a person is once reborn in baptism, he is then a good Christian, and need not be reborn any more. And such a faith the brothers in faith of Nicodemus have even now, that a baptized Christian is a Christian already; he is already reborn in baptism and need not be reborn another time. And though ten year old children here know that the new birth which has happened in baptism does not help adults anymore, all the same grace thieves depend upon that, that the new birth has happened then in baptism, and so a baptized heathen only needs to believe that he is reborn and renew his covenant of baptism. But, however, Jesus did not consider that Nicodemus was reborn when He demanded new birth of him and said, "Ye must be born again." Nicodemus considered himself reborn in baptism, but Jesus did not consider him reborn but began to demand that he must be born again. Behold, this dead faith is now the grace thieves' only refuge, when the devil puts them to seek the new birth all the way back to baptism, for which reason they need not be born again. Behold, thus the devil deceives the grace thieves when a Christian urges them to rebirth. And a Christian knows surely that if he had been reborn ten times before, it does not help him tomorrow if he breaks that covenant and falls from grace, but he must be born again, he must become a child, otherwise all the former rebirth is in vain.

The second consideration: But how would Nicodemus have understood what new birth is? Perhaps he, like many other grace thieves, thought that

he had already been reborn in baptism. But how now does he know what new birth is? If Nicodemus had read in the 66th chapter of Isaiah of the pain of new birth, then he must have thought that it was the pain of circumcision in the flesh. But that spiritual pain in the heart when the heart is circumsized must be unknown to Nicodemus. And what the prophets speak of broken hearts, what did Nicodemus know about that, who has not experienced what kind a broken heart is? What David reminds in his hymns of penitence, of his sorrow and his pain, how could Nicodemus understand them since he did not need to be truly penitent? And now if those places from the Scriptures are brought forth to the grace thieves, where the pains of new birth are depicted, as for example, the words of the Saviour, "A woman, when she is in travail, she has pain." How can the grace thieves and servants of self-righteousness understand these places in that way as the disciples understand them, who themselves have experienced so. And when, in the Bible, it speaks of that joy and rejoicing which is kindled in a believer's heart through living faith, how do those who have not been reborn understand, who have not experienced it? They grope about with the intellect and with that dead faith which they have, but the matter itself is not there. These and other places of the Scriptures Nicodemus has never understood, although they all pertain to that new birth. And when Nicodemus did not understand what new birth was even with his intellect, how could he then believe new birth to be possible

and necessary? He who knows that new birth is necessary has already felt himself condemned and cursed, and truly many in this congregation have felt themselves condemned and cursed. Many have condemned themselves under this judgement and condemnation. Many under this judgement and condemnation have felt that it is impossible to become saved in such a state, but from there they have turned back into the world. They have not cared to knock on the strait gate. They have not believed it possible for a person to be born again when he is old, or to become so small and so slender, that he would have fit inside of the strait gate. And when they have turned around from the strait gate into the world, they have begun to oppose the Christians with a bad conscience and to upset the movements, and finally they begin to seek for signs of grace in the bottle and also in worse places. Nicodemus kept the Saviour's doctrine to be right up to the time of the Saviour's death, but when he saw what this doctrine effected in the Christians, when they began to speak with new tongues, then Nicodemus' Christianity ended. Nothing more was heard of the man. Gamaliel, that renowned wise man in whose school Paul was taught the wisdom of the Pharisees, the same Gamaliel groped with the intellect that much, that he prohibited the other lords from persecuting the Christians until they could see if it was from God or man, for Gamaliel was so blind, although he was a great teacher of the Scriptures, he was not able to know or try along side of the Word of God that was the Christianity of God or

of man. But nevertheless he held the persecution of Christians to be wrong, until that time when it could be seen what becomes of it, as some pagans even now have preached at the beginning of this awakening, "We shall see if it is lasting." Where was Nicodemus then when the other lords of the council began to persecute else Christians? It is not mentioned anywhere that he would have defended the Christianity or spoken in behalf of the Christians in the council, or said as much as Gamaliel, that to cease with the persecution until it is seen which way things turn. Hear now, all you brothers in faith of Nicodemus: You have now seen what excuse came to Nicodemus, why he could not believe that new birth was necessary or possible. It was his own holiness, self righteousness, which made him unbelieving in that place. He thought himself to be reborn in baptism or circumcision. And may even now depend upon that new birth which has happened in baptism, and in that place they deceive themselves. The brothers in faith of Nicodemus are not whores, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor cursers, but they are very meek and pious, or such people whom the world thanks and praises. And if it were possible that some person would reach the kingdom of heaven without new birth, then Nicodemus would be the first in the kingdom of heaven. And all others who are hanging on to Nicodemus' coat tails would also have hope that they, too, would reach the same place if they would try to live as meekly as Nicodemus has lived. For Nicodemus has lived so meekly that not one Christian

can live so meekly. Nicodemus has also been a secret disciple of Christ, as Joseph of Arimathia. He has believed Christ's doctrine to be right. He has not borne hatred in his heart toward Christ like the Pharisees. He has also defended Christ against the lords of the world. But when he once became blasphemed by the enemies of Christ because of that matter, he became mute. Nicodemus could not become honorless because of Christ and begin to bear the cross. Honor was so great in him, that he did not care to come to Christ in the day time, for if he had come in the day time, then the other lords of the world would have barked at him as being a disciple of that false prophet and disturber of the people. But when he came at night, he could protect his honor. All of the brothers in faith of Nicodemus come to Christ at night. They want to come into the kingdom of heaven as thieves, like that woman who began to sneak in amongst the crowd, but Christ did not allow that woman to go with the stolen grace, but openly she had to confess all her deeds, all the shameful places had to be uncovered, all her deeds had to be brought to light. The honor of the world was one excuse why Nicodemus could not come into true Christianity, And the second greatest excuse was self-righteousness, which made the new birth impossible. Now you see, all you brothers in faith of Nicodemus, in what place you are fastened and with what rope the devil holds you. The devil of meekness, the devil of honor, and the devil of self-righteousness prevent you from coming into the kingdom of heaven. The sor-

rowful disciples of Jesus, who wept and lamented behind the closed doors, can experience great joy when that crucified One appears before their eyes, but Nicodemus has never seen Christ after His resurrection. The new birth happened to the disciples of Jesus on Pentecost day, when the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to speak with new tongues, proclaiming the mighty works of God. Then the honor of the world ended, then they ceased loving their own lives. Then the crowd of the devil began to blaspheme them. Then they received a foretaste of that joy and rejoicing which surpasses all understanding. And to that blessed condition those few souls should strive, who because of sorrow and doubt are not able to believe that Jesus is still living. And you unbelieving Thomas, put your finger into the print of the nails if you dare. And you sorrowful Mary Magdalene, sit now on the edge of the grave, and weep when your Saviour has died. Sit on the edge and weep and lament so long, until you see the crucified and thorn-crowned King alive, standing before your eyes, that you could get to rejoice and proclaim about Him to your brethren, that Jesus is living, and that they can see Him as He is, face to face. Amen.

First Sunday after Trinity 1853.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
Matt. 5:3.

These words of the Saviour, where the gospel is preached to the poor, are

taken from the Sermon on the Mount. They testify that natural poverty is not in question here. There are many in the world who are in natural poverty, but there are not many spiritually poor. We have perceived that the poor of the world are often so sorrowless that spiritual poverty does not fit into their hearts. They almost have such a faith that the Christians are obliged to help them, and if the Christians are not able to fill their colon, then they say, "What kind of a Christian is he who does not help the poor," although Jesus said to the Jews, "You have the poor with you always and whensoever you will you may do them good, but me you have not always,." From these words is heard that Jesus is not always to be had, but the poor are everywhere. Jesus has not said not to help the poor, but He has said, "You have the poor with you always, but me you have not always." When we take heed where so many poor have come from, we find that God has not made some poor and some rich. But the enemy, who confuses the intellect of the people with fleshly lusts, he has made the people poor, and there are not found many who can say, "God made me poor." God has given a healthy body and a healthy soul; it is a very rare person who naturally has become maimed. And if there were no other poor than those who naturally have become poor, there would not be many poor on the earth. But the greater portion of the poor have become poor through their own ungodly life: some through drunkenness, some through adultery, some through pride, who in their youth have lost their health and in

that way become poor. For that reason we have the poor always with us, as Jesus has said. But Jesus is not always with us. If now these poor of the world would become spiritually poor, then it would be joyous for the Christians to help them, who have the means to help, but all the poor of the world do not want to become spiritually poor as Lazarus, who lay at the rich man's gate. Without a doubt, Lazarus had learned from natural poverty, which poverty is acceptable to God. Lazarus had, through natural poverty, become a spiritual beggar, and although now many a poor one takes for himself a false consolation from poor Lazarus, namely such poor to whom poverty is acceptable for a foundation of salvation. However Lazarus did not come into Abraham's bosom through natural poverty, but through spiritual poverty which made him into a spiritual beggar. Have all poor now become poor in spirit? Are all poor now humble before God? Has natural poverty been able to humble them and chastise them? All poor have not yet become like Lazarus, The sorrowless poor always want to be proud and measure their Christianity with the measure of their colon, but Jesus has said, "You have the poor with you always, but me you do not have always." This must be a sign to you, you spiritually poor, that Jesus is not always with you. And when you can sometimes enjoy His merciful presence, then you must allow that woman to be at peace, who has a glass of pure and precious spikenard ointment. Let her waste it, as long as she pours it upon Jesus, for Jesus is not always with you. And

you poor of the world, who think that the Christians are obliged to feed you, do not think that the woman did wrong, who poured the precious spikenard ointment upon Jesus' head and did not give you the price. Do you think that Judas is the best guardian of the poor, who murmured and scolded that woman because of pouring the ointment? Surely Judas pities the poor and has mercy on them because of his own purse, but he has no mercy on Jesus, nor does he believe at all that the woman who poured her love upon the head of Jesus has done rightly; but Judas figures that it would be better if the price of the ointment was given to the poor. But you have the poor with you always and whensoever you want, you can give to them, but Jesus is not always with you. If now those poor who, like poor Lazarus, are poor in spirit, would lie at the rich man's gate, who is not so merciless as that rich man who did not even place a plaster upon the sores of the poor one, but the dogs licked his sores when the rich man did not have as much conscience as a dog. We have seen that the dogs must lick the sores of those poor ones, who lie at the rich man's gate full of sores. We have seen that the dogs cannot be without licking the sores of such poor who lie at that rich man's gate, who is one exorbitantly rich man, who is not so merciless as that rich man, who does not have compassion on poor Lazarus, nor does he put a plaster on that poor man's wounds. But that rich man who is in Heaven without a doubt will place a plaster upon his wounds, and will carry his soul to Abraham's bosom where poor Lazarus

will be comforted. Hear, you great Lord of all possessions, the prayer of the poor, sorrowful, and miserable ones. Our Father who art in the heavens, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 16: 19-31.

According to our holy gospel, we must, at this holy moment, consider: Why the rich man had to go to hell and why Lazarus had to come into Abraham's bosom. The first consideration: The rich man had not gathered his possessions by stealing or by crookedness, and all the same he had to go into the place of torment. The second consideration: That poor Lazarus has done good to no one, but has been a trouble and a burden to the rich man, and all the same he was taken by the angels to Abraham's bosom. Here now are two men, who are entirely contrary to each other. The one was kept in great honor in the world, the other lay sick and under foot at the rich man's gate. To the one the lords of the world came to eat and drink, to dance and make merry, and on the other, no one cares to look. The one wore purple and precious linen clothes, the other does not have a rag on his naked skin. The one has a beautiful courtyard, beautiful horses, painted sleds and carriages, but the other has no roof over his head. The one is certainly able to eat delicacies, drink sweet drinks, carry finery; the other has nothing to put into his mouth. If it now went according to the world's judgment and surmising, then the rich man should have become saved by all means, but it would be fitting to see Lazarus in the place of torment.

The first consideration: The rich man has not acquired his possessions through nor stealing nor by deceit, he had inherited that great wealth. Why did he have to come into the place of torment, when he had been no evil-doer? The rich man's brothers would probably ask that. For what reason must this meek, pious, and honest man go into such an unfortunate place? For no other reason but that he had received his good things in the world. So Abraham said: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things. You did not seek any other good in the world, but only the good of this world, namely possessions, honor, finery, beauty, sweets and good days. This pleasant life you have been able to enjoy in the world, and be satisfied now with that." If the rich man would have stopped his vain and foolish life at the right time, would have sold all his possessions and helped the poor, as Jesus said to that rich youth who came to ask, "What should I do to inherit eternal life?" If the rich man had believed Moses and the prophets, what they have written of penitence and repentance, then, no doubt, he would have had concern over his immortal soul, would have begun to seek in time for that imperishable substance, which moth nor rust corrupteth, nor thieves break in and steal. But his heart was so attached to the world and to those matters which are of the world, that he cared for nothing else but that good which the world gives. There now was the right reason why he had to go to destruction. Some of the brothers of the rich man surely say that the rich man was not

harsh and merciless toward the poor. But Lazarus would not have lain at the rich man's gate if he would have received help from him. It appears from all aspects of the matter that the dogs had a better conscience than the rich man, for the dogs licked his wounds from compassion, but the rich man did not place a plaster upon his sores. But let it be as the brothers of the rich man think, that he was merciful toward the poor. What could he have gained then with that showing of mercy? Many a rich man in these times is merciful toward the poor. He distributes only a little to the closest poor ones, and instead makes many poor with his liquor business, so all the brothers of the rich man say after his death, "Surely that man has become saved without a doubt." How do you know that he became saved? Yes, that we know, that he was so good at helping the poor. But think first how many he made poor with his liquor business and with exorbitant prices, which he placed on his merchandise. Place also there his hatred toward the Christianity, and tell me when has he made penitence and repentance of vanity of the world, finery and pleasure, and say then, "This man became saved." But if nothing more is demanded for salvation than the supporting of the poor, which is now found with many rich men, then certainly all the rich men could promise themselves good days in the kingdom of heaven. But all rich men should begin to believe Moses and the prophets, what they write about penitence and repentance. Those wretches should also begin to believe that without true conversion not one person will be saved,

for the rich men cannot believe what Moses and the prophets have written about penitence and repentance. The rich of this world do not want to believe that there is a hell to be found for the impenitent, and a heaven for the penitent and believing ones. First they would want to hear fresh news from hell before they would believe that there is a hell; and if all the poor would yet arise from the dead and would begin to preach repentance to the brothers of the rich man, they would not believe, they would not make repentance. If God Himself would come from heaven, they would not even then believe and make repentance, for the brothers of the rich man will certainly not make repentance before the skin gets hot. The brothers of the rich man become angry with all the preachers of repentance, whether the preacher of repentance came from heaven or hell, from the heights or the depths, it makes no difference to them; whether the preacher of repentance is alive or dead, it makes no difference to them. All the preachers of repentance are for an offense and an abomination to the brothers of the rich man. The brothers of the rich man are ashamed to see such ones who preach penitence and repentance.

The second consideration: Why was poor Lazarus taken by the angels into Abraham's bosom, although he had done good to no one? If it is difficult for the world to say why the rich man went to the place of torment, although he had done wrong to no one, certainly it is more incomprehensible to the world why poor Lazarus was taken by the angels into Abraham's bosom. That

much we understand, that Lazarus was not saved because of his natural poverty, nor because of his wounds and his sickness, although many a poor one hopes for better fortune after this unfortunate life, since he has become a crossbearer. But that is unknown, who has placed this cross upon the crossbearer, whether he himself has become poor, sickly, and maimed through his ungodly life. I think that the devil has placed the cross upon many worldly crossbearers, who have not yet understood to differentiate between Jesus' cross and the cross of the world.

But we must now think so, that Lazarus has not become poor and sickly through his own carelessness. He has not become poor through drunkenness, adultery, or laziness, or pride, but through some other misfortune he has come into such a poor condition in behalf of the body. And this cross of the world has changed to Jesus' cross with him since he, from realizing the perishableness and vanity of the world, has come to know his poorness of spirit or spiritual poverty, in which the prodigal son was when he was herding swine. Lazarus certainly did not merit anything by his natural poverty, as also the prodigal son merited nothing by his spiritual poverty. But that distress, which came from the spiritual poverty, has forced Lazarus to seek for better fortune and blessing in that earth and in that heaven which is on the other side of this earth. And that was the merit of Lazarus, that he became so poor that he had no more faith, no hope, no love, no good works: there was nothing any more with which he could have covered

his nakedness, there was nothing with which he could have quenched his hunger after righteousness, there was nothing with which he could have healed his wounds. For that reason the dogs also in pity began to lick his wounds. Do you think, you brothers and sisters of Lazarus, do you think that the dogs can alleviate your pain with their licking? Do you think that the dogs have such a conscience, that they can have mercy and pity you when they see the wounds of the conscience bleeding and vile smelling? I think that the dogs have such a nature that they pity you, they have mercy on you, they lick your wounds, and this licking of the dogs signifies that your sins are forgiven, your iniquity is wiped away. Since you have such a faith that God has made you poor and so miserable that you must lie at the rich man's gate naked, unclothed, full of sores and bleeding wounds, which also the dogs lick in their pity and compassion, then certainly the great Creator has also intended to give a better earth and heaven, where all poor are rich, all beggars are givers, all wounded are well, all sorrowful are joyful, all downpressed are lifted up. The soul of the spiritually poor is not heavy for the angels to carry into Abraham's bosom. Lazarus' soul is not as heavy to carry as the rich man's soul, which weighs itself down into the abyss. The soul of the spiritually poor Lazarus is so light for the angels of God to carry into Abraham's bosom that they do it with joy, but the soul of the rich man is so heavy that it weighs itself down to the bottom. Now Lazarus' soul is comforted, now he sits with

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. If he here has been hungry, he there is filled; if he here has been thirsty, there his thirst is quenched; if he here has been naked, there he is clothed in the righteousness of Christ; if he has wept here, then he rejoices there; if he here has been in wounds, he there then is well; if he here has been in black clothes, there then he will be given white raiment; if here he has been despised, there he is now exalted; if the rich man has stepped on him, now the rich man roust pray to him. Be now of good refuge, you poor Lazarus. Sit now at the table with Abraham, sit now to drink and eat the bread of heaven. You are now in Abraham's bosom, who is the father of believers. No one mocks your tears. Rejoice and be glad. You have drunk of the cup of sorrow, but now you can drink of the cup of life which is in God's paradise.

Amen.

Second Sunday after Trinity 1855

Some bidden guests said to the king's servants, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, therefore I cannot come." Luke 14: 19

We hear from these words what excuses some of the sorrowless have, of why they do not want to make true penitence so that they would become partakers of God's grace. They are so firmly attached to the world, that the Spirit of God is not able to tear their hearts loose from the world. They love their oxen more than God. And although the

sorrowless say, "We do not keep our oxen as a god," nevertheless it appears from all aspects of the matter, that they do keep these natural things as gods, since they love them so much that because of them they cannot make true penitence and repentance. The sorrowless think and fear that the natural work will cease if they go to church or school several times. The sorrowless people do not think that they spend more time in dancing, card playing, liquor drinking, and other vain pastimes than in church and school. He does not think that he spends more on finery and beauty than what the awakened give to the schools. If, therefore, some servant of God calls him back from the road to destruction, and encourages him to a better lot and life, that he would become a partaker of God's grace and of that blessedness which God has promised to the believing ones, then he says, "I have bought five yoke of oxen and therefore I cannot come." Another said, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." Here the Saviour has placed the excuses of the sorrowless before their eyes. Some think they will become poor through Christianity, and some fear that they will not get a wife if they would begin to become too delirious. So also sorrowless girls fear that they will not get a husband if they become penitent. They must then give up their finery and adultery if they would begin to sincerely become penitent and make repentance. And just because of this matter many have ceased from being penitent and have fallen from grace. Because of adultery and finery many have ceased to follow the sorrowful

disciples of Jesus, and through that the name of Christ has been blasphemed among the heathens. Now truly a bid has come to all, that the heavenly supper is ready, but those bidden guests have so many excuses, they have so much to do with the world, they have no time. Some have oxen and horses in mind, some have marriage on the mind, some have finery on the mind and in the heart, therefore they postpone their penitence from year to year and from day to day. Finally death comes to squeeze their hearts, and Just then their eyes are opened to see on one side the foolishness of the world which they have loved, and on the other side eternity opens before their eyes. Then they would take back those precious moments of grace, which they have wasted here in this world in vanity of the world, drinking, lewdness and pleasure, but those moments of grace will come back no more. And then they will begin to condemn themselves. They will begin to cry out to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us." All of the people in this congregation know what an unfortunate death has come to those who have despised that heavenly voice, which has cried out repentance to the hardened ones. All mortal ones have had to confess the Christianity to be right, which they formerly in their blindness have judged to be wrong. Not one of those mortal ones who have left the world in these recent years has been able to testify that this Christianity is wrong, but they are many who have had to condemn themselves because they have not taken heed of what a dangerous condition they were in,

how blind they have been, who have fought against this Christianity. Take heed now of the cry of repentance, you blind, halt, and maimed, you deaf and dumb. Who knows how long this time of grace will last? Soon that time will come that all despisers, all scoffers, all opposers, all enemies of the cross of Jesus can cry out, and no one will answer; they can knock and no one will open; they can howl and the walls of the abyss will answer. But may that great Keeper of the Supper, who has called many, although few have come to that great Supper, open the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, lead the halt, carry the maimed and feed the poor, that they too would reach that great Supper before the doors will be closed. Hear Thou Keeper of the great Supper, the sighs of the halt, blind, and maimed ones. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 14: 16-24

According to our holy gospel we must, through God's grace, consider why the bidden guests do not want to come to the wedding.

The first consideration: Why does the tiller of the ground not want to come to the wedding? The second consideration: Why do the cattlemen not want to come to the wedding? The third consideration: Why do the marrying men not want to come to the wedding? Our hope is that although the great guests do not want to come, the poor, the halt, the blind, the maimed nevertheless come, no matter how slowly they travel.

The first consideration: Why do the tillers of the ground not want to come to the wedding? The first said, "I have bought a piece of ground, I pray thee have me excused." In this parable the Saviour has shown that the excuses of the sorrowless are all the natural tasks, through which sin is committed, and all those matters to which he is attached with his heart. A piece of ground is of itself allowable, but it becomes dangerous to his soul, since he thereby does not labor in the field of God. He seeds the natural field, but the heavenly field remains unseeded. This happens often in that land where the field is man's best possession. The Jewish grainmen gather the harvest grain for a lean year, as they say, but raise the price of the grain so high that the poor are not able to buy it. How would such till that heavenly field, who put both the strength of the body and soul upon the natural living and are not able to raise their thoughts or lift up their hearts to some higher intention. They dig the earth with their fingernails and they think they will find a treasure trove there, but when it comes to light, it is nothing more than a charcoal pit. If they would only till the ground, but they spoil the ground, they spoil God's grain, that it is no longer fit for food for the swine. Do dogs lap up liquor? Do swine eat devil's dung? Not one creature is so lewd and filthy as man, who was in the beginning created in the image of God. He has now changed into a spiritual swine and is rather like the devil than like God. His countenance has changed like Cain's countenance, ugly and awful. And with such a countenance he

now wants to come before the face of God and the angels, but all unrepentant and unconverted ones will be cast out. Since, in the time of grace, they are called to true penitence and repentance, they give their excuses: "I have bought a piece of ground and I must needs go and see it."

The second consideration: And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to prove them." Here now, all the sorrowless can now hear why they despise God's merciful calling to repentance. They say, "I have bought five yoke of oxen." Although the sorrowless say, "They are not in the heart, we do not keep the oxen as gods," but it sounds now from the Saviour's own mouth that the oxen and horses are suitable to the slaves of the world for gods, as the pagans in Egypt kept the ox as a god and served it, in the same manner as the children of Israel made a golden calf in the wilderness. The daughters were certainly ready to give their rings to Aaron. They were certainly ready to jerk off the earrings from their ears when they heard that from them would be made a god. But when they should have given a quarter for the school or for the poor, then they are lacking in every respect. Not only are the oxen and horses the sorrowless people's gods, but also fancy clothes, beautiful homes, painted sleighs and whatever might be dear and precious to them. Luther says that a person's god is that which he loves the most and keeps to be his possession. The rich love their possessions and the poor their rags. It is a terrible and pitiable matter, that the enemy has so

imprisoned his slaves and wound his web that it is impossible to tear oneself loose, no matter what. When the servants of God encourage the sorrowless to penitence, they answer, "There's no time, there's no chance. I must live in the world, I must till the ground, I have bought a piece of ground, I have bought five yoke of oxen, I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." Are these excuses of the sorrowless such a necessity that because of them they cannot come to the wedding? Yes, they are, in the minds of the sorrowless people, so necessary and so imperative, that the slaves of the world cannot free themselves of them. They cannot be without them no matter what would be. Although he knows that the ox cannot help him in eternity, all the same he is fastened to them and must go to destruction because of them. No matter what happens to the soul, the body must live. The earth and the dirt must be dug. The possessions of the world must be gathered, beautiful clothes must be prepared, oxen and horses must be bought. And this is such a great hindrance to the sorrowless that because of them they cannot have concern over their souls. The word of God is despised, and because of them the worship of God is forgotten. All that pertains to repentance and upbuilding of the soul is neglected because of the natural things and being busy. And just then when death comes, those imperishable possessions which are needed in eternity are dug for. This sorrowless life is so awful and terrible before God, that because of this ungodly life the Son of God began to tremble and shud-

der with horror. But that blind wretch cannot see that he is so terrible, but he thinks that others are no better than he.

The third consideration: Why the marrying men do not attain a state of penitence. If the buyers of land do not care to be saved, and the cattle men have such excuses that they cannot attain a state of penitence, then surely the marrying men have an even greater excuse, for those former ones had diligence, and love of the world was so great, that they could not separate themselves from them, but the marrying man has lewdness and pleasure so strong that he cannot attain a state of penitence at all. This is the greatest hindrance for the youth. First, they dress themselves beautifully and attractively to the world. Finally they begin to commit adultery and, as in Noah's time, began to marry. Women were taken and given to the men, so also in the time of the Son of Man. And if they married like people, but some begin from the wrong end: they marry like animals in the mating season, and after that the other devils come to keep the wedding. Some do not enter into matrimony, but commit adultery, and such beautiful beings are now in the world, who bear the name of a Christian: and commit adultery. The meek pagans, before times in the world, have rebuked those who commit adultery, but now no one else rebukes except the awakened ones and Christians. And because of that rebuking, they are hated and persecuted. Now in Christendom they live like the Turks, and the pagans live according to that faith and doctrine in which they have been taught and brought up. But

they, who have been baptized in Christ, do not even begin to live according to that doctrine which they have been taught, but they live just contrary to the Word of God. They are godly in the church and ungodly behind the church, they are meek in the church and where behind the church, they bless in the church and curse behind the church, they drink from the Lord's cup and the devil's cup on the same day, and that they do from year to year and from day to day. And when death comes and the eyes are opened, then they see what road they are on. Surely then distress comes. They call for a pastor to absolve themselves. Then they would surely wish that the Christians, whom they have formerly mocked and hated, would come to talk to them. Then the foolish virgins begin to beg of the wise and say, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," but they have nothing to give, since they lie together. Then the sorrowless begin to pray to the awakened, that they would forgive them their foolishness, and the grace thieves pray to the Christians that they would pray for them, but the time of grace is ended, the sun of grace is setting, the life cord is breaking; soon the life will leave, and then there is no more time of penitence, but they must go into eternity and there they can regret eternally. Now you have heard what the best excuses of the sorrowless are. They are fields, oxen, and women. The tillers of the ground cannot bear to leave their fields and come to the heavenly wedding. The cattlemen cannot bear to leave their oxen and come to the wedding, for the oxen are dearer to them

than the kingdom of heaven. The marrying men do not come to the wedding, for they must commit adultery first before they go to destruction, so they would not be left without a share in all the joy and the pleasures. Therefore no others come to the heavenly wedding than the poor, the halt, the blind and the maimed. What a poor group of wedding guests the King of heaven has! Into such a group an honorable peasant does not dare to come, let alone a lord of the world, not at all. Therefore the King of Heaven becomes well blasphemed because of that poor and despised group of wedding guests which are there. It is altogether different with the prince of the world, who has wedding guests like ashes, namely the best tillers of the field which are in the world, and the best cattlemen which are found in the world, the best marrying men which can be found in the world, namely the fine and the beautiful men and women in serge clothing, silk kerchiefs, gold rings, gold earrings, gold hearts. There they drink, there they curse, and there they dance and there they laugh and blaspheme the poor wedding group of God, who are the halt, the blind, and the maimed, the deaf and mute, the needy and poor. And these blind, halt, and maimed, which are so greatly despised, can sit in the wedding of the King of heaven and eat manna. They receive wine and milk without money and without price, and the bridesmaids can dance on the golden floor like deer and sing the new song to the King. Amen. Hallelujah!

Third Sunday after Trinity, Sermon A.

“Behold I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats.” Ezekiel 34:17.

The Lord speaks much of those lost sheep in the 34th chapter of Ezekiel, and gives that merciful promise that He Himself wants to take care of His sheep and also intends to judge between the sheep and the sheep, and between the rams and the he goats. What He speaks of the sheep and what He has intended to judge between the rams and the he goats is truly necessary to be understood rightly. It is remarkable that the ram and the he goat are always in opposition, for they have an entirely different nature. Since now people are compared in this place to animals, each one having a different nature, then we must know the nature of those animals to which people are compared, and take from that an example of how the sorrowless are portrayed in the form of the he goat and the Christians in the form of the rams. If we would now observe how the sorrowless hate and trouble the Christians, then we understand that the Lord judges them in that way, that the sorrowless must confess on their death bed, if not before, that they have opposed and mocked the truth against their consciences. For when the Lord’s judgement becomes heavy upon them, then the sorrowless can see whom they have pierced. Woe! Woe! What a heavy judgement will come upon them already in this world, when the conscience begins to condemn them on the death bed, that they have despised and mocked the good counsel and exhorta-

tions of the Christians. Behold, what a difficult death comes to those who here have blasphemed the truth and opposed the effects of the Holy Spirit. If now a person died like an animal, that there would be nothing left of him after death, then he could think that no responsibility would come after death. Then the sorrowless could also say, as King Solomon imitates their speech in the Book of Wisdom 2:6: “Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wines and ointments. Let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness, let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place: for this is our portion.” Thus speak those who have no hope of a better life. They want to greatly enjoy this life in the world, they want to drink or fill themselves with the best wine, they want to enjoy the entertainment of the flesh because they have no hope of a better life, and all the same when death comes, they are in distress, for there is a secret fear that it will not go well. They certainly know that judgement is before one, and they are not able to believe that the soul dies together with the body, but they must believe that the soul is immortal and that a severe responsibility is coming. There the sins will come before one like a cloud, but there is no grace nor hope that God hears their prayers. Such is the condition of the sorrowless when they must leave this world. Take heed, all people, of this death of the sorrowless which you have sometimes seen, and conclude from that what a pitiable end comes after this life of the

sorrowless. For that judgement which the conscience proclaims to the dying one is a true judgement. It does not change in eternity. Let us place ourselves also around a Christian when he is saying farewell to the world, and let us observe him along side of the sorrowless: what a great difference is between them! One receives death with joy and rejoicing, the other goes to eternity against his will. One can thank Jesus for that great grace that he is saved from sins, death, and under the power of the devil; the other cannot thank, but fears and complains that God does not hear his prayers. Such you have heard with your ears, and have seen with your eyes. And now take heed of this short and precious time of grace and cease from that ungodly life from which no good end will result, and make repentance while there is yet time of grace, so that penitence would not come too late in eternity.

And since the Saviour, that great Shepherd of Israel, is still seeking the lost sheep, as He indicates in today's gospel, we pray to that great Shepherd of Israel that He would not become weary of seeking those wretches, who are so greatly lost and strayed so far that they no longer hear nor see where that small flock is, which the great Shepherd of Israel has gathered around His bloody cross, who stand there with sorrowful hearts. And if also those wretches, who have blasphemed that Crucified One, would today become pricked in the heart, would beat their breasts and would go home. Hear, You great Shepherd of Israel, the prayer of

all the sorrowful, penitent, and down-pressed. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 15:1-10.

In today's holy gospel the Saviour shows what a great love He has toward sinners, when He brings forth the parable of the Shepherd, who leaves the 99 in the wilderness and seeks that which was lost. And since the expounders of the Scriptures do not agree on that place of the Scriptures, what the 99 are who are left in the wilderness, neither can we surmise what they are. But it would be more beneficial for us if we would consider how the Shepherd seeks the lost sheep, if we could follow His footsteps there, which surely are heavy, as even a natural shepherd has great trouble to go into the wilderness and seek for a sheep which is lost.

The first consideration: What sheep are they, who are called lost? The second consideration: Where are they found?

All sinners are called lost sheep, who have not yet become Christians, but especially those who have strayed away from the small flock of Christians and who have fallen from the state of grace and strayed into the World where they have no rest. The publicans and sinners, whom the great Shepherd seeks, were outright pagans and coarse sinners, who will sooner awaken than those meek Pharisees, who have not lived so ungodly as the publicans. It is noticeable in every place that the coarse sinners awaken when the Word of God is preached to them, for such people cannot even think that they will be saved if they die in that condition. They cannot escape under any shadow

of meekness, thinking or believing that they reach the kingdom of heaven with such a life. The conscience says quite the right judgement, that they who drink, curse, fight, commit adultery, and steal are not acceptable to God as such. That they live so boldly although they hear the Word, comes from that, that they cannot give up the world. Honor is also great so that they cannot confess those shameful deeds and reconcile with their brother in strife, as the publican Zaccheus who awakened by the word of Jesus and promised to repay four-fold for what he had taken wrongly over the limit of the law. Zaccheus did not spare his honor or property, but he wanted to cleanse his conscience and repay all his wrongdoings. All sinners, take now an example of him and be not so merciless toward your own soul, that you would allow it to perish because of honor or because of a few dollars. For the Saviour praised Zaccheus as blessed, who made such a promise and also kept it. We cannot say that he became saved thereby, that he repayed all his wrongdoings, which he was able to do with money, but through the grace of the Saviour he became saved, for Jesus saw that he had a penitent heart and a true desire to become saved. But not many follow Zaccheus' example, for some feel that penitence is necessary, but they postpone this necessary matter to some future time, until the time it is too late. Do not postpone your penitence until death! For you have seen how it goes with them who postpone it. Zaccheus was one lost sheep whom Jesus, the good Shepherd, found in the wilderness of

sin. And that sinful woman who wept at His feet in the house of Simon the Leper, was also one lost sheep whom He found in the wilderness of sin. But He found none of the Pharisees. Nicodemus was not a lost sheep, but he must have been one of those who need no repentance, although he was a secret disciple. So we see from all these examples, that the publicans and sinners awaken and become penitent when the Word of Jesus touches the heart. Such coarse sinners cannot be Under a shadow of meekness, or hope that they will reach the kingdom of heaven without penitence. But those meek Pharisees cannot become truly penitent and repentant, because they have lived so meekly that they do not have sin worth repenting of. They can say to the Saviour, "Are we blind? Certainly we know better than the publicans where the road goes to heaven." However these Pharisees were so blind that they did not know their sins at all, because of that terrible self-righteousness, which barred them from the kingdom of heaven. But what must we say of them, who have once been in the Christianity and then fallen away? They are, nevertheless, lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Shepherd surely seeks them with great sorrow, who have been of this sheepfold and have strayed away and gone on the wide way of destruction. These wretches are in a very unfortunate condition. We cannot say if the great Shepherd of Israel would ever find such lost sheep; however in the Saviour's time there were not such ones who would have formerly been Christians and then fallen away. But the Saviour

has said that the last state of that person will be worse than the first. And truly they have become worse. When, namely, the devil's spirit has to go out of a person through the Word of the Saviour, then he travels in dry places, seeking rest but finding none, and then he says, "I will return into my house from whence I came out, and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter in and dwell there." Woe, how terrible he is! When he once has had to go out, then he takes revenge for the former happenings, then he takes back his misfortune then he torments that unfortunate person, whom he has in his clutches. Be terrified, you who have fallen away, and allow yet once more the voice of the Shepherd to enter into your ears, for you are lost sheep of the house of Israel, which the great Shepherd of Israel seeks with a sorrowful heart. He travels those heavy steps and seeks in every place, on Mt. Sinai, on the shore of the Red Sea, on the shore of the River Jordan, calling with a loud voice. But an answer is not heard from many, for some are so strengthless that they are not able to answer, and those wretches know that the enemy has ravaged them, torn and wounded them so that there is not much voice left with which to answer. They have no strength to come to Jesus, there is no strength to crawl to the foot of the cross, there is no strength to even look much in that direction. Why do you so greatly fear your Shepherd, you lost sheep? Why do you flee to the enemy, you unfortunate

soul? Come back from the road to destruction and behold how He sweats blood because of you. He dies of sorrow because of you, for He does not wish that anyone would become unfortunate. But the enemy prevents you from coming, and you yourself are agreeable to that. But do not allow the enemy to rule your mortal members. Tear yourself loose from the crowd of the world and set yourself at the cross and behold what Jesus suffers because of you. Behold how the heart of the heavenly Parent bleeds because of the ungodly children! Have you not troubled Him enough and torn His wounds? Turn back, turn back before it is too late. We must preach to such prisoners of unbelief, who have no peace in the world, nor have they peace in God, that they would believe that God would receive them if they would come and begin to seek, search, pray, and knock upon the door of heaven, so that the porter would hear, then certainly He will open. But these words do not belong to grace thieves, nor to the builders of self-righteousness, but to those they belong who have no peace in the world nor in God.

The second consideration: Secondly, let us observe where the great Shepherd of Israel finds His lost sheep. Some are totally blind in sorrowlessness; those he sure finds in the world. Some publicans sit in the customs house, as for example Matthew and Zaccheus, some harlot as the woman who came to weep upon His feet, some palsied one who is carried to Jesus, some woman of Canaan who cries after Jesus. But in such a multitude there are

not many who truly need help from Him. For although many come to Jesus to gawk, there are not however many who cry out in distress, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me," hardly one in a thousand, who is truly needy. Nevertheless, they surely pray when death begins to squeeze their hearts, but some sorrow-less at this time say, "It is too late for one who postpones it to that moment." Oh, if the merciful Saviour would yet have mercy upon those who cry out on their death bed but several in that condition, namely the dying and those struggling with death, have said, "God does not hear my prayer." And what could be the reason that the sorrowless, who have postponed their penitence until that time when death begins to show its teeth, are not heard? What could be the reason for that, that God does not hear their prayers? I think the reason is that they are not able to pray any more, or to knock so hard that the porter would hear. He who has served the devil his whole lifetime, the enemy has gained such great power over him that this unfortunate soul is not able to cry out with such a loud voice, that it is heard in heaven. It is terrible to think of this matter, and even more terrible to see that there have to be so many even in this congregation who have heard with their ears and seen with their eyes the sorrowless on their deathbeds, and nevertheless have not taken heed of their warnings, of those who have died, how impossible it is to become saved on the death bed, since they have thought nothing about it before. If you do not believe the Christians, then believe tho-

se who preach repentance on their deathbeds, and behold their end! The greatest scoffers, the greatest opposers, and the greatest enemies of the Christianity have had to ask forgiveness from the Christians, and not one mortal at this time in this congregation has found another road to heaven than what the Christians have found. Even those mortals who condemn themselves to hell must testify that this Christianity is right. And the testimony of this dying one is the best testimony, and whoever does not believe it is so hardened that it is impossible to believe that such a one can awaken even on the deathbed. Those few souls, who are striving in their most precious faith until death, are those sheep that are found, who lie in the sheepshed and chew that food which that great Shepherd of Israel has given them. They will soon get to move away from this cold weather to the beautiful shore of eternity, where the wolves and animals are no longer tearing and ravaging the lambs of Jesus. There the Shepherd brings them to the best pastures and the water of life flows every day from that rock, which is Christ. There the lambs of Jesus leap like deer and rejoice on Mt. Zion, and sing the new hymn. Amen. Hallelujah!

Third Sunday after Trinity, Sermon B.

The Lord says through the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel: "I will feed my flock and will feed them in a good pasture. I will bind up that which was broken, I will feed them with judgement." Ezek. 34.

Thus said the Lord through the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel. And we believe that the Lord has fulfilled His gracious promise; although it appears before our eyes as though much has remained unfulfilled. When we observe that time when Christianity first appeared in the world, we find that the Lord Himself had begun to feed His sheep when the Holy Spirit was poured upon the disciples and upon the first Christians, and the first Christians could rejoice in the Lord, although they were so hated and persecuted by the world. And many times afterwards the promise of the Lord also became fulfilled, as we read of the recollection of former Christians who were in the pope's kingdom, where every so often the true Christians were terribly persecuted, but the Lord Himself has fed them and strengthened them with His grace, that they have been able to go to death with joy and rejoicing. And also in the kingdom of Luther, the Lord Himself has fed His sheep since the lazy and careless shepherds have not fed Jesus' sheep, but fed themselves and the goats. Then the Lord has always awakened some man or some woman to preach powerfully to the sorrowless people, and in that way the Lord Himself has fed His sheep and led them to the best pastures, where the graced souls have come to feel joy and rejoicing and a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven. But we see that it is such a small group which the Lord feeds in this way; there are not many souls alongside of that great multitude, who can taste of that sweet food, which is in the best pasture. And those few who

can taste of that sweet food, can only seldom taste of it. What then happens to all the rest? Must then all others eat the devil's food? Many a worldly wise one has said that God would not be almighty if He could not lift up from hell that great multitude which has fallen into hell. And many a peasant who imagines that he understands what the right doctrine is, many a peasant says, "God has not created me for destruction." They rely upon that, that God is so merciful that He will raise all the impenitent whores and thieves up from hell. But it is not as the grace thieves think. God is certainly almighty, but God cannot do anything contrary to His nature. God is not only merciful, but also wrathful. He is wrathful to those who do not believe, so that they would be able to war against sin. He is also wrathful to those who commit sin upon grace, who believe and commit adultery, believe and steal, believe and deceive their neighbor, believe and drink, believe and curse, believe and laugh the giggler's laugh with the gigglers. That laughing of the gigglers God could not bear in the Old Testament. No one has ever seen the Saviour laughing, but the disciples have seen Him weeping many times.

Where now are the lost sheep of the House of Israel, which the Shepherd of Israel came to seek? Where now are the lambs of Jesus which He asked Peter to feed? They were all scattered on the mountain of Israel in the cloudy and dark day. But the Shepherd of Israel saw that they would become meat to all the beasts, if they would remain alone for a longer time, therefore He had to

begin to seek them out. The great Shepherd of Israel travels now those heavy and troublesome steps, seeking and calling out in every place, on Mt. Sinai, on the shore of the Red Sea, and near Jordan's stream. Some have climbed on Mt. Sinai from where they fall down and break their necks. Some have become exhausted on the shore of the Red Sea, and fear they will drown when the enemies oppress them into the Red Sea. But step boldly into the Red Sea, Israel. If you believe, you will cross the Red Sea dry shod, but the enemies will drown in the waves of the Red Sea, and then you will, for the first time, get to sing the new hymn to God. He finds some on the shore of the River Jordan where John baptizes, but one great multitude lies dead and as bones on the shore of the Dead Sea, where they decay and stink, and that worm which will never die, it gnaws at them. That worm which is called the dog of Hades will gnaw their bones even after death.

But when the Lord Himself has promised to feed His sheep, we pray that the great Shepherd of Israel would bring them to the best pastures, then they would grow white wool which the Shepherd has washed in the river Jordan, that they could rest on the hill of Golgotha when they come from the wilderness of this world, that the great Shepherd of Israel would bring them into the sheepfold when the snow storms and tempests come, and finally on Mt. Zion, where the lambs leap as deer and rejoice and are exceedingly glad. Hear, Shepherd of Israel, the blea-

ting of the lost, strayed, and wretched sheep. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 15:1-10.

In accordance with our holy gospel we must seek the lost sheep. First, let us consider those places where the lost sheep usually are. Secondly, what joy comes to the angels in heaven over one sinner who turns and repents. Whoever goes to seek sheep must be very familiar in those woods, in dangers, also along the shores of the rivers where the sheep usually are. He must be familiar with Mt. Sinai, the shore of the Red Sea, and the shore of the River Jordan, where the sheep usually were before. He must take notice of their footprints, if they have gone up into the heights of Mt. Sinai, or if they have gone to the shore of the Dead Sea, or if they have become lost on Mt. Hagar, which reaches unto Jerusalem, whose children are slaves together with their mother. It is not known where the Shepherd must find some lost sheep. Some have probably gone so far into the deep woods, that they will never come back. The Shepherd travels those heavy and troublesome steps and cries out on Mt. Sinai, on the shore of the Red Sea, and near Jordan's stream, but hears nothing there. There is no voice or answer there. And when He calls the lost sheep, "Where are you!", then the mountains answer, "Where are you!" Sometimes some wretched sheep can be heard bleating far away, and the Shepherd thinks that there might be other lost sheep there.

But when He goes there, there is nothing; even that one is gone whose voice was heard. No doubt it was some lean wretch, which the wolf was ravaging and then it bleated. If the Shepherd looks down, He sometimes sees some footprints of sheep in the muddy bog. Sometimes He encounters some carcasses which the wolf has killed, and of some nothing is left but some pieces of skin, and who can repair those carcasses which the wolf has killed? With great sorrow and bitterness of mind the Shepherd looks at those carcasses which the wolf has slain, but He cannot help them or give them life. But He must leave them and seek others who however still have life. It seems as though the lost sheep were gone for all time, since formerly the Shepherd of Israel has found some on Mt. Sinai, where they had strayed, but now no one is found on Mt. Sinai, where God roared terribly in Moses' time. The frightened and trembling ones do not dare to climb up there. But this fear did not remain long; they soon began to dance around the golden calf. That great Shepherd of Israel has also found some on the shore of the Red Sea, where the enemies began to oppress them. But Moses lifted his staff and they were able to escape; they crossed over the river dry shod. And then they saw the enemy drown in the waves of the Red Sea. And on the other side of the sea, for the first time they were able to rejoice and be joyful. But this joy was not long lasting when they began to travel in the wilderness where there were no berries on the trees or water on the earth. And although the Shepherd fed them manna, which

rained from heaven, they were not satisfied even with that, but when the flesh pots of Egypt came to mind, they began to murmur and complain. Faith did not endure during the time of temptation. Because of that murmuring and that impatience, they had to travel back and forth in the wilderness of this world. To many the desire came to turn back to the house of bondage, and there they died like dogs. And although such a good reward was promised in the land of Canaan, where milk and honey flow, so they were seen going into the kingdom of the dead, nor do many people now reach that promised land where milk and honey flow. Woe! Woe! How many souls are lost in the wilderness of this world. And it appears that it is the same now as then, the same battle with the enemy, the same murmuring in the wilderness, the same dissatisfaction, the same complaining when the flesh pots come to mind. And because of adultery, 24,000 were slain. What other than the devil of adultery takes the young folks, which is so strong in the young flesh? How many souls do you think will reach the promised land? Probably not many will reach there. I do not however doubt of their Christianity who have become rooted and strengthened, but there are many lost ones and scattered ones, so there is left only one small flock who will hardly stay together without a shepherds. And if now the shepherd goes after those which have become lost, where will he find them? Who knows, in the desert or in the deep forest, where the wolves have torn and ravaged some. Some have drowned in the Dead Sea. Some

are in the caves of the cliffs, some run amidst dangers after mushrooms, and some have gone into the land of the pagans. But that great Shepherd of Israel, who always travels those heavy and troublesome steps seeking and calling those lost sheep, has found some on the hill of Golgotha, where they stand with sorrowful and broken hearts, weeping and lamenting that the Shepherd has died. There stands also Mary Magdalene and Johanna and that disciple whom Jesus loved. They see and know that Jesus has died. But at this time there are not many who weep and lament when Jesus dies. Surely they see that Jesus has died, but sorrow does not come because of that. What kind of mortals are they, who do not become sorrowful, although Jesus has died? Just so they are not of that large group, who stand and make mockery of the crucified One. Of that I have wondered much, that the unbelieving of this time do not have sorrow. However they do say there is no faith, therefore they do not become sorrowful. I think that they do not have true unbelief, but it is like some slime of dead faith which flows from their mouths. If the old order of grace must remain in its power, then sorrow must come from Jesus' death, and if there is true unbelief, then weeping and lamenting will be heard there. So it has happened to the disciples, and so it must happen even now if there is the true unbelief. But if there is dead faith, sorrow will not come. Sorrow does not come to the unbelieving of this time, and they go into the world, one to his field, one to his business; some go to commit adultery, some to drink. Some begin to

bear finery, some to build beautiful estates. Do they have unbelief, who do and live so? Certainly not, it is not unbelief, but the faith is strong as a rock. What did the disciples do when their faith ended? Did they go to drink and to commit adultery when their faith ended? Did they go to carry finery and to seek delicacies? They were not able to go anywhere because of unbelief, but they were together in one room and there they wept and lamented. Go now, all you unbelieving ones, to weep and lament when Jesus has died. Go and complain that you have no refuge in heaven or in the world. Turn your hope to hell since you know and see that Jesus has died. Turn your hope to hell and sigh so heavily that an opening will come into the roof. Perhaps these sighs will be heard in hell, where that crucified One is after His death, perhaps death and hell must allow Him to come up since the sighs of the penitent, sorrowful, and lamenting ones make unrest in hell. The tears of the penitent burn the conscience of death and he must allow the great Crossbearer to come up. Then joy will come to the sorrowful disciples, when Jesus becomes alive and they can follow Him to the mount of Ascension, where they pray to Him, bowing their knees. And then they go to preach the gospel to all created, each day awaiting the return of that great Victor to come to judge the quick and the dead. Amen.

Fourth Sunday after Trinity Sermon A

“He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:18

Here, first, all those who believe upon the name of the only Son of God can hear that they are not condemned, but the unbelievers can also hear from these words of the Saviour, which are found written in the Gospel of John 3:18, that they are condemned already. However they do not want to receive this condemnation of the Saviour, for the grace thieves think they believe although they cannot say when they would have received that true, living and saving faith, from which can be well surmised that they do not have that true, living and saving faith| but an imagination which they have received from the enemy: one dead faith, which they themselves have made and therefore they fear the judgement although they have been condemned long since. They become angry with those who proclaim this severe judgement. As the Jews became angry at John the Baptist and the Saviour because of that barking, which they proclaimed to the unbelieving, so even now the grace thieves become angry with those Christians who proclaim the judgement to them, but they do not become angry with those who proclaim grace to the sorrowless pagans. The Jews also had that faith that God was their father, when they said to the Saviour, “We have a father, even God,” but the Saviour

said, “Ye are of your father the devil.” So the Jews of this time also believe that God is their father although they are of their father the devil. The sorrowless do not believe that they are of their father the devil, but they believe that God is their father. And from where have they received such a faith that God is their father? No doubt the same father as the Jews had has given the sorrowless of this time that faith that God is their father. The same father, the devil, has given them such a false assumption, who had given the Jews that faith that God was their father, although they were of their father the devil.

Now we must consider why all the sorrowless become angry with those who proclaim the severe righteousness and judgement of God to them. The Saviour has said, “He that believeth not is condemned already,” but the sorrowless do not believe that, that they are condemned already. If someone says to them that in that unbelieving state they are condemned, then they become angry and say, “You are in pride, you condemn us although we are redeemed with the same precious blood.” Certainly you are redeemed with the same precious blood, but this precious blood has flowed in vain in your behalf, when you trample His blood with your feet and mock the tears of the Heavenly Parent with your ungodly life, therefore the blood of the Heavenly Parent has flowed in vain in your behalf. In vain His tears have flowed over you, Jerusalem, who hate the Christians and shed the blood of those who come to admonish you, that you

would once know your time of visitation and would think of what befits your peace before the door of grace is closed. Behold, this judgement is now pronounced to the persecutors of the prophets and Christians, who say, "We have a father, even God" and nevertheless kill His Son. They say, "The door of grace is open to us," and nevertheless hate the Christians. They scourge and kill the disciples of Jesus and think thereby they are doing God a service, but all the same they say, "Certainly God is merciful, He will not cast us into hell." Such ones say to their neighbor, "Go to hell," although the Saviour has forbidden and said, "Judge not, lest thou also be judged." But when the Christians admonish and counsel the sorrowless to true penitence and repentance, and thereby want to say to the slaves of the world, "Don't go to hell," then the slaves of the world become angry and say the Christians are condemning them. Which one now is condemning: he who says, "Go to hell" or he who says, "Don't go to hell"? When the Christians say to one slave of the world who is going to hell, "Don't go to hell", then the slave of the world thinks that the Christian is telling him to go to hell, and again when the slave of the world says "Go to hell", then the other sorrowless think that he does not condemn. If one sorrowless one says to another, "Go to hell," the other does not become very angry, but if a Christian says to a sorrowless one, "Don't go to hell," then the sorrowless one becomes angry and says, "Are you condemning me? Are you God?" He becomes angry because a Christian

wants to warn him so that he would not go headlong into hell; he becomes terribly angry that he cannot go to hell in peace. A sorrowless person is so drunken with the wine of adultery, that he lies down and sleeps at the brink of burning rapids, and if some good person awakens him, he becomes angry with the one who wakes him and says, "Why do you not allow me peace of sleep? You are just the very enemy, who does not allow a person peace of sleep." And nevertheless afterwards they reprove the Christians and say, "Why did you allow us to sleep in peace and to go to hell? Why did you not cry out to me, so that I would have awakened from the sleep of sin?"

When now according to the Saviour's words, all are condemned who do not believe upon Him, then those few souls who believe and also even those who feel what fools and slow of heart they are to believe, should pray that great Hero of faith, who is the Author and Finisher of faith, that He would help their unbelief and would lend them some grace to believe first, that all unbelieving ones are condemned and second, that all believing ones are redeemed from under the condemnation through that great work of redemption, which has been done in Jesus Christ. Hear, You great Crossbearer and Hero of faith, the prayer of the doubting and those of weak faith. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 6: 36-42

Since all sorrowless and thieves of grace think they receive justification for themselves from today's gospel, and

turn all these words to the awakened, then we must, through God's grace, at this moment consider to whom these words of the Saviour belong. First; Has the Saviour forbidden the disciples from condemning? Second; Has the Saviour forbidden the pagans from condemning? May the high Judge give His grace that all the false judges would be overthrown from their judgement seats and all the true judges would be exalted before that great supreme Judge.

First: Has the Saviour forbidden the disciples from condemning? Certainly. He has forbidden them from condemning as the pagans condemn the Christians, for the pagans would surely wish that all Christians would go to hell. They dare to say also when they become angry, "Go to hell and go away." And when the pagans wish very well for their neighbor, they then say, "May the devil take you and roast you." The pagans have always condemned the Christians to death and to exile. They have condemned the Christians to be burned, to be scourged, to be torn by beasts, to be cast into the depths of the sea, and when the pagans have condemned the Christians to death, then they thought they were doing God a service. Now the Saviour forbids His disciples from condemning in that way, as the pagans condemn, namely in anger and to threaten evil to another from a bad heart, or proclaim wrong judgement. Namely, when the pagans condemn the Christians as false prophets and wild spirits, then they write the wrong judgement and say, "He has blasphemed God." Who has seen more faults in a Christian's life than the pagans? Who has hated and persecuted the Christians more than the pagans, and who sees

more motes in the Christians' eyes than the pagans? In the pagans' eyes the Christians are false prophets, wild spirits, and an accursed crowd, who do not allow honorable people peace of conscience. But the devil has so reversed the eyes of the pagans, that they think the Christians are condemning when they warn them of the judgement. Namely, when a Christian says to a pagan, "Don't go to hell," then the pagans' ears hear only the last words, "Go to hell!" The pagan does not hear the first word, which forbids them to go. And when the pagan has the devil's nail in his ear, the forbidding of the Christian sounds as if it were asking the pagan to go to hell although he has forbidden him and said, "Don't go to hell." Not one Christian has yet condemned the pagans in anger and animosity, but the pagans have always condemned the Christians. The Jews became so terribly angry with Stephen that they gnashed their teeth and stopped their ears. And even now some pagans become so terribly angry with the Christians that they shake and become black in countenance like tartars, and some get eyes like goats when someone begins to speak of Christianity. But those wretches do not know that the old man devil drives them like work oxen. And just then when they are at their best, making sausages of the blood of Christians, they say to the Christians, "Do not condemn," although the Christians do no more than to warn the sorrowless of death, judgement, and eternity, and say to the sorrowless, "Don't go to hell." All the same these blind wretches think that the Christians are condemning.

Perhaps now the disciples of Jesus have a right to judge, according to the

words of the Saviour: "You must sit upon thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel." However, the disciples of Jesus condemn no one to hell, as the pagans, who say in anger and from an evil heart, "Go to hell." And although according to the words of Paul, Christians also have permission to judge, namely, "A spiritual person judges all things," nevertheless the Christians judge no one to hell, but rather they warn and admonish the sorrowless so they would not go to hell. All the same a wretched sorrowless one thinks that the Christians tell him to go to hell. The pagans judge so, for the pagans certainly wish that all Christians would go to hell, but the Christians have not yet wished that anyone would go to hell. Instead the Christians have always cried out to the pagans of God's severe righteousness and judgement, which awaits them if they do not become penitent and repent in the time of grace. They have cried out as John the Baptist, "Ye generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" They have also cried out louder, as Paul said to one enemy of Christianity, "O child of the devil, full of all subtilty and mischief and enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord." Behold, thus a Christian condemns the pagans, but did Paul tell him to go to hell or would Paul have wished him to go to hell, although he rebuked him so severely? Certainly not, but when the pagans get to condemn the Christians, they first tell lies about the Christians, that they are false prophets and wild spirits, then they begin to hate and per-

secute the Christians with fists and cudgels, staves and sticks. And if they are not able to get rid of the Christians by that means, then they take them before the governor Pontius Pilate and set the Christians before the law so that, in that way, they would get to suck the blood of the Christians. The pagans have, namely, the nature of a blood hound; namely, when a blood hound gets to lap blood, then he is silent. And when the pagans can lap the Christians' blood, then the conscience ceases to bark. As that royal harlot, who was in Herod's palace, did not get peace of conscience before John's head was carried on a platter. If the pagans had that power that they could push the Christians into hell, certainly they would willingly do it; but thanks to God, the pagans do not have power over the soul and therefore they try to torment the body of a Christian, that thereby they will get peace of conscience. Now the Saviour has forbidden His disciples, that they must not condemn as the pagans condemn the Christians to death, to fines, or to exile. But the judgement of the disciples is a spiritual judgement, when they judge the twelve tribes of Israel. They judge, as Paul says, spiritual matters in a spiritual way, and their judgement is the right judgement. It is not the wrong judgement as the pagan's judgements which has always been the wrong judgement. As the Jews and Pilate proclaimed a wrong judgement of the Saviour, so also the pagans have always proclaimed a wrong judgement of the Christians. Since the devil has reversed their eyes, they look at all matters in reverse; they turn right to be

wrong. They see such faults in the lives of the Christians which are an obligation of the Christians, for example the confession of sins, reconciliation with one's neighbor, discerning spiritual writings, and speaking about Christianity; all these matters are, in the pagans' minds, a terrible sin. So also when liquor is called devil's dung, which in the pagans' minds is the best blessing on the earth, or if someone pours the devil's dung on the ground, that is, in the pagan's mind, a terrible sin. So the optometrist of the world has prepared such eyeglasses for slaves of the world that they must see the mote and even the dust in the Christians' eyes, but the beam which is in their own eye, the pagans do not see.

Second; Has the Saviour said to the pagans, "Judge not"? In today's gospel the Saviour has not spoken to the pagans of judgement at all, nevertheless the pagans think that the Saviour has not forbidden them to condemn, but the Christians. The pagans, therefore, have permission to condemn the Christians, but the Christians do not have permission to condemn the pagans. No doubt the pagans are satisfied with that, when they hear that the pagans have permission to condemn the Christians? Pilate therefore had power to condemn Jesus, but Jesus did not have power to condemn Pilate. No doubt the pagans are satisfied with that? The Saviour also said to that pagan Pilate, "Ye would have no power over me except it be given from above." No doubt to the other pagans also is given power from above that they can condemn Christians to hell. So the pagans think, that they have that power given from above that they can condemn the Christians. But are the

Christians given that power, that they can condemn the pagans? The pagans answer, "No!" Well, no doubt now the pagans are satisfied with that, that they can condemn the Christians. And now the Christians must be quiet when the pagans condemn them, for the Saviour has said to the Christians, "Judge not, lest thou also be judged." But He has not said this to the pagans, "Judge not," but He has given them permission that they can judge, and that power the pagans have received from on high. So judge now the Christians since you have power. What kind of a judgement will you now give us? No doubt you now give us such a judgement that all Christians must go to hell. But Christians do not go to hell according to the judgement of pagans. But if Christians would condemn the pagans to hell, then they must go to hell if the devil does not protect from tribulation of conscience. And although the god of this world is powerful to protect some of the pagans from tribulation of conscience, he has not been able to protect all. That we now see and know for sure, that the god of the world has not been able to protect all from tribulation of conscience. Therefore all pagans can now judge the Christians, but if you yourself do not want to judge, then ask the Jews, for the pagan Pilate said to the Jews, "Take Him and judge Him according to your law." And surely the Jews would gladly judge the Christians, but their law is such a common law which no longer is satisfactory for a guideline in spiritual matters, therefore Pilate must always let the judgement fall on the Christians, directly against his conscience he must judge since the Jews demand. The Jews again have such a law in their gall, that the law of the

conscience is not felt at all. And so the life of that righteous Man had to be given under the pagan's law; Christ first and His disciples after Him, had to go to death because of their faith. And thus the pagans have received that power from on high, that they can judge the Christians, and when they cannot condemn the Christians' souls to hell, then they must condemn the Christians' bodies to death, to fines, or to exile. Behold, in this way the Jews, pagans, and Catholics have condemned the Christians, and all of them thought they were doing God a service when they killed the disciples of Jesus. All persecutors of Christians have had that faith, that they have permission from above to condemn the Christians. And this judgement the Christians have had to receive. But who gave the pagans this power, that they can condemn the Christians to death, to fine them, or to sit with bread and water? Has God given the pagans that right that they can judge the Christians in that way? I think that the god of this world has given them such a judgement. Pilate was given that power from on high to judge with the right judgement, but the devil has given him that power that he can wrongly judge an innocent person contrary to his conscience. And that same god of the world has given the Jews, pagans, and Catholics that power that they can kill the Christians. But the Christians are given that power from on high to judge spiritually, and God confirms their judgements and then all the hatred of the pagans must fall upon them. And as the Jews have cried out, "May Christ's blood fall upon us and

our children," so Christ's blood has also begun to burn their consciences terribly, and so has the blood of the Christians become burning upon all Jews, pagan, and Catholics, and will always become terribly burning to all enemies of the Christianity. For God has terribly avenged the Jews, the pagans, and the Catholics for the blood of the Christians and will avenge henceforth. But the Christians must shine as the sun when that great day of the Lord comes, and then all persecutors of Christians can see whom they have pierced! Amen.

Fourth Sunday after Trinity Sermon B

"Give and it shall be given unto you; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." Luke 6:37,38

In today's gospel, along with other teachings and counsel, our Saviour has spoken these words which pertain to spiritual matters when they are understood rightly.

The first teaching: "Give and it shall be given unto you," also pertains to natural generosity or helping one's neighbor, which in itself is necessary. But since generosity is not suitable for a foundation of salvation, for the reason that a Christian has so little love that he cannot give of love, but from the demand of the conscience, so the old man is reluctant in that helping, especially for the reason that he earns nothing from that assisting. The poor surely often have such a faith that God will repay many thousand times what is given

to them, although the sorrowless poor of this time are without conscience and unthankful. They know neither good nor bad, and they have the measure of Christianity in their colon. They measure the Christianity with the measure of their own colon, and he is a good Christian who helps the poor. Nor do they inquire if there are means to help or not, but they want to take as by force, as though they have the right to receive. Therefore it is hard to give to such ones who are never satisfied, but the more they get, the more they want. Therefore such needy ones do not testify that the Christians have shown fruits of faith. But the Christians help, nevertheless, according to their means, although the sorrowless poor do not say anymore as they did before in the time of sorrowlessness, "May God reward you. Many thanks and may God repay you a thousand times." The Christians in Luther's kingdom cannot believe that God will take them into everlasting habitations for the reason that they have helped the poor. But the Catholics surely build their salvation much upon that, that they have helped the poor, as also the sorrowless here build their salvation upon that, that they have helped the poor. For such have often told the Christians, "I have helped the poor more than you have."

Another word: "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven." It truly belongs to true Christianity: for the sorrowless cannot forgive from the heart, although they say, "I have forgiven you long ago." True Christians can forgive from the heart, and for that reason forgiveness is promised to them, when they

crawl before the mercy seat with a penitent and believing heart. To those who from the heart forgive people their trespasses; to them forgiveness is promised. Even if people do not forgive, God nevertheless forgives the penitent their trespasses, when they come to pray with a humble and broken heart, to ask and plead for mercy from Him. But the devil of self-righteousness preaches to the penitent that God does not forgive their sins when they commit sin every day with thoughts, lusts, and desires. If, say I, the penitent ones believe what self-righteousness preaches to them, they will be left without grace and without salvation. Believe now, you penitent and doubting souls, that God forgives your sins and transgressions. Nevertheless, you have no other refuge than with that great Crossbearer and thorn-crowned King, who has not spared one single drop of blood, which He has not allowed to flow for the redemption of your souls. Oh hear, you great Forgiver and eternal Pardoner, the sigh of the penitent, sorrowful, and doubting ones. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 6:36-42

In accordance with the above-read holy gospel, at this holy moment through God's grace, we want to bring forth these words of Jesus to the penitent: "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven," if they can: reconcile these words to themselves and own them with a believing heart.

The first consideration: How many times must a Christian forgive his brother? Peter once asked, "How many ti-

mes must I forgive? Is that not enough when I forgive him seven times?" At that time Peter had such trials that a person is not always able to forgive. But that was a natural person's trial. If a person tries his nature, he certainly feels that he is not always able to forgive. But the Saviour said to Peter, "That is not yet enough, that a person would forgive his brother seven times, but seventy seven times must he forgive." This was a harsh answer, not only to Peter, but it is given to all Christians, and let the Christians now try themselves, if they think that they are able to forgive their brother that many times. First, there is this trial, if a Christian is able to believe such to be a Christian who transgresses against him so many times. For this word "brother" signifies a brother in faith, as Peter understood that they are brothers in faith, who are born of Abraham's seed and who have the same kind of faith- Peter had heard that expounding of the Scriptures of the scribes, and from them he took this question: "How many times must I forgive? Is it not enough that I have forgiven him seven times, namely, to my brother?" The scribes had, namely, that faith that a Christian need not forgive the gentiles. But now when such an answer was given to Peter, that seventy times and seven must he forgive his brother, then Peter received such a blow that even the intellect was taken aback. And now this trial is put before the Christians, if they think they are able to believe that such a one is a Christian who transgresses against him so many times, and secondly if they think they can forgive so many times. I

think that there is truly needed such a faith that the old Adam be crucified and mortified daily, otherwise not one can be so patient. Now the Christian, through daily penitence and repentance, can begin to mortify the old Adam, so that he can be able to forgive his brother as much as God is able to forgive him and bear his sins. For the Christians must themselves feel that they certainly transgress against God seventy-seven times a day. If the Christians truly know themselves, they must confess that they transgress against God daily as many times as is now said.

The second consideration: "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven." If it is difficult for a Christian to forgive those who always intentionally do evil, they can from that surmise how much more God can suffer the weaknesses of the Christians, and He must also be able to forgive what Christians transgress against Him with thoughts, lusts, and desires, not only seven times, but seventy seven times a day. If watchful Christians do not commit willful sins, they certainly have so much sins of weakness, that if a Christian were judged according to merit, then not even one Christian soul would be saved. But God must suffer the weaknesses of the Christians, and forgive as often as they ask, beg and pray to Him, although the accuser always stands before God's throne and accuses the Christians that they commit sin repeatedly, and reproaches the Heavenly Parent because of the children, saying, "Beautiful children you have, whores and thieves!" But what can He do about that, when He Himself has given His life for them and sweat blood

in their behalf, and suffered the torment and tribulation of hell in their stead. He can say nothing else to the accuser, than He has said right after the fall into sin, that the seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent. However, surely the children of God are whores and thieves, they are also murderers. But for such whores and thieves and murderers, the Son of God has suffered the pain and tribulation of hell. He has not come to save the pious but the sinners. As long as the penitent whores and penitent thieves accept the Son of God as an advocate before the Father, so long the accuser cannot rebuke the Father, no matter how the accuser accuses them. But as soon as the penitent begin to answer for themselves, then they are lost. When the accuser, through the intellect, depicts to the penitent that the Son of God cannot answer for them, but that a person himself must answer, then the enemy has won his goal. When he turns their eyes as toward the world, he shows them all the honor of the world, then the accuser has gained his intention. Then he preaches to the believing ones through the intellect: "You will not become saved no matter how you try, look rather into the world, then you will receive peace of conscience." First he makes light-mindedness allowable to the youth, through which the sorrow ends, namely that sorrow which is after the mind of God. Then finery and worldly-mindedness become allowable, and finally adultery becomes allowable. When, in this way, they have caused sorrow to the Spirit of God, then He leaves and finally they become seven times worse than they

were in sorrowlessness. From that we see that it is not easy to become saved. But we have that hope and trust in God, that those few souls who yet are striving in their most precious faith, can receive that assurance that God will forgive their sins of weakness which they commit with thoughts, lusts, and desires, if they are able to believe so much that they would win the temptations. As long as the enemy accuses them that they are whores and thieves, or as long as they remain in self-knowledge, as long as sin is felt to be sin, so long the penitent and believing ones feel that they cannot answer for themselves. But as soon as the consciousness of sin ceases, they receive such a power from the devil, that they can answer for themselves. But pray now, journeymen to eternity, that the Lord through His great grace would forgive you what you transgress every day against Him, and remember that your time of warfare is not long anymore! To them it is long, who do not travel while there is light. But it is not long for those who travel in the daytime and struggle with all the beasts which come on the way against the travelers, to scare and tempt them. The Son of God has promised to be the Advocate to the penitent and believing ones, who are not able to answer for themselves. Have you now taken Him for your advocate? Have you borne gifts to the Judge? You know that the accuser is terrible at accusing you, you penitent and believing ones. But be of good refuge, the Chief Judge will receive gifts and will turn the judgement so that the whores and the thieves and the murderers will be freed.

And that great Advocate before the Father, who has taken upon Himself the matter, will stop the mouth of the accuser, when the defendants are so dumb that they can answer nothing. Bear gifts to the Judge, you dumb defendants, and pray to that great Advocate that He would not become weary of pleading your case, until the judgement is proclaimed. Who knows, soon the end will come, soon the judgement will fall, soon you will reach peace and joy, when the accuser is cast out, and then all the defendants can thank the Advocate eternally, who has redeemed and relieved them of all accountability now and forever. Amen.

Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind. Which when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.”
Matthew 13:47-48.

Our Saviour, who knew best the effects and characteristics of Christianity, has taken parables of trading, fields, grape vines, leaven, darkness, light, money, sheep, dough, and of all kinds of building materials, which people know well. These parables effect so much that the sorrowless do not understand much at all of His sermons, for which reason His disciples sometimes reproached Him and asked Him why He spoke to the people in parables, and did not preach God’s truth straight, so that all would have understood His ser-

mons. But He also told the disciples the reason why He preached in parables. The reason was this, that the sorrowless people did not understand anything of the effects of Christianity or the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, no matter how He would have preached the mode of Christianity. But to the disciples was given to know the mysteries of God’s kingdom; therefore He explained some places to them which were still hidden from them, for the simple ones, who do not have such great power in the intellect, can certainly feel the effects of Christianity in the heart, although the understanding is not very clear.

What now pertains to this parable which is taken of catching fish, we must remind you that this net, of which the Saviour speaks in the 13th chapter of Matthew, has been cast into the sea long since and is always drawn to shore. But those fish, which the fishermen catch with that net are timid at first, as fresh water fish, which sometimes gape within the net but always find some hollow in the bottom, where they hide when the net is drawn. We cannot lament like Peter, that we have labored all night and have caught nothing. It would be a great dissatisfaction and unthankfulness if we would begin to complain that we had caught nothing, although we have not caught those big fish, which always go into that bottomless pit which is in the bottom, so we can nevertheless rejoice over that catch of fish which has been caught. Those small fish are also good fish, although some fishermen are not very satisfied when they have to go through so much

trouble cleaning the small fish. There is much trouble with them, but they do not need as much salt as the large and fat fish, who do not feel the salt much. We hope that the small gold fish and small fish which have become caught in the net of the Holy Spirit must be drawn to shore and placed into vessels until that day when the Master of the net separates those decayed fish from the living fish. But the decayed fish, which have once been caught in the net of the Holy Spirit, are worthless for they do not feel the salt. What should the fishermen do with the decayed fish who do not feel the salt? Those decayed fish are thrown into the lake by the fishermen for the worms and sticklebacks for food. Lamentably, many decayed fish have come into the net, and we do not know whose fault it is that they have decayed, but that we know, that the decayed fish do not become suitable no matter how they are salted.

There are some decayed fish here which are cast by the Master and fishermen in the lake for food for worms and sticklebacks. Also those large fish which are called fresh water fish, which can stand no noise whatsoever, they cannot stand that the fishermen would speak; these fresh water fish often gape within the net. But when the net is drawn to shore, there is nothing in it, only moss and mud. They are called fresh water fish because according to the reminiscing of the old people, they are from the fresh water, that is, from the underground bottomless lake, and that is where they flee every time when they are attempted to be caught. Whoever fishes for such fish must be a

sorcerer, but who now would begin to practice sorcery because of them? Let the fresh water fish go into that bottomless lake since they do not want to remain in the net of the Holy Spirit. We want to be satisfied when we have caught as many small fish as fit in the vessels. There is no longer so much salt that could be spared to salt those decayed fish, therefore the decayed fish are cast into that bottomless lake for the worms and sticklebacks, which gnaw at their bones. Some fishermen are such that they do not understand how they should catch fish. They cast the net, not on the right, but on the left side of the boat. They can labor all night and catch nothing. Some fishermen cast their net into the sea and catch only suckers, lizards, and frogs. No doubt they fish in such a bog, where tadpoles are conceived. Some fishermen stand themselves in the mud hole up to their armpits and are sloshing there. What better fish could such await than what they get, namely suckers, lizards, and frogs.

We must now finally mention that the net which is cast into the sea is the net of the Holy Ghost, which is of very stout fish line and made of the best hemp. That net is not easily broken. It soon tears off the scales from the fish. And that fish which is once truly caught in the net of the Holy Spirit cannot easily escape, except some pike, which swallow small fish; they tear themselves loose from the net and go their way. The fish do not go into the net before it becomes narrower. First when the net is cast into the sea, all kinds of fish are in the net, large and small, pike, salmon, perch, burbot, roe

and other such ones. But the narrower the net becomes, the more some are in haste to escape. Some go over and gape on the outside of the net, mocking the fishermen. Some run toward the net and some get caught in it. Some wrench the net and tear it. Some press down into the mud and let the net go over their neck. Some small fish come to shore with the net. Do you see now what it means when the Saviour says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind. Which when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away."

This net was cast into the sea before already, but then when the net was cast into the sea the first time, the fish were so proud that they did not want to stay in the net at all. They went out of the net, large and small, and began to gape on the outside of the net and show their tails to the fishermen. But now we bow our knees in the Lord Jesus' name, as Peter, because of that great draught of fish which has come, not through our wisdom, but by the Lord's power, who has gathered those fish in the net of the Holy Ghost and allowed them to be caught, and so our hope is that these fish will come to shore, will be put into vessels, will be preserved until that day when the Lord Jesus needs them. Remain therefore, inside the net, you small fish and gold fish, striped back white and red, wounded by the pike, remain in the net so that the pike will not be able to swallow you. The decayed fish, lizards, suckers, and young of the frogs will be cast away for food for

sticklebacks. But for that great draught of fish which now has been caught, we must thank and praise the Lord and always pray that the great number of fish would be confined to the net. Hear, merciful Saviour, the sigh of all those who labor all night until the time the day breaks. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 5:1-11.

We hear from today's gospel how the disciples became astonished at the great draught of fish. Peter thereby became conscious of his sins when he fell at the Saviour's feet and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." He felt himself unworthy to be near the Saviour. We cannot now explain how deep this knowledge of sin was. But let us take substance for consideration from the Saviour's words, "Fear not, henceforth thou shalt catch men." Let us consider therefore, through God's grace, how Peter catches men. First: With what kind of a net does he fish? Second: What kind of fish does he catch? We know that the words of the Saviour have become fulfilled, for Peter has caught much fish. We poor and foolish fishermen are not worthy to catch anything. But if the Lord Jesus, of His great grace, would allow us to catch some small fish, we would be satisfied, for we have not been able to thank even for that which has been caught.

First: With what kind of a net does Peter fish for people? It is the net of the Holy Spirit which is made of very stout hemp cord. This net of the Holy Spirit is not made of such thin cord as Satan's

net, which is as fine as a spider's web, so that a person does not feel how and when he was bound in them. But the net of the Holy Spirit is made of stout cord. It squeezes hard the heart of the fish, which has become caught in it. As you know, the heart of the fish is under the jaws, so also the hearts of those people rise under their chin, who have become caught in the net of the Holy Spirit. The fish knows well when he has become caught in the net of the Holy Spirit. But he who has become caught in Satan's net does not know that he is caught in that net; they can swim after their own will in fleshly lusts and pleasures. The net can never be seen, for it is so fine that the fish can neither see nor feel it, until he is drawn into that bottomless pit which is at the bottom of the lake. Sometimes the old man himself goes to spear some salmon, which is in the net. He first fetches fire from hell with which he kindles those dry trees and old tar stumps which he has gathered from the root stock of the world, and when the devil's fishing fire comes suddenly upon the fish which have been accustomed to swimming in the dark, then the fish become so blind that they do not understand to flee. And then the old man, the devil, stabs one blind fish after another and puts them into a kettle or else on coals to roast. The enemy is an old fisherman and also has helpers who fish with him. Although the devil's helpers have no part in the catch, when the catch of fish must be divided, but he keeps it all himself. But it comes from this, that the helpers of the enemy have no salt. If those fishermen had salt, they

also could get a part of the catch of fish, but those wretches have no salt. Therefore all those fish decay, which are caught in those nets, which the foolish fishermen have woven from silk thread. They think that the fish would be caught more easily, the softer the thread is from which the net is woven, but there they become greatly deceived, for death cuts those threads of which that net is made, with which the grace thieves fish for fish. And then the enemy takes all of their catch, and the empty scraps, intestines, and scales he leaves for the fishermen. But that net with which Peter fished for men's souls for the kingdom of heaven was certainly not made of silk thread, nor spun of cotton batting, but it was of very stout hemp cord and in parts woven of wire, and very heavy to draw, so that if Peter had not had such power of the spirit and had strength, he certainly would have become weary of drawing the net of the Holy Spirit. We have just seen such fisherman who intends to cease fishing when the seine becomes little heavier to pull. And it is clear that the more fish are in the seine, the heavier the pulling of the seine becomes. But there is no other way. He who wants to take the fishes to the shore must pull with all the power the Lord has given him. And if the powers however are lacking, he must do as Peter, of whom it is told, that he made a sign to his companies so that they would come and help him. But a lazy and strengthless fisherman will cease with pulling the seine when it becomes heavy.

The first reason is this: The seine of the Holy Ghost is ten times heavier to

pull than the seine of the grace-thief, which is made of silk cords. The second reason is this: Peter must sometimes work the whole night and he does not get anything. And when he finally throws his net in the fishing place according to the commandment of Jesus, then he gets fish, but then the seine becomes heavy to pull, and Peter must make a sign to other companions so that they would come and help him when the own boat begins to sink. But a lazy fisherman ceases to pull the seine when he feels that the seine becomes heavy. Would such a fisherman like to get the small fishes, who does not care to pull his seine to the shore or to the boat. And where would such a fisherman get enough salt in order to prevent the fish decay. The fishes will by no means retain their freshness without salt even though it is written in the gospel of this day, that the disciples left all of the fishes and followed Christ.

But those fishes did surely not decay there because without any doubt the family members of the disciples got the fish ready. Who knows how it will happen in the world always. Who knows if I also must follow Christ and leave all fishes, which are fastened to the net of the Holy Ghost by the power of Jesus, to be got ready by others.

I feel sorrow if I must leave the beautiful fishes, but if I shall receive an order from above, that I must follow Christ just like Peter followed him into the residence of the highest priests, so I ask you to pray for me that I should not do as Peter did at that time when he denied that he was a disciple of Jesus, but that I should rather do as Peter did after

his fall, when the Savior said: "Follow me!" And by God's help I shall follow.

Secondly. What kind of fishes Peter will get? All fishermen have the desire to get those larger fishes, but we see from all occasions that the largest fishes are so timid that they do not stay in the seine. The enemy has angled those larger fishes and the torchlight of the devil has made them blind. They swim in the depth of the wisdom of the World so that the net of the Holy Ghost does not reach those places where the large fishes swim in the depth of the fleshly wisdom. Thus only few of the larger fishes follow the seine. It is miraculous that a large fish fastens to the net of the Holy Ghost.

Paul writes that there are neither many of the wise of the World who are invited, nor many of high rank. They were far from Christianity already then. And the lords of the World seem still to have the same mind. They regard the Christianity as sorcery and an effect of the evil spirit. Without doubt the devil has succeeded to get so great rule over them that they flee the periphery of the light just like the large fishes are used to do. Peter and other fishermen must therefore be satisfied if they get some small young fishes. Those small goldfishes, white and red, which swim near the shore and seek food there, are caught every now and then, when the net is thrown in the sea. The large fishes are in the depth, far away from the shore, far away from the beautiful shore of the eternity. They swim there in the depth of the wisdom of the World where the whale-fish dwells. That whale-fish swallowed Jona the Prophet be-

cause he did not want to practise the office of the Prophet. He did not want to advise the pagans and warn them for God's judgements.

The same whale-fish swallows still even other larger fishes who do not want to obey the heavenly commandment. Even if the whale-fish had to throw up Jona who cried to God in the stomach of the whale-fish, the other large fishes have no hope that the large whale-fish of the World will throw up them from his mouth. The reason is, that they do not cry to God like Jona, but they try by their intellect to make a hole in the stomach of the whale-fish, and they imagine that they can escape through that hole. But there is no exit from the stomach of the whale-fish.

The pike sometimes comes to the shore, but however he does not stay in the seine, but still swallows small fishes even though he himself is in the seine. And finally, when the seine becomes cramped, the pike flees through the seine and destroys the net. Thus there is not much hope that Peter or some one else of the fishermen would get larger fishes by the net of the Holy Ghost because the large fishes are quite too far from the shore. They are in the depth of the bottomless sea, where the net of the Holy Ghost does not run at all. It is better that Peter catches the smaller fishes which remain in the seine and come to the shore. Peter got many thousand souls on one day when he began to fish them by the net of the Holy Ghost. And even if we do not get so much at same time, we indeed had to thank to God for that small catch of fish which has been caught. If the small fis-

hes would remain in the seine untill it will be drown to the shore, then some vessels would become filled. There would be enough fishes to salt with that much salt we have. Salt has no effect to those large and fat fishes but the small young fishes and goldfishes need not so much salt before they become good.

Those fishermen who fish in the mud pond maybe get ruffs, lizards and frogs. Such fishermen have sank in the mud down till the armpits, and there they keep wading. May God be merciful even with those wretched ones who are wading there! If only they first would be able to come up from the mud pond and throw their nets in the sea. Then they could get some small fishes. But as long as they stand in the mud pond and fish there they do not get anything else but lizards and frogs. It is told that in some places people eat frogs and lizards and put them salted in the vessels. But I know and I am sure that the frogs and lizards are not acceptable to the owner of the seine who has the net of the Holy Ghost, but he wants to get good fishes, which first are got ready and washed with the water of life and properly salted with the salt of the truth, so that they would remain fresh untill the owner of the seine needs them. We know that the large fishes need much salt before they becomes acceptable. But the small fishes do not need as much salt as the large fishes.

Remain in the seine of the Holy Ghost, you small and young fishes! Do not swim far from the shore, you small young fishes! Do not hurry further in the depth, you small goldfishes! There is the pike who has a great throat. There

is the dragon who has sharp teeth. There is the whale-fish who swallows thousands of large and small fishes at a moment. Remain nearer the shore, you white and red fishes who are small, so that you would come to the shore with the seine of the Holy Ghost when it is drawn, if you would be acceptable, so that the fishermen could put you in the vessels, and properly salted be acceptable for the owner of the seine when the quests come from heaven.

It is our desire when Peter and John throw their nets to the right side of the boat, that a big capture of fishes will be got through the grace and blessing of Jesus who now is standing and waiting on the shore. On the shore of eternity he waits for the tired fishermen! Amen.

The blue text is translated by Lauri Koistinen. This part has disappeared from the papers we got from old Melvin Niska 1985.

Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

“For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:20.

These Saviour’s words are found in the Gospel for today. They are severe and very significant words, and the words are spoken to Jesus’ disciples, and therefore belong to the Christians. And I think that the Christians should feel the weight of these words. But because Christians feel so much iniquity

in themselves, they must own for themselves Christ’s righteousness, and believe that their iniquity is accounted for righteousness, because Christ has paid their iniquity. And because Christians do not have any of their own righteousness, but only Christ’s righteousness which they must account as their own; that is to say when Christians feel that their own righteousness is nothing other than lack of righteousness, in what way must then their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, when we hear by these Saviour’s words as if the disciples’ own righteousness must exceed the Pharisees’ own righteousness? The papists say that love must be the foundation of living faith and that a Christian of himself must be holy and righteous. “Therefore, if a Christian has lack of love, then he does not have living faith;” so say the papists. “If a Christian feels evil in his heart, then he does not have a saving faith, and if a Christian feels impatience in his heart, then the devils have not been driven out of his heart, but he is yet under the devil’s power;” so say the papists. “If a Christian feels evil lusts and desires in his will, like fleshly lusts, the effects of greed, and other such things, then there are not holy lusts and desires in the will, nor has such a one yet been sanctified or made holy through grace;” so say the papists. “If a Christian in his mind feels evil thoughts, there are not good and Godly thoughts in such a person’s mind, nor is he yet rightly pious and free of sin as a Christian should be?” so say the papists. And so say even the confessors of dead faith, who with their mouth con-

fess the Lutheran faith and are likewise assured that they have the right Lutheran faith. They speak thus: "A Christian must have holy desires and lusts and he must become like an angel before he can come into the kingdom of heaven. "How" does it now go with the Christians? Could they now enter into the kingdom of heaven with that righteousness which they now have, namely Christ's righteousness owned through faith, as Luther has taught? The reason speaks thus: "Christ's righteousness is not yours, but you must have so much self-righteousness that God cannot condemn you. You must become righteous and holy in your own behalf and not in another's, namely Christ's, righteousness, which is not yours; with your own righteousness you must come to the judgement. You must of yourself become holy and righteous before you can be acceptable to God." And so also demand the papists and the confessors of dead faith in the Lutheran kingdom. These grace thieves say thus: "A man must become like an angel before he can enter into the kingdom of heaven." And they take proof for this doctrine from today's gospel, where Jesus says to His disciples: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Do you hear now, you false prophets and wild spirits, who always boast of Christ's righteousness and who yourselves are so ugly and black as the devil himself. Do you hear what Christ says? Except your righteousness shall exceed the scribes' and Pharisees', you shall not enter into the

kingdom of heaven." So say the pharisees who have so much self-righteousness, that they are able to say: "I thank you God, that I am not as this publican," or as the pharisees of this time say: "I have done more good than evil; I have not done wrong against anyone, but I have done right to every man and my conscience does not condemn me of sin." Such people are able to say to the Christians: "You are as ugly and black as tartars although you say you have been cleansed through Christ's blood." And the Christians are not able to evade this accusation, but they must confess themselves to be whores and thieves, and guilty of all sins,, but they trust on this, that Christ has paid all. They own Christ's righteousness and believe that it is acceptable before God the Father. They take the bloody form of Christ upon themselves when they appear before God. They follow Jesus' bloody footprints from the Garden to the hill of Golgotha; they stand with a sorrowful and broken heart at the cross and behold the wounds of the Crucified and Thorn-crowned One. They gather in one room and there they weep and lament when Jesus has died. And if this world's clergy-nen see that Jesus' sorrowful disciples weep and lament, then they say; "What howling is this?" They go yet for a second time to Golgotha and weep upon Jesus' grave. There is now the righteousness of the sorrowful disciples. And when Jesus becomes alive, then the disciples are joyous: there is their righteousness. And when they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, they begin to condemn and to bark at the world: There is their righteousness.

What do you think, you sorrowful disciples, do you want to come before God's presence with this righteousness? Do you want to come, you penitent sinners, before God's throne of grace when you, in behalf of the inward men, are as black as a tartar and as ugly as the devil himself? I think that you have no other refuge, but with that righteousness which Christ has merited for you, you must come to cry and to sigh: Our Father, and so forth.

The Gospel: Matthew 5: 20-26.

In today's gospel our Saviour has set such places before us that the disciples and the Christian's can together be ashamed, if their righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees. We must now for the upbuilding of the sorrowful and doubting souls explain, as we understand what these words of the Saviour contain and how we should rightly understand these words of Jesus: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." First consideration: Of what kind is the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees? Second consideration! Of what kind is the righteousness of the disciples?

First consideration: The righteousness of the scribes and pharisees is shining before the world, especially in outward meekness, finery, beauty, and also exists in outward humility, but not in change of heart or in true repentance and confession of sins, but that they otherwise are separated from the other

people by their outward meekness. They are not as the course sorrowless people, who do not have honor, so that they could cover their evil deeds from before the world's eyes. Nor are the scribes and pharisees such as the half lords of today, who drink and play cards even during the service of God. But true pharisees are very godly they go to the church to pray, and their prayers are more beautiful than the publican's sighs. They build the prophets' tombs, help the poor, give honor to one another, bow themselves and beg for forgiveness if the house has not been cleaned when a guest comes. But if Jesus' disciples rub some ears of corn with their hands on the Sabbath, then the Pharisees rebuke them for transgressing the Sabbath; they have keen eyes to see the Christians' faults. And when living Christianity appears in some place, then the pharisees say: "It is nothing other than wildness," and then begin to persecute the Christians, And although they otherwise want to do right to all, they nevertheless teach their children to say, "Korban," that is: the parents' part shall be given to God so that under the guise of the law or godliness it would be for the income of the churchly. The Saviour also rebukes them, that they swallow camels and strain at gnats, and that they devour widows' houses, and He commands them to cast the first stone at the whore if they were free of her. Such is the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees. It is very shining before the world and therefore are they able to say: "I have done more good than evil, I have done right to all men and I thank you, God,

that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.” And when the pharisees or the scribes explain the scripture, so they say in the explanation of the fifth commandment: “Thou shalt not kill, but who ever kills, he must be guilty under judgement.” But of anger or murder of the heart, the scribes speak nothing. Or if in anger and wrath one says to his neighbor: “Raca,” that is, rascal, the scribes say nothing of it. Said in a word: what concerns outward, gross sins, those the scribes and pharisees condemn, but of the evil of the heart they know nothing, nor do they know the heart at all, for it is hidden from them. Neither does Nicodemus feel the evil of his heart, and therefore he does not consider a change of heart and new birth to be necessary. The scribes’ doctrine of righteousness is completely against God’s word and the order of grace, since they want to explain the outward life of the people, but that inward corruption and the evil of the heart they leave unexplained. And they themselves have some sins permissible, for example, swearings finery, worldliness, anger, and Old Adam. Said in a word: the meek life of the scribes and pharisees does not go to the impossible and their doctrine is entirely reversed, because in the explanation of the commandments, they leave out those most weighty places of the law, which are righteousness and judgement,

The second consideration: What kind of righteousness should the disciples have, that it may exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? The first matter concerns this righ-

teousness we find directly from the explanation of the fifth commandment, that the disciples must come to feel man’s inner corruption and the evil of the heart, and that even small sins must become sins. This place the scribes and pharisees leave unexplained. The pharisees do not believe that even a little sin merits hell. The Saviour shows that barking at one’s neighbor in anger and wrath has deserved as great a punishment and judgement as open murder. This is the first place which concerns the disciples’ righteousness, that they must so understand and explain God’s law, that even a little sin will become as heavy and weighty as a great sin. The anger of the heart is just as great a sin before God as open murder, although the disciples now cannot avoid this inner corruption. But this righteousness of the law should so press them that sin would be known as sin, that no sin would be permissible, and under the shadow of allowance become committed. This is the weightiest place in the law, which the scribes and pharisees have left out, and a few disciples have not yet comprehended the weight of this matter. Some do not understand that even a little sin is destructive, when for example, a little vanity is permissible, so all disciples do not yet understand, that such a sin is destructive, not only because of the bad example, but also because of the allowance under the shadow of which this little sin is committed. When sin loses its power, then even the conscience has lost its strength, but such a sin which does not come upon the conscience is destructive for this reason, that man does not

regret the sin, which he does not understand or feel to be a sin. The righteousness of the disciples is recognized also in the reconciliation of brothers in strife: this is again a heavy place in the law which the scribes and pharisees leave unexplained and undone. If the house is unclean when guests come, then they say, "Forgive me, this house has not been cleaned," But if they in anger and wrath say to their neighbor, "Raca," they do not consider it to be a sin, neither ask forgiveness. If they yet should give another a box in the ear, that they do not consider to be a sin, neither do they ask for forgiveness. This reconciling with the brother in strife has become a matter of the conscience to the awakened and the Christians, But not so sufficiently has this weighty place in the law become a conscience matter, that it would not be needful to become yet weightier. These are the weightiest places in the law, which the scribes and pharisees leave unexplained and undone. But the righteousness of the disciples must by far exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees if they want to enter the kingdom of heaven. First, they must so understand and explain God's law, that even small sins become sins and destructive; in addition to reconciliation with the neighbor. What else concerns the righteousness of the disciples is concluded in these of which our Saviour has spoken in the Holy Gospel, namely: when God's commandments are rightly understood and explained, the disciples become great sinners. All self-righteousness and own goodness are excluded; all thoughts, lusts, and desires which

God's spirit has not effected become sin, through which the disciples come to a right knowledge of sin. They become penitent and must beg for grace. There now stands the righteousness of the disciples, which far exceeds the scribes' and Pharisees' self-righteousness and own holiness, that the disciples' self-righteousness must so come to an end, that they come to feel with a living conscience that they sink into hell and come under eternal condemnation, if Christ does not give them His righteousness and make them so righteous, that God can no longer condemn them. How is it now with you, you disciples of Jesus? Does your righteousness now exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? Have you now stripped the rags of self-righteousness from yourselves and taken Christ's righteousness, with which you can boast on Judgement Day and say, "Our righteousness far exceeds the self-righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, for we have Christ's righteousness?" Can you now say, "Christ's righteousness is ours?" Can you now boast of Christ's righteousness when the devil of self-righteousness, who is the accuser of God's children comes to accuse you as whores and thieves? Can you now boast of your righteousness and say, "We have a greater and nobler righteousness than the scribes and Pharisees. We have Christ's righteousness which is our own righteousness, which the Father beholds as right righteousness, for which the Father cannot condemn us." I believe that the righteous can boast of their righteousness and say

to the accuser, "We are righteous through Christ's righteousness," Amen.

Seventh Sunday after Trinity

"Dear brethren! For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty." 2 Peter 1:16.

In today's epistle, Apostle Peter makes known those signs of grace which he had seen on the Mount of Transfiguration, and assures those Christians to whom he writes that he had not followed cunningly devised fables, or told them vain recollections when he had spoken to them of the great power and glory of Jesus Christ, and what he spoke to them of that salvation which the Saviour had promised to all believers. We hear therefore, from these words of Peter, that this is a great sign of grace or confirmation to his faith of that forthcoming salvation. Although Peter, according to that sign of grace, could experience many changes of heart and also fell into sin, nevertheless he could not bring this sign of grace to naught, or to think so, that it was nothing, but this great and wonderful brightness, which he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration, always remained in his memory. That same brightness had assured him of that forthcoming salvation! he was like strengthened in his faith through this sign of grace, so that this was not a vain matter, which Jesus has promised to those who follow Him.

So also another Christian who has seen some sign of grace can be so assured of that, that salvation is not in vain which the Word of God promises to the believers, although the children of the world understand nothing of that, they do not even believe that those signs of grace are true, but think that there is like some deceit concealed there. But a Christian knows that they are not vain or deceitful flashes, but they are such signs of grace with which that merciful Saviour wants to strengthen the faith of the faint-minded and doubting ones, so that they would not become weary on the way of life, carrying Jesus' cross. To Peter this sign of grace often came to mind when temptations came upon him. Before he had asked the Saviour, "We have forsaken all and followed thee; that shall we have therefore?" And to many a sorrowful crossbearer the same question of Peter probably comes to mind: What will he finally gain from that Christianity, since he has forsaken all the pleasures of the world and begun to follow the footsteps of the Saviour. Then the Saviour saw it necessary to show Peter and the others, who were afraid, that they would receive nothing for their trouble. He saw it necessary to show the doubting ones that their trouble is not in vain. He shows them some sign of His brightness, that they would know just what a great reward awaits them if they continually henceforth remain in the Christianity. But this first sign of grace was shown only to Peter, James, and John. For what reason could the other disciples not then see the Saviour's brightness? Were the other disciples greater sinners

than Peter, James, and John, or were they in that condition that it was not fitting to show such signs of grace yet? We cannot understand why the first sign of grace was shown only to Peter, James, and John, and not to others; but we surmise from all aspects of the matter, which happened after these signs of grace, that they were not then better than the other disciples. Although Peter had that thought about himself, that he was the best of all the disciples, nevertheless he had the greatest fall, when he denied the Saviour. And when the Saviour was in that greatest agony and tribulation in the Garden, He again took those same men aside, namely, Peter, James, and John, who had seen Him transformed before. He took them aside and asked them to watch and to pray, but they were not even able to watch, for the sleep of sin pressed their eyes. Therefore, we surmise from these happenings that these three were not better than the other disciples for the reason that they could see the first signs of grace. However, they were as testifiers and witnesses of the Saviour's glory and tribulation; they could remind the other disciples what they had seen and had heard, and certainly these signs of grace also belong to others. Although we cannot say that Peter, James, and John were better than the other disciples, we nevertheless hear now from their mouths that the glory of the Saviour is not in vain, and that salvation, which He has promised to the believing ones, is not an old story. But through these signs of grace even the faith of the other disciples is strengthened, who have not yet seen the brightness of Je-

sus. And although Peter had that foolish thought that he was the best of all the disciples, nevertheless he was able to experience from his own weakness and fall that: he was sometimes worse than all the rest. It is not written anywhere that the other disciples, because of envy, would have looked askance at Peter, James, and John because of this sign of grace. Neither is it written that the other disciples would have kept Peter's fall as pleasant. And so not one Christian should be envious of these signs of grace, which one has felt and another has not felt, but a Christian thanks God for those signs of grace, which God has shown to someone, although they are not yet revealed to them. Many an awakened person thinks thus, "Since others are given signs of grace and I am not given them, so I probably am not on the right road. The Saviour does not care for me, since He does not take me to the Mount of Transfiguration." But it is unknown if these thoughts of the awakened are exactly the right thoughts. When the Saviour took only three disciples with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration and left the others, so it is not written that the other disciples would have been rejected by the Saviour, and the three chosen; but it is written so: "Come to me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The Saviour does not take all separately to the Mount of Transfiguration, but only takes some, that they must proclaim to the other disciples the great power and glory of the Saviour to help penitent sinners, who come to Him with a penitent and broken heart.

But the children of the world know nothing about that. If the disciples of Jesus would yet say to the sorrowless, "We saw the Lord," they do not believe. The children of the world say, when they see some sorrowful soul weeping and sighing: "That is a remarkable superstition." If they see someone rejoicing from God's grace, they look at him as demented. The children of the world do not understand that both sorrow and joy are effects of the Holy Spirit. Neither the naturally meek nor the confessors of dead faith care to see such demented ones who weep although there is nothing to weep over, and laugh although there is nothing to laugh at, and sigh although there is no visible reason why they should sigh, but when the sorrowless themselves begin to whore and make merry, no one keeps that to be strange. The devil's spirit often shows his slaves the honor of the world and says, "All this I will give to you, if you will serve me." And when he makes his children intoxicated with the wine of adultery, he says, "Look what kind of joy awaits you in hell! Serve me faithfully and I will give you honor of the world for a reward; keep a whiskey trade, I will give you worldly possessions as a reward; drink liquor and I will give you great joy and pleasure as a reward; curse and I will give you a good name in hell." And surely the blind wretches believe that this joy of the world reaches even to hell. The blind wretches cannot distinguish the Creator of heaven and earth from the god of the world. They willingly and surely believe what the daughters of the earthlings whisper,

that the Christians are possessed of evil spirits. The very same faith the pagans formerly had, that the Christians are the disciples of the devil, when they despised their gods.

When now the god of the world gives his slaves such great possessions, joy and honor, and promises also to give them more in hell, than the Saviour also must sometimes show his sorrowful disciples that their troubles are not in vain, if they only await the moment of their redemption in patience. The Saviour has not shown His glory to some without a reason. If the other disciples take heed of these, which have happened to Peter, James, and John then certainly their faith would become strengthened, although many a sorrowful disciple thinks: "The Saviour does not care for me, since I cannot see His glory." But if you sorrowful soul have not seen His glory on Mount Tabor, then you nevertheless can see His glory in the Garden if sleep does not press your eyes. You can also see His glory on the hill of Golgotha, where the whole world was upon Him. So the Saviour Himself has said that the Son of Man is glorified. Although the world looks at it as a great shame that the Son of God hangs on the cross, nevertheless the honor of the Saviour is there glorified. The honor of the Saviour is not so bright in any place in the eyes of the penitent sinners, as in the Garden and on Golgotha's Hill, where He bore the crown of glory. That was the great glory of the Saviour, that His blood was shed even for those who mock His tears. If you penitent soul have not seen His glory on Mount Tabor, then behold,

nevertheless, His glory in the Garden, where the bloody sweat drips from His holy body, and where the load of sin presses Him to the ground. Where He must bow His knees because of you and with hands crossed cry out, "Abba, dear Father, if it would be possible that I could be relieved of this pain, of this torment of hell, which these ungodly children have caused me." If you are so sleepy that you cannot see His glory in the Garden, then go to the hill of Golgotha. There, nevertheless, His glory shines like the sun to all penitent souls, and only the entirely blind cannot see other than one disturber of the people and a teacher who counsels people on the wrong road. The completely blind see only one blasphemer of God and a great sorcerer on the cross. But the penitent souls, whose conscience the tears of the Parent burn, surely see their Parent's blood flowing on the cross. They see the One who has given them birth, in the pains of death and sitting in the blood bath, they hear their Parent crying out in the distress of death. Behold, penitent soul, the Saviour's glory in this tribulation, in this torment, in this blood bath, in this crown of glory which made holes in His head, from which the red blood flows. Behold yet the Saviour's glory in this nakedness on the cross, in this pitiable state and bloody form. Behold yet His glory in the nail holes and open side. In blood-red raiment He trod the winepress of God alone, all of His wounds open before the whole world, but the blind do not see His glory and His brightness there, shining through His heart and soul. Dear Saviour! Show your glory to all

penitent souls, who have not yet seen your brightness. Open your heart and allow the drops of grace to flow into the mouths of the thirsting, who have not yet tasted of the water of life. Let your sun of grace shine to those solitary travelers who sit upon the road and await the dawn of day. Soften the hard hearts and break the hard hearts, that they would begin to melt as honey in the sunshine. Hear the sigh of the sorrowful heart because of your love. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 17:1-8

The brightness of the Saviour on Mount Tabor is one sign of grace which was shown only to some of the disciples, and we cannot say why all the disciples could not see such signs of grace. But that we know, that the Saviour has shown His power and glory to the other disciples in a different place and in another form, but especially has He shown His glory and godly nature in that bloody strife, when He gave His life for the redemption of all mankind, although the blind people do not see any glory in that, but only shame and dishonor. However, the Saviour Himself has said of this strife, "Now is the Son of Man glorified." Now people can see the glory of the Son of Man. When now the Saviour reveals Himself to His disciples in many ways and in many different forms, so a suitable opportunity comes to us here to consider: In how many ways the Saviour reveals Himself to His disciples. When we search out those places in the Scriptures where it speaks of the revealing of the Saviour,

we find that the Saviour revests Himself in that form which best befits the soul condition which His disciple is in. When the Saviour revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene, His wounds were covered. When He revealed Himself to Thomas, He showed His wounds. When He revealed Himself to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He spoke of the Scriptures. When He revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus, He was brighter than the sun. When He revealed Himself to John, He was like a slain lamb. That we know assuredly, that all the disciples have seen the Saviour in His bloody form on the cross. He has also revealed Himself to the sorrowless crowd of the world as a great prophet or as a godly teacher, but the blind crowd of the world held Him to be a false prophet, who taught people wrongly. And although the sorrowless people of this time do not care to openly say that the Saviour has taught the people wrongly, they nevertheless bear hatred toward those who have been converted through His doctrine and received living faith. The Saviour has also revealed His godly power through signs, but the blind throng of the world said that He performed miracles with the power of the devil. The Saviour was, in their mind, a great sorcerer. He has also revealed to the blind crowd of the world His godly power and brightness upon the cross, but they looked on Him as an evil doer and blasphemer of God. Therefore, although the Saviour revealed Himself to the children of the world in many ways, they nevertheless do not confess Him to be the Saviour, but they mock His tears.

We have just said that when some person sees the Saviour, then the Saviour has such a form which befits the condition which the person is in. Before the eyes of the Jews, the Saviour is a sorcerer, a false prophet, a disturber of the people and a blasphemer of God. Since the devil had reversed their eyes, they beheld all spiritual matters in reverse: the Saviour changed into a sorcerer, the Son of God changed, in their eyes, to a blasphemer of God. The best Teacher on the earth changed into a false prophet, and when He effected with the power of God, the people thought that He effected with the power of the devil. Even now the Saviour would become the same kind of a man in the eyes of the sorrowless throng, if He would begin to effect bodily. They would say to Him as did the Jews, "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil." Some confessors of dead faith, who through the deceit of the devil's spirit think they are the closest ones to the Saviour, surely say that if the Saviour would meet them, they would take Him around the neck. But I think that they would spit at His mouth if He would begin to reprove them as whores and thieves. They would soon say, "It is not the Son of God who barks so shamelessly at honorable people." The meek people would say, "It is not the Son of God who barks at meek people as meek whores and honest thieves." The confessors of dead faith would say that it is not the Saviour who wants to rob them of their faith. Said in a word, the sorrowless people of this time would become more angry with the Saviour than the Jews were. But if the god of the

world would come in the form of a great lord and begin to thank and praise, begin to counsel them how they must become rich and gain through crookedness, to keep a whiskey trade, and become an honorable lord, then they would soon say, "This would be a suitable king for us." Even all the poor would come to such a lord and would say, "Counsel us, good lord, what we should do so that we, too, would become rich." And he would say to them, "Gather all the poor together and rob them of their possessions wherever you find them." Behold, thus the devil is busy with a person. But the Saviour who confesses the truth to the people, He is, in the eyes of the sorrowless crowd, worse than the enemy.

Now we must consider what kind of a form the Saviour has when He reveals Himself to awakened souls. These are in that soul condition that they feel they need a spiritual Saviour who would redeem their soul from the torment of hell. But self-righteousness is also so great, that they do not dare to come to the Saviour as poor and unworthy as they are, but they first try to beautify themselves with their own repentance, and when it does not go so, they begin to doubt that the Saviour probably does not care for them. In that soul condition, the Saviour sometimes comes before the eyes of the awakened in the form of the cross, that signifies only that the Saviour wants to show them how they must become, namely stripped naked, as the Saviour was on the cross, and also blasphemed by the world, despised and hated. It is as if the Saviour wanted to say to the awakened

souls, "Behold, you must also become so poor and unworthy before you can suck the reconciling blood from my breasts. Your flesh must be crucified, the old man must be destroyed, all the old rags must be stripped off, all shame must be shown, all the dogs of the world must bark at you, all the meek whores must spit upon you. You must become honorless. You must cry out that God has cast you into destruction. You must become so poor and unworthy that the closest relatives, parents and children will begin to pity you and cry because of you, that you have gone into such a poor condition, that you have become so foolish that you have begun to carry Jesus' cross and to sigh under it." Therefore, since the Saviour reveals Himself to the awakened as crucified, bleeding and full of bloody wounds, it signifies that the heart of the sinner is not yet broken, but it will break just at beholding such a pitiable sight. A very bitter sorrow came to the disciples over that, when they beheld Jesus in that pathetic form on the cross. It was that sorrow of which the Saviour said, "Ye shall weep and lament." Just then the tears of the Parent began to really burn their conscience after the death of the Saviour. That former dead faith disappeared entirely; all their hope was lost. When this sorrow after the Saviour became greater and greater, just then their hearts were really broken, and just then other kinds of signs of grace began to appear. The Saviour began to live in their hearts; they began to see the Saviour resurrected. Therefore when one penitent soul sees the Saviour on the cross in a bloody shirt, then it signifies

only this, that he who sees it is in that soul condition that the old faith is waning, and that the heart becomes rightly broken in that same place when he beholds it. Certainly this beholding or looking at the Saviour upon the cross is one sign of grace, but it is not such a sign of grace that it brings joy, but it brings or effects a still greater sorrow; the heart becomes thereby rightly broken. Just then the tears of penitence begin to really flow, a person just then begins to truly feel that he has been left an orphan and without refuge. So it happened to Mary and the disciples, that the tears just then began to flow very freely after the Saviour's death. And so it also happens to other awakened ones, if they could take heed of all the changes of heart. For the law by itself is the scolding of the Parent. It frightens the sinner and makes the heart hard. But the tears of the Parent, or the Saviour's spiritual and natural tribulation, when they begin to burn the conscience, just then they effect the true sorrow and grief. They break that stone hard heart. So Luther himself testifies that the severe righteousness of the law caused him a great anguish, fear and trembling; but the Saviour's sufferings that did break the heart. When now one penitent soul who through the hammering of the law has truly awakened, sees the Saviour on the cross, we cannot say to him, "It is not right, it is not a sign of grace." But we say to him that he has truly seen one great sign of grace in that soul condition which he is in. For which is a greater sign of grace, than that a parent, whose most loving exhortations you have despised, and to whom

you have caused such great bitterness of mind through your disobedience, when you went to commit adultery with the devil — this Parent, whose tears you have mocked so many times, still shows you such great grace and such great love, that He allows His blood to flow because of you and yet cries out to you in that bloody form, "Behold, unfortunate child, behold what kind of anguish and tribulation you have caused me. Look what kind of wounds I have received because of you, but my heart still burns with love toward you. These tears flow just because of you, my final sighs arise even to heaven because of you so that the evil deceiver could not get you entirely in his keeping. Cannot this tribulation of the Parent cause your hard heart to move to true penitence? Come, come! lost sheep, and give a kiss to your Parent before He dies." Behold, thus speaks the Saviour to the awakened, when He reveals Himself in that pitiable bloody form on the cross. If this is not a sign of grace, then other signs are not better. But these signs of grace are not yet such, that they would cause joy. A penitent soul can certainly receive a blessed assurance from these signs of grace, that he is not entirely rejected or cast away from the Parent, when he sees the heart of the Parent bleeding from love. But if he truly understands these first signs of grace, he then should not take for himself some false consolation and think that he is now a good Christian. Amen.

Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

Jesus spoke this parable. “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” Luke 13: 6-9.

The Saviour brought forth this parable to those unbelieving Jews, to whom the Saviour had preached the gospel for three years, but with whom there did not appear to come forth any fruit from His preaching. No visible awakening appeared among the people, although He had preached the gospel of God’s kingdom already for three years. In this parable God the Father is the Master of the vineyard but the Dresser of the vineyard is the Saviour. The Master of the vineyard said to the Dresser of the vineyard: “Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” But the merciful Dresser of the vineyard began to pray the Master of the vineyard, that he would spare this unfruitful fig tree yet one year, till he digged a ditch around it and dunged its roots, if it would even then bear fruit. But who knows if this unfruitful fig tree even then will become fruitful, although a ditch has been dug around it. Already

now the Master of the vineyard has done work upon it, that this unfruitful fig tree would become fruitful. For three years the Master of the vineyard has traveled in the vineyard and sought fruit from this tree but has found none. How long do you suppose, unfruitful fig tree, that the Lord will allow you to stand unfruitful in the Lord’s vineyard and cumber the ground? Do you not hear, what the Master of the vineyard says to the Dresser of the vineyard, “Cut it down! Why cumbereth it the ground?” Perhaps you think, you unfruitful fig tree, that the Dresser of the vineyard will always pray for you, that you will not yet be cut down so soon. But do not think, you unfruitful fig tree, that you can stand unfruitful in the vineyard forever. You cumber the ground, and if you do not become fruitful when the Dresser of the vineyard digs ditches around you and dungs your roots, then you will be cut down without mercy and cast into the fire. For thus the words read in today’s gospel: “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire;” Now you hear, unfruitful tree, what judgement awaits you if you do not soon become fruitful. You believe, no doubt, that it is sufficient that you remain green, that there are some leaves on you, that you have not become entirely a dry tree. But you now hear from the Master of the vineyard’s own mouth, that you shall be hewn down and cast into the fire, if you do not become fruitful soon. For so says the Master of the vineyard to the Dresser of the vineyard: “Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find

none: cut it down? why cumbereth it the ground?" An unfruitful tree cumbereth the ground no matter how green it might remain, and even though it bears leaves every year and even flowers. As long as this fig tree remains unfruitful, it cumbereth the ground, sucks moisture and strength from the ground, but does not become fruitful. The Master of the vineyard can not taste any fruit from such a tree although he has sought fruit already for three years. Beware, you unfruitful tree, that it will not go with you as it went with the fig tree, from which the Saviour sought fruit and found none. Then He cursed that unfruitful fig tree and said, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." Woe unto you, you unfruitful fig tree, if you are still unfruitful when Jesus comes to you seeking fruit from you. Now Jesus is hungry, now He desires to taste the fig tree's fruit. Is there even one tree here from which He could taste sweet fruit? There would probably not be many trees with whose fruit He could quench His hunger. But there are many dry trees which are suitable to the devil for firewood; and rotten trees, which grow wicked fruit, whose berries are sweet in the devil's mouth because they are very bitter and sour. What distress does the devil have now when he "walks through dry places, seeking rest and finding none?" If he stays overnight in the woods or the wilderness, where a crying voice cries: "You unfruitful tree, bring forth fruit worthy of repentance," then the old man devil finds in that wilderness not only firewood from which he can build quite a bonfire, in front of which he can roast

his butt, but in this wilderness the devil also finds many rotten trees which bear wicked fruit and they are so bitter and sour, that the Master of the vineyard cannot take them into his mouth, as He laments through the prophet Isaiah (5:2-7): "My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" But these evil berries, they taste sweet in the enemy's mouth. These he eats willingly so that the teeth chatter and devil's dung comes from them when they fall from the devil's butt. We should now notice what difference there is between the dry tree and the green tree and the rotten tree, and also between the high tree and the low tree, the fruitful and the unfruitful tree, which are all mentioned in the Scriptures. But not all are examiners of trees. However the Saviour says in today's gospel that the tree is known by the fruit. Namely, here is a question of such trees which are planted in a vineyard or orchard, as a grapevine, fig tree and apple tree. But may the great Dresser of the vineyard, who knows best those rotten trees, separate them from the fruitful trees. And the unfruitful trees from which fruit has not yet come, but only leaves and flowers, may the great and merciful Dresser of the vineyard pray

for them, that the Master of the vineyard would spare these unfruitful trees for one year yet until he digs ditches around them and dungs their roots, and that he would protect the green trees, upon which there are yet leaves and flowers, from frost, snowstorms and tempests, so that the frost would not destroy those small berries which are not yet ripe. And you cursed tree, who has never become fruitful, may no fruit ever grow on you everlastingly. And you worthless tree, who is rotten inside, no acceptable fruit will ever come from you. And you high tree, beware that the wind of the world does not bend you, and remember what the Lord has said: "I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken and have done it." (Ezekiel 17:24.) But you merciful Dresser of the vineyard, who has labored so much upon this unthankful ground and has planted so many trees in your vineyard, of which few trees are likely to become so fruitful that you would be able to taste fruit of the tree which is grown in the north country: do not yet become tired of praying for the unfruitful tree which remains green and bears leaves. Always dig ditches around it and dung its roots, that perhaps it finally will become fruitful through great tribulation. You have trodden the winepress alone. Hear therefore, you great and powerful Dresser of the vineyard, the sigh of the sorrowful and down-pressed ones: Our Father and so forth.

The Gospel: Matthew: 7:15-21.

In today's gospel the Saviour speaks of the good trees and the rotten trees, for which reason we, through God's grace, shall consider: Which are the good trees and which are the rotten trees? And if we, in our examination of them, should notice some green tree, some high and low tree, then we shall also consider them. But may the Dresser of the vineyard who best knows the trees by the fruit, give us the right enlightenment, that we may be able to rightly discern the rotten trees and the good trees. For the tree is known by its fruit, but on the other hand, the fruits are known best by the taste.

First Consideration: What kind are the rotten trees? Everyone who is not entirely blind can surely discern the dry trees from green trees, for a green tree does not burn as well as a dry tree, for a dry tree ignites into flame immediately if someone puts it into the fire. And as you know, around this church the devil will not come into distress for firewood. As often as he passes by, he surely finds enough firewood that he can roast his butt. And if someone would say to him: "Do not burn those yet", then the old man devil answers, "It warms the butt." But the green trees do not burn so well and the old man devil would hardly bother to chop those down if they were not in the way when he must drag out the dry branches. However the Saviour has said, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Be it then a green tree which bears only leaves but does not bear fruit, or a rotten

tree which bears evil fruit, namely such bitter and sour berries which the Master of the vineyard cannot put into his mouth no matter how hungry and thirsty he might be. But the old man devil really likes these berries which are so bitter and sour. He eats them so greedily that his teeth rattle. The devil's teeth have not therefore become loosened, although he has eaten and continues to eat those bitter berries. But in Israel such a proverb was made which the Lord did not like at all, namely this kind of a proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour berries and from that the children's teeth have become loose." Now therefore all such trees which do not bear good fruit are hewn down, and cast into the fire. For when the green trees do not become fruitful, and bear only leaves and flowers, then they cumber the ground. They take much room in the vineyard or orchard, but the Master of the vineyard has profited nothing from these unfruitful trees. Think now, you unfruitful trees, when guests come from heaven, what will the Master of the vineyard set before them for sweet food when he does not find grapes from his vineyard, nor figs from the fig tree? He cannot, however, put the bitter berries on the table when guests come from Heaven. He must then begin to lament: What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Why therefore does it bear only corrupt berries?" I believe that the rotten tree is such a tree which is rotten on the inside, so that it cannot become fruitful, or it has fruit but they are corrupt fruit. These, therefore, may be those false prophets which come in sheep's

clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves. Who, therefore, are these false prophets? All sorrowless and grace thieves cry out that the Christians are false prophets and wild spirits who do not give honorable people peace of conscience. But I think that the sorrowless are false prophets and wild spirits. For in that crowd anyway there was not a single Christian who then began to prophesy when the Jews made an uprising against the government. Then there were many of those who preached to the blind nation: Now the Messiah cometh, now cometh Christ to help us from under the power of the heathenish government. And the blind nation believed what these false prophets and wild spirits preached, but in that crowd there were no Christians. The characteristic of false prophets is this, that they truly preach of the kingdom of the Messiah, but with the wrong purpose. They preach so, that God's people do not need to be obedient to the heathenish government. They do not need to pay taxes to the heathenish government. The false prophets then incited the Jewish nation to rebel against, the government. It was for the misfortune and destruction of the nation that they began to believe such ones who encouraged the nation against the government. But the Christians have never so preached as the false prophets have then preached. And what do the false prophets of this time now preach? Yes, they preach that the former old ungodly life is a right life. And the false prophets of this time preach that whiskey is permissible, that one small drink does not do anything, that stealing of

tax money is permissible and cursing is also permissible. Are they then false prophets who preach that penitence and repentance must take place; drunkenness, cursing, fighting, and adultery must be cast away with worldly joy? They who preach so are, in the mind of the world, false prophets. But they who preach thus: a little whiskey is permissible, cursing is permissible, adultery is permissible, stealing of tax money is permissible, dancing and card-playing are permissible, they who so preach and live, are the true prophets. Just believe what such prophets preach and you will become saved. But here in these times such prophets have appeared, who from Luther's writings think that they have found proof that this Christianity is false. Such ones now come in sheep's clothing, for they come under the guise of the Lutheran faith. They want to defend the old Lutheran faith which these awakened ones supposedly wish to overthrow. So also came those who argued with Stephen; they came with God's word and wanted to protect the old Mosaic religion which the sect of Christianity supposedly wanted to destroy. And so they who argued with Stephen testified: "For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." However Jesus of Nazareth has not come to change the statutes and laws which Moses has given. But the devil has gotten them to believe that Stephen had so spoken. And the same schoolmaster has, no doubt, gotten some so-called Lutheran believers to believe that these awakened ones want to

destroy the Lutheran faith. No doubt the devil has given them such enlightenment, that these awakened ones want to destroy the Lutheran faith. But as the old man devil reads the Scriptures in a perverse manner, so can he also read Luther perversely. If Luther speaks against the Catholics, then the sorrowless apply it to these awakened ones and say, "Thus Luther preaches." But if such a place comes which completely overturns the faith of the sorrowless and portrays their life such as it is, then they say: "That does not fit, we do not want to be in the Lutheran faith." They who, in this way, want to protect their old dead faith with Luther, they no doubt come in sheep's clothing or in the guise of an old Christian and with Luther's words want to protect those places of old adam which otherwise would become sore if there would not be the protection of Luther. They are, no doubt, one part of those false prophets of whom the Saviour says: "...they come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves." And why do they come in sheep's clothing, or in the guise of an old Christian, to defend the old Lutheran faith which they imagine that these awakened ones are changing? Yes, because they have one sore spot in the heart, which they want to heal with the Lutheran faith. It is one wretched little old adam who from Luther's seed, receives spirit and through the Lutheran faith comes to life, namely a secret spiritual hatred for the Christians, which makes such honorable Lutheran believers curse the Christians and avoid the Christians meetings, so that that place of old

adam which is very sensitive would not sometime be pricked. But what does this avoiding help? If they are Christians, no doubt they have courage to come into the light and to reveal their heart, which is decaying. The dog of hades gnaws their conscience and the seeds of the serpent eat at the bottom of the heart. Because of this, such Lutheran believers avoid the Christian's meetings and live as other grace thieves in the darkness. They do not want to come into the light for their deeds are evil.

Second Consideration: What is the good tree which bears good fruit? Although good trees are not found in many places, it is, nevertheless, our hope that such trees can be found which bring forth good fruit. But how are they recognized? The Saviour says that by the fruit the tree is known, and the fruit is known best by the taste. If the tree's fruit tastes sweet in the mouth then it is a good tree. But if it is bitter, then the tree is rotten. Without a doubt the Saviour speaks in this gospel of the fruit of living faith, which does not stand only in movements and high feelings of grace, but also in watchfulness, in confessing the truth, and in a Christian life. If a Christian, who has once received the assurance of God's grace and the forgiveness of sins, is sometimes serious and sorrowful and sometimes light-minded, then we can doubt of his Christianity, because he is not truly watchful over his heart and his thoughts. If he sometimes has a burning love and sometimes has love for the world, then we can doubt of his Christianity. If he sometimes is in burning love and takes the Christians around

the neck, and sometimes again is so fastened to the world that he does not have the means to help the needy, then we can say that such a person does not have the right fruits of faith. What does it help you if today you are a Christian and tomorrow a heathen? If you are today in burning love and tomorrow fastened to the world? I think that the right fruits of faith should not be white today and black tomorrow, but the right fruits of faith must be as the Saviour has brought forth in the fourth chapter of Mark, 28th verse: "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." This full corn in the ear is not changeable, is not white today and black tomorrow, but it is one kind. And when this fruit has ripened and grown to its fullness then it no longer becomes greater or lesser. I believe that the Saviour, in this place, portrays such a fruit of faith which reveals itself in such a love which sacrifices itself not only for the Christians, but also for the sorrowless. For Christ has sacrificed himself not only for believing ones but also for sinners. That that the Christians want to take each other around the neck, is surely of itself a sign of burning love, but in there is also self-love which owns pleasure for itself from this. But if they must hastily depart and go to the heathens and sacrifice the strength of soul and body for the edification of the heathens, there self-love wants to oppose, the Son of God left the blessedness he had with the Father in eternity and came into this thankless world, where sinners tormented and tortured him, and this was the love which sacrificed itself

for sinners. This self-forgetting love now appears to be still distant! If the Christians should leave their blessed fellowship with the other Christians and go far away to heathen lands, where no Christian would speak to them anymore, they would not be able to even hear news of other Christians, then would they be sad, especially in such a place where no one would hold them to be Christians, but false prophets and wild spirits. Just there that love would be tried which sacrifices himself and gives himself for sinners and suffers want for the sake of those who hate him. This kind of love the Son of God has shown to you. He has given up the blessed fellowship with God and the holy angels. He has come unto thieves and murderers. He has sacrificed himself for those who hated and persecuted him. And such love He demands of the Christians, which sacrifices itself for the heathens. But this self-sacrificing love is not yet found in many places.

Now the trees have been observed in the orchard. There is the green tree and the dry tree, there is the fruitful tree and the unfruitful tree, there is the good tree and the rotten tree, there is the blessed tree and the cursed tree, there is the high tree and the low tree, there is the fig tree and the grapevine. And in this consideration is also heard a crying voice which says: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Are there now such fruit in the Lord's vineyard, which are suitable to eat when guests come from

heaven? We think that there should be found some red grapes which will be acceptable to the Lord. But the Lord probably will not find many such fruitful trees, in which there is sweet and ripe fruit although the Lord, with reason, can ask: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore brought it forth wild grapes?" Surely the Lord has labored much in this vineyard. He has dug ditches. "And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." (Isaiah 5:2.) In this vineyard are still found such trees from which the Lord has sought fruit for three years and found none. Here are also found such trees which are surely green, they have leaves and flowers but no fruit. Here also are found rotten trees in which are only bitter and sour berries, which the Lord or the Master of the vineyard cannot take into His mouth. But the old man devil likes them very much, he eats those bitter berries so that the teeth chatter. There are yet in this vineyard also some cursed trees which the Lord has had to curse when he came seeking fruit from them but found none. And, who knows, upon how many trees he now will find the right fruit, when he comes hungering and thirsting to seek such berries which will quench the hunger and thirst? And what shall the Dresser of the vineyard now put on the table when guests come from heaven? He cannot put horse berries as food for the-

se guests, but he seeks for figs and red grapes, and these he puts on the table when guests come from heaven. But there are not many which have ripened, for some branches of the vine have not become fruitful. The frost has killed some berries. From some the leaves and flowers have already dropped off, and these trees will probably soon become dry. But those few trees, which are still fruitful, stand in God's vineyard by the edge of the flowing stream. If the Lord gives more moisture from heaven and would allow his gracious Sun to shine upon those who are bringing forth fruit, then it is our hope that they will ripen for that time when the Lord needs them, when he sends his angels to cut off with a sickle the fruitful branches which have been grafted into the true and living Vine, in which there are white and red grapes which he can put on the table when guests come from heaven. Therefore ripen, you red grapes, before the frost comes, grow and ripen. Who knows, the angel of death will soon come to cut you off. Soon the guests will come from heaven, who need to taste those grapes of the vine which have grown in the north country. Grow and ripen, so that the Master of the vineyard might receive something for his trouble, which he has had to suffer when he tread the winepress alone. Amen.

Ninth Sunday after Trinity 1852.

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” 1 Corinthians 4: 1-2

In this place Paul speaks on the office of spiritual stewards. That is, stewards of the mysteries of God who must distribute God's mysteries to the people; and who else is the steward of the mysteries of God than a teacher into whose care God's mysteries have been entrusted. The Apostle yet places alongside this remarkable word, that it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful, in temporal as well as heavenly matters. But the Saviour has said that some stewards are such that they begin to beat their fellow servants when the Master had gone away; and said yet to himself: “My Lord delayeth his coming and will not come back quickly,” and trusting upon this delay he began to beat and starve his fellow servants. He no doubt thought that no one would dare to accuse him. But the Saviour asks all stewards what the Master will do to such stewards who so mercilessly beat and starve their fellow servants. A few stewards are like the one who allows his fellow servants to starve and who himself lives sumptuously; in such stewards there is no faithfulness.

The Saviour said also to His disciples: “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables.” He therefore lets all know that Jesus' disciples must know the mysteries of God's kingdom;

otherwise, how could they be the stewards of the mysteries of God when they must distribute to the fellow servants their portion of the law and gospel, as much as belongs to each one. To this place also belongs what the Saviour says to His disciples: “neither cast your pearls before swine;” that is: God’s grace does not belong to the sorrowless and hardened, but to the penitent. The disciples of Jesus are truly stewards of the mysteries of God and therefore they must know the mysteries of God’s kingdom; they must know what goods have been entrusted to them.

Unfortunately in these times many unjust stewards are found who wrongly distribute God’s precious goods and property. Those also can be found, who not only beat, but also starve their fellow servants and even cast God’s gifts to the goats and swine, and such stewards no doubt think that the Master will delay his coming; the Master will not come soon. Surely the goats and swine like such stewards very much who cast God’s gifts to them and starve their fellow servants; but the Master does not like such ones very much. I have heard that some lords of this world give delicacies to dogs and bones to the children; and they, too, may be such stewards of which the Saviour reminds, that they beat their fellow servants, thinking that the Master will delay his coming, who knows how long the Master will delay? He may come then when the steward believes the least. Because now “it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful,” so it would be necessary to watch who now

would be a faithful steward, who now could be a faithful steward of the mysteries of God. Such a one is probably not a faithful steward, who beats his fellow servants when the Master goes away. Nor is such a one a faithful steward who gives delicacies to the dogs and bones to the children. The Saviour said to the woman of Canaan: “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs”, but such kind are some stewards — they take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs: what must the Master and parent do to such stewards who take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs? Must he not be horrified and weep when he hears how his children are starved and the dogs are well fed. And the second horror is that some stewards cast God’s grain to the goats and swine; what must the Master say to such ones when he hears how unjust and unfaithful stewards squander his goodness? Must he not become angry at such ones and say: “Thou wicked servant, give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.” But the unjust steward no doubt thinks thus: surely the Master will delay his coming, he will not come back again so soon. But now if he would yet delay a little while as the unjust steward thinks, although Peter writes to the Christians that the Lord will not delay His coming as some think He will. Anyway that day will once come that the unjust steward will be called before his Lord and He will say to him: “Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.” No doubt the unjust steward will then go to his Lord’s debtors and say; “How much

owest thou unto my Lord?" If then the Lord's debtors say how great a debt they have, namely a hundred measures of wheat or a hundred measures of oil, then the unjust steward will say: "Take the bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty." Or as the sorrowless clergy of this day say to the awakened: you are not at all the greatest sinner, surely you will be forgiven; and you do not have to short your sins to the world. Thus the sorrowless pastor now preaches to the half-awakened ones, and if they believe his sermon, they then take their bill and write fifty; they read the debt of sin as half less, and finally with their own repentance become Christians. The whores and thieves, drunkards and saloon-keepers then say, "Ah, that is a good pastor, who does not bark so terribly that people become crazy, and we will carry him into everlasting dwelling places." But it is unknown how much you will carry such a teacher who preaches the gospel so sweetly that meek harlots give their milk, and serpent's tears flow from the saloonkeeper's eyes because he, too, is mentioned as a dear Christian. Tears begin to flow from the sober drunkard's eyes because flowing devil's dung has already long ago made his heart tender. Who knows how many such dear Christians will thank their teacher in eternity, when the eyes open and they can see that the whole debt of sin has been left unpaid.

And surely such unjust stewards take children's bread and cast it to the dogs; they give delicacies to dogs and to children they give bones. What will the Parent say when he comes and finds out what the unjust stewards do when

they feed the pigs well and starve the children? I think that such doings will pain the Parent's heart very much, and not in any case will the Parent be very conciliatory to such an unjust steward, nor will he be likely to again entrust his house and his children into the care of such a steward, who feeds the pigs well and starves the children.

Now because the gospel for today shows how cunning the unjust steward is to deceive his Lord, we must by God's grace look at his cunning, when we have first bowed our knees before that great and powerful Master, praying with all our heart that those poor children would not become so unfortunate that they would fall into the care of an unjust steward, who takes children's bread and casts it to the dogs, or gives dogs delicacies and throws bones to the children! Although I truly am a poor one to feed God's children, that the conscience has not yet yielded to, that I should take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs, but as Paul says: "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it;" anyway I hope that the children will grow teeth, that they could, without eating chewed food, begin to eat stronger food that they wouldn't need to always watch for chewed food from another's mouth. For the time may soon come that such a steward will come, of which an old proverb says: "A child eats from the feeder and the feeder feeds himself too." Pray now, children, in behalf of those who have become so unfortunate that they must die of hunger with food beside them, or who have such a steward who

takes the children's bread and casts it to the dogs, that the great Master and Parent Who feeds and upholds all orphans would give them such a steward who could faithfully feed God's children. Hear, dear Parent, the sigh of the weeping and moaning ones! Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 16:1-12

Because expounders of the Scriptures surmise that this unjust steward is a rich man to whom has been entrusted much worldly goods, which he wastes and uses wrongly, not to the glory of God nor in the helping of neighbors, but for his own corruption and for the misfortune of other people, so we must by God's grace examine: What man is this unjust steward? And who are the Lord's debtors whom the unjust steward teaches to change the right accounting? May that great Lord and Master Who has entrusted both temporal as well as spiritual goods to those who are the stewards of His mysteries, give to us right enlightenment, that we could rightly understand what His will is!

The first consideration: Who is the unjust steward? Present day expounders of the Scriptures say that this unjust steward is a rich man to whom much worldly goods has been entrusted, and the Lord's debtors are supposedly troubled ones who have like a right to receive help from the rich man: but this rich man has not rightly used his goods for God's glory and for helping troubled ones, but he has wasted his own, as the world's lords are accus-

tomed to doing, in vain Keeping of funeral, baptism, and wedding feasts; some world's lords take from the poor and spend it on the rich. And when the Lord calls them to make an account, through sickness or adversity, they take and make a will to the poor ones with that intention that the poor would pray in behalf of their soul when they die. But it is unknown if the poor ones can with their foreprayers carry the soul of one slave of mammon into everlasting habitations, who has lived in the world like a creature; wrongly used God's blessings in vain feasts, and has made more poor than he has helped. He has first gathered goods Justly and unjustly; if the poor have needed to beg something of him, he has taken an expensive price from them; some have with liquor business made the country black: and such a slave of mammon now takes and makes a will to the poor when he dies; surely the poor who receive a portion of his goods will take and pray in behalf of his soul, that the devil will not take him after death. I think that the devil will take his soul just the same, no matter how great a portion of his goods he would give to the poor, because he has no other foundation of salvation than this only, that the poor pray in behalf of his soul, although many a blind wretch may so think that the poor will carry his soul into everlasting habitations when they pray in behalf of his soul. But this explanation of the Scriptures does not fit at all in this place: instead the unjust steward is a teacher to whom has been entrusted spiritual goods, which he must use for the upbuilding of Christianity, as Paul in the

above-mentioned place said; We are the stewards of His mysteries. But some teachers do not preach so that people would awaken, but they waste God's entrusted goods and property; they promise grace and salvation to all the unrepentant, and preach the gospel so sweetly that meek harlots give their milk and gracious saloonkeepers begin to shed serpent's tears. They preach to the drunkards: dear Christians, and to the saloonkeepers: dear friends of Jesus, surely you will become saved if you live so meekly as you have lived until this time. You do not need to become so crazy as these awakened ones who sigh like creatures and bark at honorable people, and they even howl. If some penitent soul comes to such a teacher and with tears confesses his sins, then he says: "What howling is this?" Such is now the unjust steward: a wolf who ravages Jesus' sheep; he not only preaches to the drunkards: dear Christians, and to the saloonkeepers: dear friends of Jesus, but he preaches also to the penitent: you false prophets, and to the graced ones: you wild spirits. Such a teacher pretends not to know that the church is full of impenitent devils, who behind the back make faces at even their own teacher and call him a black satan. What kind of thanks will such a teacher finally receive from them when the eyes of both open? Surely they will carry him into everlasting habitations and thank him in eternity for the good teachings; so thinks the unjust steward, that because he teaches the Lord's debtors to lessen their debt of sin, then they will pray in behalf of his soul and carry him into everlasting habitations. If now

such a steward meets his Lord's debtors and asks: how much do you owe my Lord? Then they answer: a hundred measures of oil, or a hundred measures of wheat. The Lord's debtors are namely awakened people who feel how great their debt of sin is; and they confess their sins although the unjust steward has not yet asked them; and they have the debt of sin written on their conscience or in the account book of the conscience. But the unjust steward does not say to his Lord's debtors: it has been rightly written in the book of account, and look after it now, how this debt would become paid, or go now to the Lord and pray: be patient with me and I will repay all. But the unjust steward says to the Lord's debtors: Take your bill, sit down quickly and write fifty; that is to say — you are not at all the greatest sin" ner; surely you have been forgiven, if you can believe. Here is not a question of true penitence and repentance; for the unjust steward does not demand of his Lord's debtors that they must make a true penitence, but he teaches them to lessen the debt of sin and says: take your bill, sit down quickly and write fifty; and so he thinks that they will thank him in eternity for that good work that he taught them to lessen the debt of sin. But who knows how much they will thank him for it when the eyes open and they can see that the whole debt of sin has been left unpaid and unforgiven.

But let us hear yet what the unjust steward says when the Lord intends to take his office from him: he says, namely, thus: "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed," Namely, if the unjust ste-

ward should begin to make the right accounting with the Lord's debtors or demand them to pay their debt: that is — if he would begin to demand of them true penitence, then he would have to himself also begin to dig ditches in the Lord's vineyard and perform heavy labor; he would have to himself begin to dig old sins up and begin to lead penitent souls; but this digging becomes so heavy for the unjust steward that he would sooner throw out the teacher's office, as many a pastor has already intended to do who has a few awakened ones in the congregation. His own penitence and leading the souls of the penitent ones becomes so heavy that he must say: "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed"; that is: I am not able to dig ditches in the Lord's vineyard; I am not able to lead penitent souls, and I am ashamed to beg for the Lord's grace, that He would strengthen me. In this way the unjust steward finds that best advice, that he teach the awakened to lessen the debt of sin, that they would cease making penitence and would carry him into the house; when he puts their consciences to sleep, then he himself also receives a better peace. No doubt they will give him punch from their wage when he allows them to go to hell in peace, for if he should begin to dig ditches in the Lord's vineyard, or dig up his own and other's sins, then it would become heavy and troublesome work for him. He would not have the leisure to keep feasts or to go to gentlemen's affairs and play cards with them; he would also become honorless if he would begin to bark at the sorrowless. The world's lords would begin to hate

him, saloonkeepers would say to him: "Thou art a Samaritan and thou hast a devil"; all meek whores would begin to accuse him, nor could a single saloonkeeper hold him to be a lord. How could an unjust steward be able to dig so much in the Lord's vineyard? He will sooner give up the whole office, as many a sorrowless pastor has intended to do when he has begun to feel how heavy it is to bear the burden and heat of the day; namely, the carrying and digging is not so easy for the teacher in the Lord's vineyard where there are awakened people. The dog's office is not so easy as the sorrowless pastors think; for that reason they attempt by all means to smother every single spark of that fire which the Saviour came to kindle on the earth; they try to extinguish that spiritual fire in every place where it appears; and they think that thereby they are extinguishing hell's fire; but it will probably kindle hell's fire more than extinguish it thereby, that they make impenitent sinners believe that they will, such as they are, get into the kingdom of Heaven. Who knows how it will go at last with the unjust steward, when the impenitent whores and honest thieves or sober drunkards and gracious saloonkeepers should carry him into everlasting dwelling places?

But why did the Lord thank that unjust steward that he performed diligently? Would the unjust steward through that thanks merit eternal life and salvation? But probably the thanks will not come to him as repentance when his cunning will be seen in the right light of day. The Lord thanks him,

not because he did right, but that he could be cunning that he could so deceive the Lord's debtors, that he could put their consciences to sleep in that way, that he taught them to change the bill of the conscience. The Saviour speaks in this place as a certain rich worldly merchant usually does when he notices how sly the store clerk is to change the accounting, so he says: "He surely was cunning!" But the store clerk through this saying has not received any thanks, but the store clerk is driven out of the Lord's house, for it is said to him: "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward," At this time most store clerks are so cunning at deceiving themselves and the Lord's debtors, that if they do not begin to dig up their own and the debtors' sins, they probably will soon receive this command: "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." Although they think, "My Lord will delay His coming," and they begin to beat their fellow servants. Some give delicacies to dogs and to children they toss bones: they take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs, Should not the Parent become angry, should not such a terrible matter hurt the Parent's heart, when He hears how the unjust steward starves His children, but feeds the pigs. I am truly a poor one to feed God's children, but I have not anyway with my mind and will taken the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.

Now the Saviour finally says in today's gospel: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may recei-

ve you into everlasting habitations." Some think that the Saviour in this verse encourages His disciples to gather worldly substance and property, but in that the devil of greed probably better encourages not only the slaves of mammon, but also the disciples; and if they just consent to it, then probably also that substance will be left unsought for which the moth does not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. But the Saviour encourages His disciples to rather speak to the rich, that they would turn to Christianity, and in that way would become friends with them and would receive help from them in time of persecution, Jesus' disciples are, namely, poor and hated by the world; because they are hated and persecuted for Christianity's sake, they must sometimes leave all and follow Christ, and then may the rich help Jesus' poor disciples in behalf of body, if they make friends for themselves of the unrighteous mammon. It is not at all the intention that Christians should pray and cunningly speak to the sorrowless that they would help them in behalf of body, but the Saviour's intention is that the disciples must labor upon this, that the rich of this world who often have gathered goods unjustly, would turn to Christianity so they willingly would help the poorer Christians when they need help. It would not be fitting either for a Christian to begin to preach into his own purse, but only that the rich of this world would become Christians, Here are now three explanations: First, that a Christian surely may gather world's goods if he can, and in that way make for himself friends of unrighteous

mammon; and all are agreeable to this explanation, especially merchants and saloonkeepers. The second explanation is this: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," that is: you must not offend the mind of the rich, but be friends with them, that they would help you when you need it. This explanation without a doubt the rich of this world agree to, so that the poor disciples would not dare to bark at them. But it would become a great vexation to the poor Christians if they would have to, because of bodily distress, so serve the rich that they could not any longer speak the truth to them. Namely, if a poor Christian barks at a rich heathen, then the rich heathen becomes angry and no longer helps the poor. But the third explanation is this: "Make, etc.," that is: speak to the rich of this world that they would turn to Christianity, and would help you when because of severe persecution you need help from them. But now the rich of this world will begin to search for mice and say: "So they expound the Scriptures that they might get us so crazy that we would begin to give those lazy ones our property, that they could drink coffee well and go to the villages to bark; they travel under the guise of Christianity, but probably the Christianity of many is in the colon. And when Old Adam speaks these words, he pretends to be so truthful and valiant that the devil himself can say: "Amen! it is a true word: now you know how to speak right, my boy!" But surely the Christians will nevertheless bark, although the sorrowless and servants of the devil do not give them anything. The world's

rich must hear the truth until that time that they must cast all the wrongly-obtained money on the church floor; all the wrongly-obtained goods which have been collected with thievery and unjust means, must burn their consciences eternally if they do not become cast away in the time of grace. For with Judas' purse no one will enter into the kingdom of Heaven. So make for yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you need it, they will carry you into everlasting habitations: for the devil will not likely spare Jesus' disciples because he has not spared them before either; although the unjust steward thinks that in this way he will become carried into everlasting habitations: that he teaches the Lord's debtors to change the books of the conscience. But the devil will probably in the end carry his soul. He no doubt will thank him for that, that he could deceive his Lord and make his Lord's debtor's book of conscience to be changed.

Do not change the book of conscience, you Lord's debtors: but allow all the letters to be unmoved, and be sorrowful about how your debt would be paid; or if you are not able to pay, then fall down before your Lord's feet and pray that He would be patient with you, that He would forgive your debts, that He would nail your bill of debt to the cross, as Paul writes that the handwriting on which our debt is written has been nailed to the cross; namely the penitent and believing ones' bill of debt, who feel that they are not able to pay it, not in this nor in the future world. Pray, you Lord's debtors, that not a single un-

just steward would deceive you, but better examine your book of the conscience, that you would never forget how great your debt has been and how much forgiveness you have received from the Lord. And never forget that you have been heathens and aliens from the commonwealth of Isreal, but by God's mercy the light has shown from on high to enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, that they could see that great and amazing light which is with God. Amen.

Tenth Sunday after Trinity

“Oh sorrowless, when will you cease from sin? How long will you sleep in sin without sorrow? Oh how earnestly the Lord awakens you and asks you to come once on the right road. Although you have tarried so long, become penitent quickly.” Old Finnish Hymn Book Number 408

This hymn of penitence of the hymn book is one crying voice, with which the Holy Spirit wants to awaken the sorrowless sinners from their sweet sleep, although often in vain. A pitiful voice of lamentation is heard over the hardened ones, which calls and exhorts sinners to repentance but some are not as though hearing. For first the quack of the world has given them sleeping potion, that they cannot awaken from their sleep, although the sexton shakes them with all his strength. Although he would strike them on the head with a staff, so that it makes a cracking noise, however they still do not awaken. Ne-

vertheless, all who are asleep have not watched all night, for some have slept the whole night and even yet part of the day, and still have not awakened. Some have awakened too early, as they themselves think, and therefore sleep forces itself upon them during the day, But it still is not bed time no matter how early one would have awakened, surely there is still work both outside and inside. If you lie down before all the work is done, then the necessary work is left undone and the wage for the day is paid according to how the work is done. But I do not know who would have awakened too early, that he therefore would now need to lie down when the sun is still high. That time will probably soon come that the sun will set, and who then will see where the road goes to heaven.

The Saviour has said, “Walk while ye have the light lest darkness come upon you.” He who travels in darkness cannot see where he travels, but woe to those wretches who have slept all night and still sleep all day; what will become of them when they finally awaken? They will probably sleep forever, who have not awakened thus far. So it appears that those wretches who have not yet awakened will go to eternity in their sleep. The Spirit of God in this hymn surely shakes those drunken ones, who sleep at the brink of the rapids, but they do not awaken from that any more than intoxicated ones awaken from the shaking of the sexton. They only lift their head and say, “Will you not give me peace of sleep?” The old people still remember that time when the sexton came here with the staff of

Moses and knocked the drunken ones who snored so loudly that the sermon of the pastor could not be heard because of the snoring of the drunken ones. But now the knocking and shaking of the sexton is almost forgotten, and the old ones can as jokingly reminisce to the coming generations that before times the people awakened by the knocking of the sexton, when he knocked them with the staff of Moses, but nothing of that, that they themselves had a blow from the staff of Moses and that they had to then lift their head and say, "Why did you strike me? I am not yet asleep," Without any intention, no doubt, an old person leans his head against the rail, trying to sleep. He is not really sleeping, but he appears to be sleeping. Nevertheless it is noticeable that sleep comes soon even to those who are not trying to sleep, what then to those who are deliberately trying to sleep? The prophet says to those sorrowless ones who did not awaken from their sleep, although they are shaken through harsh law, of such it is written in the prophets that they love sleep. And what more do the sorrowless do than love sleep? They love sleep especially in the Lord's house, where the word of God goes as a hum over their heads and effects such a sweet sleep, that some surely do not awaken before only in eternity. The old man thinks, since he sees that the staff of Moses is no longer in the hand of the sexton; he thinks, no doubt, "I now can sleep in peace, he will not come to rap anymore. He will not come to wake me; no doubt from now on he will give me peace of sleep. I have once received

one blow from the staff of Moses, he does not care to strike me anymore,"

But watch yourself, you old man, if you begin to snore too hard, that you will not receive yet another blow from the staff of Moses, and then you will get such a blow that you will remember for many years that you have once received quite a rap, and again lied down and began to snore in the Lord's house, but another time you will receive such a blow that a hole will come in your skull. Surely I know that some have such a thick skull that they do not feel anything no matter how it would be struck. We will take an example of a reindeer which has thick bones. It is so lazy that it does not flee no matter how it would be beaten. And we will take an example of a bear, which has such hardened bones in its skull that a bullet will not go through. But the devil has made steel helmets and breast plates for some people, so that God's two edged sword will not penetrate. How could such a hardened spirit feel the knocking of the sexton? And when the sexton shakes them, who have once awakened and again become sleepy, then the devil's angels get to laugh and say, "Look there! You got quite a blow," For the devil's angels themselves certainly do not sleep in church, but do such tricks that even those few souls who are watching would turn their eyes and ears away from the sermon. Therefore the sexton has not gone so often in these times with the staff of Moses, that the devil's angels will laugh. But if too much sleeping is done here, then the staff of Moses must begin to move. The Holy Spirit surely shakes some with

these words which are found written in the old hymn book, "Oh Sorrowless, when will you cease from sin? How long will you sleep in sin without sorrow? Oh how earnestly the Lord awakens you and asks you to come once on the right road." But what does it avail that the Lord earnestly awakens them? The drunken, nevertheless do not awaken since the quack of the world gives them devil's dung and sleeping potion. The word of God goes like a hum over their head, or in one ear and out the other and never comes toward the heart.

Certainly it is time now to arise up out of sleep both for those who have slept during the time of darkness and even in the daytime, and also for those unfortunate souls who begin to regret that they have awakened too soon, and for that reason rest at noon time. However the husbandmen do not have time to sleep if their fields must be planted at the right time. Nor has the journeyman time to sleep during the day, if he must reach the destination before all the people are gone to bed. But to the whores of the world who peddle themselves out at night, it appears that sleep comes in the daytime; so also the thieves who go on their robbery trips at night, they sleep in the daytime; so also the drunkards, who tarry in the tavern until morning, they then sleep all day long. But the right kind of people, who take care of their work, do not have time to sleep in the daytime. Nevertheless sleep now presses forcefully upon some laborers in the Lord's vineyard. It appears as if they were now regretting that they had awakened from their sleep too early. But I tell you, you who

are struggling with sleep, if you have awakened too early, then lie down now and sleep well, that when it is dark, you will be able to again drink and fight, be playing with whores and steal as you did before. Your heavenly Parent was not able to sleep, nor did sleep come to Him when He wept over you and pitied the unfortunate state of the ungodly children; since they had to become so blind that they could no longer see their destruction. Those wretches certainly have a good time who play with fire and run riot with knives, but the parent's heart shudders and tears flow from his eyes, since those blind wretches do not obey at all the commands of the parent, to stop playing with fire before the whole house is set afire. Look, thus they do in their foolishness, already then they cause the parent sorrow and bitterness of mind, And when these ungodly descendants become older, then they begin to drink and fight, to play with whores and to steal, and when the Parent scolds them and exhorts them to a better life, then they curse their Parent, mock His tears, and say to the sorrowful Parent, "Shut your mouth and do not worry about us, we will answer for ourselves," Behold, such nice sons the heavenly Parent has fed and raised until this day. Wo doubt now the enemy has joy when he comes to reproach the Parent and to say, "Such nice children you have, whores and thieves, drunkards and murderers, crooks and scoundrels.

Today the Parent weeps and pities those unfortunate wretches, who cannot see two cubits ahead and nevertheless hold themselves to be wise. Who kno-

ws if there will now be found any souls in the city of corruption who hear the painful voice of lamentation of the heavenly Parent, when He pities their blindness, that they knew not their time of visitation. And those few souls, who have seen His tears flowing over this unfortunate people, who knows, are even they able to watch in the Garden when the sins of the ungodly children begin to burn His conscience. But pray, nevertheless, you disciples of Jesus who have seen the tears of the heavenly Parent flowing, that He would protect you from that misfortune which stands before the hardened ones, that you would get to flee to the refuge of the heavenly Parent when the enemy comes to destroy the city of corruption. Hear, sorrowful Parent, the sigh of the weeping, lamenting, and suckling children. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 19:14-44

We heard from our Holy Gospel that Jesus wept over the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem and pitied their blindness and misfortune, who did not allow themselves to be led to true penitence and repentance, although the Lord had so earnestly awakened them from sorrowlessness. Let us now today count these tears of Jesus and observe if some tear would have been shed even in our behalf, when we through God's grace observe: What could be the reason that the heart of a sinner must be so hard and hardened that Jesus must weep over him? First: Israel and David, that is, godly parents receive sorrow and grief when the ungodly

children bring them with sorrow to the grave. Second: Rachel weeps over her children, and would not be comforted; that is, a great sorrow comes to the Parent when the enemy slays His children.

If the heavenly Parent would give to all the penitent ones a broken heart, so that from even some child He would receive some joy for His tears, for although He has wept because of all, He does not however receive joy from many, since most mock the Parent's tears and trample His blood. First: Israel and David received sorrow from their children, for their children were ungodly. We cannot understand what kind the heart of the heavenly Parent is before we experience a natural parent's heart, although a natural parent's heart is lacking in many matters, some spark of love is still left in him, namely in such a parent's heart in which the devil has not excreted. We know that some parents do not have a parent's heart. Some parents are even worse than animals, who nevertheless are concerned over their young and even put their own lives in danger when their young are in danger. All the birds of heaven, who have warm blood in their hearts, give their own lives for the sake of their young, but some people are worse than a dragon, who lays its eggs in the sand and cares no more for them. From such parents we cannot take an example, for they do not have a parent's heart, who do not acknowledge their own children to be their own, nor do they even give them the Father's name, but leave their children on a bank, like the dragon who lays its eggs in the sand. The devil of

greed and the devil of honor have slain and taken away all the love from the heart of such parents, who leave their own children as orphans and without refuge on the earth. But of Israel and of David, who themselves were Christians although their children were ungodly, of them we can take some example, since we want to consider what has remained in a natural parent's heart of that original image of God, for they truly had a parent's heart. Therefore we hear from the Scriptures that Israel's children were ungodly. They became angry with their brother Joseph, who bore tales to the parent of what an evil life they led behind the parent's back, and they would have even killed their brother if the oldest brother Rueben had not prevented them. Nevertheless, they sold him into a foreign land and lied before their parent that an evil beast had killed his son. And although they saw what kind of sorrow came to the parent because of their treachery, not one of them would inform their parent that his son was still alive. Not even Ruben, the oldest son, did that good thing to the parent, that he would have informed him that Joseph was alive, although he had saved Joseph from death.

And such is now that natural meekness: it does not want to cry out its own sins to the world, nor to reveal other's sins. He certainly could see that misery which came to the parent; he could see the parent dying of sorrow, but he did not care to say that much, that "Your son lives." Such are those nice children, who bring the parent's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. First

they commit evil, and then they lie so that their evil would not be known, but nevertheless their evil becomes known. When distress came to the sons of Israel, then the conscience began to reproach and to accuse, that they had well merited such punishment because of harshness and mercilessness toward their brother. What did it avail now that Ruben reproved them of that sin, since he, too, was a partaker in that, that he did not reveal to the parent what they had done to Joseph. He nevertheless brought his parent's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, since he concealed the other murderers' sins. No doubt he feared that those others would become angry with him if he would tell the parent the truth. He did not want to bear the hatred of the world because of the truth; he did not want to become honorless before the world. The friendship of the murderers was to him better than the parent's love. The parent's misery and the parent's tears did not touch the heart of the meek man. Because of him, the parent could certainly die of sorrow. Because of friendship of the world he had no mercy upon the one who gave him birth. Because of worldly honor he certainly brought his parent's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Behold now your likeness here in Ruben, you meek men who say, "It is better to cover the sins of the whores and the thieves and to keep them secret than to reveal them." Behold now, you friends of the murderers, you are to blame for that, that the heavenly Parent must die because of sorrow, but as you have covered up the sins of the thieves and the murderers, you yourselves have

covered up the Parent's heart of love forever, so that not one ray of grace can shine upon you.

But as Israel received such great sorrow from his children, although he himself was a Christian, so David also received even greater sorrow from some of his children, although he himself was a Christian. Perhaps he had truly gone before the children with a bad example, since he fell from the state of grace into willful sins, for which reason the enemies of Jesus' cross imagine they receive joy. And from the fall of a Christian, the devil's angels also receive joy and say, "Beautiful are the Christians' examples, beautiful are the fruits of the Christians, Was David, too, a Christian? some bloodhound and whore-buck!" But David did not become angry although some enemy of the Christian came to bark at him as a bloodhound, David did not avenge his enemies, although his own people urged him. But David had a parent's heart when that ungodly son Absalom sought his parent's life, nor would that son have spared his father if he would have gotten him into his clutches. But all the same, such a sorrow of the heart came to David over the death of that ungodly son, that he began to cry out, "Oh my son Absalom, would that I had died for thee!" Behold, there now was the right parent's heart. If the ungodly children seek the life of the heathenish parents, they become terribly angry and love is completely lacking, there is no more grace in the parent's heart to such children no matter how they would regret. But a Christian parent still has so much love that he could

even die for the sake of ungodly children, and for the sake of his murderers. Oh wonderful heart of a parent! There is one deep place which man's intellect cannot comprehend. But now from a Christian parent heart can be concluded what kind the heavenly Parent's heart is. If David's heart could know an unspeakable sorrow over the death of his ungodly son, if he has cried out, "Woe, woe, my son Absalom!", how than does the heavenly Parent cry out when He sees His children, who anyway in behalf of creation are His children. How the heavenly Parent cries out, "Woe, woe!" when He hears His children screaming in the claws of the enemy, and nevertheless cannot get to help them, since they are so hardened that they curse their Creator and trample His blood and mock His tears.

Woe, woe, how even today He weeps and pities those unfortunate souls who have not received His teachings, but go to hell in their blindness; and are all now blind who go to hell? Do not some go to hell with open eyes? Those who have once had their eyes open, have already felt what a terrible torment there is in hell, have also felt what an unspeakable joy is in heaven, but all the same turn back into the world and begin to crucify the Saviour anew with lusts and desires. Do they go blindly to hell? No, but such ones go to hell with eyes wide open. Woe, woe, how the heavenly Parent today weeps over you, you miserable souls,, and cries out with a sorrowful heart, "Oh, if you knew, unfortunate city, unfortunate congregation, unfortunate community, if you know what belongs

to your peace, you would think in this your day, but now it is hid from your eyes,”

And since we hear the heavenly Parent’s painful voice of lamentation, since we see the tears of love flowing from His eyes, then we can say: there is thanks, now, to you sorrowful parent; there is thanks now for that, that you have given birth to these wretches with great pain and shedding of blood. There now, sorrowful parent, is your thanks that you have fed and reared these wretches. As soon as the first tooth grows in the mouth, they bite your breast. When they begin to crawl, they already pull the parent’s hair, when they take the first steps, they are able to do evil. When they begin to walk, that desire comes also to play with fire and to run with a sharp knife, so that the parent’s heart just trembles when he sees how the devil gives such fools boldness to play with fire, to run quickly with a sharp knife, and to climb up on the table. And when the parent takes away those murder weapons from the child’s hand, then he still cries and threatens. Although he himself is no bigger than a weasel, he already threatens to beat the parent with his fists because he took the murder weapons away. Such now is the life story of old Adam’s children, selfishness, pride and obstinacy right from infancy. The offspring no bigger than the fist thinks he is so wise that he does not need to listen to the commands of the parent. If the parent’s heart shakes and trembles because of the foolish boldness of the children, then the fools laugh. If the Parent forcefully takes some whore from

under the whorebuck, then the whore says, “For goodness sake, you are not always watching my butt,” such thanks now a parent receives from his children, when he wants to prevent them from sin and from killing themselves. What do such wolf whelps now do when they grow older? Do they become wiser, do they then begin to regret the foolishness of youth? No doubt they regret! When they themselves become men, they begin to drink, curse and fight, commit adultery and steal, and if the parent wants to warn them of such a terrible life, then they whip their parent and say, “Shut your mouth, old fool, you are not answering for me.” Such now are old Adams children, even worse than wolf whelps. Woe, Woe! those wretches who do not see two cubits ahead and nevertheless think they are wise. If the natural parent’s heart can suffer sorrow and bitterness of mind from such children, who do not see their unfortunate state at all, but run headlong into hell, so that the parent must lament as old Israel, “Ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave,” what then the heavenly Parent, who can see even farther than the natural parent. His heart wants to break with sorrow when He sees how those blind wretches, who live in the city of corruption, become so unfortunate already in this life, and also then eternally, since they have not known their time of visitation. They themselves intentionally incited the enemy upon themselves and in that way were killed.

Look, such sorrow and bitterness of mind the ungodly children cause their Parent. And there now is the thanks to

You, sorrowful Parent, there now is thanks for that, that You have given birth to these wretches with great pain, trouble, and shedding of blood. There now is thanks for that, that You have fed and reared these wolf whelps. Often in watching over them, You bow Your knees praying in behalf of these unfortunate wretches, that they would become God's children, that You could rejoice with them in the kingdom of heaven. But Your tears have flowed in vain, heavenly Parent; in vain Your blood has flowed to the last drop. The hardened children have not taken heed of Your tears and of Your sighs, they mock Your tears and trample Your blood. Are there any here from whom the Parent could receive joy, are there any from amongst the hardened who fit into the Parent's heart?

Second: Rachel weeps over her children and will not be comforted. Rachel, Israel's beautiful wife, mother of that righteous Joseph and Benjamin, died while giving birth to the youngest child. She was one parent whose innocent children were slain in Bethlehem, from which pain of the heart came to the parent's heart when she saw how the enemy slew innocent children. Would there be one here now from whom there would come joy to the sorrowful Parent if they would be slain in Bethlehem because of the Son of Mary? There was one righteous Joseph then, who was dear to the parent's heart, but he, too, was sold to the pagans. And when he did not want to commit adultery with the heathen woman, he had to sit in prison for two years; nevertheless the parent received joy

from this son, namely Joseph. But are there now many children here, from whom joy would come to the sorrowful Parent? There are not many who because of righteousness would have sat in prison, or because of the Son of Mary would have been slain bodily in Bethlehem. There are not many of whom the parent would receive such joy that he could say, "Now I want to die, since my eyes have seen you, that you are still living." You righteous Joseph; are you still alive? Can the sorrowful parent receive that joy from you, that you are still alive, or has that cruel beast torn and rent and ravaged your soul and killed your spirit, as your paganish brothers say that a beast has killed you? However I think that you are alive, Joseph, although in a pagan land, where shameless whores lie against you, that you have wanted to bring them to shame. The hope is that joy will come to the Parent's heart from you, if you always hold fast to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, although the paganish brothers hate you and want to kill you, all the same their hatred turns to glory of God, that the paganish brothers must finally ask forgiveness of their wrong doings, which they have done to you.

And of you, too, there is hope, Mary Magdalene, that your tears and your sighs effect so much, that the great Crossbearer arises from the dead. But you unfortunate Judas, who have fallen through deceit, and because of love of the world have agreed with the enemy, and because of greed have promised the enemies of Jesus' cross that you would deliver Him without struggle under the

judgement of the chief priests and lords of the world. You have gone so many years in the school of Jesus in vain; He has taught and counseled you in vain. You have not become wiser through that, but have hardened the more. What devil was it which went into your heart when you went back into the world; and what devil was it which went into your heart when you went out of the company of the other disciples after that dipped sop, before the Lord's Supper was finished, before the hymn was sung? Could it have been the devil of greed which made you betray your Saviour? Could it have been the devil of anger which gave you haste to separate from the company of the other disciples, or was the dipped sop caught in your wind pipe that you had to go out to vomit poison upon the Christians? You certainly will not go to hell blind surely that much was told to you, how it will go with the betrayer of the Saviour. But no doubt you thought that the other disciples do not need to know what kind of a man you are. You want to be a Christian among the Christians and a devil amongst the devils, and nevertheless the dipped sop effects so much, that you must now flee out of the company of the other disciples although it is night. Where are you going, Judas, since you do not remain anymore in the company of the other disciples, and did not return to the prayer meeting to sing the hymn of thanks? Did you get the urge to urinate, or for what reason did you go out into the dark world before the Lord's blessing was read? Since you now have separated from the company of the other dis-

ciples and have gone out into the dark world, although you have received such a warning and the final sign of love from the Saviour's own hand, certainly that innocent blood which you have betrayed will once burn your conscience. But then penitence will avail no more; confession of sin will no longer help since you have not confessed then when it was a time of consideration for Jesus' disciples. Not even that will help, that you throw back the ill-gotten money into the church, but you must go out to hang yourself so that all of the other disciples could see what an unfortunate and terrible death comes to those wretches who betray their Saviour because of greed. The tears of the heavenly Parent have flowed in vain because of you, poor Judas! Although you, blind wretch, have not seen Him bleeding in the Garden and on Golgotha's Hill, the other disciples, however, have seen His blood dripping from His forehead, but sleep forces so intensely even upon them, that they are not able to watch and pray with Him. Woe, woe! also to those wretches who, in the stupor of sleep, see the heavenly Parent sweating blood, nor are they, nevertheless, able to watch and pray so that they enter not into temptation. Has the Lord not gone three times to awaken you and every time that He came, He found you lying down because of sorrow. Are you still lying down and resting? And now the time is at hand. Behold, Judas comes soon with the crowd of the enemy to take ahold of Jesus, and then you must finally awake from your sleepiness.

We have now seen the heavenly Parent weeping and pitying that unfortunate people who live in the city of corruption, but this people have not known their time of visitation. The Saviour's tears have been shed in vain because of them, no help has come to those wretches because of the Saviour's suffering and death, joy has not come to the Parent from many children, to whom He has given birth with great tribulation and shedding of blood. Is there some soul here, who is reconciled with the heavenly Parent, upon whom that precious reconciling blood has not flowed in vain? Come now with cleansed hearts and nevertheless with broken hearts before the mercy seat, and pray that the tears of the heavenly Parent would never be forgotten, that the blood would never dry up which has flowed from the Parent's heart, but that it would always remain fresh and new and moist. What does dried blood effect? If the blood of the Parent does not remain fresh and new and moist in the heart, death will come. Where have the newly-born received that blood which is in their heart? Has this blood not come from the Parent's heart? Namely that blood which sustains the life of the newly born. Woe, woe! children, take heed that the blood which is in your heart and in your veins has come from the Parent's heart. Should you mock the Parent's tears anymore, you who have received blood from the Parent's heart, which sustains your life? And the heavenly Parent must still suckle you, He must allow you to suckle His grace flowing breasts so that the weak life which is in you would remain with you.

Remember now, children, these tears of the Parent, which today have flowed from His eyes because of you and all ungodly children. Let those tears shine like pearls in your eyes, as precious stones in your crown, as the rays of the morning in your heart, that you can finally get to count the Parent's tears with transfigured eyes in the city of the new Jerusalem, the hot tears of the Parent, which have truly flowed for all ungodly children in that great city of corruption. But only the disciples see them and feel them weighty and heavy when they fall upon the hardened conscience. Count, count, you disciples of Jesus, count the Parent's tears if you can, and gather them into your heart now and forever. Amen.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.” Proverbs 30:12.

There are also those as Solomon says, there are those hypocrites and mouth Christians, who think that they are cleansed but are nevertheless not washed of their filthiness. But who recognizes them? The pagans think that Christianity is hypocrisy; the pharisee thinks that the publican is a hypocrite; everyone who lives thus so boldly in the world thinks that these awakened are hypocrites, and that they make themselves godly. We concede that all devils are not hypocrites, as some devils are proudly truthful and cannot

stand to see hypocrisy, for example the devil of hatred, he cannot be a hypocrite, and his brother, the devil of pride cannot be a hypocrite. And when both live together in a sorrowless person's heart, they want to openly show to the world that they are truthful and noble, for they go to hell boldly, and behold others to be hypocrites who cannot travel so boldly on the wide road to destruction as they. Such people do not even say that they are Christians, nor do they practice any behavior of godliness, they do not go into the temple to pray as the pharisee, nor does he come there to sigh like the publican, and such people who live so boldly in sin do not care much to go to confession, they feel no doubt, that it does not pay for them to go there when they so boldly mock God; they imagine that the responsibility would be lighter in eternity when they overlook the mediums of grace. But all devils are not so serious as the devil of hatred and the devil of pride, all are not so bold to go along the broad way of destruction as these two, namely the devil of hatred and the devil of pride. Some enemies are so meek and so godly that no one can be as godly as they, and they think they are pure although they have not been washed of their filthiness. One of these is a meek devil who has not done wrong to anyone, nevertheless he does not remember that he would have done wrong not to God nor also to people. This meek devil is one pharisee, who thanks his God for that, that he is not so evil as other people. And although in the pharisee's ears it sounds as if his prayer is more beautiful than the publican's, especially

since the pharisee thanks his God for that, that God has protected him from sin, nevertheless this prayer of the pharisee is an abomination before God, for the honor of the world and self righteousness, of which the meek devil is constructed, has protected the pharisee from those coarser sins, as robbery and adultery. Perhaps now the slaves of the world and the pharisee's brothers in faith do not believe that the devil protects a person from some sins, nevertheless it is one immovable truth, that that meek devil had protected the pharisee from those coarser and vulgar sins, that same meek devil also now protects some people from the coarser sins, as stealing, drinking, cursing, fighting, and other coarse sins, and such people should thank the devil and say, "I thank you dear devil of meekness, that you have protected me from adultery, stealing, and fighting. But the natural intellect here is very much opposed that it becomes terrified and says, "Does the devil protect from sin? does he not encourage to commit sin?" But the devil of meekness is not such, that he encourages one to sin, but rather he protects from those sins, which affect their honor. But the devil of meekness also protects his slaves from penitence; the pharisee cannot come to true penitence, for he does not have enough sin to repent of. What now pertains to the pharisee's good works, that same devil of meekness which protects him from the coarser sins puts him also to do good works, which he also enumerates, for they are his basis of salvation. Moreover, the pharisee has sharp eyes to see the faults of the Christians, when,

namely, the pharisee does not see iniquity in himself, so he must watch in others' faults. — The other portion of those who think themselves pure are called thieves of grace, who cannot fit with the publican, for they have a false confidence of the grace of God, for surely all sorrowless are thieves of grace, for that reason that they own for themselves much from God's grace, when they have such a faith that God protects them not only naturally, but also from spiritual misfortune, and if they through their own foolishness, and after the encouraging of the devil, do some foolish deed from which some harm comes, then he puts all on God and says, "God made me poor, God put this cross on me, God took away my health." In that way they own for themselves God's blessing in an entirely wrong way, when they can put upon God all that the devil has done. If the wine merchant gets rich, God has done that, He has given the wine merchant goods and belongings. If the drunkard, whore, or thief become poor, God has also done that. Such a faith cannot possibly fit in the skull of a sorrowless person, that the devil has such great power, that he can make some poor and some rich. But the true grace thieves are such who think themselves pure but nevertheless are not washed of their filthiness. With some, namely, the conscience has moved a little, but not to that extent, that the devil of honor would have received a death wound; such grace thieves cannot stand Judgement, they do not want to cry out their sins to the world, they do not want to reconcile their evil deeds, they stand behind the brush fen-

ce and there they own for themselves the gracious promises of God although the heart has never become broken. Some of these grace thieves have reached the first signs of grace and upon them they have gone to sleep. Such grace thieves do not want to know anything of God's severe righteousness, and they think they are pure although they nevertheless are not washed of their filthiness, for some old sins are fastened to them, and it especially can be recognized how they have gone beyond bounds in that, that they fear and avoid the Christians, they do not want to be with the other Christians in the meetings, they have a secret hatred toward the Christians. If they had love for the Christians they would keep fellowship with the Christians and would willingly hear the other Christians' thoughts of that only necessary thing. But just that matter, that they separate from God's congregation, shows clearly that they do not have love, that the fault is in the heart, and how could such ones fit anymore through the strait gate when the Old Adam has grown so big that he no longer fits into the Christians' heart, nor in the Christians' meetings.

In today's Gospel the Saviour sets before our eyes two men who had come into the temple to pray. One was a pharisee and one was a publican, and we think they were both here praying although with a little different mind. We must through God's grace consider with what intention each has come and what each one effects with his prayers in the temple, but we pray that Almighty King, that He would hear the sighs of

the publican, which come from a broken heart, although the pharisee despises him and mocks his tears. Lord, look toward the publican with mercy and allow his sighs to be heard up to heaven, then we believe that he will go home more justified than the pharisee. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 18: 9

The pharisee and the publican are two remarkable men who have come to the temple to pray. One is a meek and honorable man and kept in high esteem in the world, he is also godly and is also somewhat patient since he does not go out from the church although the publican stands there and sighs. The pharisees of this time are not so patient, for they leave the church when the publican begins to sigh, and lament that the publican spoils their devotion. But the publican is one person, despised by the world, a very poor person, who no doubt has not lived honorably, but he feels also that he has not merited any honor or thanks. The load of sin has become heavy on his conscience and when he smites his breast, it can surely be surmised from that, that his heart is sore. We must now through God's grace consider the pharisee and the publican. The first consideration: Why has the pharisee come into the church to pray? Second consideration: Why has the publican come here to sigh? Our hope is that the publican would go home more justified, no matter how he would be despised and kept poor by the pharisee.

First: For what reason has the pharisee come here to pray? We do not know but anyway he has come, if he would only stay there so that the urge to urinate would not come before the prayer is over. We see that the pharisee stands and prays thus to himself; "I thank you, God, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." From this pharisee's prayer, we hear that the pharisee has such a faith that God has protected him from sin and we well surmise that the pharisee's brothers in faith have the same faith that God has protected them from sin, when they say, "I have not stolen, thanks to God, I am not a whore, thanks to God, I am not a drunkard, thanks to God," With these words they thank their God for that, that he has protected them from sin. But it is unknown what God it is, who has protected them from sin. I think that that god is in the lover heaven who has protected the pharisee and his brothers from sin. It is one decent devil who protects some from those coarser sins, such as adultery stealing, drinking, and fighting. And this meek devil is made up of worldly honor and self righteousness. Those pharisees who this meek devil protects from sin, avoid those coarser and more vulgar sins, which attack his honor, but from those finer sins, the devil of honor cannot protect them; moderate drinking is allowable to the pharisees, finery is allowable to them, greed in business is allowable to them, the joy of the world and worldly vanity are allowable. The pharisees of this time hold christening feasts, weddings, and funeral feasts and

that is a custom of honor, and all that honor of the world gives in to, that the pharisees allow and seek after. But the pharisees have such a firm faith upon God that surely the publican does not have faith as much as a mustard seed compared to that which the pharisee has. For the pharisee think that God has protected them from sin and say also, "Surely the devil does not protect from sin, more likely he encourages." But now you must know, all you good pharisees who are here, that the devil of honor and the devil of self righteousness have protected you from sin, both from open stealing as well as adultery and also from drinking and fighting; and thank now your god who has protected you from sin, saying, "I thank you, God, that I am not as other people, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I have not stolen, thanks to God, I am not a whore, thanks to God, I am not a drinker, thanks to God"; so say the pharisees of this time. But if they believed that it is the devil who has protected them from sin, then they would thank him less. Is there even one sin on the conscience of the pharisee, of which the god of this world could not protect him? It has not yet been heard that sin would have begun to trouble the conscience of the pharisee, but the sins of the publican must be on the conscience of the pharisee. Why does the pharisee say that he is not so poor as this publican, no doubt the pharisee knows that this publican is one poor person, one whore and thief, who now came here to sigh right in the ears of the pharisee, who knows the devotion of the pharisee will even be spoiled

by the sighs of the publican. We have heard that the pharisees saw many faults in the life of the Saviour and the disciples were Sabbath breakers already in the Saviour's time and after His death such bad people couldn't be found anywhere as the disciples of the disturber of the people. So the pharisees had received that assurance that the Nazarene sect which calls itself Christians was the worst kind of people, which should be destroyed with fire and sword. Do the pharisees even now have the same faith, that the Christians are the devil's group, when they do not allow honorable people peace of conscience? But certainly the pharisees even then thank their god although they carry spiritual hatred toward the Christians and despise the publican. Come now and thank your god, who has protected you from sin, and do not bow your knees at all when you pray, but stand as the lords of the world are accustomed to doing, as the pharisee also does, he stands and prays thus to himself, "I thank you God, etc." And when you have thus prayed, then go to that wine merchant who is in the lower end of the burning rapids and pray to him that he would give you flowing devil's dung for quackery for your heart, so that the sighs of the publican would not burn your conscience forever.

But let us now behold, for what reason the pharisee is not like this publican. We hear him thank his god that he is not as this publican; it means that he is not so poor as this publican. The pharisee is, in the mind of the world, many thousand times better than this publican. First, the pharisee has lived

meekly and avoided sin, for which he also thanks his god. But the publican cannot thank his God for that, that He has protected the publican from sin; the publican feels that he has not taken heed of his God then when he lived as an animal in sorrowlessness. The publican feels that he is a whore and a thief, for that reason he cannot thank his God for that, that God has protected him from sin. But there is one more reason why the pharisee despises that publican so much. They are the publican's sighs which make the pharisee feel bad. Namely, the pharisee cannot bear to see such, who cry and sigh. If the pharisee was not now in the Lord's temple, then he would say to the publican, go away from here now from sighing, you hypocrite. You have whored and stolen before and now you come here to sigh like a beast. But since the pharisee is in the Lord's temple, he does not dare to speak there, the pharisee would sooner go out of the church himself so that he would be relieved of seeing and hearing such; and if the devil himself was in the church, as his habit is, then he must go out as soon as the publican's sighs begin to be heard. The devil of meekness himself must go out as soon as the sighs of the publican begin to be heard. And the grace thief, who says he lies at the foot of Jesus' cross every day, arises quickly and goes out quickly from the church as soon as the publican's sighs begin to be heard. Is it not strange that the devil and his slaves cannot at all stand to hear the sighs of the penitent ones. Already then the pharisees did not like it that one woman came to weep on Jesus' feet in that home of Si-

mon the leper, no doubt their devotion was spoiled with that. It was in their mind so ugly to see that one wretched whore came to wash Jesus' feet with her tears, no doubt the pharisees must have thought, how could Jesus, who was kept as a prophet, suffer such a whore, why did Jesus not drive the penitent whore away from crying and howling over Him. Such is the nature of the pharisee, that he cannot bear to see such ones who cry and sigh, he despises them so much that he thanks his god for that, that he is not as poor as this publican. Many pharisees have at this time prayed their god that they would never become so poor or so foolish as this publican, who began to sigh there. But when already here the tears of the penitent burn the conscience of the pharisee, who knows what those sighs will effect in eternity, when the pharisee begins to sigh and howl. There the sighs of the publican will probably burn the pharisee's conscience eternally. There the pharisee must curse himself when the publican's sighs come to memory, that he has not in this time of grace cried like the penitent whore in the house of Simon, nor has he sighed like the publican, he has not smote his breast and sighed, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!" There he begins to repent eternally that he has despised the publican, that he has blasphemed his prayer, that he has laughed when he should have wept, that he has borne spiritual hatred toward the publican when he should have loved. And although the pharisee here overlooked the publican's sighs and said, "They also sigh like beasts," then that time must

soon come that the devil's angels mock the pharisee's tears, when he also begins to shed serpent's tears, then the devil's angels will probably ask him, "What howling is this? Since you have not howled before and since you have not sighed before, then be without sighing now." The devil will probably begin to wipe away the serpent's tears when the pharisee begins to howl in hell, the devil is probably ready to treat, with quackery, the heart of the pharisee with flowing devil's dung as he is ready to doctor, with quackery, the pharisee here if some pharisee's conscience becomes troubled; the devil will probably put his breast in the pharisee's mouth in hell and say, "Suck now, brother, the devil's paps as you have sucked before." The pharisee has been accustomed here to suck the paps of the devil, as he sometimes, when the devil does not always release his milk, is accustomed to swallowing the flowing devil's dung, which drips from the devil's butt, as one spiritual swine is accustomed to do; but there in hell, the milk does not come anymore from the paps of the devil, nor does the devil's dung drip from his butt as we hear the rich man lamenting in hell that there is not a drop of water to drip on the tongue. Think now, good pharisee, there in your time, what befits your peace and stand no more and pray, "I thank you God that I am not as other people, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." But look now upon that penitent publican, how he goes home more justified than you, although he does not have beautiful prayers as you do.

Second: Why has the publican come here to sigh? We do not know; but he has not come without a reason, even if the pharisee says, "What is this hypocrite sighing for?"

But that we know, that sighs do not come from nothing, there must be some substance before sighs will come forth. We hear from the Gospel that the publican smote his breast. Why did he beat his breast? Was there not pain and oppression? When, namely, the publican's conscience awakened, sin and the devil began to gnaw at his conscience and to oppress his breast. The spirit of God began to reproach him through his conscience of adultery, stealing, drinking, cursing, greed, whiskey trade, vanity of the world, stealing from tax money, and of all sins which he had committed in sorrowlessness before. From this rebuking of the spirit of God the publican became sorrowful and heavy-hearted, he in that way came to suffer tribulation of conscience. And not only that which the pain of sin brings with it like the accusations of the conscience and oppression of the heart, but also that spiritual enemy began to attack him terribly and accuse him night and day. The pharisee began to despise and blaspheme him, the world began to hate him, how does it go now when you have come at the same time with the pharisee to pray? Do you dare to bark at the pharisee because of hypocrisy? That penitent robber on the cross rebuked the other of sin, although he himself was in the same condition. We well surmise that the pharisee despised that publican so much, who was sighing, that he begins to thank his god that he is not so poor

as this publican. The pharisee says, "I have not stolen, thanks to God, I have not whored, thanks to God, I am no drunkard, thanks to God", but no matter how poor the publican is, namely a whore, thief, drunkard, curser, and fighter, we anyway have that hope, he goes home more Justified than the other, for he is penitent, he beats his breast and says, "God have mercy on me, a sinner!" But the pharisee cannot bear to see such ones! And the devil himself, who is a great lord of the world and a very wise man, cannot bear such ones who cry and sigh, he becomes angry and says, "Go away from here you hypocrites from sighing. I cannot bear to see such who cry and sigh for no reason, go to the kingdom of heaven to sigh, there is no room here in hell for such." Where will you go now, you penitent publican, when all the lords of the world drive you out of their houses and the prince of hell himself drives you away from hell. Is it not the best instruction that you go to the door of heaven to cry and knock upon the door of grace. Is it not the best instruction that you go with Mary to the house of Simon the leper where Jesus the Nazarene is dining and begin to wash His feet with tears of penitence, do not heed what the pharisees think, but you wash the feet of that Great Cross-bearer, that Blood-sprinkled and Thorn crowned King with your tears of penitence; perhaps He will look with grace toward you and will give you that blessed assurance that you are fortunate in time and in eternity when you believe that your sins are forgiven to you. But woe you publican wretch, if you waste His

grace and go to crucify your Saviour anew. Woe you publican wretch, if you again cause His spirit to become sorrowful because of your unwatchfulness through light mindedness, through love of the world. You have now received that answer to your sighs, that you will go home more justified than the pharisee, but take heed how you use this great grace that you do not become as the prodigal son, and waste that great substance and goods which he had received from the Father, and finally began to herd swine. For those wretches, who herd swine in the wilderness of this world and think they are earning peace of conscience, for because they wrestle with swine, they can surely die of hunger, can faint far from the Father's House. And if you penitent publican waste and spend that precious substance of grace, which you have now received, you will become a herder of swine and will perish in the wilderness of the world, but when you go home more justified than the pharisee, then travel now seriously on the road of life and keep God before your eyes, look back and ahead so that the enemy could not get you into the same wretchedness as before so that the pharisee who now despises you and keeps you poorer than others, could get joy in your fall and could truly reproach you. Travel now seriously on the road of life so that the name of Christ would not become blasphemed among the pagans because of you. And when you finally come into that temple, where you can pray and serve God forever, then sit in the lowest place, until then when that great Lord Who has called you into this wonderful

light will say to you, Friend, step up higher, then it will happen that you will have honor in the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

Twelfth Sunday After Trinity.

“And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb or deaf or the seeing or the blind? have not I the Lord?” Exodus 4:11.

Thus God said to Moses when Moses lamented that he was not able to speak to the children of Israel with such a loud voice, that they would hear. Moses said to the Lord: “I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.” Moses put this as an excuse when God commanded him to go and lead the children of Israel out of the house of bondage. And to Moses this was a reluctant journey because he guessed that a dog’s office is not something pleasant when he must battle with the sorrowless. Then Moses put this as an obstacle, that he had a slow speech and a stiff tongue. But the Lord asked him? “Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf or the seeing or the blind? have not I the Lord?” In this place is heard as though God would have made some deaf and dumb, but in other Bible passages is heard that God has not made some deaf or dumb, but the devil has. If we now grant that the naturally deaf and dumb have in creation gotten their defect by God permitting it to happen, as for example, Moses had in creation become of a slow speed and a stiff tongue - although this defect did

not hinder much either when he received power from God to speak the truth; nevertheless, the spiritually deaf and dumb cannot accuse God that they have become deaf and dumb, if we do not take that Bible passage for a protection for old adam, where God says to Prophet Ezekiel in the third chapter 26th verse: “And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of they mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house,” There it is surely heard as if God would even put this to the sorrowless nation for a punishment, that the prophet shall become dumb so that he can no more rebuke the sorrowless people because they are rebellious and do not want to hear reproof. But nevertheless the Lord rebukes Moses on the other hand at the water of strife, that he was not rightly zealous to speak in God’s behalf the truth to the ungodly people. If we take all these Bible passages rightly under consideration, then we find that the naturally deaf and dumb have received that defect in creation, perhaps for a punishment, reminder, and warning for their parents, who have been deaf and dumb in that place where they should have spoken the truth. But a spiritually deaf and dumb person cannot lay the blame on God for that, but it is the devil who makes even the Christians deaf and dumb, where they should speak God’s truth. Jesus sighs today over the deaf and dumb who are brought to Him and the Christians can surely warn themselves that Jesus would not have cause to sigh over them, if they become deaf and dumb and are no more able to speak the truth

to the world. Then the sorrowless have occasion to say: "Now we can go to hell in peace for the Christians' sake; they no longer bark at anyone. The Christians have now settled down."

O Lord Jesus, open the ears of all the deaf to hear and loose all the dumb ones' tongues so that hereafter you would not need to sigh over the deaf and the dumb. Hear, you Healer of the deaf and dumb, the sigh of the sorrowful and penitent: Our Father which art in Heaven, and so forth.

Gospel Mark 7: 31-37.

With the guidance of our Holy Gospel and following that which was spoken above, we should through God's grace at this moment of grace consider, how the ears of the deaf are opened and how the dumb are able to speak again.

First consideration: In what way are the ears of the deaf opened? We have all in a natural condition been deaf and dumb, as you know and well remember that time, when God's Word went like a hum over your head, in one ear and out through the other, at that time not a single word ever came near the heart. But when the Word of God began to be preached in the right order and Jesus cried with a loud voices "Ephphatha", then a few deaf ones' ears opened to hear and listen to God's Word with different ears than before, and then God's Word effected a great devotion, Then there was also a great desire to hear and learn, but when the first fervency began to cool, this fervency and this desire after hearing the

Word of God ended. The world began to get more and more room in the Christians' hearts; they no more had so much time to come to hear God's Word. This end of the first fervency is probably not the fault of the doctrine nor in a change in the word, but in the Christians' own laziness and carelessness, in lack of love, in unwatchfulness, and perhaps in spiritual sleep, which comes over the disciples in the Garden where Jesus sweats blood. And although three times He came to awaken them, just the same the sleep of sin forced itself upon them, so that they see the suffering of the Heavenly Parent as through a stupor of sleep, and finally do not know from where this terrible suffering comes or what it effects. Behold now, you disciples of Jesus, and listen if Jesus even today sighs over us. He does not sigh only for the sorrowless, who are deaf and dumb, but He sighs even for those whose ears were once opened when He cried: "Ephphatha", but which are again becoming deaf, which comes from this that the Christians do not protect their ears from the wind of the world. If the world's cold wind manages to blow in the ear, especially during sleep, then surely deafness will soon come. Do not give Jesus reason to sigh over you, surely Jesus has once before sighed heavily over you, that He would not need to sigh again a second time.

Second consideration: In what way do the dumb receive the power to speak? As you know we have all been dumb in the sorrowless condition. One brother has not said to his brother: "Know the Lord." None have asked of the travelers to eternity: "Where are

you going?" But the travelers to eternity went deaf and dumb, all those standing on the shore of mortality stood there deaf and dumb so that scarcely one said farewell to the travelers, nor did the travelers leave salutations to those left behind. But then when Jesus took hold of the dumb one's tongue through this awakening, the dumb one's tongue became loosed and he spoke clearly. Then many could thank God for that great grace that the Great Creator had in His mercy opened the deaf one's ears and loosed the bond of the dumb one's tongue. Then the lame leaped like deer on Mount Zion and the dumb tongues burst into praise. But now the greatest portion have again become deaf and it sounds as if there would be no cause to thank. This dumbness can not be the fault of the doctrine, which, as far as I know, has not in any place bound the Christians' tongues nor stopped up their mouths. But the Christians' own laziness and carelessness which has come from the love of the world, unwatchfulness, and spiritual laziness. Take heed you disciples of Jesus, watch, if you would become deaf and dumb then Jesus will sigh over you and look up to Heaven! And although we yet have that hope that the Heavenly Father will hear the sighs of His Son and give Him Strength to cry, "Ephphatha!" that is: "Be opened!", so that the ears of the deaf will yet open and the tongue of the dumb will burst into praise. But it is not pleasant for me to hear Jesus' sighs over the deaf and dumb, whose ears once were opened and whose tongues formerly burst into praise.

Do not wonder, dear brothers, that I reproach you for spiritual laziness and slowness to run in the battle, as your conscience may testify that there is slowness; that there is a fault both in the hearing as well as in the speaking. And I can not say that I am better, but it seems like God wants to begin to awaken and hurry us, so that we by spiritual laziness would not weary of running toward that great goal which has been placed before us. For we hear now that hard times stand before us; that God wants to try our faith. Jesus has said: "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered abroad," When the great and mighty in the world rise up against Jesus, then are the disciples together in prayer. And I truly believe that God yet can scatter and make as nothing the advice of Ahithophel.

But the Great Shepherd of Israel, who has Himself gathered His sheep with great trouble in that cloudy time, when the sheep were scattered as goats on the Mount of Israel. The Great Shepherd of Israel who has trod those heavy and toilsome footsteps and sought lost sheep on Mount Sinai, by the shore of the Red Sea, and beside the River Jordan, and who Himself herds, tends, and cares for His sheep and carries them to the best pasture and leads them to living water. May He shelter, strengthen and protect His own sheep from cold, snowstorms, and tempests, so that they may be protected from the wolf's teeth, the lion's claws, and the dragon's jaws, that the trembling and ravaged sheep of Jesus may soon reach eternity's blissful shore and Mount Zion to leap as deer, where not a single

wolf will tear or ravage Jesus' sheep anymore. There the lion's roaring will be heard no more and the great dragon and old serpent, called the devil and satan, who is the seducer of the whole world, he is now cast out of Heaven. Rejoice ye Heavens! But woe to those who live in the earth and the sea, for the dragon shall come having great wrath, knowing that he has a short time! Be now in good refuge, you thrushes and finches. Soon shall you be able to sit on the branches of the living vine and sing songs of praise to the Great Creator who has given you life! Amen, Halleluja! Amen.

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

“For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.” Mark 14:7

From these words of the Saviour we hear that helping the poor is good and necessary, but the Christianity is even more necessary, for the poor are always amongst us and they will never cease to be as long as the world stands, but Jesus is not always with us. Judas and his brothers think that it is a waste if some Mary pours the precious spikenard ointment upon the head of Jesus. They think that the woman did wrong, since she wasted such expensive ointment, which was for no one's good. They thought that Jesus needed no anointing or sign of love, but rather the poor need help, as some of Juda's brothers and cousins say, “People become

poor through Christianity. It would be better to give to the poor than to the schools.” But the poor you have with you always, but Jesus is not always. Remember that, you relatives of Judas, that the Christianity is not always offered to you. And if all would have received Jesus when He was offered, there would not be so many poor. But it appears now that the poor and needy increase because of the lack of Christianity; since Jesus is not in the heart, then the poor come to you. And it is heard from these words of the Saviour that He wanted to be foremost, that first the precious spikenard ointment would be sacrificed, but when He is taken away, then you can give to the poor. You certainly have the poor with you always, and to them you can give whenever you want to, but in the giving to the poor the first question is this, with what disposition of the heart you give to them. We should help the poor, not upon future payment, but because it is a Christian's obligation, and for that reason our Christianity is tried, if we have love toward our neighbor, if we want to help the poor even if we receive nothing for it. Whoever is greedy for worldly goods, he has nothing to spare to give to the poor. Some slaves of the world take from the poor and spend on the rich, some give to the poor because of honor, since the poor serve him well; but if we give to the poor because of honor, that people would see how charitable we are and guardians of the poor, then we do as the Pharisees, who gave with the sounding of a trumpet when they gave their alms. Many said truthfully, “I have helped the poor more

than you have.” And that shows, if not openly, nevertheless secretly, that they might merit a better thanks from God and man than someone else, if there would not be some wrong foundation of salvation behind their back. If someone says to another, “I have helped the poor more than you have”, he is no poor man, he does not need a Saviour very soon, he already has a firm foundation upon which he depends. But how long will this foundation of salvation last, that is another question. And it is remarkable how many kinds of matters are acceptable to people for a foundation of salvation. For some, poverty is acceptable for a foundation of salvation; for some, riches are acceptable for a foundation of salvation; for some, meekness is acceptable for a foundation of salvation; and for some, dead faith. But that only foundation which is already laid, namely Jesus Christ, it is not acceptable to many before all of the false foundations fall. The poor often say that they do not depend upon their poverty, but upon the Saviour, and nevertheless many poor have that thought, that God has so arranged that he became poor. Nevertheless if we examine more closely how and in what way he has become poor, then it can be seen that God has not made him poor, but through his own laziness and carelessness or through drunkenness and through wasting he has become poor. If in his youth he had used the strength of body and soul rightly, he could have avoided poverty. But a poor one does not want to confess that he, through his own carelessness and laziness, has become such, but he always repeats that

God made him poor. If now spiritual poverty would follow this natural poverty, if he would begin to feel that he has wasted the substance of soul like he has wasted substance of the natural body, then he would have gained something from his poverty. But his thoughts do not turn in that direction, but he thinks thus, “Since God has made me poor in this world, assuredly God will give me better possessions in the other world.” As confirmation for this false faith, he also takes an example of poor Lazarus who reached Abraham’s bosom. Behold, in this way poverty becomes a foundation of salvation for some who do not know the right foundation of salvation. A rich one again thinks thus, “Since God has so abundantly blessed my work and my trouble that I have been able to help the poor, surely He loves me, assuredly He wishes well for me, not only in this life but also in the world to come. And if God wishes so much good, assuredly He can make one blessed.” As confirmation for this false faith, he also takes an example of Abraham, who became saved although he was rich. Neither rich nor poor think about that, that the devil teaches some to become rich through crookedness and through whiskey trade, and some he makes poor through drunkenness or through laziness. It has been experienced already from the beginning of the world that natural meekness is acceptable to many for a foundation of salvation, as it is founded in the natural intellect. The natural intellect says thus, “If meekness is not acceptable, what then is acceptable?” Natural meekness has been an

old foundation of salvation to all those who know nothing of the Saviour, and even now this false foundation is rooted in the skull of many people. For although naturally meek people say that they do not depend upon meekness but upon the Saviour, nevertheless it is apparent from their speech that they have no sin. But what does he need a Saviour for, who does not Accumulate so much sin, enough to become penitent over. He, who does not have that much sin that they begin to trouble the conscience, does not depend on a Saviour; surely meekness is the foundation of salvation to such a person although he does not know it.

We hear from the Apostle James' writing how many people have dead faith as a foundation of salvation, where it is also explained how and in what way dead faith reveals itself. Dead faith is a false faith upon the Saviour, without penitence, without love, and without works. Apostle James shows what the confessors of dead faith do to the poor who ask for help. They say, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body." The confessors of dead faith give the poor good words, but nothing more; they pity the poor but nothing more. When the rich come into the congregation, the confessors of dead faith say, "Sit here near me," but to the poor they say, "Stand there or sit here under my footstool." This is precisely that sign of dead faith that he overlooks the poor and gives honor to the rich.

After this foreword we must take heed more closely to the words of the

Prophet Isaiah: "If thou open thy heart to the hungry and nourish the afflicted souls, then shall thy light rise in the darkness and thy darkness shall be as the noon day." (Finnish Bible) In these words are both a natural and a spiritual meaning. A Christian opens his heart to a hungry soul both naturally and spiritually, when he gives the hungry one two kinds of food; he gives him natural food, if he has it, and he gives the hungry one the Word of God if the hungry one has need; and so he satisfies the afflicted souls. If he has it, he nourishes the afflicted souls with natural food, but he nourishes also with the words of God, if the afflicted one needs them. And therefore the prophet says, since there is a question here of both natural and spiritual nourishment, "Your light shall rise in the darkness when you counsel the afflicted so they begin to understand the word of God." The light of Christianity begins to shine in the dark heart of the afflicted soul. "And thy darkness shall be as the noon day." A Christian's darkness is that dark time when sleep commences and movements of the spirit cease. This darkness is nevertheless as the noon day in the souls of the completely blind ones, alongside of that darkness in which a natural person lives. The Christians' darkness is, to a natural person, as the noon day. When a Christian speaks something to an afflicted one who knows nothing of Christianity, it effects more, or gives him more light of Christianity, than that outward knowledge which he has. I surmise that the confessors of dead faith expound these words of the Prophet in a different way,

namely, "Whoever helps the poor with a good intention, he has peace and a good conscience both in prosperity and adversity." And it may be possible that helping of the poor appeases the conscience of a natural person, when he gets to boast and say, "I have fed the poor more than you have." But an awakened one's conscience does not become quieted with this, that he helps the poor or gives them natural help, for his conscience yearns for some thing more. The conscience of an awakened person cannot receive peace before he can open his heart to the hungry ones; that is, to satisfy the afflicted souls. Just then he receives peace of conscience when his light begins to shine in the dark soul of the hungering one, and the Christian's darkness becomes as the noon day in the heart of the afflicted one.

Today we must consider how that merciful Samaritan pities and has mercy upon that wretched man, who had fallen into the hands of the thieves. If God would allow us His grace, that we could comprehend this great truth and use it rightly for the eternal upbuilding of our souls, since we have become so wretched and afflicted through the robbing of the thieves, through the striking, the whipping, the piercing, through the wounding and ravaging, that if that merciful Samaritan does not take us and have mercy upon us wretched and afflicted sinners and pour oil into our wounds, we will surely die upon that road where the robbers have left us half-dead. Oh merciful Lord Jesus, do not leave us on the road to die, but have mercy upon us, lift up our afflicted soul and bring it into the inn, be-

cause of your merciful heart! Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 10:23-37

Today's holy text is understood and expounded in many ways. Some think that this matter which is related here has truly happened. Some say that the gospel is a parable, for a reminder and an example to the Pharisees of what they should do, since they do not correctly remember what they have read in the catechism about helping their neighbor. It often happens that the pharisee, who has so much more to do, does not remember to answer correctly to this question, "Who is our neighbor?" Or is the fault in the Pharisee's conscience, which takes away the memory when he is asleep, although it gives a good memory when he is awake. But some think also that the man who has fallen into the hands of the robbers is an awakened person, whose conscience has been terribly wounded by spiritual robbers, and that the merciful Samaritan is the Saviour Himself, who has mercy upon this wretched sinner, pours the oil of grace into the wounds of the conscience, and brings his soul into the inn. But the Word of God fits many matters, and to whichever matter this gospel is applied it affects much, is weighty and upbuilding. Therefore we take substance for consideration from the merciful Samaritan. The First Consideration; What kind of a man was this merciful Samaritan? The Second Consideration: In what condition was this person who had fallen into the hands of the robbers? The Third Considerations

What forced the Samaritan to have mercy and to help that person who had fallen into the hands of the robbers? May God give His grace that all who have fallen into the hands of the robbers would be helped before they die on the road!

The First Consideration: What kind of a man was this merciful Samaritan? He was of such a lineage which the Pharisees and honorable men of the world despised. The respectable people of the world do not care to keep fellowship with the Samaritan people, who are born of such poor lineage, and in all their habits are so different: poor and despised, filthy and repulsive both in dress and behaviour. Such a person is not worthy to be amongst respectable people. For what reason is the Samaritan held so poor that honorable people cannot keep fellowship with him? First, for the reason that he was born of such poor lineages second, because he has a false faith. He is not a total pagan, nor is he such a Christian who is kept to be a Christian in the world, but he has such a confused doctrine and false faith, that the right kind of people keep him to be a false prophet. He is even worse than a pagan, for the reason that he is so good to bark at respectable people and to skin them of their honor. When the Pharisees and scribes and other Jews travel that way where the Samaritans live, they bypass the village; they do not want to eat or drink anything which the Samaritan offers to them. The Pharisees fear that their honor and their Christianity and their high esteem will be spoiled if they touch with their fingers those dishes which

the Samaritans have had in their hands. Therefore the woman of Samaria asked Jesus, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest a drink of me?" Will your honor not be lost when you have fellowship with such a base person? And it was the worst name of abuse which the Jews could give the Saviour when they called Him a Samaritan. "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil." You are not the right kind of a person, you have the countenance of a dog. You are not worthy to be in the company of honorable people. Said in a word, a Samaritan was so base and so overlooked, both because of his false faith and because of his barking, that honorable people of the world went far around so they would not meet such a heretic and lose their honor and Christianity.

Now it happened that a priest and a Levite and a Samaritan happened to be traveling the same road, however not in the same company but separately. And that wretched person, who had fallen into the hands of the robbers, lay by the roadside wounded, half dead. The priest looked upon him and went by, he did not recognize this man to be his neighbor; so also the Levite looked upon him and went by. Neither the priest or the Levite recognized this man to be his neighbor. They were both respectable men and also, above all, such Christians who are held to be Christians in the world; not such false prophets who have now appeared in the Karesuanto congregation, but such Christians who have become Christians through baptism, and from the time of baptism on have remained Christians. Said in a word, the priest and the Levite

were respectable Christians who allow people peace of conscience, and also allow the man who was wounded by the robbers to die in peace. No matter how a person were in wounds, bloody and half alive, certainly the priest and Levite allow such a wretched one to die in peace. They think thus: "Let us allow this wretched person to die in peace, let us not touch him. Our hands will become bloody, our clothes will become spoiled if we begin to work on him. Let us allow him to die in peace." Otherwise this priest and this Levite place a plaster of sorrowlessness upon the wounds of the conscience when a small hole has come into some person's conscience, but such large and such bloody wounds as this wretched and afflicted person had, those the priest or the Levite cannot heal. They fear that the blood which flows from the wounds will adhere to them and spoil their clean consciences. Therefore they look upon such a one who lies in tribulation of conscience, half dead, and go by. But that merciful Samaritan could not only look upon that person who was so terribly wounded by the robbers and beaten half dead, but He had mercy upon him.

The Second Consideration; What forced the Samaritan to have mercy upon this wretched man, although he was kept as a pagan? Do pagans have a better heart than the priest and the Levite? He was not exactly a real pagan, but he was of that heresy where that false doctrine was preached, through which people become insane. He had read the Scripture, but he had that false faith that a person will not become sa-

ved with that Christianity which he received in baptism, but that something more is yet needed. He also had that false faith that love of one's neighbor does not become fulfilled in this, that a person only looks upon the wretched one and pities him. But only then the love for one's neighbor is fulfilled, when a person does something to alleviate his pain, pays for medicines for him, and also takes and pays it from his own purse. But the priest and the Levite have that faith that love for one's neighbor becomes fulfilled thus: that a person looks upon the afflicted one, pities him and goes by, but that a person need not pay anything from his own purse to help the afflicted one. This the Samaritan could not think, although he was a half-pagan and of low esteem. Do such have a better and more merciful heart than the priest and the Levite? We do not know, but nevertheless he had mercy upon the wretched person who had fallen into the hands of robbers. This wretched person, whom neither the priest nor the Levite recognized as their neighbor, is certainly in a pitiful condition. First, all his possessions were stolen away; all his travel money with which he should have traveled to eternity was destroyed; all his meekness which he had gathered together with his honesty was taken away; all his food which he had prepared for a repast for himself in the grave was also stolen. The honorable clothes of self-righteousness were stripped off, those beautiful clothes, so acceptable before the world, which he had bought from the world's merchants and had made to order by the world's tailors, which he

intended to wear in the grave so that he could worthily, bravely and manfully bow himself before the god of the world, all that finery was taken away. He himself lay on the road half dead, bloody, wounded, in a wretched condition. The robbers had ravaged his conscience terrible; if that merciful Samaritan had not had mercy upon him, he surely would have died upon the road and become food for all the ravens and beasts.

But that merciful Samaritan could not bear to see this wretched person dying on the road, although the priest and the Levite did not recognize him to be their neighbor, since there was no longer that much money found in his purse and pocket with which he could have paid for their trouble. They left this wretched person to die on the road, although they were good and respectable Christians. No doubt they thought that it is written no where that we must help out the afflicted one with our own money and to pay for medicines for him. If this wretched man had had money with which he would have been able to pay for their trouble, they surely would have taken care of him on the road, or if this wretched man's conscience would have had a small wound, certainly the priest and Levite could have repaired it with a plaster of sorrowlessness. But since he had been already stripped naked and exposed so that he had nothing on his bare skin and was entirely bloody, since his conscience was like all one sore, when the robbers had ravaged and torn his conscience, so the priest and the Levite thought that this wound is beyond repair; we do

not dare to touch these wounds, and from where would we get paid if we would begin to plaster these wounds? If he was a better man, we would give him a quarter's worth of whiskey with which he could anoint his bowels; we would give him a quarter's worth of ointment for the conscience, that it would cease from bleeding; we would give him a quarter's worth of plaster of sorrowlessness with which he could cover the wounds of his conscience. But since he is entirely bloody and wounded, we can do nothing for him -

so thought the priest and Levite.

But that merciful Samaritan did not question that this wretched one was entirely bloody and wounded. As soon as He saw him lying there on the road He had mercy on him. From where did this compassion come toward him, who was so despised by the world and of such low esteem that no one cared to look upon him? We do not know, but we think that the sight of the blood moved Him, that wretched condition in which this person was, who had been wounded by robbers, that wretched person's nakedness, wounds of conscience, pain of heart and spiritual anguish, the spiritual death struggle, the sighs, the painful voice of lamentation, the tears, all this pitiful wretchedness went like a sword through the heart of the merciful Samaritan, And if this merciful Samaritan had not had mercy upon him, he would have died on the road and no one would have taken care of his carcass.

May you be thanked, merciful Samaritan, that you have had mercy upon this wretched man and taken care of

him on the road! Without you this miserable person would have died in blood and wounds, and no one would have asked about him, if you had not taken care of him on the road and poured oil and wine into his wounds. Who has bound those wounds which the robbers have made in this miserable man? Who has poured wine and oil into the wounded and bloody conscience, which the robbers have ravaged and torn? You, merciful Samaritan, have had mercy upon this miserable person. You have taken care of him on the road, you have bound his wounds, you have poured wine and oil into his conscience, you have lifted him up from the ground when he lay halfdead, strengthless and maimed, sore and sick, full of bleeding wounds, with a bleeding conscience, a wounded heart. You, merciful Samaritan, have brought him into the inn and paid the host what he has spent in his behalf, and intend also when you return to repay more in his behalf. What do you think, you who are wounded by the robbers? Have you now recovered so that you are able to thank the Samaritan for that good work, that He has taken care of you on the road and paid so much in your behalf? Without Him you would have died in your wounds and your blood. Have you recovered so much that you would be able to thank Him, since you can do no other good toward Him? I think that you are also poor at thanking Him. However, await till the time He returns, if then you would be able to thank Him better, since now you are not able. Do you think He will come soon? I think that He will come soon, if you await Him with love

and desire of the heart. I believe that He still remembers you and prays for you that you would soon recover, that you would be able to thank Him better when He returns. Then He will take you into His own inn where the robbers will not come to wound you, and all who have barked at Him as being a Samaritan can see that He is a better Helper than all the rest. But remember now, you man wounded by robbers, that the merciful Samaritan has taken you up from the road where you lay half-dead in your blood, and remember, too, His merciful promises that when He returns He will repay the Host what He spends because of you. Return soon, merciful Samaritan. The man wounded by robbers awaits you, that he could thank and praise you because of your mercy, and because of your trouble which you have seen because of him. Amen.

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

“They have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble, they will say, Arise and save us.” Jeremiah 2:27.

Thus laments the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah. When it went well with the people of Israel, they turned their backs to the Lord, but when distress came, they said, “Arise and help us.” Here a picture of a natural person is placed before our eyes. Namely, when a natural person prospers well in this world, then he does not remember God at all. But when some

distress comes, then he becomes godly. While he is well, he prayed often to the god of the world with curses and swearing, but in distress he becomes godly and, in his mind, begins to pray to the God of heaven. So do especially the grace thieves, who after custom believe there is a God. But they who are very bold at blaspheming God, they do not pray even in distress, but only curse when some severe injury happens. Some are so hardened that they curse even on their death bed and ask the devil to come to get their carcass. If such hardened ones injure themselves greatly, then a curse is the first word which comes out of the mouth. If they fall through thin ice, then a curse is the first blessing. But surely the devil will take care of the carcass without cursing. He takes care of those also who have not prayed before, but only then when in distress they begin to pretend to holler, "Arise and help us," if they have no better foundation of salvation than only that hollering after Jesus when in distress, for the prayer of the ungodly is an abomination before God. Therefore the prophet Jeremiah writes, "They have turned their back unto me and not their face, but in the time of their trouble, they will say, Arise and save us." And it is heard especially of the grace thieves, who while they are well do not take heed of God, but when distress comes, they say, "Arise and help us." Grace thieves often become godly when death threatens and presses their unbelieving hearts. Then they begin to pray to God with beautiful prayers, and this praying can, however, be necessary and good for them and for

us all, if that fervency which comes to some on the sick bed would be continuing; but it is often seen that the devotion and the godliness which they had while in distress soon changes to light-mindedness and sorrowlessness when such people get over that distress. And of that Christianity which comes on the sick bed or when one is in distress, we can say as the children of the world say of this Christianity which has now appeared, since they cannot find any other fault, "If it would only be enduring." So we can say of that Christianity which comes to the children of the world when in distress, "If it would only be enduring, if it would last a longer time than only when death is before the eyes." But worse than that, that devotion and that godliness which often comes even to those sorrowless in their distress, does not want to be enduring. As soon as a sorrowless person gets through that tight place, the wind of the world comes and scatters their whole Christianity. When natural and bodily distress no longer is there, they are sorrowless as before. We are not speaking now of those who in distress promise the church some dollar or some quarter with that intention, that if God supposedly would now help them in this present distress, they would pay God that dollar or that quarter. But it would be better if they would first repay their neighbor for wrong doing to him, as Zaccheus, and would then take notice if there would still be something to give as a gift to the church. It lies in the nature of a sorrowless one that he wants to do good to God, although he does wrong to his neighbor. Thus a thief can

promise a silver dollar to the church if his thievery would prosper. And a whore can promise the church a dollar if God would so arrange things so no child would result from her adultery, and from that gift a peaceful conscience comes to the whore and the thief. They think that God is reconciled. With one dollar they buy for themselves not only natural good fortune, but also a good conscience. But we must now speak of those who in distress promise to make repentance. Such a promise is surely a little better than the promise of those, who in distress promise the church one dollar or a quarter, but it is worse than the promise of those, who promise to make repentance in distress or on the sick bed, their promise, I say, often wants to remain in that place where such a promise was made. Assuredly many make such promises of repentance when death scares them, but the world and the devil bring such promises to naught. Godliness and devotion cease as soon as such a person becomes busy with the world. Of such a Christianity we must say that it is certainly good and necessary, if only it would be lasting. And the children of Israel must have had such a Christianity also, since the Lord laments through the prophet Jeremiah, "They have turned their back unto me and not their face, but in the time of their trouble, they will say, Arise and help us." And the same kind of a Christianity was also had by those men who in distress stood afar off and cried out, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." They began to pray to the Saviour when distress was at hand, but when they became helped, they no

longer remembered the Saviour at all. The world became so dear to them, they no longer came back to thank the Saviour for that great grace that He had helped them. And surely our Christianity also will become such if we do not take better heed of the time of grace than before. I fear that our Christianity will end if the world becomes so dear as to those ten lepers, who did not return to thank Jesus, except one who was kept in low esteem in the world. He was a stranger in this world, and so we also must be, just pilgrims and strangers in this world as Paul writes to the Christians: "Our conversation is in heaven." But the world is cunning to rob even the hearts of those who through the great power of the Saviour are cleansed of the leprosy of sin. What does our Christianity help us, if we are Christians only when the prompter stands over and forces Christianity into us, or if we are only Christians when natural or spiritual distress forces us to cry out, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." But a Christian should always have death and eternity before his eyes; whether he be in joy or in distress, he should be so estranged from the world, and so live in this vale of sorrow and grief, as though every day was the last day. Otherwise the world will become so dear to him that he will not remember to come back from the world to thank the Saviour for those great gifts of grace, which he has received both naturally and spiritually.

Where now are those ten lepers who should show themselves to the priests, that they were cleansed? Has the world become so dear to them on

that trip that they do not understand or remember to come back anymore to thank Jesus for His great gifts of grace? Jesus awaits you, you cleansed souls, and asks, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

Come back from the world, you cleansed ones, you graced ones, who have once stood afar off and cried out, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." Come back to thank and praise that great Crossbearer who always awaits you, and longs for your souls which have become fastened to the world. Follow the Samaritan, who is a stranger in the world, and bow your knees before the feet of the Lord Jesus, as did this poor stranger, despised by the world. He bowed his knees and fell on his face before His feet and glorified God with a loud voice; not being ashamed before the world that he was cleansed through Jesus' grace, he dared to cry out to the world that he was cleansed. But those nine, who did not return to thank Jesus, where are they? They must still be fastened to the world. They nevertheless do not care to cry out to the world that they were cleansed through the power of Jesus. Come therefore, you only stranger; come, you Samaritan, blasphemed and despised by the world, come to thank your Creator and Saviour! Although the other cleansed ones would go into the world, you come, you poorest of all Christian, and praise God with a loud voice saying, Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 17: 11-19.

Since now there were ten cleansed and all these have showed themselves to the priests, so we must through God's grace and in accordance with our holy gospel, consider: Where are the nine, since only one stranger, one Samaritan, has returned to thank the Saviour for His great gifts of grace? But first we must separate those who have never been cleansed, for although then only ten lepers came to Jesus to cry out, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us," surely there were several and many hundred who did not come at all to Jesus to pray and beg for help. This matter the Saviour Himself has explained when He once said to that congregation which was in the synagogue in the city of Nazareth, that many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, but none were cleansed, saving Naaman, the Syrian, who was a stranger. So even now there must be many of those lepers in the congregation of Nazareth who will never become cleansed, although they are full of the leprosy of sin. It was the Saviour's intention, that the Nazareth congregation was still full of the leprosy of sin although they thought that all were cleansed. And certainly the Nazarenes well understood that the Saviour was reproaching them, when He took such parables from the Scriptures. They all were filled with wrath toward Him and drove Him out of the synagogue, and led Him to the brow of the hill upon which their city was built, and began to cast Him over the cliff, but He tore Himself loose from their hands and went away. No

doubt, the men of Nazareth thought that the Son of Joseph did not need to come to reproach them with such parables, which He took from the Scriptures. The respectable men of Nazareth were old Christians. Why did the son of Joseph have to come to reproach them that they were not cleansed? And certainly they had a good ear to hear and a good mind to understand that the son of Joseph was barking at them when He said, "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed saving only one Naaman the Syrian." One pagan, who did not even belong to the congregation of Israel; is such a pagan now brought forth, who did not even hear but through news that there was one prophet in Israel who can cure the disease of leprosy. Certainly the men of Nazareth had good ears to hear that they were reproached with such a parable which was taken from the Scriptures.

But it is unknown if the old Christians of this congregation have such good ears to hear how they are reproached with the same kind of a parable, which the Saviour brought forth to the congregation of Nazareth, namely this old reminder which is in the Scriptures and has truly happened, that in the time of Eliseus the prophet there were many lepers in Israel, but none others were cleansed except only Naaman the Syrian, who was a pagan. Do you follow now that no others were cleansed than only this one stranger? So the men of Nazareth understood this matter, that they were reproached with such a reminder, and for that reason the old Adam arose in them, "Is that so, were

there not any others cleansed than only this one pagan? Are then all other lepers not cleansed?" So the men of Nazareth understood this parable of the Saviour, and other baptized pagans should also understand that all the other leprous men and women are not cleansed, except only those ten who stood afar off and cried out, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon us." Although even then, or in the Saviour's time, there were many of those lepers, however there were no others cleansed except only those who stood afar off and cried out, for they then felt that they were not worthy to come near the Saviour. They felt that the disease of leprosy had made them unfortunate. But others have not felt that; the disease of leprosy does not trouble those who are asleep. The disease of leprosy is a contagious disease, which goes down to the children like an inherited sin, and a person who has contacted such a disease must flee far away from the company of such people who are cleansed. The Saviour said to the disciples, "Ye are clean but not all," from which follows that all are not cleansed. But they who are not cleansed, they do not want to confess it, for they think that since the Saviour has washed the feet of all, then all are the same kind of Christians. But Judas still has one place uncleansed, and that place must be almost black and awful although it is hidden from his eyes. We say therefore as Jesus said to the congregation of Nazareth, that as in the time of Eliseus there were many lepers in Israel, although no others were cleansed except the heathenish man Naaman, so even now there

are many, and many full of leprosy; but truly there were no others cleansed than only ten who have cried out in distress, and these ten have certainly showed themselves to the priest, as the Lord has commanded them to do. But as it stands in today's gospel, they have now become fastened to the world and have not remembered to return to thank the Saviour for His great gifts of grace, except this stranger who is the poorest of all. Have the nine not been with him in the time of penitence or when they all cried out, "Jesus, Thou Son of David have mercy on us," And not only in the time of penitence, but even before they have drunk together and cursed in the same company. For although the Samaritan has always been in low esteem, and has not been invited to Christenings, or to weddings and funeral feasts, nevertheless he has been good enough for a drinking companion to the drunkards when people began to brew liquor. He has also been acceptable to the whores for a whoring companion, although he was poor and despised otherwise. But now since he has become cleansed, he is no longer suitable for a companion to the lords of the world, nor to the drunkards or to the whores, for he has become an abomination to all of them. But it is still more remarkable that the companions in penitence and distress will probably leave him, so it appears nevertheless in today's gospel, that ten were cleansed but nine have not returned to thank the Saviour, but only one stranger who is the poorest of all. Where do you think they have strayed? Have they fainted on the road, or have they become lost,

that they do not know the way back? I think that their hearts have become fastened to the world and therefore they are missing.

"That I have expected," now says an old Christian who has never had leprosy. What have you expected? Have you expected this, that those nine who have once been in distress and cried out, "Jesus, Son of David," must return to the world? No doubt you have anticipated that, that all would become the same kind as you are. You have prayed to God that all of these who were cleansed would become leprous again, and that they would begin to drink, curse, fight, commit adultery and steal. That, you old Christian and good pharisee, have hoped and prayed for, that they would become like the devil as you are, and that you could rejoice over the fall of a Christian. But they are not yet exactly at that point that they will begin to drink with you, to curse and to fight. If they have forgotten to come back to thank the Saviour, they can still keep in memory that blessed time when they were cleansed, and can once again remember the grace of the Saviour when the world becomes bitter.

Now when we have separated those who have never become cleansed, then we must observe those who have become cleansed of their leprosy. The Saviour longs for them and asks, "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?" Have their hearts become fastened to the world since they have not come back to thank Jesus? The Saviour told them to go and show themselves to the priest, and no doubt they have done that, but where are their

hearts now, since they do not come back to thank Jesus for His great gifts of grace? Has the priest told them to go into the world? Has He told them, "You do not need to go to Jesus to thank Him"? I do not believe that the priest would have told them to do so, but I think that the world became dear to them, and since they also received that testimony from the priest that they were cleansed, they thought, "Since we are once cleansed, we have no more distress, we do not have to go such a long distance to thank Jesus. Great trouble will come to us from that; we have much work at home which has been left undone during the time of leprosy, we do not have time to return to Jesus." Not one can bypass this place in the Scriptures, who after being cleansed has become fastened to the world; only that stranger, who immediately after his cleansing came back to thank Jesus, has gone past it. And therefore the Saviour said, "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?" They are probably fastened to the world.

What should we do now, since the matter is such that the cleansed souls do not come back to thank Jesus? Is it not the best counsel that we first confess that this place in the Scriptures is written for a reminder and warning to all those, who have been cleansed through the power of Jesus, that they would avoid the unthankfulness of the nine and would follow the example of the Samaritan, and would turn back from the world and begin with better fervency to thank Jesus for that great grace, that He through His word has

cleansed them from their leprosy. Otherwise the enemy will bring them so far into the world, that they will not be able to come back. Hear, you cleansed souls! Jesus longs for you and asks so that all the people hear, "Were there not ten cleansed, where are the nine?" Do you keep Jesus' grace so cheap that because of love of the world you are not able to return to thank Him? You certainly will not bypass this place of the Scriptures; it is written just against you, for it portrays before our eyes how unthankful those nine cleansed ones are.

Must our Lord always long for those cleansed nine? Must He always be in sorrow because of them? Must His work always be in vain? I hope that those few souls, who have once been cleansed, would come back with the stranger and fall at the feet of the Saviour and thank Him with a loud voice, so that the enemy could not sift them and on Judgement Day accuse them that the cleansed souls are so unthankful that, of ten, only one stranger came back to thank the Saviour for His great gifts of grace. Let us confess that we have been unthankful. God has now given such great grace and blessing both in behalf of body and spirit, that it is apparent that He wants to draw us to Himself with His goodness. But unthankfulness is so great that not many have time to come to church to thank God for their health and for the natural living, which He has allowed to grow abundantly on the earth, and for the peace which God has also granted to all thus far. No one is persecuted because of his faith, as the first Christians were hated and persecuted because of Chris-

tianity. Those few souls who are cleansed, they must be so half-hearted and cold that they are not worthy to suffer anything for Jesus' name sake. They are so unthankful toward the Saviour that they do not remember at all through whose power they are cleansed. They have peace in the world, since love of the world is so great that they no longer remember to come back to thank Jesus for His great gifts of grace. Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine? No others are found who returned to glorify their God except one stranger.

You hear now, you cleansed souls, that the Saviour longs for you and asks, "Where are the nine?" You probably will now say, "We have no time; we have lost so much necessary work during the time of our awakening, which we must now accomplish. Therefore there is not as good a chance to come to church as before." But Jesus, however, longs for you, you nine cleansed ones! Where are you? Have you already gone into the world and so far that you no longer remember from what distress and from what destruction Jesus rescued you with His word? Who knows where you will find Him when you need Him again. Then Jesus may be so far away that the eye will no longer see nor the ear hear. Because of your unthankfulness Jesus will go so far away that He will no longer hear your cries; He will go to that place where He is better received.

Certainly ten have been cleansed even in this congregation, but where are the nine? They have gone into the world, they have forgotten Jesus' good

works. Woe unto you, you nine cleansed ones, who went so far into the world that you did not come back to thank Jesus. Now no others have come back to thank Jesus except one stranger, who is despised by the world and of low esteem. Were there not ten cleansed but where are the nine? They have gone their way, they have gone so far into the world that the eye no longer sees, nor does the ear hear where they are. Who knows if they will come to see Jesus any more before the last day, when the judgement falls upon them: "Depart from me, ye cursed." And thus will be heard the judgement of those who were cleansed and did not return to thank Jesus: "If a righteous man ceases from his righteousness and does those former abominable works, then the former righteousness is to no avail, but he must go to be with those who howl and lament in outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Amen.

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33

Our precious Saviour teaches us with these words which are found written in today's gospel, that we must first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these things shall be given. We know that with the kingdom of God is understood first the kingdom of grace or true and living Christianity,

as the Saviour has established it, and which was spread by His disciples through the preaching of the gospel, and explained more broadly in the holy Scriptures. This kingdom of heaven, of which the Saviour speaks so often, should be found in a person's own heart if he has become a Christian and a child of God. So testifies the Saviour Himself, when He says to the Jews, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17: 20, 21

If now the kingdom of God is within us, then we should strive after this, that the kingdom of God would come into our heart, that we would come to feel the power of the kingdom of God in our hearts, which is to be the temple of God and God's dwelling place. And how else could this come into our hearts, if not in that way, that we strive after it, that we first become Christians and children of God, so the kingdom of God would come to us and we would become a partaker of the greatest power and honor of the kingdom of God. When now the Saviour tells His disciples to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, it signifies that they must strive after Christianity, or be diligent to beg, to hasten, to strive, to cry out and to knock upon the door of heaven, and to pray to God that he, through true penitence, repentance, and living faith, could receive his sins forgiven, would become a partaker of God's grace, and thus would find the kingdom of God in his own heart. To whom, now, that kind of a change of heart and mind

happens, or who first strives after Christianity and becomes a Christian, to him is given all these natural possessions; he becomes rich through Christianity. But a natural person does not believe that he will become rich through Christianity, but he thinks that a person becomes poor through Christianity. Natural intellect says thus, "Whosoever is zealous after the world, he should become rich, but he who does not look out for himself, he will become poor. Whosoever is covetous in gathering the substance of the world, he will become rich, but he who gives away his own, he will become poor. Whosoever works diligently will become rich, but he who does not work, he will become poor." Therefore the natural person concludes that he will become poor if he should begin to be delirious in this way like these pietists. The enemy has painted such apparitions before the eyes of the slave of the world that he believes all the lies which are carried along the road by the sorrowless. If one word is spoken to the slave of the world, to that is added ten more lies before it has gone a league (6¼ miles), and every lie of a slave of the devil others believe, as Paul testifies that the god of the world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, so they must believe lies. Therefore if one word is spoken to the whiskey merchant, to cease from that ungodly whiskey business and become penitent and make repentance, then he says, "If I quit my whiskey business I will immediately become poor." That is always the first word from the mouth of the whiskey merchant when he is asked to make repen-

tance. "I will become poor if I must quit my whiskey business." But the whiskey merchant does not count how much goes into his own mouth and how much the devil of honor takes of what the devil of greed has gathered with crooked whiskey business. If it is said to the drunkard, "Cease from drinking that flowing devil's dung and become penitent and make repentance," then he answers, "Is liquor not God's blessing; is that what you call . devil's dung?" Not even the drunkard believes that he becomes poor through drinking, but through the Christianity he would immediately become poor. If it were said to a meek whore, "Cast away your finery and become penitent and make repentance," then she will soon show her pass, with which she can travel freely in the kingdom of the whores, and says to her advisor, "Look at your ass, I have earned my finery respectably, I have certainly not stolen it." She speaks of having respectably earned it, although she had earned it by adultery, for the meek whore does not believe that she will become poor through adultery. If it is said to the slave of the world, who is so zealous after the world and working greedily that he does not have peace during the day nor rest at night — if it is said to him, "Become penitent, you slave of the world, and do not kill yourself with endless sorrow," then he answers, "Must we cease from doing work and lie idle as the pietists?" The devil has given the slaves of the world that faith that the Christians do not work but lie idle and eat what belongs to others. Therefore the Saviour becomes a liar since He has said, "Seek ye first the

kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." It signifies that a person becomes rich through Christianity. But the slave of the world thinks that he will become poor if he begins to be delirious as these pietists are delirious. Namely, the slave of the world does not remember how much work has been neglected in dances, weddings, taverns, and many foolish trips which would not have been done if the prince of the world had not reversed their eyes. In that place where he thought he would best gain goods of the world, in that place he just came into misfortune. So the slave of the world has figured wrongly, that which he thought was coming to him for gain, that came to him for misfortune. What he thought was coming to him for honor, it came to him for shame. As for example, the drunkard and the whiskey merchant when they must pay a fine, and the meek whore when she has a bastard child. What the devil of greed brought in, that the devil of honor took away; whatever finery increased the honor, that adultery destroyed. So all has gone backward from what old Adam has contemplated.

Now since the eyes of some have been opened through this Christianity which now has appeared, many can see how foolishly old Adam has figured: it has gone just the opposite from what he has thought in sorrowlessness. Oh! If from now on the people would begin to become wiser! If the words of the Saviour would be rightly understood, then all these natural possessions will be given to those who first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Through Christianity a person must become rich, no matter how the natural intellect opposes. But as the natural goods do not come without seeking, so also the kingdom of heaven does not come without seeking, and therefore the Saviour has said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these others will be added unto you." Oh, if all the poor pagans would begin to seek the kingdom of heaven, so that they would become rich and gather all kinds of spiritual goods, which rust nor moth corrupteth nor thieves break in and steal. All poor and beggars who want to become rich begin now to seek imperishable goods, not from the bosom of the earth, where the earthlings dig for themselves perishable goods where they think they will find a treasure trove, but when it is beheld in the daylight it is only a charcoal pit. But you must seek from above the imperishable goods which neither rust nor moth corrupt, nor thieves break in and steal. And those few souls who have found those imperishable goods, pray the great Crossbearer that He would protect their most precious goods so that the great thief of the world would not be able to steal them. May that exorbitantly rich man hear the sigh of the poor, miserable, beggarly, and down-pressed ones. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 6: 24-34

In today's gospel the Saviour warns His disciples of that ageless sorrow of natural livelihood. He tells them to take an example of the birds of heaven, who neither sow nor reap, and of the lilies of

the field who do not spin and are nevertheless more beautiful than Solomon, the great lord. In accordance with these teachings we must, at this time, through God's grace observe: The birds of heaven and the lilies of the field.

The First Consideration: The birds of heaven, who feeds them in the time of frost?

The Second Consideration: The lilies of the field, from where do they receive their beauty? May the great Creator give His grace, that the birds of heaven would always be able to twitter to the lone traveler, when he longingly travels from the heathen land to the new Jerusalem, and that a weary traveler would find some flowers of eternity when he sometimes travels on the verdant meadow. These flowers of eternity will be planted upon his grave.

The First Consideration; Of the birds of heaven: Who feeds them in the cold weather? The Saviour has said, "They neither sow nor reap." They must be lazy about working, since they do not sow, but whosoever begins to consider their nature, he soon notices that the birds of heaven are not lazy, as the crows and magpies imagine. Surely they do not sow or reap, but they nevertheless are in unceasing work, as we see how the swallow, with especial diligence, gathers from the earth and heaven all kinds of building material and substance of livelihood. From the earth they find all kinds of building materials from which they build their nest. And it is one example which we must take from these birds of heaven, as for example the swallows and nightingales, that they live in matrimony two and

two, always in pairs. They are not like the crows and magpies who gather at mating time and again scatter. But the swallows live in matrimony and raise their young together, so also the nighthungales and other chickadees always live in matrimony and take care of their young. Therefore from where have the magpies, crows, and other beasts of the forest learned such a trick that they live mixed up like animals? The crows and magpies certainly do not live in matrimony as the chickadees, swallows and water fowl. But the magpies and forest devils are quite the whores, and such are also the crows and magpies which here laugh around the church.

Another example of the birds of heaven that we must take notice of is that the swallows do not lay their eggs until the nest is finished. Who then taught the cuckoo to place its eggs in the chickadee's nest, a great trouble for those chickadees who are left to incubate the cuckoo's eggs and bring up its young. The cuckoo certainly does not care for its young, nor does it take care of them, but lays its eggs stealthily in the chickadee's nest and leaves its eggs there. Is it any wonder that the young of the cuckoo starve their foster mother, for the young of the cuckoo have such a big stomach that the foster mother can in no wise feed them. She herself must starve since the young of the cuckoo swallows all the food substance which the foster mother brings to the nest. And what do the young of the cuckoo do when they grow bigger? They leave their foster mother to die. Such is that unthankful cuckoo; it is almost like the dragon which lays its eggs in the sand

and leaves the eggs there. There are also the same kind of two-legged creatures here, who lay their eggs before the nest is ready; do the swallows and chickadees do so? They are not swallows, they are not chickadees, who lay their eggs before the nest is ready. They must be some owl who lays its eggs before the nest is ready, or else some unthankful or shameless cuckoo, who does not have time to build itself a nest: she cannot take time from cuckooing and eating, she does not have time to incubate the eggs, but lays them in the chickadee's nest. No doubt there are also some dragon-like creatures here, who lay their eggs in the sand and leave them there I think that from the dragon's eggs young of the dragon will come forth, which will eat the chickadees, and such terrible creatures lie now in the sunshine and pierce those who go by with their sharp tongue and bite with poisonous teeth, and no one kills them.

But now we must speak of those birds of heaven which live in matrimony and do not lay eggs until the nest is ready. Where do the young of the swallow get food and how do they live since they do not sow or reap? Our Saviour has commanded to take an example of the birds of heaven: who will feed them when all the food is gone on the earth? That great Creator who has given them life will take care of them so that not one dies of hunger, and also to the young of the raven He gives food at the acceptable time. Have the young of the raven merited food, who do not thank their Creator for the light, as the chickadees which twitter in the morning as

soon as the sun rises, with a clear voice singing a hymn of thanks to that great Creator for the first ray of light which awakens them in the nest. So do the swallows also, but the young of the raven let out a terrible sound when some sheep or other animal is killed by the wolf. Then the young of the raven are happy, in that hope that they, too, can eat the carcass along with the wolf. Have such terrible birds merited food, as the young of the raven and the owls, which love the darkness and hate the light? The owls do not dare to move about much in the daytime, but in the time of darkness, then they are on the move. Their eyes cannot stand the light although they have large eyes in the skull. Do you think the owl is a beautiful bird, which twists its neck and looks backwards? Nevertheless, even to this night bird is given its allotted share.

The owls are not all gone yet, although they have tried to get rid of them. But the swallows have not built their nests around the church, but farther away, and in other villages they have built their nests. Nor do I know what could be the reason that the swallows are not seen here around the church, but only crows and magpies. And here they caw every day as if they were in need of food, and if some chickadee were in their company, its voice could not be heard because of the cawing of the crows.

Now you chickadees and nightingales, swallows and other small birds, wherever you are, you must soon leave and go to another world; for that reason you have no worry as to how you will be sustained during cold weather when

all food is gone on the earth. You no doubt know that this time of grace is so short that you do not have such a long time before you will be able to move to a warmer climate, which is on the other side of the earth. As soon as the young of the swallow can fly, they will get away from this cold climate to the other world. Therefore they are without worry as to how they will be sustained, for they know that the great Creator, who has given them life, will feed them with the seeds which fall from the field which the Lord has allowed to grow. From those seeds the chickadees get their sustenance for that short time that they are remaining here.

But the crows and magpies, how will they be sustained when this short and unpredictable time ends? They do not eat those seeds which fall from the field, but they eat only worms which are in the manure, or they are another kind of a bird, and even blacker than these crows, of which the Saviour has said that the birds of heaven ate that portion of seeds which fell by the wayside. So I believe that distress will finally come to the crows and magpies when winter comes. Then the chickadees will be far away, on the other side of the earth where the sun stands overhead, and there is the tree of life which does not shed its luxurious growth of leaves, and manna which came down from heaven. There the chickadees and swallows and nightingales will sing the new song to that great creator, who has given them life and feeds them so abundantly without their sowing and without reaping.

Behold the birds of heaven, you of little faith and of weak faith; take heed of the birds of heaven, and take an example of them, how the Lord feeds them although they do not sow or reap. You, too, beg for the blessing of the Lord, then you will receive, you doubting and unbelieving ones.

The Second Consideration; The Saviour says to the disciples, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." But a grown person, whose heart is very attached to the world, does not look upon the flowers; he does not take an example for himself from them and think if he, too, was so beautiful as these despised flowers, but he only tramples And dungs on them. No matter how attractive and beautiful the flowers of the field would be, the slave of the world does not care for them. But if a meek whore comes into a boutique where the merchant of the world has spread out the silk kerchiefs and other finery, then the eyes certainly turn in the skull like an owl. The lust of the eye becomes so great that if she does not get one of these silk kerchiefs by stealing, she must begin to buy one; even if it is her last quarter, she will spend it. She no doubt thinks, "What shall I do with money?" But it does not come to mind, that what shall I do with finery. However, many a meek whore has had to sell her finery at half price when the bowels begin to be empty, although the natural intellect should say that much to them, that the money which is spent on finery in the youth would be more necessary for the children, since they go around naked, nor is there food to put into the mouth.

But the devil also confuses the natural intellect through the lust of the flesh, and makes a person so blind that he looks with the desire of the eye upon those flowers which the master of tricks has painted upon silk kerchiefs and calico rags. But he does not look at all upon those flowers which the Saviour has said to look upon, that they could take some example for themselves, if they too could become as beautiful and lovely as these despised flowers, who cry every morning over sinners and pity them because of that nakedness which came upon them through the fall into sin, when they lost their beautiful clothes of innocence, and had to cover their shame with finery which they themselves made. Do you see, you grown person, how the innocent children, who do not understand to long for that outward finery, admire beautiful flowers when they find them in the meadow. From them they make crowns for themselves and keep them as something. They understand to behold the beauty of flowers better than a grown person. And where does this come from that a child looks on the flowers with a good will, but a grown person does not care about them anymore than an ox or a calf? It comes from this, that a grown person's heart is fastened to the world. He does not keep God's created flowers to be beautiful, but those he keeps to be beautiful which the devil of adultery has taught the world's master of tricks to paint, promoting finery.

The Saviour has said that the beautiful lord Solomon was not as beautiful as the flowers which grow in the field. Therefore, behold the flowers of the

field, you children of the world, and take an example of them, how beautiful they are and lovely; they toil not neither do they spin. However if you would become as beautiful as one flower of the field, you would be acceptable for a bride for the Saviour. Go to seek the beautiful and lovely flowers in the valley of Sharon, in that garden where the Saviour sweat blood. Perhaps you will find some flowers of eternity there, which do not shed their petals nor change their color, upon which the blood of the Saviour has dripped. This blood has pressed some flowers in the valley of Sharon and made them like roses, which grow among the thorns. The thorn is a sharp bush with which the Saviour was crowned; in it are the sharp branches and needles which pierced innumerable wounds in the head of Jesus. But in the same thorny bush the most beautiful red roses grow, and those roses the daughters of Zion now seek from among the thorns, since the thorns have been acceptable to the Saviour for a crown, which now has changed to a crown of glory, then the flower of the thorn should be suitable for the bride of the Saviour for adornment on her day of glory. The thorns have pierced innumerable wounds into the head of Jesus, from which the red blood has flowed, and from that blood the flowers of the thorn have become red and beautiful roses. Seek therefore, those roses in the garden, you daughters of Zion, who always want to be beautiful, and behold those flowers which have grown from the thorn, for they are the most beautiful flowers on the earth. Are you, daughters of Zion, as beautiful as these

flowers? If you were as red as these thorn roses, then you would certainly be acceptable for a bride for the Saviour, that thorn-crowned King. Seek yet those flowers of eternity which never change their color. Then you have fulfilled the command of the Saviour, when He says, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not neither do they spin, but Solomon, that great lord, in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Prepare now, you daughters of Zion, that you would become as beautiful and as lovely as one of these flowers. Then you would be acceptable for a bride for that thorn-crowned King, who bears the crown of glory. And His bride has a thorn rose on her breast on her day of glory, which will soon come. Amen.

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

"Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Romans 5:12

We hear from Paul's epistle why death has come into the world, from which can also be surmised that if sin had not come into the world, Adam's children would have reached heaven without death. Now all sorrowless people fear death, but this fear of death does not come upon them before death itself presses their breasts. If they feared death more, without a doubt they would begin to make repentance. As

the fear of death is the first sign of awakening, then the fear of death should come to the sorrowless when they are in the best strength, so that they would attain penitence and make repentance before death comes. But this fear of death is far from the sorrowless when they are busy with the world. They do not have time then to think about death and eternity, they have much to do with the world. Only then do they begin to fear death when they feel that it does not help to resist death, and then they must say, "It is not for me." Some, say I, must then condemn themselves to hell and say, "Penitence is now too late." They busy themselves with the world so much and so long that the matter which should have happened first is left to the last. The sorrowless postpone their repentance from day to day and from year to year. They love the world so much that they cannot leave it before death comes and cuts the lifecord. And thus they postpone that matter to the last which they should have done first. They no doubt think that there is not so much urgency with the matter; death will not come immediately. No doubt I will be able to make repentance when death comes. Thus think those, no doubt, who feel that they are not exactly ready to die. Some confessors of dead faith, who have confirmed their consciences with that dead faith, think that they are already prepared to die, but finally when death comes, only then do they begin to doubt of their salvation. This is a sure characteristic of dead faith, that it leaves a person doubting of his salvation when all doubts should end. We know

that living faith becomes always stronger, the closer a person comes to eternity. But dead faith, which is seemingly firm when death is not near, becomes weaker when death comes nearer, and finally such faith ends entirely, when contrarily living faith becomes so strong in death that a Christian can die with joy. What do the confessors of dead faith say to that, when death tries their faith so that they are left completely naked? All that stolen grace with which they acted manfully is stripped away, death robs them of their faith, there is no longer refuge in anything. Do not allow them to rob you of your faith, grace thief! Hide the stolen substance well so that the prosecuting attorney will not find it. Put that grace which you have stolen in the cellar so that death does not find it. Say to the Christians when they come to question and examine you, "I know that God is merciful. I trust upon the Saviour's grace, I believe that all sins are forgiven." — But death will come and rob you of your faith, grace thief! You have not received grace, but you have taken it for your own. Without true penitence you have begun to steal grace. Therefore death robs you of your faith and takes away that grace which you have stolen with your own permission. We have so many examples of the death of true Christians and of the death of grace thieves, that we need not be in ignorance of how grace thieves go to eternity with doubts, when death robs them of their faith and takes away their stolen grace, so they must go to eternity empty and naked. On the contrary, living faith gives a Christian boldness

and joy in death so that their faith becomes always stronger the closer death comes, neither is death able to rob them of their faith although it yet tries! But death does not dare to rob them of their faith for they are assured of that, that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor height, nor powers, nor principalities can separate them from that love which is in Christ Jesus.

We must today consider how the Lord of life and death awakens from the dead those dead who die as youth in sin and sorrowlessness, and through that spiritual death cause their parents sorrow and bitterness of mind. So many times before we have spoken of that natural death, and fear of death has not come to sorrowless thereby. Therefore we must now speak of spiritual death so that fear of death would better come to the sorrowless when they hear where spiritual death has received its beginning, and what this death effects in eternity, from which may that merciful Lord Jesus protect all mortals so that they would not die eternally before Jesus meets them with the power of His grace. Hear, you heavenly Parent, the prayer of all sorrowful and weeping ones before earth is thrown upon the body. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 7:11-17

In today's holy gospel it is given for us to know that Jesus awakened a youth from the dead, who was his mother's only son. This matter gives us an opportunity to speak of our mortality, first considering that spiritual death and showing how Jesus awakens

the youth before earth is thrown upon the body. The First Consideration: Why had this youth died young? The Second Consideration: Why did the pallbearers stop when Jesus laid His hand on the bier. The Third Consideration: Why did the youth sit up and begin to speak when Jesus said, "Young man, arise!" We hope and pray that all youth can hear the Lord's voice before they die eternally since the old carcasses, which have lain dead since childhood, will not arise again before earth is thrown upon the body.

The First Consideration: Why had this youth died young? Lamentably, spiritual death falls upon not only old carcasses, but also on young ones who do not understand to watch out for their lives. Namely when sin or that spiritual sickness, which all children have contracted from their parents, begins to trouble them, they die very suddenly, and although medication is given to them both in confirmation school and in the Lord's Supper, the enemy takes them and gives them sleeping potion, through which the Word of God and other spiritual medications become powerless. The Word of God and the Lord's Supper are used wrongly. From the Word of God this youth takes for himself substance for sorrowlessness, when he mixes that with natural inclinations and thinks that he is already a perfect Christian when he reads that much that he is confirmed. Many a youth also becomes angry with the teacher who will not confirm him with less study. When a youth goes to the Lord's supper for the first time, he also takes for himself substance of death

from there, believing of himself that he is a complete Christian, since according to the esteem of the world he is a full man. Many a youth, therefore, goes to the Lord's Supper like Judas to whom the Lord gave the dipped sop, and after that dipped sop the devil entered into him. After that dipped sop, just then do they become very bold to be busy with the world; after that dipped sop he begins to drink liquor and to conduct business, to curse, to fight, to steal, to carry finery and to run after whores. Before, when he was still not confirmed, the people of the world said, "He is under age, he has not become an adult yet." But after the first time at the Lord's Supper, the people of the world say, "He has now become an adult, he is now suitable for a witness", and from this saying of the world the youth has taken that faith for himself that he is a Christian, since he has been allowed the Lord's Supper. What is the trouble now? When the youth by going to the Lord's Supper became a Christian, he began after that dipped sop to live boldly in the world. He cast the book under the bench; in its place he bought himself a pipe, a liquor flask, a broadcloth coat and cards. When Sunday came, he put on the broadcloth clothes and silk kerchief, washed himself clean on the outside though the heart remained unwashed, went to the village together with more of the same kind as himself, and began drinking liquor, playing cards and trying to act like a man, so that others too would see what a man he is who can drink, curse, and fight and play with whores. He did not think of that, that such a life is just the kind

of life of the devil, which before the altar he promised to cease from, but he believed more upon the world which called him an adult person. From that he took assurance for himself that he is a complete Christian, and after the dipped sop the devil entered into him. He became much more bold than before to blaspheme God through his ungodly life. If his parents said some word of warning to him of that cursing, card-playing or fighting, he gave show-off words in answer, told them to shut their mouths. He did not account himself responsible to listen to his parents any more, since he had become an adult person. And the blind parents did not even stop him from that whiskey business, for they thought that the child must earn something for himself since there was no other means of livelihood. — Look, such a life has been here formerly, and the same kind of a life is even now in all these congregations, where both the young and the old lie dead. They take substance for their sorrowless life from the Word of God and from the Lord's Supper, and live in that faith that they are Christians although their life is just a heathenish life. Not one of them doubts of his salvation or thinks that much that sorrow will come after such a life. We have by this life depicted that spiritual death. It is, namely, known to all that the body bears the form of a living person: face, form, eyes, ears and all other members are like a living person usually is, nor is there any other difference between a living and a dead person except that a living person has life but a dead body does not have life. A living person's

heart moves, but the heart of a dead body does not move; the living person has his eyes open, but the dead body does not; the living person speaks, but the dead body is mute; the living person hears God's Word, but the dead do not hear. Such now was the youth who was carried out dead. If Jesus had not succeeded in coming before the body was covered with earth, this body would certainly have decayed in the bosom of the earth and no one would have cared about him.

The Second Consideration: Why did the pallbearers stop when Jesus touched the bier? The pallbearers are in a spiritual sense those natural lusts and desires which bring that dead person to the grave. Namely, not one dead person is in his own control; the natural inclinations, lusts of the flesh, are those devil's angels which take him out into the world and force him to do such deeds. A natural person is not able, any more than a dead body, to move itself to some good thing, but the lusts and desires of the flesh take him here and there, sometimes into drinking, sometimes into greed, sometimes into adultery, sometimes into stealing, sometimes into fighting. A natural person cannot be without drinking when the lust of the flesh forces him; he cannot be without cursing when anger urges him to curse; he cannot be without stealing when the desire to steal is kindled. How can he avoid such deeds, since he is entirely under the control of the devil? He must do what his master commands. As a dead one who is carried where the pallbearers bring him, so also the natural person is taken by lusts and desires

into the world,— and where do these pallbearers take him? Certainly not into life, but directly into hell they will take him.

But when Jesus comes and touches the bier, then the pallbearers stop. Every awakened person knows how his life was before, when he lay dead on the bier, and what kind his life has become afterward. Namely, when Jesus with the power of His grace touched the bier, the pallbearers had to stop, not for that reason that these pallbearers would not have carried his body into the grave if no hindrance had come, but they were frightened when Jesus touched the bier. With His hand Jesus began to press on the bier, and it was so heavy that the pallbearers became powerless. That Jesus touched the bier, in a spiritual sense signified that the Saviour with the power of His Word presses the soul of the spiritually dead person through sorrow and grief. And from that spiritual sorrow, the soul of the person becomes so heavy that the pallbearers, those evil lusts and desires which live in a person's flesh, are no longer able to carry this person's soul into the grave, or into hell. For surely these pallbearers wanted to bring this spiritually dead person into the grave, but Jesus presses on the bier with His hand so hard that the pallbearers are not able to move him. Through this pressing a person's soul becomes so heavy that the natural inclinations, fleshly lusts and desires are no longer able to move him in that direction where they were taking him, namely to hell. Then when Jesus began to press the person's soul with His hand, or with the power of His

Word, the pallbearers, or the lusts and desires of the flesh, became so powerless that they were no longer able to take him into drinking, or into cursing. The lusts and desires of the flesh lost their power through this pressing, namely by that sorrow and grief which came from this pressing of the Saviour. He whose eyes are open can certainly understand how and when the Saviour began to press him. However, David lamented that the hand of the Lord was heavy upon him. Nevertheless, this carcass cannot move yet, although the hand of the Lord presses him. It is only that much that the pallbearers, or lusts and desires of the flesh, which were taking him into destruction, are no longer able to bring him there, where they had intended.

The Third Consideration: Why did the body begin to speak when Jesus cried out, "Young man, arise!"?

We well know that a spiritually dead corpse cannot speak at all. Only that slime of dead faith which drips from his mouth is taken by the sorcerer into a vessel, mixed with dragon's blood, and given with liquor to the youth so that through this sorcery he probably will be persuaded into fleshly love. But as soon as Jesus cries out, "Young man, arise!", this spiritually dead body rises up and begins to speak. It is not mentioned in the gospel what this young man said when he was awakened from the dead, but we only surmise that he spoke of that grace of the Saviour through which he had received the spirit, although he had lain dead for a long time. Of the Saviour's great power and grace, all youth speak

who have been awakened from spiritual death through this great power. But they, who lie in spiritual death are mute. And how can the dead speak before Jesus gives them life? That also is in our gospel, that fear came to all when they saw the dead youth become awakened and heard him speak of the Saviour's grace. The same kind of fear comes even now to some when they hear youth who have been awakened speaking of the great effects of the Saviour's grace. They become dumbfounded and wonder, "What delirium could this now be?" But all of those who have seen with their eyes that great change which has happened in this youth who was awakened; how he, who before this time lay dead and knew nothing about this spiritual atmosphere, was also deaf and mute in this spiritual death, nor could he speak anything of those matters which pertain to Christianity, has now been awakened from the dead through the power of the Savior, sits up and speaks of the grace of God. This youth, who the pallbearers or the deathly destructive lusts and desires were bringing into the bottomless grave, now follows his parent home. That sorrowing parent, who became very sorrowful because of her son's death, can now rejoice over the awakening from the dead and the spiritual life of her only son. From this also comes a great fear to all those who have with their eyes seen the dead youth awakened, and joy comes to all those who have wept because of the death of this youth. But the pallbearers received nothing for their trouble when their intentions came to naught. They were not

able to carry this body into the grave when Jesus touched the bier; they were not able to take his soul to hell when Jesus awakened him. The pallbearers received nothing for their trouble, although they had intended to carry this youth into that grave from which no one can escape. They must now look at that youth with shame, and who knows, they even look askance upon him who became alive in this way.

You youth! Arise from spiritual death! You have died young through sin, and through that spiritual death you have caused your parents sorrow and bitterness of mind, although those parents who themselves have long since died cannot weep over your death. But those parents, who themselves are alive, they pity their misfortune since they have to become so unfortunate that they must lose their children through spiritual death into hell, from which there is no hope that they will arise. Many a parent must weep and cry out as David, when he heard that his son Absalom had died in his sorrowlessness, then he wept and cried out, "Oh my son Absalom, would that I had died for thee!" And who is that Christian parent who does not cry out as David when they also must suffer even that severe misfortune, that their children die in sorrowlessness, through which the parent loses all hope that he could see his child in the kingdom of heaven. Not one parent is so hard and so hardened that he would wish that his child would become unfortunate in time and in eternity, but Christian parents especially pray to God that they could see their children in the kingdom of heaven.

What a bitter sorrow comes to parents when their children die in sorrowlessness! And, nevertheless, the sorrowless children cause this sorrow and bitterness of mind to their parents. If the parents had that hope and assurance that those youth who have died young were in the kingdom of heaven in the refuge of the heavenly Parent and in the bosom of the true Father, then the body of the child would be so light for the parent to bear, that he could also thank for that, that God took them away from misfortune and temptations of the world before the evil days. But woe to that unfortunate father and mother who must with sorrow and bitterness of mind carry out the dead body of their only child, who died in sorrowlessness before God's preceding grace could effect in him some kind of a change for the enlightening of his soul. Then must the sorrowful parent cry out like David, "Oh my son, would that I had died for thee!"

Behold now, you youth, what bitter sorrow came to the parents over the unfortunate death of this young man who died in sorrowlessness! Behold, you youth, who live in sorrowlessness as Absalom, how pleasant it would be for your parents if God's preceding grace would receive that much room in your hearts, that you could have a blessed death, so that the sorrowful parents would have that hope that they could see their children in the kingdom of Heaven. You have already caused your parents sorrow and bitterness of mind through your disobedience. You have already badly repaid their trouble and mocked their tears with your hardness

of hearing and light-mindedness. Today or tomorrow death will come and will snatch you away from your sorrowlessness! Then the parents will begin to sigh heavily upon your grave and say like David, "Woe, woe, my son! Would that I had died for thee." But the tears of the parent are no longer able to redeem the sorrowless child's soul from hell. The tears of the heavenly Parent are not able to redeem from hell the souls of those who mock His tears with their ungodly life! Awaken therefore, you dead youth, and arise from the grave before the grave is covered with earth. Amen.

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

The Saviour says in the gospel of Luke that the scribes and Pharisees choose out the chief rooms or seats at the supper, as is the custom of the lords of the world.

Because of worldly honor they sit in the uppermost places at weddings and social functions; because of this worldly honor He rebukes the Pharisees and scribes. And we know assuredly that worldly honor is the same as it has been before. Whatever worldly honor had caused the scribes and Pharisees to do in the Saviour's time, the same splendor he effects even now in those who are in the faith of the scribes and Pharisees. Worldly honor has certainly not become any less after the Saviour's death, but it has increased more when the world has become puffed up in its

wisdom. The wise of the world have a greater wisdom and intellect now than in the Saviour's time, and the wiser they become in their own opinion, the greater they become in power and honor. Finally they become so great and honorable that they no longer need any God, not in heaven nor on the earth. But the peasants follow after the lords in that same foolishness. Although they do not have such a large intellect and wisdom as the lords of the world, nevertheless they have a greater arrogance and ignorance since they must imitate the habits of the lords in dress, in food, and in buildings. Some peasants become recognized by the world because of their riches, and some because of power. But the most foolish thing is that one ignorant peasant must imitate the habits of the lords in dress and behaviour as the Saviour already then rebuked the Pharisees for finery, with which they thought they would gain more honor. He also took the example of John, showing the people how far he was from finery, when He said to the people, "What went ye into the wilderness to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?" Did you go to see one fine lord of the world clothed in silk and Swedish broadcloth? Behold, said Jesus, "they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses." In the king's palace there are fine lords, but the peasants already want to be in silks and Swedish broadcloth, as is the custom of the lords and ladies in the king's palace. Here already are such silk whores who formerly have not been found in the world, not even in palaces. Here already are such peasants in Swedish broadcloth that

everyone who sees them thinks that they are great lords, before whom even the governor can bow down. Here already are such silk whores, as before in Herod's palace there was one royal whore because of whom John the Baptist lost his head. However, our foreparents were clothed in leather clothes which God Himself made for them.

Such things as these worldly honor has caused to come forth, and what will it even yet cause to come forth before the measure of sin will be fulfilled? Now when the scribes and Pharisees come to a wedding, they choose the uppermost places that they would presumably be seen by the world. And they have such great honor that they kill one another over one word which touches their honor. And who has given them honor? The lords of the world think that God has given them honor, and so also the respectable peasants think, that God has given them honor. But I think that the world and the devil have given them honor, since they have long since become honorless before God because they are all one generation of adulterers, as the Saviour says, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." When John saw such coming to him, he said, "Ye generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Has God now given honor to such ones? The god of the world certainly gives honor to the whores and thieves, just so that they put on a broadcloth robe and a silk kerchief on the head, and bow down well before the god of the world. The god of the world gives them quite the honor, especially to the respectable whiskey merchant

and the temperate drunkards, and also to the meek whores and honest thieves, just so they deck themselves in finery and can drink well, curse and fight, commit adultery and steal. But Jesus said to the Jews, "How can you give honor to God who receive honor one from another?"

There now is the place which shows what great power the devil has received over men, when they receive honor one from another and leave God without honor. And there is not enough in that they receive honor from others when, for the sake of honor, they prepare feasts and invite the rich, who because of their possessions have become honored, so that they again would be invited in return. But also the devil shows his power in this, when he incites some to go to the law because of honor; because of honor he incites some to taste of devil's dung; some he, because of honor, incites to drink in competition and to curse in competition, and to fight in competition — especially this, that he incites them to run races, lift weights in competition, row in competition, harvest in competition, or do other work in competition, and because of that honor many have ruined their health in their youth. Has God given you honor when you went to drink in competition, to curse in competition, and to fight in competition? No doubt the god of the world will give you honor in hell, since you have served him here so faithfully. If it is true that God has given man honor, as the wise of the world think, then assuredly the god of this world will give the adulterous generation honor. And who has given the

drunkard honor, when he begins to drink in competition. In the drunkard's estimation, he is the greatest hero who can stand to drink the most liquor. Has not the devil himself given the big drinker honor? Who has given a meek whore honor, when she weeps over her honor, lamenting that she is innocently barked at? It is also seen that the chief robbers weep over their honor when they are innocently barked at! Who has given such a one honor? Has God given the whores and thieves honor? No doubt that god who lives in the lower heaven has given such ones honor. But the Pharisees, who are not whores and thieves, who has given them honor, since they chose the uppermost seats at the weddings and synagogues? Who has given them honor, when they put on beautiful clothes, namely broad-cloth coats and silk kerchiefs and black boots? No doubt they should be acceptable to God in such finery, since they are very acceptable to the world and to the prince of the world. Nevertheless, John the Baptist could not preach repentance to the people in such clothes. Neither has the Saviour Himself traveled around the country in finery preaching. But the lords of the world and respectable peasants are bedecked in silk and broadcloth when they come to a wedding, so that they would be seen by the world. And the silk whores also come to church to show their finery and meekness to the world, but to the Christians they show their pass, with which they can freely travel in the kingdom of adultery.

These and other such honorable habits the devil of honor incites them to

do, but that belief always remains with them, that God has given them honor.

We must more broadly consider: who has given people honor, when we have first prayed to the Lord of Glory, whom the respectable people have hung on the cursed tree, so that He who became honorless before the whole world because of those to whom the devil has given honor, would take away that false honor which is a great shame before God, that all would become honorless in the world and would give the devil back his honor. Hear, Lord of Glory, the sigh of the honorless ones, Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 14:1-14

In today's holy gospel the Lord of Glory counsels those who, for the honor of the devil, sit uppermost in social functions, for the reason that they hold themselves to be most honorable in the world. For that reason we must, through God's grace, observe, What does honor of the world effect, first in a natural person, and second in the awakened ones?

The First Consideration: What does honor of the world effect in the sorrowless state? In the sorrowless state, the honor of the world effects as Jesus has shown in the gospel, that respectable guests who keep themselves in high esteem choose the uppermost places in the synagogue or church and at social functions, through which they show that the devil has exalted them and made them to be respectable lords of the council. Many a lord of the world, because of honor, has become angry if

he has not been asked to sit uppermost at the wedding table. And again many a one, because of honor, has become poor, wasted his own in vain social functions, and lived like lords, so that he would be honored by the world. And when his own substance has not sufficed, he has taken loans from here and there and lived like a lord on other's money. Finally because of vain honor he has become a beggar. Some, because of vain honor, have shot themselves; some have run away; some, because of vain honor, have ruined their health when they have wanted to be the first and best man in everything so that they would be praised by the world. But they have not believed, nevertheless, that honor is of the devil. And when a whore, because of honor of the world, kills her child, then the devil gives her that assurance that God has given her honor. Nor is it strange that the devil showed the Saviour all the honor of the world, since the great lords of the world go to visible death because of honor. Some lords of the world have such a great quest for honor that they care not for life or death, just so they gain honor. But it is still more strange that the devil of honor has killed many great lords. When their lust after honor has not become fulfilled, they have become sick over honor and have died. From that can be surmised what a terrible devil the honor of the world is, since it has killed so many great lords of the world. Not only in that way, that because of honor they have committed suicide, but that honor can kill outright without a weapon and without a medium. It is more strange, and it has hap-

pened in that way as has just been said, that when the burning lust for honor has not become fulfilled, the lords of the world have died of sorrow. It has happened to many noted lords of the world, but the great lords of the world do not therefore believe that the devil has awakened such a burning lust for honor in them, but they have that faith that the quest for honor comes from God. Honor is, namely, a respectable devil, it is not so despicable as the devil of drunkenness. The devil of honor is not so vile as the devil of adultery, nor is the devil of honor so shameful as the devil of stealing, nor is it as black as the devil of envy, nor is the devil of honor so terrible as the devil of greed. All these, namely adultery, stealing, envy, hatred, greed, are still kept as sins by the world; but honor no one keeps to be a sin, but it is as beautiful before the world as an angel of light. And all want to gain that, namely kings, lords, peasants and beggars, if not in one way, then in another. For example, the devil of honor incited David to number the people, through which he committed a great sin before God. The devil of honor incited Herod to slay children in Bethlehem. The devil of honor incited that respectable whore to ask for the head of John on a charger. Said in a word, not one devil is so terrible as the honor of the world, although it is beautiful and respectable before the world. Honor incites the princes of the world to war, through which many thousands are killed. Honor incites some to go to the law. Honor incites whores to slay their children. Honor incites the drunkards to drink in competition, through

which many a drunkard has died of liquor. Honor incites the young to wrestle through which many have ruined their health and become maimed. Because of honor many a snot-nosed brat wears Swedish broadcloth and a silver pipe in his mouth, although his poor parent is suffering hunger and cold. For the sake of honor, silk whores wear the dung of worms around their necks and on their heads.

These, and other such things, the devil effects in the unbelieving and sorrowless ones; it is one terrible devil, for it even kills that natural love which the Creator has planted between the children and the parents. Absalom wanted to buy the honor of the world with his parent's blood, and many a lord of the world drives his children away from his house and disinherits them just because of honor. Namely, when the children of such parents become whores or thieves, it so greatly hurts the parents' honor, that there is no more mercy in the parents' heart, no matter how the children become penitent. This is a terrible matter, and if the heavenly Parent had such great honor as some lords of the world do, then it would be impossible to think that even one of His children would be taken up into grace no matter how they would repent.

From where then have the wise of the world and all the lords of the world received that assurance that honor has a good effect in people, and that it has come from God? I think that they have taken the assurance from that, that the devil of honor has protected some respectable people from sin, as for examp-

le from fleshly adultery and from open and excessive drinking.

The Pharisee thanked God that he was not like other people, extortioners, unjust, or adulterers, but the Pharisee did not think that honor and selfrighteousness had protected him from those coarser sins. But he was in that faith that the God which is in heaven had protected him from sin, and so even now many a Pharisee thanks God that He has protected him from sin. But it is just the devil of honor which has protected some from adultery, stealing, drunkenness, cursing, and fighting; and from that all lords of the world have taken that faith that honor is one godly effect in man. But if this honorable god protects some from these coarser and more shameful sins, then certainly the same respectable god protects them from penitence and repentance. It certainly protects the Pharisee so that he does not become as foolish as the publican; and as the Pharisee always goes ahead of the publican into the church, he also goes ahead in social functions. He always sits in the uppermost seats in the synagogues; and also in social functions of the world he sits in the uppermost seats. And now the Pharisee has that kind of a belief that since he is first in the church and first in social functions, then he will also be given the first place of honor in the kingdom of heaven.

But it is heard in today's gospel that the host asks him who sits in the lowest seat to go up higher, but to him who takes the uppermost seat for himself in the synagogue and at social functions, the host says, "Give this man

place.” Go now, Pharisees, to sit uppermost at the wedding table, that you can receive honor from the world. Soon the host will say to you, “Friend, give this man place,” who is now sitting in the lowest place, and then you must with shame go to take the lowest room. In that great supper you can sit in that place where the publicans now sit. But those wedding guests, who now have sat in the lowest seats, can hear this honorable word from the Host when the great Supper is held, “Friend, go up higher, and then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.”

The Second Consideration; What does honor of the world effect in the awakened condition? Then honor is so cunning that he no longer incites an awakened one to like himself; he does not incite an awakened one to show off or carry finery; he does not incite him to sit at social functions of the world. But he often incites him to be ashamed and to hide the work of the Spirit of God. At first the awakened one has a great battle with honor before he is able to confess his sins. The honor of the world wants to entirely prevent that open confession of sins. There also the devil of greed comes to help the devil of honor, and the two, namely the devil of honor and the devil of greed, build a brush fence for the penitent one, which not one grace thief will climb over. The devil of honor preaches thus to the thief of grace, “You need not cry out your sins to the world,” and the devil of greed adds this word, “If you cry out your sins to the world, then you will have to repay your evil deeds. You will

first become honorless and besides all that, you will become poor.”

Behind this brush fence all the grace thieves are now stuck, who do not want to cleanse their consciences but go straight to God. They think that God is merciful to them, although they do not want to repay their evil deeds or be reconciled with their neighbor, although we have so many places of the Scriptures which show that one must first be reconciled with his neighbor before a person can hope that he can receive his sins forgiven by God. And what pertains to confession of sins, first the book of Joshua shows how the whole congregation of Israel suffered injury because of one man who had stolen and hidden the stolen item. That man did not want to confess his theft before it came to light. And secondly, when people came to John the Baptist and asked for baptism, they confessed their sins. Was it a secret confession like the Catholics demand? All the grace thieves want to come into the kingdom of heaven with honor, and it is better, in their opinion, to be in hell than to be without honor in heaven. They do not think about this, that a time will come when all secret deeds will come to light, and that all grace thieves who do not want to become honorless before the world, must there become honorless before God and all the holy angels; and whosoever does not want to confess his sins before the Christians can there confess his sins before the devils. And whosoever does not want to repay his evil deeds, can eternally pay to the last mite.

But the place of honor is a strait place even to those whose awakened consciences force them to cry out their sins to the world, for Judas' conscience did not become appeased through this, that he confessed to the high priest, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." And although he even threw the ill-gotten money into the temple, he could not appease his conscience with that but it was a compulsion of the conscience that he had to do so. But in the matter of cleansing, Peter again shows the example that honor does not want to allow the penitent to go unto Jesus that Jesus could cleanse them, for self-righteousness and honor of the world incited Peter to oppose Jesus in that place where he should have allowed the Saviour to do with him as He wanted. Worldly honor put these words in Peter's mouth, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Honor of the world gave Peter a false unworthiness through which Peter almost got left without cleansing.

Honor of the world works all these in the awakened, from which can be well surmised that the devil of honor of the world is no simple devil, but he is so many-sided and with many angles that not even the awakened ones can understand well all that this cunning and secretive enemy effects, for he changes himself into an angel of light as it happened with Peter. It is no wonder that the world does not know his effects to be terrible and horrible, for the devil of honor reveals itself to the world as an honorable man who wants nothing but good, and all his effects, according to the opinion of the world,

are good, allowable and respectable, as though it had come from God. But even the awakened souls become deceived through honor of the world, who have not yet comprehended why the devil of honor forbids that open confession of sins and why he wants to prevent the penitent from reconciling with their neighbor, and why the devil of honor wants to prevent that cleansing which Jesus offers to them. It is just for that reason, so that the sins would remain unconfessed, that the conscience would remain uncleansed, that the feet would remain unwashed, that the sin would remain unforgiven until the time that there is no other way than what Judas finally realized, that he confessed his sins to the devil's priests who said, "See thou to that."

If the devil of honor had not been able to rule Judas' heart, without a doubt he would have confessed his sins to the disciples of Jesus, but Judas has that fear that his Christian honor would be brought to naught if he now confessed his sins to the disciples of Jesus. In that place honor wants to make a great war, when a person who has traveled in the school of Jesus for many years, and has made the other disciples believe that he is a true and faithful disciple of Jesus, when he must begin to confess to the other disciples that he is a betrayer, there honor takes a strong hold against it, that he would sooner go to hell than that he would cast his honor of a Christian behind him, and begin anew to strive and carry the cross.

This is an impossible place for Judas. The honor of a Christian is a high pinnacle of the temple from which it is

not easy to come down when the devil has exalted one up there. It is also dangerous from both sides: if he confesses himself to be a betrayer, then all of the disciples of Jesus will push him out and his honor of a Christian would go to naught completely, but if he pretends, with hypocritical evasiveness like the serpent, in the company of the disciples of Jesus, then he can keep the Christian's honor yet for some time. But the Christian faith, which he carries until the time that the conscience awakens, just then comes to naught when he sees Jesus condemned. And just then can he see what the devil of honor has accomplished but penitence is too late. When he finally confesses his sins to such priests who are enemies of Jesus, they cannot comfort him, and although he then throws back the ill-gotten money, nevertheless he does not receive peace of conscience, but must go out and hang himself.

Thus has honor of the world made many thousand people unfortunate in time and in eternity; and all the same, the lords of the world say, "It is of God. God is the one who has given man honor." But it is seen from all his effects that he is one chief devil who is not easy to recognize, and that all who follow him become unfortunate in time and in eternity.

So Jesus now gives all the wedding guests that counsel, "Sit not down in the highest seat at the wedding table, but sit down in the lowest seat." That is, do not seek vain honor but give away the honor to the devil. Then he who has bidden you will say to you, "Friend, go up higher, then you will

have worship in the presence of those who sit at meat with you." That is, you will receive honor from God when you first have sat in the lowest place in the world; that is, when you have given the honor of the world to the devil. But certainly Pharisees will not go sit in the lowest places, but they choose the uppermost places in the synagogues and at social functions, and therefore the host says to them: "Give this man place" and then they begin with shame to take the lowest place. When that great wedding day comes, then the host will say to those who now sit uppermost in the synagogues and in social functions, "Friend, give this man place," and so they will go with shame to sit lower, those who here Love the honor of the world. Amen.

18th Sunday after Trinity.

"The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Psalm 110:1.

The Saviour has explained these words of David about himself and has shown that David's words show the godly nature of Christ. Since the Jews incorrectly understood the words of the Scriptures and perverted the prophets' promises of the coming Saviour, then they imagined that Christ would become an earthly king, as man always understands the Word of God wrongly when his heart is fastened to the world; he then wants to turn spiritual matters completely backwards. Those matters which pertain to spiritual life, he app-

lies to natural life, and that which pertains to the soul of man, natural man wants to apply to the body. Thus the Jews had wrongly comprehended the prophets' promises of the Messiah.

When the prophets had formerly said that the Messiah or Christ shall sit on David's throne and that there would be no end of His kingdom, then the Jews thought that Christ would become an earthly king and take the whole world under Himself. And this false presumption was also in the skull of the disciples until that day when the Saviour ascended into heaven. Thus the heart of honorable man is so fastened to the world that he cannot wait for any other Saviour than only an earthly Saviour who would make him fortunate in this world. Now Christ wanted to turn the thoughts of the Jews away from an earthly Saviour and get them to believe that Christ, or the Saviour, who was promised to mankind in the Scriptures, cannot be only an earthly king, or such a Saviour who helps from natural distress, but especially one spiritual king and Saviour of the soul. When even David by the prompting of the Holy Spirit had spoken of Christ in the 110th psalm and said: "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." This signifies: God said to the Saviour: "Sit thou at my right hand, until all the enemies of Christianity must bow themselves to the dust before thee." But the Jews did not understand these words of David, from which the Saviour took a testimony of the godly nature of Christ. And so it probably happens even now that all Jews who

believe upon one earthly Saviour, do not understand how Christ is David's Lord and David's son. The Jews always believe upon an earthly Saviour. They believe that the Saviour upholds their natural lives, that he makes them rich and lords in the world. They believe that through the Saviour they shall gain riches, honor, and good days. The Jews also believe that after death they will go into Abraham's bosom, although they drink, curse and fight, conduct a liquor business and are ardent after the world, take a large gain for their trouble and merchandise, and hate the Christians who, in the mind of the Jews, are false prophets and possessed of evil spirits. The Jews argue against it when someone wants to show with the words of the Scripture that Jesus, whom they have killed through sin, unbelief and iniquity, sits on the right hand of God until all the enemies of Christianity will become a footstool for the Saviour. A part of the Jews who hate the Christians will finally be won when they themselves get troubled in conscience and then they must bow their knees in Jesus' name and in this way become a footstool for the Saviour. A part of the Jews harden more through Christianity and fall even deeper into hell than they are by nature. Then they also become a footstool for the Saviour when they fall under His feet in hell. In this way all are finally won, both the Jews and the heathens who are the enemies of the Saviour. Some have to bow their neck under the Saviour's yoke when a spiritual compulsion or demand of the conscience drives them to beg for grace. Some again who are hardened, are

trampled by the Saviour like a footstool down into hell, when their conscience begins to testify that they would have become saved if the spiritual hatred toward the Christians had not hardened their hearts. When, namely, the Christians speak the truth to the Jews, as Stephen: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost", then the Jews are so severely angered that they gnash their teeth. These blind wretches do not understand that because of this spiritual hatred toward the Christians, they sink so deep into hell that God is not able to pull them up.

There are yet many Jews and heathens who are enemies of the cross of Jesus, although in these times they are scattered, namely the Jews whose rule is soon ended. They must now, like shameful dogs, avoid the Christians' eyes; and they still have their old faith that this Christianity, which through Jesus has spread in the world, is nothing other than superstition and the deception of the devil. The Jews have had feelings about this, that they must live as strangers in the midst of the Christians and that their former rule has ended. But they have the hope that they will get revenge on the Christians when the Saviour comes, whose coming they await, when they imagine that they will come into power. Those heathens who live among the Christians are also very angry at the Christians; but the faith of the heathens is this, that they will become saved through their meekness. Heathens do not steal as much grace as Jews, but they nevertheless are enemies of the cross of Jesus and in a totally heathen land where only heathens live,

there is the same kind of life as was here formerly. There they drink, there they curse, there they fight; on Sunday they drink, play and dance, and from that the lust of adultery is finally kindled, but just the same they imagine they will become saved. The heathens know nothing of the Saviour, they have only heard the Saviour's name, but that is all. And how can the heathens believe upon the Saviour when they trust upon their meekness, although their life is an ungodly life? But they do not know their sins and they know nothing of penitence and repentance. Who has preached to them of true penitence and repentance? By no means do heathen pastors or Jewish pastors preach so that the people would awaken. When heathen pastors themselves have the belief that Christianity is a superstition and the effect of the devil's spirit, how can they then so preach that the people would know themselves? The heathen pastors preach much of meekness and love, but of true penitence, repentance, and new birth, they never preach. Since there are still so many heathens in the world now, both baptized and unbaptized, who do not know the Saviour, we must preach so that the heathens can hear that in their heathenism they are going on the wrong road. We hope and pray that David's son who is also David's Lord, would through His word, give both the Jews and the heathens the enlightenment that they would come to understand how David's son is also David's Lord, who gives to all the penitent, grace and joy and peace and power and strength to travel, strive and long, cry and knock, sigh and pray that

Jesus, the Son of David, would have mercy on them and help them in the great war and struggle of death, so that the devil, the world, and their own flesh would not be able to entice them. Hear the prayer of all the humble and distressed ones, Our Father and so forth.

The Gospel: Matthew 22:34-46.

In the latter part of our holy gospel the Saviour speaks of His godly nature where by we have a fitting occasion to consider how David's son is David's Lord. First consideration: Why do the Jews and heathens not believe that David's son is David's Lord? Second consideration: Why do all those who are in distress believe that David's son is David's Lord? May God grant His grace that all Jews and heathens would turn to the Son of David, so that they too would come to know that David's son is also David's Lord, and that all who cry: "Jesus thou son of David, have mercy upon us!", could get to know His godly power to help and raise them up from hell!

First consideration: Why do the Jews and heathens not believe that David's son is David's Lord? Through natural birth the Saviour was born of David's lineage.. This all Jews know and some evangelists have therefore listed the lineage of the Saviour from generation to generation so that the Jews would believe that Mary's son is truly the son of David, as the prophets have formerly written. Now the Jews surely believe that Jesus is the son of David, or that according to the flesh He is born of David's lineage, as the prophets have testified. But how this son of David is also David's Lord, this

the Jews do not understand, as we heard in today's gospel. Since now the Jews do not understand how David's son is David's Lord, then neither do they believe that David's son is David's Lord. This unbelief of the Jews comes from this, that they await an earthly Saviour who will feed them for nothing. They feel bodily hunger and bodily poverty, but the hunger of the soul they do not feel. Therefore they willingly believe upon such a Saviour who would have great worldly goods, so that he would be able to make all rich. To such a rich and honorable lord all the world's poor would come to beg for help; all the world's lords would go to him to eat and drink prepared substance. All who through drunkenness and laziness have squandered their own goods would go to him to beg for money to borrow. Said in a word: for that reason all who need to eat and drink but do not care to work for their living, would gladly take such a man for a Saviour who would feed them for nothing. And the son of David would surely be suitable as such a Saviour if He, namely, would win the whole world under him and become a king for the Jews. But such a Saviour, who has nothing other to give them than God's word, is not suitable as a Saviour to the Jews nor to the heathens. And this is the real reason why the Jews cannot believe that David's son is David's Lord. When a person is fastened to the world, he awaits such a Saviour who will feed him for nothing. He longs for such a Saviour who can help him from all natural distress. But such a Saviour who helps from spiritual distress is, accor-

ding to the mind of the natural man, unnecessary. When natural man is not in any spiritual distress, then he does not understand to long for a spiritual Saviour. "He does not feel that he needs such a Saviour who will help his soul from the torments of hell. If the Jews would be in spiritual distress or in pain of conscience, then they would sooner believe that David's son is also David's Lord, or God. For the Son of David can, as an earthly king, help the poor from natural distress, but from spiritual distress or pain of conscience, none other than God can help, therefore David's son must also be David's Lord. He must be greater and more powerful than David. David in the spirit called him Lord, because David, who was often in pain of conscience, felt that his son would not have been suitable as the Saviour of sinners, if he would have been only a man. But the Jews whose best treasure is in the world, and to whom pain of conscience does not come because they are grace thieves, do not long for nor do not feel that they need a spiritual Saviour who would save their souls from the torments of hell. Therefore they do not understand that the Son of David or Christ, who was promised by the prophets as a Saviour, shall be David's Lord, or greater and more powerful than David. The Jews' bosom sin is greed or love of the world. The Saviour and all the prophets reprove the Jews of greed; they devour the houses of widows and orphans, teach children to steal the livelihood of the parents and try in every way to gain worldly goods, with deceit, craftiness and whiskey trade. They charge as high

a price for their trouble and goods as it is possible to get. If they must exchange money, then they take payment even for that. They are good at helping such needy ones from whom they think they will receive a double gain. But if they have to help such poor from whom they would get nothing, then they say: "Go to the Christians!" Surely, for this reason, the Jews are honorable in sacrificing to the church and in inviting guests to drinking parties. They serve whiskey to all the travelers who are of the same faith and same lineage as the Jews. To there also come self-righteousness and outward meekness, finery in dress, stateliness in behavior. They are hypocrites, they bear high and great thoughts of themselves, they consider themselves so holy that they do not keep company with heathens, and they cannot stand to see the Christians before their eyes at all. The Jews are also grace thieves when they own for themselves God's promises of grace, although they are uncircumcised at heart. They carry the mark of outward Christianity or dead faith in their flesh, but since the heart has never been circumcised, they are hypocrites. There is Christianity in the skull, but in the heart there is heathenism. Therefore the Jews cannot believe that David's son is David's Lord. Namely, since they are fastened to the world, they cannot believe that a spiritual Saviour is more necessary than a natural Saviour.

The Jews do believe upon an earthly Saviour, but the heathens, who base their salvation upon meekness, know nothing of the Saviour. They, on the other hand, have the belief that man's

meekness should be acceptable to God. The heathens do not need to steal as much grace as the Jews. Namely, when the heathens have the belief that man's meekness should not be in vain, then they also try to live meekly; they better their life and with this betterment they imagine that they are acceptable to God. The smaller sins they do not hold to be a sin. They make the smaller sins allowable: moderate drunkenness, moderate cursing, moderate hatred, moderate greed — all of these are made allowable by the heathens. And since the heathens have natural virtue as the foundation of salvation, they bypass the Saviour, and thus do not believe that David's son is David's Lord. For that reason the heathens certainly trust in the Saviour in a natural way; they believe that the Saviour sustains their natural life, and so the Jews also believe. But what does this faith help them when they know nothing of spiritual life? Therefore we now hear why the Jews and heathens are not able to believe that David's son is David's Lord, or why they do not believe that the Man who traveled in the land of Judaea is the heavenly Parent who has created us. The Jews do not believe for the reason that they love the world and always await an earthly Saviour, through whom they would get rich and become lords in the world. All Jews truly believe that the awaited Saviour will help them from all natural distress, and through this dead faith which is in their skull, they also believe that they are children of God since they are circumcized and eat the lamb of the Passover, although in the heart they are uncircu-

mcized. The, heathens know nothing of the Saviour, for they trust upon their meekness and thus do not feel that they need a Saviour. How can the Jews and heathens long for a spiritual Saviour, when they never have spiritual distress or pains of conscience? When do the Jews have pains of conscience? They do have spiritual hatred, but not penitence and pain of conscience.

Second consideration: Why do all who are in spiritual distress cry, "Jesus thou son of David, have mercy on us"? Both the Jews and the heathens cried when they were in distress, "Jesus thou son of David, have mercy on us!" If these distressed ones would have had a doubt that David's son did not have the power of God to help, then they would not have cried out so pitifully after Him. But distress compelled them to cry out, and distress also taught them to believe that David's son had the power of God to help. So it is also in a spiritual sense. As long as man does not have spiritual distress, as long as a sinner is able to carry his burden, that long he gets along without the Saviour. When the heart has not yet truly broken and been made humble, even the awakened man seeks many by ways and wants to bypass the Saviour. Self-righteousness pushes such thoughts into the heart that he is not worthy to come to the Saviour in such a poor and miserable condition before he has improved his heart. But when the burden of sin becomes so heavy that a sinner is no longer able to bear his burden, then he must begin to cry: "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me and take away this burden of sin which presses me into hell." But

would a penitent sinner go to Jesus if he did not have the faith and assurance that David's son is also David's Lord? If a penitent soul did not have the assurance that this Jesus, who was born in such great poverty of David's lineage, is the Creator Himself, the heavenly Parent who has given us life — if one penitent sinner would begin to so think as the wise of the world, who say that Jesus is not God, but He is a remarkable man to whom God has given more intelligence than to Other men — if, say I, one penitent soul would begin to think so, that the Saviour is not God Himself, but only like God, then that penitent soul would in no way go to Him, but he would go directly to the Father and bypass the Saviour. Thus do all the worldly wise, they go past the Saviour directly to God, They are not able to believe that the Saviour is God Himself, the Creator Himself, although the Saviour has said that no man cometh unto the Father but by Him, that the Father and the Saviour are one and that he who sees the Saviour sees the Father. This a penitent soul must know, that David's son is also David's Lord, that no one is greater, higher, or mightier than He, and that no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. If, say I, a penitent soul does not have the complete faith and confidence that Jesus is David's Lord and God over all, Creator and Parent who has given him life, then a penitent soul would have no other way out than to go to destruction. But when a penitent soul has the complete assurance that his Creator, his Parent, and the One who has given him birth has suffered such great pain and tri-

bulation when He has given birth to him and other unthankful children, who by their ungodly lives have caused Him such great anguish and tribulation and have mocked their Parent's tears, then a penitent soul has no doubt of this, that the heavenly Parent does have the desire and power to help penitent souls from their tribulation. But the penitent ones consider themselves unworthy to come before the heavenly Parent's eyes. They fear that the heavenly Parent no longer cares about them when they have become so filthy. The devil of self righteousness accuses them that they are whores and thieves and murderers, and the conscience also testifies that they are such. How do they then dare to become a footstool for the Savior when self-righteousness demands that they must become like angels before they approach God. If the devil of adultery and the devil of greed and the devil of hatred would cease tempting them, then they could better believe that the Saviour would receive them. But these devil's angels do not cease tempting the awakened ones as long as life remains in them. And then self-righteousness says, "The Saviour does not care about such who have seven devils in their flesh; man must become better before he is worthy to come to Jesus." But if you awakened one do not go to the Saviour such as you are, along with the devils, then you will never become free from the devil's power. When the devil begins to torment you, then go to Jesus and cry as did the woman of Canaan: "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me! My soul is grievously vexed with the devil!" Go to

Jesus, you man possessed by evil spirits, and cry out! He will drive the Legion out of you and will make them go into the swineherd; and the swineherd, which here walks in the pasture, is suitable to carry the devils into the lake of fire. But those few, who are tormented by the devil and tempted in every way, shall become freed from them, when Jesus comes with His grace and with His word to drive out the devil's angels who tempt them. And our hope is that He shall drive the seven devils out of Mary Magdalene's heart: when she with a broken heart prays the great Crossbearer and Thorn-crowned King that He would drive out all devils which torment her. She shall afterwards show her thankfulness to Jesus and pour costly spikenard ointment upon His head; and finally when Jesus dies, she shall pour out tears of love and longing upon His grave, and the great Cross-bearer shall again appear living before her eyes, and she shall take Him about His feet and embrace Him. Amen.

Nineteenth Sunday after trinity.

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:19.

We hear from these words of the Savior from Matthew 16:19 that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to Peter, although he was an empty sinful person and lacking in so many

ways. We have also heard, how Peter used these keys of the kingdom of heaven: He admitted repentant and doubting ones into the kingdom of heaven, but shut out unrepentant and hypocritical ones, who forced themselves into the kingdom of heaven. He forgave sins to the repentant and believing ones; but to hypocrites, who did not have true penitence or living faith, he said thus: “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” (Acts 8:21,22.) But the Pharisees, who followed the wisdom of natural reason, were always of that belief, that no one but God can forgive sins. And the same belief can be seen in the present day Pharisees. They say that nobody has been given that power or authority that he can forgive sins. Nevertheless the outward belief has been in the congregation, that the keys of the kingdom of heaven have been given to the clergy, who in God's behalf pronounce sins forgiven to communion guests and also to those who are judged by the punishment of the church. But the punishment of the church in these times has changed to hypocrisy, and happens only because of custom. For now a whore or a thief is given-forgiveness of sins, although he feels nothing to repent of and has no intention of repentance. Not many can believe that a thief has become a Christian from this, that he has suffered the punishment of the church. Nevertheless the punishment of the church means this, that one has become a Christian, who has suffe-

red this punishment. For in the first Christian congregation the church punishment was considered a great grace, when a penitent sinner got to suffer the punishment of the church or was considered possible to receive sins forgiven and become a member of the Christian congregation. But now such a thing is kept as a shame and a punishment, which then was a great grace and a good work to sinners. If now this thing is kept as a shame and a punishment, which in the first Christian congregation was a great grace of God; if it is now a great shame, what was then a great honor, can we not presume that some error has come into our faith; when the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which the Savior gave to Peter and to the other disciples, and were then great gifts of grace, are now kept as a shame and a punishment. One evildoer keeps this as a shame and a punishment, that the kingdom of heaven is opened to him, but he does not keep this to be a shame and a punishment that the devil's kingdom is opened to him through his shameful works, because of which he is judged to suffer the punishment of the church. Then the penitent ones thanked God from the heart, that they were granted the great grace of God, and it was seen possible for them to be taken into the Christian congregation as members. They thanked God for this, that the Christians kept them of this value, that they confessed them to be brothers. But now many would thank God, if they would escape the punishment of the church. Has not the magician turned our eyes around, when we see that as evil which is good? We keep

that which we receive of the church to be punishment, which is one great grace of God, We think, that it is a great shame, which is a great honor. If the enemy has gotten to turn people's eyes around so, that one great grace of God is kept to be punishment, then certainly also in many other matters the eyes are turned around.

When the enemy has turned people's eyes around, then they see that as mockery of God, which has happened as a glory to God. This we hear in today's gospel, when Jesus said to one palsied man: "...thy sins be forgiven thee" then the Pharisee said, "This man blasphemeth (God)". So has the enemy reversed their eyes that they see all things backwards. Forgiving sins was in their opinion blaspheming God. According to their understanding, Jesus was a Samaritan and he had a devil: the disciples were the apostles of the devil, Christians were possessed of evil spirits. When a person is himself under the rule of the devil, then he sees all spiritual matters backwards. Then the sorrowless condition becomes the graced condition. Natural man keeps himself to be a Christian and sees Christians to be false prophets. When now the Christian takes the keys of the kingdom of heaven from the Savior's hand and admits one penitent and doubting soul into the kingdom of heaven through that grace which Jesus has earned with His blood for penitent sinners, then the Pharisees and hypocrites say that it is blasphemy of God. But when the Pharisees themselves get the keys of the kingdom of heaven into their hands, then they open the kingdom of heaven

to the sorrowless, to the grace thieves, and to the naturally meek; but the truly penitent and sorrowful souls they shut out of the kingdom of heaven. Do they not steal the keys of the kingdom of heaven, those who judge Christians as false prophets, hypocrites, and Pharisees? They who themselves are false prophets, hypocrites, and Pharisees always think that true Christians are false prophets and hypocrites, but themselves the sorrowless and Pharisees keep to be Christians and children of God.

Hypocrites and confessors of dead faith think that they have a true faith but Christians have one false faith. When now hypocrites and confessors of dead faith, and also other sorrowless people think that they have a true faith, but Christians have a false faith, then they have by their own permission received the power, that they hate the Christians and judge them according to their wrong thoughts; they judge Christians because of hatred and not because of love. But this hatred of the people of the world, it is one sure illustration of this, that they have received the keys of the kingdom of darkness but not the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Those who have visible hatred in their heart and who because of this spiritual hatred condemn Christians, as the Jews condemned Jesus and His disciples, these possess none other than the keys of the kingdom of darkness, although the magician has made them so blind that they see all spiritual matters wrongly. They think that the keys to the kingdom of darkness are the keys to the kingdom of heaven. They think that they do service to God when they hate the Christians,

although through this hatred they do service to the devil. They make themselves and others to believe that Christians are false prophets, hypocrites, and Pharisees. All those who themselves are blind and think they are Christians, make others believe that Christians have a false faith. Such ones have the keys to the kingdom of darkness with which they open the bottomless pit to themselves and to their children and to all others who believe their doctrine.

Today we should consider and question, who has authority to open the kingdom of heaven and who does not. But may the Heavenly Father, who in old days would open the kingdom of heaven to penitent and sorrowful souls through the reconciliation which is prepared with his own blood, change the minds of the sorrowless people and may He move the sorrowful with locking of living faith and with the assurance that He has the keys to the kingdom of heaven which He can give to whom He will. Hear our sighs, Thou God of Peace! Our Father and so forth.

The Gospel: Matthew 9: 1-8.

We heard in today's gospel that scribes kept it to be blasphemy when Jesus said to the man sick of the palsy, "thy sins be forgiven thee." Following this we must consider: Why do the people of this world always reprove Jesus and the confessors of His name, that they are blasphemers of God when they in God's behalf assure penitent sinners of the grace of God, but do not promise the grace of God to the sorrowless and impenitent? It is said briefly

thus: The people of the world cannot suffer that grace is promised to the penitent souls and not to them. If grace would be promised, confusedly, both to the penitent and to the impenitent, then the children of the world would be satisfied with that, because the sorrowless and impenitent would like this much, if to them also would be promised grace, not only to the penitent. But God's grace is promised to the penitent, and not to the sorrowless. Then the world's sorrowless people become very angry and say: "This (man) mocks God. Who has given you this permission? Are you a forgiver of sins?" The Jews were of this belief, that God did not give the keys of the kingdom of heaven to anyone. But those who have grown up in Christian faith have a lot to contend in this; do people have permission to forgive sins and to bind? The Pope says: "The Savior gave the keys to the kingdom of heaven to Peter, and Peter was the first bishop of the city of Rome. And when Peter suffered martyrdom because of faith, he gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the bishop of Rome. So always a succeeding bishop of Rome receives the keys of the kingdom of heaven from him who had previously been bishop. In this way the keys of the kingdom of heaven come like an inheritance from one Roman bishop to another, from the first to the last." In this way the keys of the kingdom of heaven are supposedly with the Pope. And the Pope also bravely owns the authority to himself that nobody can bypass him into the kingdom of heaven. He lets in now whom he will, and shuts out whom he will. But we know, that the Master

does not give keys to thieves. The Pope is one thief of grace; he has stolen the keys to the kingdom of heaven; and that is an old saying, that thieves keep stolen goods cheap, because they have gotten them with little trouble. The Catholics offer stolen grace to lice; both to penitent and to unrepentant; they allow sheep and goats, lambs and wolves mixed into the sheepfold. There is not the question in the Pope's kingdom about true penitence, but whoever comes to the Catholic priest and confesses sins, to him the priest is obligated to give the forgiveness of sins, although there be no sign of penitence. Forgiveness is also given for such sins, which a person has not yet committed, but afterward intends to commit. If then a person intends to commit murder or steal or commit adultery, so he first goes to the priest and says: "Can I receive that sin forgiven if I do it?" "Yes!" says the priest, "What would prevent you from receiving (forgiveness) whatever you would do?" Lo! Then is the grace of God very cheap! There a person feels like living, when God's grace is so cheap: there nobody needs to be sorrowful or doubting; not one needs to be in spiritual warfare or beg; but all who intend to do something evil do not need anything else but go to the priest and ask: "Can I receive forgiveness of sins if I do that?" "Yes! you certainly can." Go all you into the Pope's kingdom, all you who want to get to heaven easily. Go there, you thieves of grace, and say to the Pope, can we also receive forgiveness if we drink, curse, and fight, keep a liquor business, love the world, and so forth? "Yes! you certainly can,

what would prevent you?" Then says the Pope to the priest: "Admit this soul into heaven He has not transgressed so greatly."

But Luther, who himself has been in true penitence, and has learned in the school of the Holy Spirit that the grace of God is so dear and precious that no man can earn it, although he would give all his possessions to the poor, although he would whip himself to pieces, and although he would give himself to burn: Luther, say I, began first to argue with the Catholics about the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins, and he began very truly to question: by whose permission did the Catholics allow swine, bucks and goats into the sheepfold?

He began very truly to question: from where did the Pope get that permission, that the impenitent, sorrowless and hardened ones are allowed into the kingdom of heaven? The more Luther considered this matter, the more he became assured of this, that the Pope was one big thief, who had stolen the keys to the kingdom of heaven, but with those keys turned the wrong lock and opened the wrong door: namely he opened the bottomless pit to the sorrowless but not the kingdom of heaven. And from this Luther's war with the Catholics came to us the beginning of Luther's faith, which we pretend to confess with our mouth, but Catholic faith remains in our heart so long as we will force ourselves past penitence into the sheepfold. Luther's faith was this, that the grace of God did not belong to any others, but only to the penitent and broken hearted ones. But now, when Luther's faith has long since died in the

hearts of men, and is left like a silk scarf around the brain and like cotton batting around the heart of old Adam; now all confessors of dead faith argue, that nobody knows who is penitent and who is sorrowless, and therefore the priest must, into whose hand the keys of the kingdom of heaven are given, twist those keys both to the right and to the left side when he begins to open the door in this way in confession or release from sin: "If your confession of sin is honest, your penitence true, and your faith guileless, etc." But this twisting to the right and to the left is not the right twisting. Penitent souls fear that they will not get in, when the keys to the kingdom of heaven are twisted so, that both doors are open at the same time, both of darkness and light, both to the bottomless pit and to the kingdom of heaven.

There is yet that belief rooted in the skull of man, that the keys of the kingdom of heaven are not valid otherwise except in that office: when the office of the clergy has the gown, then he can open the kingdom of heaven and close it, but otherwise he does not have any power to open or to close. In this way there is more power in clothing than in the heart, and the outward functioning of the office has greater value than experiences of the heart! Does this have to be believed, that the keys to the kingdom of heaven fall from the priest's hand as soon as he strips off the robe? Isn't it better to be believed, that the spiritual priest carries the keys to the kingdom of heaven everywhere, but the sorrowless priest does not get these

keys to move otherwise than in performance of the office.

Luther's belief concerning the right penitence and repentance is thus: that God's congregation must assure the penitent ones of the forgiveness of sins, and that one right penitence of sin is known by these, if a person has the right sorrow of the heart and horror of the conscience, and that a person must rightly know his sins. (Augsburg Confession Art.12) From these words we hear that every buck and goat does not get into the kingdom of heaven, but one penitent sinner who has the right sorrow of the heart and the horror of the conscience. From where can one sorrowless person get these signs of penitence? Sorrow and grief do not come from the air. I think that this is the best counsel to all sorrowless ones, who fear distress of conscience, that they go into the Pope's kingdom and that they give one penny into the Catholics' beggary purse, in this way way they can get into the kingdom of heaven without sorrow and without distress. What do sorrowless ones have to do in Luther's congregation? Luther demanded true penitence and horror of conscience; he demanded that the penitent ones must rightly know their sins and then he demanded true, living and saving faith. From where will all these come to the sorrowless? They cannot themselves force or bend their heart to regret sin, and who has the right sorrow of the heart and horror of the conscience, he also cannot accomplish by his own strength that fear of death and that emptiness, before God gives him that power that he can believe. To such penitent souls the

congregation of God must give that knowledge, that God is gracious to him. For this reason the keys to the kingdom of heaven are given to God's congregation, that he must open the door to penitent souls. But the sorrowless he must shut out of heaven. This is the faith of Luther.

But this teaching is not fitting in any way to the wise of the world and to the meek, and to the confessors of dead faith. The worldly wise say thus when a separation is made between the penitent and the sorrowless: "God has not given anyone the authority to shut out people from that common grace, and the wise of the world also say: "God does not long for sorrow and grief, but He only longs for correction of life, and who here has not had time or gotten to correct his life, supposedly to him will come some advice in the other world"; and yet the wise of the world say: "God is not so hard that He will destroy people in hell." Isn't this teaching of the wise of the world as sweet as sugar to the world's sorrowless and slaves of the flesh, who feel that they cannot fight with old Adam and to whom comes distress to suffer the chastisement of the Holy Spirit. These because of shame do not care to go to the kingdom of the Pope, to ransom their soul from hell with one penny, they can go to the wise of the world to ask what they must do. The wise of the world do not speak of penitence, nor anything of faith, but improvement of life they certainly demand; and who is not able to improve his life here, supposedly there will be some counsel in hell. Isn't this good advice? Supposedly the wise of

the world have gone to hell to see how people get along there, when they think that there will be some counsel there. Catholics again say thus. "If you confess all your sins before the Pope, those that you have committed and also those sins which you have not yet committed, but intend to commit henceforth, then the priest will forgive you them all." This also sounds like good advice to the sorrowless; because in the kingdom of the Pope they do not need to regret their sins, but only confess them, and then they get in. But Luther, who himself was in deep penitence, demanded true penitence and living faith. But since one penitent soul cannot believe of himself, so Luther yet demanded this, that the congregation of God must assure him of God's grace and the forgiveness of sins. When now the congregation of God through the priest or through some other Christian says to one penitent soul: Thy sins be forgiven thee; then first the scribes or worldly wise become angry and say: "this (man) blasphemes God; you do not have any authority to forgive sins; God has not given the keys of the kingdom of heaven to you". Naturally meek people also become angry and say: "God and my conscience testify that I am innocent; I do not need any grace from the congregation." Those also become angry, who have dead faith in the skull and they say: "Certainly God knows that I have made repentance, no one needs to try my heart". And for what reason do all of these become angry? For this reason they become angry, that the congregation of God or the true Christians will not confess pagans to be

brethren in faith. True Christians must not promise grace to the naturally meek, because they do not need any grace, not from God or from man. Also Christians must not promise grace to the dead faith; because he has a faith of his own; he himself can believe what he wants to. And he who is trusting on dead faith, he does not know how he began to believe. He does not know this either, how he has repented of his sins: he thinks that he has repented of his sins, but it has happened so accidentally that he has not noticed it. Sometimes he thinks that it has happened in a dream; sometimes he figures that it happened in childhood. Is than Luther astray? Or had he seen a dream when he demanded such signs of penitence, which not one other can feel to be necessary, but only those who themselves have been penitent? He demanded sorrow of the heart and horror of conscience. Can this happen unnoticed, that a person would not know of it himself? But we are assured of this, that Luther is not astray nor has he seen a dream, but he has rightly understood Scripture, when he has put forth true penitence as necessary for all people. And we are also assured of this, that Luther has understood Scripture correctly when he has demanded true and living faith. But the keys to the kingdom of heaven he has not stolen or robbed when he would open the door to the penitent and to the sorrowful souls, but shut out the impenitent. Very certainly all worldly wise ones, all naturally meek and confessors of dead faith become angry when they are not allowed inside. They certainly can be of that belief that it is blasphemy

of God when it is said to penitent ones: Thy sins be forgiven thee. Nevertheless the penitent souls have no other shelter, than God's grace, which Jesus has merited for souls. If the enemy would only get that much for them, that they could flee into the lap of Jesus, then the worldly wise could live in their wisdom, naturally meek could live in their meekness, and confessors of dead faith could live in their faith if they would be able. It is written in the Holy Scripture that the righteous shall live by faith; and he who has living faith he can live and die with that, that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, not only through the office of the clergy but through every person who himself has received grace. It is one unshakeable truth, whether the Pharisees believe it or not.

And now, you palsied ones, who with other people's help are carried to Jesus, when you don't have that strength that you are able to go yourself! When the Son of Man sees from your condition and appearance that you have one sorrowful and broken heart, then the Son of Man says: Thy sins be forgiven thee. And now take up thy bed, arise and walk; if yet the scribes and Pharisees grumble and say: "This (man) blasphemes God", there are yet anyway some who dance, who thank God, who has given that authority to men, that the man sick of the palsy has received his sins forgiven, that he is saved from his palsy. And you palsied one, who yourself have not been able to travel the road of Christianity from that time when this sickness of the palsy came upon you, take up now your old bed-

ding of self-righteousness and carry it out, and remember! That you have received sins forgiven just then, when you got to hear these sweet words of grace from the mouth of Jesus: "Thy sins be forgiven thee," and do not henceforth go to commit sin, that something worse would not befall you, Thou palsied man! when the Son of Man has said to you: "Thy sins be forgiven thee", then you do not need to doubt anymore of the forgiveness of sins, although the Pharisees doubt, because at that moment that you believe, you receive that power to arise and walk the road of Christianity, but only to the palsied ones He has said: Thy sins be forgiven thee. So believe now, you palsied one, that your sins are forgiven. Amen.

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord make coats of skins and clothed them." Genesis 3:21

We hear from these words that man could not make clothes for himself when he had become naked because of sin, but God had to make clothes of skins for Adam and Eve. And although these clothes of skins were not as fine as the broadcloth and silk clothes which the whores of the world wear upon themselves, nevertheless they covered up the shameful parts and were a shelter from the cold weather. But we have seen that such clothing of skins, which God at that time made for naked man, is no longer acceptable to the naked whores of the world, but they must have such clothes through which the

sun shines, so that all the bucks of the world could have the eye entertainment of seeing a naked whore. Namely, when a naked whore wants to live very meekly, she removes her sack-cloth shirt from herself and in place puts on a combric shirt, through which the moon and the sun shine. On top of the cambric shirt she puts on a crinoline skirt, and so beautifully decked she goes to dance with the whore bucks, so that they would see her beauty. Both breasts she leaves uncovered for pleasure for the eyes of all those who desire to look upon her, but the moon and the sun shine through her clothes, and when she comes into the sunlight or before a candle, all the shameful places are seen, although she has meekly covered those shameful places with finery. But the meek whore does not believe that people can see her nakedness; she thinks that other people can see nothing when she herself does not see. She does not understand that light shines through, and that those clothes of meekness which she wears are the see-through kind. If she was so wise that she would wear clothes of skins, which God made for Eve, the shameful places would be covered better. But those clothes are no longer suitable to the whores of the world, which God made for their Mother Eve, but now they must have such clothes through which the moon and sun shine, so that all people could see, not only their breasts which are hardly covered with the sea-through crinoline, but also other shameful places which they have supposedly covered with the cambric shirt and the see-through crinoline skirt.

What does it help when she goes to the sauna and washes herself clean in front and behind before she goes to show herself to the world? She cannot anyway become so clean through that washing that the black places will not be seen. She has, namely, such black spots on her body which do not become white with natural water. Therefore God said to that old whore, Israel, "Even if you took much soap and washed yourself with lye, nevertheless your shame shows before me." When now people who have their eyes open cannot turn their backs on the whores of the world, nor do they know where they should turn their eyes when such a see-through whore comes to show her pass, with which she will get through hell's customs to travel in the kingdom of adultery. Then those people, who have not yet become entirely shameless, must say to the shameless whore of the world, "Oh for shame! are you not ashamed to show all the shameful places to the world?" Then she will say, "Are you seeing any more than what God has created?" But we know for sure that those black spots upon which the sun shines were not there in creation, nor in the innocent state, but they have grown afterward, when the lust of adultery began to be felt; and those black spots will not become covered with the cambric shirt of meekness nor with the crinoline skirt. Nor will the black spots become white even if she went into the sauna of darkness and washed herself in front and behind. Therefore the Lord also says to the meek whore, Israel, "If you would take much soap and would wash yourself with lye, nevertheless

your shame shows before me.” If old Adam’s daughters would have put on those clothes of skins which God made for their foreparents, they would have been better able to cover those shameful places. But the clothes of skin are no longer acceptable, but now they must prepare the cambric shirts of meekness and white crinoline skirts, through which the moon and sun shine. Through those clothes the shameful places are also seen when they come before the sun or a candle. Those shameful places were not seen formerly when darkness covered the earth and darkness covered the people. Then the meek whores of the world lifted their blouses to the drunken ones and some also stripped off their blouse when the whorebucks came near, but then the whole world was in darkness, no one saw their devilishness. But now light has come into the world; now the candle is put on the table; all who are in the house can see that such a life is not now acceptable which was formerly in the time of darkness. The whores of the world do not dare to come into the wedding hall stark naked, as it once happened in Luther’s time when the pope held a wedding, then all at once there came fifty naked whores to dance in the wedding hall, and all the chief priests and lords of the world were happy when these naked whores danced. But now such whores do not dare to dance stark naked in the wedding hall, but they cover the naked places with crinolines and think that people now see nothing, and nevertheless their shame is seen when they come before the light while dancing. But if those clot-

hes of skins were acceptable to them, which God made for Adam and Eve, their shame would be covered better. When now these naked wretches, who know their nakedness, are so foolish that they cannot make themselves clothes with which they could get along in the cold weather, and cannot cover their shame although they try to place fig leaves before the shameful places, then it would be the best advice for them that they would take on those clothes of skins, which the Heavenly Parent has made for their foreparents. Then they would get along in the cold weather when the world’s cold blizzard and tempest make them shiver so that the teeth chatter, especially on the shore of eternity, since that fire which the Saviour came to kindle has not yet really started to burn. Take upon yourselves the leather clothes, all you travelers to eternity, that you would get along in the tundras and on the billowing sea of the world, when the wind of the world, blizzards and tempests begin to rage severely in the cold weather! For the poor travelers, the sun is not always shining, and that holy fire which the Saviour came to kindle on the earth is not burning at all times. Therefore one poor traveler needs to be covered with good leather clothes, so that he would get along in the cold weather if darkness overtakes him in the tundras. The naked whores certainly get along well as long as they lie in the devil’s lap, but when their skin gets hot in that bonfire which the old man, the devil, has kindled from those dry trees, then they can cry out like they do here, “That certainly warms the butt.”

Pray now, all you naked wretches who cry on the cold floor of the world, that the Heavenly Parent who has given you birth with great tribulation and shedding of blood, that He by His great love would take you into His lap and wrap you in clean linens and allow you to suckle His grace-flowing breasts. Hear, dear Heavenly Father, the crying voice of the naked wretches. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 22: 1-14

In today's gospel our Saviour speaks about Christianity through a parable which shows that some because of love of the world cannot become Christians, and some hate and persecute those servants of the Lord who help true Christianity to prosper; some come into the Christianity or gladly receive the gifts of grace of God, but among them are some hypocrites or mouth-Christians who come into the wedding chamber without the wedding garment. Let us observe, therefore, through God's grace: what kind of people are they who do not come to the heavenly wedding, and second: what kind of guests are they who come to the wedding, and third: what guest is he who comes without a wedding garment. May that heavenly King, who has prepared a wedding for His Son, give His grace that those few souls who come to the wedding would take on the wedding garment, and that they would be able to answer when the King asks what foundation of faith they have!

First: What kind of people are they who do not come to the wedding? It

sounds from today's gospel that those respectable guests were already bidden before; they had already heard formerly that the King had prepared a wedding for His Son, but they were so pompous that they did not want to come to the wedding, although the King sent His servants many times to bid them. They did not want to come, instead they went away, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, and some took the King's servants and blasphemed them and killed them. Who now are the pompous guests who mocked the King's servants and killed them? The expounders of the Scriptures think that they are the Jews who do not want to become Christians at all. The Jews have, namely, that old faith of Moses upon which they trust, therefore the Saviour says, "I do not judge you for there is one that judges you, namely Moses in whom you trust." But the Jews do not believe that Moses judges them, for they think that God is their father, and they become very angry when Jesus tells them, "Ye are of your father the devil." Now when the Christianity appeared, the Jews began to hate and persecute the Christians. The Jews have, namely, that faith that the Saviour is one disturber of the people, and the Christians are wild spirits and false prophets. The Jews think that the Christians are possessed of evil spirits, and therefore they gnash their teeth and stop their ears when one Christian, Stephen, cries out that he sees the Son of God sitting on the right hand of God. The Jews become very angry when the Christians reprove them and say, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do

ye.” The Jews do not believe that the Christians are those servants of the King who call the Jews to the Heavenly wedding, but the Jews think that the Christians are servants of the devil. The Saviour also mentions in today’s gospel that they went away, one to his farm and another to his merchandise. The Jews are also noted businessmen and cunning at deceiving people, and those Jews who live in our country are also quite the liquor merchants. Those who went to their farms are called “grain Jews”; they buy much grain in good years when the grain is cheap, and then when a poor year comes they take twice the price from the poor. Otherwise, the Jews live decently outwardly, although the Saviour says that they strain at gnats and swallow camels; that signifies that they see many faults in the lives of the Saviour and the Christians, but their own evil deeds they do not see. Such now are those guests who do not want to come to the wedding or to the true Christianity. They mock the servants of the King and kill them. The Jews who live in these countries have not yet killed, but if they had the authority they would certainly soon make sausages out of the Christians’ blood. But they cannot see yet to make sausages from the Christians’ blood before they fetch fire from hell.

Second: Who are the guests who come to the King’s wedding? The Saviour says that the King bid His servants to go to the highways and said to them, “As many as ye shall find, bid them to the marriage.” But we know that those people, who stand on the highways and lanes, are especially the

whores, thieves and drunkards, so also the robbers, who stand by the highways and lanes and watch if some person comes by so that they could gain something. In the larger cities, the whores stand in the lanes and show their beauty to the passers-by, and sing their adulterous songs, because of which the meek damsels call them alley cats. In the larger cities drunkards also usually stand on the highways and lanes, and there they sing their drinking songs. Thieves also stand in the lanes and watch when people lie down, that they could get to steal. Such ones the King’s servants had to bid to the wedding, since the wedding was not acceptable to the lords. And so the whores, thieves and drunkards came into the King’s wedding. And the lords of the world and also respectable peasants, who do not want to come to the wedding, become even more angry, when they hear that harlots and publicans go before them into the kingdom of heaven; and the children of the kingdom, that is the best men of the congregation, are cast into outer darkness. But it comes from that, that harlots and publicans have enough sin to be penitent over, but the respectable and meek ones do not have enough sin to be penitent over. The harlots and publicans, that is, the whores, thieves and drunkards who stand on the highways and lanes, come into penitence when the Christians reprove them, and also become partakers of God’s grace when the heart has broken. But the lords of the world, who have a large farm and a liquor business, do not have time to become penitent and make repentance; therefore they remain wit-

hout Christianity, but they are the ones who mock and hate Christians the most. Therefore the King also becomes angry and destroys those murderers and burns their cities. But the whores or alley cats, the drunkards who call out in the lanes, and the thieves who stand by the highways, ate bidden by the King's servants to the wedding, and they come willingly, for such vulgar and coarse sinners must become penitent and make repentance when the Christians do not give them peace of conscience. They must beg for grace, since they have no other recourse anywhere than to go to destruction if the King does not have mercy upon them.

Third: What person was it who came without the wedding garment? We hear from the Gospel that the servants of the King gathered all who they found, the good and the bad; and we hear it often said that some are true, but not all. And those who think that all are not true, can now come and examine the guests to see if they can say who are the true Christians, and who are not. If they think that they know them, then let them come now to say who are the good and who are the bad. But I think that those who say that all are not true are unable to examine them. Assuredly it is heard in the gospel that all are not good who become Christians, but it is unknown if the good are better wedding guests than the bad. Although the children of the world think that the Christians make themselves good when they bark and reprove the slaves of the world, and the Christians are very bad when they are no longer acceptable to the world for drinking companions, all

the same they come into the heavenly wedding.

But who is that mute guest who answered nothing when the King asked, "Friend, how comest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" He became mute when he was asked how he had become a Christian. He must be a thief of grace who has never stripped himself naked. But it is first necessary that we understand rightly how the wedding garment is given to those guests who strip themselves naked. In the Old Testament there was the custom that when some king prepared a wedding, he also gave the guests wedding garments, as for example Joseph gave his brothers festive raiment, and the Father gave the prodigal son the best robe and a ring on his hand, but before these wedding garments were put on, the wedding guests had to strip off their own rags. But this wedding guest, of which it is now spoken in today's gospel, did not care to strip himself naked and change into new wedding garments. He had such great honor that he did not care to strip himself naked, and therefore he became mute when the King asked, "Friend, how comest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" He could not answer why he had not taken upon himself those wedding garments which the King had offered him. And it should be a sign to you that everyone, who cannot say why he has come into the wedding hall without the wedding garment, has his own rags; he has such great honor that he does not care to strip himself naked; self-righteousness is so great in him that he does not need Christ's righ-

teousness, which is the right wedding garment. But he holds himself to be a true guest, although he has come with his own black, dirty and filthy clothes. He thinks he is a true Christian, although honor is so big and stout that he becomes mute when the question comes, that how has he become a Christian, although he has not taken Christ's righteousness upon himself which was offered to him, but thought himself to be an acceptable wedding guest with his own repentance.

New take an example for yourselves, all you mute wedding guests, and consider closely why this wedding guest became mute when the question came of true Christianity, and how it will finally go with him. And you naked whores, who have formerly stripped off your blouses that you would be more acceptable to the slaves of the devil for a whore, strip off now all your own, clothes and take new wedding garments upon yourselves; strip off the old, dirty shirt, and take on a new cambric shirt which is washed in the river Jordan, which the heavenly Bridegroom has purchased for His poor bride. Formerly you have stripped off your shirt in the darkness where the people have not seen your shame, but now you must strip yourself naked before the whole world, before the angels and the devils, otherwise you will not receive new wedding raiment upon yourself, although the devils laugh, mock and sneer at a naked whore, and even spit upon her and say, "For shame, a devil's whore! How terrible she is." And the meek whores of the world spit upon a naked whore and say, "Is that the kind

the Saviour's bride is?" An old scabby and evil smelling whore of the devil who has no clear skin on her whole body, but from the heel to the crown of the head there is no sound part, but only wounds, bruises and blood blisters which have not been squeezed. As such the bride of the Saviour is depicted in the first chapter of the Prophet Isaiah, and in another place the Lord says of her, You have committed fornication with many idols, and Israel has allowed the Egyptian whorebucks to squeeze her breasts. Is such one now the Saviour's bride, the meek whores of the world ask; they do not believe that an old scabby and evil smelling whore must be the Saviour's bride. But strip yourself naked and show your wounds to the Saviour; who knows, He may have mercy on you, and take you for His bride, although you are one scabby whore. He will heal your wounds, and will give you new white garments. He will clothe you as a bride and will place a gold martyr's crown upon your head, in which there are twelve stars, and will put on a betrothal ring and a cross on the breast, and will lead you before the Father and all the holy angels, and say, "Here is that poor bride, which I have purchased with My own blood from the earth, and torn from the claws of the devil." Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, you heavens! for the heavenly King has prepared a wedding for His Son and His poor bride, and the wedding hall is full of wedding guests who rejoice and are exceedingly glad forever. Amen.

Twentyfirst sunday after Trinity.

Jesus said to a man who could not believe that Jesus is able to heal his son: “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” Mark. 9: 23.

We hear of these words of the Savior that he requires faith of those who want to be helped. But there are not many who can believe when they are distressed. Certainly all have faith when there is no trial pertaining the body or the soul, but when there is a trial and the intellect does not more understand where help could come from, then it is not so easy to believe. Even that man to whom Jesus said: “If thou canst believe etc.” was unable to believe that his son will become released from the claws of the devil. And he felt even himself that the faith became weaker and weaker. “Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief!”

The sorrowful and penitent ones must often feel and experience that their faith is lacking when they see nothing but death and hell, and do not see any hole through which they could escape from there. In this distress many penitent and sorrowful souls have fallen into doubt just like Jesus’ disciples who wept and lamented, and were not more able to believe that Jesus will become living anymore. The thieves of grace who have no distress certainly have a faith that is firm as a rock. But the disciples of Jesus have nothing to hope neither in heaven nor on the earth, because they feel that Jesus dies in their hearts. What the servants of selfrighteousness say, that they have no faith, it

is only an imagination that they will not become saved in that state (of soul). But they have indeed no distress in their unbelief, as the disciples of Jesus had, but they are satisfied in their unbelief. And at this time there are many prisoners of unbelief who do not become sorrowful of Jesus’ death. And some people do not feel at all that Jesus has since long ago died in their hearts. Some people think that Jesus is not more alive but however they are satisfied when they remain in that dead state (of soul). This dead state (of soul) when Jesus is lying in the grave of the dead faith is not the real unbelief, but it is a spiritual death of which the eternal death follows soon. If the disciples of Jesus do not become sorrowful because of Jesus’ death, Jesus does not resurrect.

Now Jesus is already died in many Christians hearts. And now all the disciples of Jesus had to become sorrowful. You had to weep and lament when you feel and see that Jesus dies in your hearts. You do not have refuge in the world when Jesus dies. You do not have hope to (come to) heaven when Jesus dies, but you must begin to weep and lament so that the voice is heard in heaven. This moves the heart of the heavenly Father to pardon so that he wakes up his only begotten Son from the death and brings him living to you again.

We hope that the dear Parent hears still in the grave the miserable voice of lamentation of the orphan children when they cry with sorrowful heart. Our Father etc.

The gospel: John. 4: 46.

We heard that the kings' servant believed, because he saw that his son was released from death through Jesus' word. But of Jesus' words - Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe - sounds also that the kings' servant would not have believed in the Son of God if this wonder had not happened. Of this servant of the king the prisoners of unbelief may now take an upbuilding example for themselves and examine themselves according to it, first in his unbelief and secondly in his faith.

For sure there is reason to rebuke the parents because they do not believe in the Son of God before they see some wonder happen. When they come to pray Jesus (asking) that he would come and help their children from spiritual and eternal death. They are not able to believe that their son will be healed in this world before they see that the son will be snatched like a firebrand from the shackles of the death. When they by their prayers carry their sorrowless children to Jesus, they can not believe that the great Lord of life and death has still power by his word to wake up those sorrowless children from the grave of the spiritual death before they see the great wonder happen.

I know that the Christian parents who have that blessed desire that they soon will see the Great Crossbearer and thorn-crowned King face to face, have such desire that even their children would become released from the death into life, so that even they would become rescued from the eternal death. The parents desire to see their children sitting in Jesus' lap and lean their heads

to Jesus' breast. That is why the parents carry by their prayers their children to Jesus hoping that He would put his hands on them and bless them.

But in this time the parents scarcely can believe that Jesus by his word is still able to wake up their children from the spiritual death. Jesus rebukes you, parents, because of that unbelief and says: Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. And as you have been like the kings' servant in unbelief, be also in faith as the king's servant when you see your children be saved from the eternal death. When you see that the spiritual ague has left your children, believe also that the Son of God has power to save by his word your children from the spiritual and eternal death.

If you would believe it, you would have more powers to speak to, advice and exhort your children to become Christians. Oh what a joy you would have, dear parents, if you were able to gather all of your children in your lap and carry them in front of God and say: Here I am, and the children You gave me. Oh, what a joy the parents might have had, when Jesus took their children in his lap and blessed them! It is pleasant to the parents to see that their children are sitting in the lap of the Heavenly Parent. It is almost impossible to believe that the Son of God is able to heal such children who have newly died in sin, or hardened so that they do not any more listen to their natural parents at all, but go head along to hell.

But the kings' servant had the lack of faith, and the other parents maybe

have the lack of faith, too, because they want to see wonders happen in their children before they believe that the Son of God is able to heal them. Pray now, all parents, that the Lord would increase your faith when you come to Jesus to pray that he would heal your children before they die eternally. Pray that you would see your children sitting in the lap of the Creator and leaning their heads toward Jesus' breast and receive his blessing. Then you can with joy and rejoicing come to the judgement and say: Here I am, and the children You gave me. Amen

22nd Sunday after Trinity.

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” Romans 10: 3.

Saint Paul has shown in many places that there is not even one living righteous before God, and that not one person will be saved through the works of the law. This doctrine of Paul was especially against the Jews who imagined that they were able to fulfill the law and thereby become righteous before God. Many still have this faith of the Jews, especially the naturally meek, who do not feel a person's corruption, nor do they feel God's severe righteousness. Such people think that meekness repays itself, and will be more broadly rewarded; they have that false faith that a person's meekness

should be acceptable to God. The pagans also have this faith, who do not know any other foundation of salvation than only that natural meekness; for that reason Pilate washed himself clean of all iniquity, before he proclaimed one wrong judgement. In that way he wanted to cleanse his conscience, so that God could not reproach him of iniquity, when he because of worldly honor and because of fear of the people, contrary to his conscience, condemned one righteous Man to death. Such is the foundation of natural meekness, that under the shadow of the law they can condemn an innocent man to death although their conscience battles against it. Pilate thought that he had cleansed his conscience when he had washed his hands and said, “I am innocent of the death of this righteous man.” This paganish faith, that man's meekness must be acceptable to God, the Jews also had, who tried to build up their own righteousness and become saved through the works of the law. But the Jews' righteousness is no better than the pagan's meekness. But where does the righteousness of the Jews demand more than the law of God demands? The self-righteousness of the Jews demands keeping the Sabbath holy to such an extent that not one Christian can fulfill it. They kept it a great sin that the Saviour healed the sick on the Sabbath and that the disciples plucked a few grain heads with their hands. And the Jews were so strict about keeping the Sabbath holy that; they do not snuff out a candle on Sunday, but on the other hand are so blind that they hate and persecute the Christians, they grit their

teeth and stop their ears when one Christian reproves them of iniquity and an ungodly life. Because of this self-righteousness, the devil has given the Jews sharp eyes to see faults in the lives of the Christians; the Saviour says, "They strain at gnats and swallow camels," they surely see small faults in the Christians, but leave out the weighty parts of the law, namely, righteousness and judgement, and so go about to establish their own righteousness. And this is one reason why the Jews cannot confess the Christianity to be right, that they see so many faults in the lives of the Christians. The devil has set them up as the Christians' guard posts. If one of them snuffs out a candle on Sunday, they keep that to be Sabbath-breaking; but if the Jews make Sunday a drinking day and a fighting day, that is not sabbath-breaking; although the king's law condemns drinking as sabbath-breaking. However, the Jews do not obey the king's law.

But Paul writes these words to the Christians, amongst which are some who are ignorant of God's righteousness but go about to establish their own righteousness and have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. This is one dangerous place if Christians begin to establish their own righteousness, they then drown the simple ones in doubts and press them so deeply into the law that it is not easy for them to rise up again. We know that self-righteousness is that devil who changes himself into an angel of light; he is supposedly so sincere that a person cannot understand his cunningness, he is one secret devil who comes upon

a penitent one in the form of truth and effects so much, that some penitent ones try with their own repentance to be acceptable to God. Some want to earn grace with deeper tribulation and torment of conscience. Some cleanse their conscience themselves with self-righteousness but not with Christ's righteousness, and if self-righteousness comes before grace, then he becomes a terrible Christian who rises up on Mount Sinai or on the pinnacle of the temple and overlooks all others who are lower. And when self-righteousness rises to the pinnacle of the temple, he becomes the best Christian, he becomes overly rich in love and he depends only on movements and high feelings of grace and takes from there that supposition, that since others do not have such high feelings, they are still far from the Saviour. Some depend only on the cleansing of the conscience, which they themselves have cleansed with their own repentance and in that way gained peace, so that he has repaid all his wrongs and reconciled with all, he no more longs for cleansing of the conscience or heart in the Saviour's blood. Those who thus through self-righteousness have cleansed their conscience, overlook the movements of the heart, are angry at those pups of grace who whine and imagine that all movements of the heart are effected by the devil or one's own doing. Some also who have become Christians through self-righteousness, in that way, that self-righteousness himself has become graced by owning grace in a half-awakened state; he cannot bear to hear the law, but only promises of the gospel, for

self-righteousness is such that he himself does not want to hear the judgement, although he judges others. But they who have owned grace although the heart has never been broken are so without conscience that neither the law nor the gospel touches the heart. They flee far from that place where the pups of grace whine, they become angry if severe law is preached, such thieves of grace are so blind that they do not recognize that spiritual hatred, which rules in their hearts. And since self-righteousness is so secret and so unknown that he changes himself into an angel of light so nicely that not many recognize it, for that reason it is necessary to remember what Paul has written to the Christians, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God," He wants to say that some do not understand how severe God's righteousness is, that not one person can be acceptable to God with self-righteousness, but even all saints are faulty and guilty before Him; but self-righteousness is so rooted that many want to be saved through it, self-righteousness induces even the awakened to earn something in some way. But we see from Judas' example that he did not get peace of conscience although he threw the ill-gotten money back, but his conscience forced him to do that, so must every person also do, who has an awakened conscience; he must throw back the ill-gotten money but he still thereby does not get peace of conscience, for God is not yet reconciled. The ill-gotten money he surely

had to throw back, but he earned nothing thereby, for sin will not be paid with money and therefore a person himself cannot cleanse his conscience. And if someone thinks that he now has a clean conscience when he has reconciled all and however is not reconciled with God, he has become a Christian through self-righteousness; and such a one becomes a terrible Christian, who has cleansed his conscience himself with self-righteousness. But he is a still more terrible Christian, where self-righteousness himself has become a Christian through owning grace, such a Christian is without conscience and is angry with the pups of grace who whine; and such a thief of grace cannot bear to hear judgement, these are not submissive to God's righteousness. But they also want to establish self-righteousness, who do not want to come and beg for grace as penitent devils, such ones self-righteousness drives and presses into doubts and finally they return to the world.

And now when self-righteousness has become as a dam in the Christianity, so that the Lord of glory no longer can get to travel as in the first awakening, then it would be necessary that those few souls who have a broken and a contrite heart would pray to that great cross bearer and thorn-crowned King, that He would destroy this dam of self-righteousness and would teach us on which side of the boat we should cast the net, and in which hand we should hold the sword of the spirit, at which tree's roots the axe could be laid, and in which way the field is taken care of, and how this dam of self-righteousness

is destroyed so that the Lord of glory would get to travel. Hear, Oh merciful King, the prayer of that servant who has come under a great debt, Our Father, etc.

Gospel: Matthew 18:23.

Consideration: about self-righteousness. First: What does self-righteousness effect in the sorrowless state? Second: What does self-righteousness effect in the awakened state? Third: What does self-righteousness effect in a graced state?

First: What does self-righteousness effect in the sorrowless state? It effects so much that one sorrowless sinner becomes indebted to the king for many thousand talents; but in the sorrowless state he does not worry about paying it, but some think that it is not entered into the book of account, some do not at all remember what they have taken on credit, and some deny entirely that they have taken anything on credit. Some take from the king on credit and promise that they will pay at the first opportunity, but do not at all worry how this debt will be paid: some are such rogues that they take many thousand talents on credit from the king, but bring their goods to another, namely to the enemies of the king.

Now some of the king's debtors are of that kind they take on credit many thousand talents from the king and bring their goods to the king's enemies and finally say to the king, "Let the devil repay you." Some surely take debt upon their own accounting and if some fellow servant asks of them, "How much do you owe my Lord?" then they answer proudly, "What does it concern

you?" I will answer for myself, you will not pay in my behalf; and pay your own debt." In this answer is one terrible pride and self-righteousness, which the devil has given to all naturally meek, for the devil has such great pride and self-righteousness that he will not take any sin upon himself, but reproaches God as wrong, Who condemns such a meek and pious man. And all the slaves of the devil seem to have that nature, that they will not take any sin upon themselves, for self-righteousness, which is the foundation: for natural meekness, gives the drunkards that enlightenment that the flowing devil's dung is God's blessings and for that reason moderate drinking is not a sin. The same devil of self-righteousness has given the whores that enlightenment that adultery is love; and to the whiskey merchant the devil has given such assurances that the Whiskey trade is an honorable business. Now if a Christian reproves a drunkard of drunkenness, he then answers, "You are not God. If I have drunk, it is not on your accounting; I have not stolen whiskey, I have received it honorably or bought it." If it is said to the whiskey merchant, "With the whiskey business you have shoved many souls into hell before the allotted time, you have made many poor, you have drunk the sweat and tribulation of the poor, because of you the poor women and children could weep in hunger and nakedness and all these tears will become burning in hell," then the whiskey merchant answers, "It is not upon my accounting, they themselves have bought, they themselves have drunk." And in this

way the whiskey business becomes a work of grace and showing of love, and not a sin. It is love for one's neighbor, it is not for misfortune. From grace and love the whiskey merchant has measured out devil's dung to the people, so also has one meek whore shown grace and her love to her companion in adultery, through that she has done wrong to no one, and if some Christian reproves her of adultery, she soon shows her pass with which she can freely travel to the kingdom of adultery, and says to the reprover, "Look at your butt. If I am gaudily dressed, I have received my finery honorably, I have not anyway stolen it, and if I have lain with the boys, it is not on your accounting, I will answer myself if harm comes to my soul." Thus has the devil of self-righteousness made adultery, drunkenness, and whiskey trade allowable, he has made the drunkard temperate, the whiskey merchant honorable and whore meek so that they have no sin to repent of; how can such ones confess that they owe ten thousand talents. Some debtors confess to the unjust stewards that they owe a debt, when namely the unjust steward asks, "How much do you owe ray Lord?" Then one says, a hundred measures of oil, another says, a hundred measures of wheat, but the unjust steward teaches them to write the sin debt off as less, when he says, take the book, sit down quickly and write fifty. Self-righteousness has discovered this trick. When the conscience awakens, he tells the debtors rightly how great the debt is, but the unjust steward, who has wasted the Lord's goods and thereby come under such a great debt himself,

teaches the awakened also to write the debt of sin to be lesser, so that the wounds of the conscience will not begin to stink and bleed until in eternity. And we know that the devil of self-righteousness does not increase, but lessens the sin debt as much as possible, but if the conscience rightly awakens and in that condition he shows to the sinner how great the debt of sin is, then the devil of self-righteousness puts rocks upon the load and says to the penitent, "Your sins will not be forgiven, not in this life nor in the world to come." But in the sorrowless condition, the devil of self-righteousness carries the load of sin like a sack of feathers: namely, natural meekness carries from one end and dead faith from the other end and the devil from the middle; how can the load of sin become heavy to such a person? To him the load of sin is so light as a sack of feathers and with this load of sin he runs very quickly to hell.

Second: What does self-righteousness effect in the awakened state? It effects so much that an awakened person intends to pay the debt of sin himself. We hear from today's gospel that the servant who had a debt of ten thousand talents prayed to the king and said, "Lord, have patience with me and I will pay thee all. With what do you intend to pay it? With tar, no doubt: How do they pay their debt, who take large debts from the merchants, depending on their own selves? They depend upon that, that they have a large tar-making pile in the woods. But it is unknown if the king cares for tar. The debt of the whiskey merchant might become paid with

tar, but the debt of sin cannot be paid with tar. Nevertheless, this servant had such a trust and reliance upon himself that he can pay that great sin debt if he can have extended time. For it often happens that one sorrowless person postpones his repentance from day to day, until that time that death begins to press his heart; then the fear of death comes when the book of the conscience opens, he knows then that the debt of ten thousand talents has accumulated, but self-righteousness teaches him to pray very wrongly: he prays, namely, that time of grace would be extended to him? he makes such promises on his sick bed, that if God would allow him to live a longer time in the world, then he would make penitence and repentance. But it has also more often happened, that such people, who make promises of penitence and repentance on their sick beds, do not remember their promises any more after they become well; in the fear of death they cry out, "Lord, have patience with me and I will pay Thee all," but when they are well they cry out, "Let the devil pay you; you have nothing coming from me."

Behold now, good and bad, what self-righteousness effects in you: it effects so much that awakened people think that they can pay the sin debt, providing they could have extended time from the Lord. And no doubt, upon some future repaying you are now depending, all awakened and half-awakened, who have suffered so many years with an evil and gnawing conscience, You have for many years been rendering an accounting with the king, have surely confessed your debt partly, but

the sin debt is not yet wiped away from the book of account. With what do you intend to pay your debt? Do you have so much tar stumps that you think that you will get your debt paid providing the Lord gives you extended time? You have already prayed many times, "Lord, have patience with me and I will pay Thee all." With what do you intend to pay your debt? with your own repentance? or better penitence? I fear that the king will command you and your wife and children's souls be sold at auction, if you do not soon fall down at your Lord's feet and pray Merciful Lord Jesus, You crucified and thorn-crowned King, I have nothing with which to pay that great debt of sin, if You do not have mercy on me and wipe away my great debt of sin, I must perish everlastingly. If you would pray in this way, you would get along better with your fellow servant, than that servant who took him by the throat because of one small debt. But self-righteousness will not allow you to pray so; but he says, "It is impossible that you could receive such a large debt forgiven, it is better to pay the debt, if you first beg for extended time and then pay a little at a time." Look, thus the devil of self-righteousness teaches the awakened ones to pray entirely wrongly, that he would finally get them to consent to the world and to forget their promises. There is no depending upon that, that this servant received his debt forgiven although he prayed wrongly, because the Lord looked at the prayer of his heart and forgave him his debt for the reason that he prayed. The Lord could see it impossible that the servant

could have paid the debt although he himself thought he could. But not one awakened person needs to follow his example in those deceiving works, but it is set forth for us to shun, that other servants would not be deceived onto the wrong road of self-righteousness. That same servant had namely, awakened from the sleep of sin, and because of the fear of death he began to pray that the Lord would extend to him yet time of grace and would wait until he with his own repentance would pay the sin debt, but self-righteousness put him to pray like that, through which he strayed from the right order of grace, nevertheless the Lord forgave him that great debt because he prayed. And therefore we must believe that he received his sins forgiven and through that became a child of God; but what faith did he have now, when he had received his sins forgiven? It is impossible to believe that he had dead faith, because no one can receive his sins forgiven with dead faith. Therefore he had living faith at that time, but living faith soon changes to dead faith if the conscience is not watching.

Third: This servant had now received this great sin debt forgiven, had so come into a graced state, he then had living faith and the child-right of a child of God. But he did not remain in that condition long, for when he was released from that first terror of death and became well, the world began to steal his heart, the conscience began to sleep, living faith changed into dead faith although he himself did not know how and when his faith would have changed, for he always built upon that

former Christianity and thought he was still in a state of grace and that he was always steadfast in his faith. But we now understand of his works that he did not have fruits of living faith when he came out and met one of his fellow servants and began to take him by the throat because of one small debt, and self-righteousness had effected this great change in him, for in a natural state self-righteousness will not allow the pagans to believe that they are condemned. Self-righteousness does not concede that the Christians have the power to judge the pagans and that the Christians have the child-right of God's children.

In an awakened state, when the conscience condemns a person because of that great debt of sin which presses into destruction, self-righteousness does not allow one to ask forgiveness, but he puts the awakened one to ask for extended time that he supposedly, through his own repentance, would get to earn grace; but in the graced state self-righteousness rises to the head in some, and on the other side he casts them to the ground through unbelief, for when six devils beat a Christian with terrible temptations, but the seventh, which is self-righteousness, changes himself into an angel of light and preaches there in the skull that such a one is not a Christian, who feels so much evil with him and who had so many evil thoughts, lusts, and desires, as though Christianity stood there, that a Christian would be like an angel.

But on the other hand, self-righteousness raises some to the pinnacle of the temple or onto a high mountain and

there he shows them all the honor of the world and exalts some as the “best Christians and fathers in the Christianity; and then they begin to take their fellow servant by the throat because of a small debt, some through the harshness of the natural law, some spiritually by merciless judgement, for when self-righteousness himself gets to be a Christian, he becomes a terrible Christian he does not allow grace any more to any others, only himself. What self-righteousness effected already in the first Christians, we see in Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians, where he rebukes them of that strife between themselves: one said, I am of Paul, another said, I am of Apollos, a third said, I am of Cephas, and a fourth said I am of Christ. Here already self-righteousness had exalted some to be the best Christians, not one of these wanted to be the poorest among the apostles. And this arguing amongst themselves remained in Christendom as long as the Christianity was living; but that was not the work of the Holy Spirit — that discord between themselves, but it was the devils of self-righteousness, honor, and self-love, who already then cane between the Christians, and the pagans took occasion from that to trample the Christianity, for the pagans of that time said then as the pagans of this time now say, “The Christians do not get along between themselves, do they not persecute one the other.” And the pagans of this time should hear what the former pagans have spoken so that they would better believe that Christianity is one wildness and remarkable superstition. But although the pagans now get to

trample the Christianity because of discord, and it is also the fault of the Christians, for Paul says, “For the name of Christ is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you,” we do not therefore believe that the Christianity is one remarkable superstition, although the pagans say so, but our hope is, that the Christianity must prosper and go forward no matter how the Jews gritted their teeth and stopped their ears. But we must pray to that great cross-bearer and thorn-crowned King, Who has come to make strife upon the earth between the pagans and the Christians, and drove out the devils of self-righteousness, selfishness and honor, greed and envy, anger and adultery from their hearts, so that they would become one heart and one soul as the first Christians were, that they were one-minded in faith and love, that they would be strengthened in their most precious faith and would remain watching to the end, that they would give their lives for Christ, if that merciful Saviour has so foreseen in His wisdom, that we must suffer hatred and persecution for His name’s sake. For He has not spared one drop of blood which He has not shed for our sake. Then if His love so demands, we must be prepared to give our lives and blood for His name’s sake, that we would win the crown of life and could rejoice with Him in that new Jerusalem and on Mount Zion where the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed sing the new song. Although we cannot yet follow their tune, but anyway it would be joyous to hear that heavenly sound which is more beautiful than the angel’s voice. There is that goal to

which we must strive, hasten and long for in our endeavoring, our tribulation, if we want to finally reach that blessed place, where all redeemed souls now rejoice and are exceedingly glad until that time when that great day of the Lord comes. Amen.

Twentythird Sunday after Trinity, Sermon A

“Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed.” Psalms 2: 1-2

King and prophet David saw in spirit how the heathens rage, the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and His anointed. And this prophesy of David has been fulfilled in many ways, first in the Saviour’s time, when the enemies of Christ counseled against Him and tempted Him in every way, and afterward in the Apostles’ time, when the persecutors of the Christians began to hate the disciples and to lap the Christians’ blood. And then in the Pope’s kingdom, where the king and Caesar and the pope began to trouble Luther and his brothers in faith, even in that time David’s prophesy was fulfilled. But now since the kings and rulers have seen how David’s prophesy is fulfilled in every way, no doubt the kings of the earth and rulers have ceased to trouble the Christians, no doubt the rulers now have taken counsel against the prince of the world, but not against the

Christians. No doubt the rulers now accuse the drunkards and the whiskey merchants, but not the Christians. No doubt the rulers now hate the thieves and the whores but not the Christians. We do not know against whom the rulers of the world take counsel; do they take counsel together as to how they would torment the crowd of the devil and dragon, or do they take counsel together against the Lord and His anointed? Do the rulers hate the thieves and the whores, or do the rulers hate the Christians? Do the rulers trouble the drunkards and whiskey merchants, or do they trouble the children of God?

We have heard that the disciples received a great joy and comfort from these words of David when the rulers began to persecute the disciples of Jesus. We have heard and seen that the disciples then received great joy from those words of David when they saw that David’s words came true or became fulfilled almost a thousand years afterward. And from that the disciples received joy and great power of prayer, when, they remembered these words of David which are found written in the second Psalm of David, which came to mind to the disciples of Jesus when the rulers of the world began to hate them because of Christianity; namely these words of David, “Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed.” And why did the disciples receive that great power of prayer then from the words of David? Yes, for the reason that in those words was the truth

of God. Their Christianity would not have been right if these words of David had not come true. But exactly from that the disciples of Jesus received great power of prayer, when these words of David became fulfilled in that way, that the rulers began to persecute Jesus' disciples because of Christianity. From where could the disciples of Jesus receive greater power of faith than from this, that they could fit these words of David to themselves, that the rulers took counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, when they hated and persecuted the disciples of Jesus because of Christianity. David has truly not spoken anything of the disciples in that aforementioned place, but has only spoken of Christ, and said a thousand years before that the heathens imagine a vain thing, and "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed." How could the disciples therefore own for themselves these words, although David in that place has not written anything of the disciples but only of Christ? Yes, the disciples could own these words for themselves in that way, that what the heathens do to the Christians, they also do to Christ. And when the heathens think vain things about the Christians, that they also think about Christ. And when these prophetic words of David were thus fulfilled in Christ and also upon the Christians, then it is a sign that the Christianity is right when it happens according to the Scriptures, namely persecution happens to the Christians according to the Scriptures. From that it is seen that this

Christianity is right, since David's prophetic words are fulfilled. If it had not so happened as David has written, namely, first he has written that the heathens think vain things about the Christianity, not only those unbaptized pagans, but also the baptized pagans think vain things about the Christians. Then David has also written that the kings of the world set themselves, that is, prepare themselves to persecute the Christians. It has not exactly happened at these times but it has certainly happened before, and can even henceforth happen. Then David has also said that the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed. That has happened even at these times, and it must happen even henceforth as long as the world stands, that the rulers of the world take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, as long as true Christianity is found on the earth. But when Christianity ceases, then the rulers cease taking counsel against Christ. From these words of David Jesus' disciples have received that faith that the rulers take counsel against the Lord and against His anointed, when they take the disciples of Jesus before the church council. The disciples of Jesus now have such a belief that David's words are now fulfilled, and that the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, who take Jesus' disciples before the church council. The disciples had just come from before the church council, when such a great movement came to them and that great power of prayer, and then it came to their minds what David had written about the

Christianity a thousand years before: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" That the heathens rage and imagine vain things was seen then, and even now the heathens rage and imagine vain things about Christ and the Christians. But the heathens do not believe that they imagine vain things when they think wrongly about the Christians, but the heathens think they have the truth when they have hatred in their hearts. And the kings set themselves against Christ, as David says. But the kings do not believe that they set themselves against Christ when they oppress Jesus' disciples through the worldly law, but they think that Jesus' disciples are false prophets and wild spirits, as such the prince of this world has depicted the Christians up to now. Since he has first reversed the eyes of the children of the world, in the eyes of the world the whores and thieves have changed to Christians, and the Christians have changed to blasphemers of God and despisers of the right service of God. They have changed to enemies of God and people in the eyes of the children of the world. Nor have the rulers brought the whores and drunkards before the church council, but they certainly bring the Christians first before the court of the church and then, who knows, they also bring them before Pilate, and there all get to cry out, "Crucify!" There they all get to accuse Christ. There in Pilate's law everyone, both the lords and the peasants, can quench their hatred in Jesus' blood, for they have all been cleansed in the blood of the dragon. No others than some women who follow after and

weep and some sorrowful disciples pity the innocent death of Jesus. All others are in joy and blaspheme that Crucified One and wag their heads and think, "It now happened good enough for the disturber of the people; he deserved nothing better." And then the rulers begin to hate and to persecute the disciples of Jesus so that David's prophecy would be fulfilled: "The rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed." And it is also seen in today's gospel how David's words have been fulfilled when the rulers of the world took counsel together of how they could trouble Christ and cause harm to Him. But we believe that He can answer so that the rulers of the world could not yet at this time do harm unto Him with their deceit. For at times the disciples of Jesus can rejoice that it has happened as David has said. And to them comes that great power of prayer, when they receive that boldness that they can confess before the whole world that the Christianity is right and the right goal, when all has happened which is written in the Scriptures. Hear, you Anointed of the Lord, what the true disciples of Jesus pray, Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 22: 15-22

In today's gospel it is written how the Pharisees went and took counsel of how they might entangle Jesus in His talk. Their intention was to summon Him before the law if he spoke something against the law of the country, or against the statutes of the kingdom, or against the faith of Moses. First they took counsel amongst themselves of

where they could best take a hold of Him. Then they took some from Herod's group as a witness or attestor and an accuser in behalf of the government, if Jesus would have spoken some word through which they could have taken a hold of Him. But this time their cleverness did not prosper, although the intention certainly was such that they could, through the law of the world or the church law, remove Him from preaching and teaching the people. For the slaves of the devil have always had the same intention as satan had in the time of Job, that he wanted to get a hold of the skin, for satan said to God, "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life." The devil has such great envy that when he otherwise does not hold his own, he must get a hold of the skin. So also the slaves of satan do when they cannot otherwise hold their own in arguing, they must take the Christians before the church court. So they did with Stephen, and even now the same thing has been tried. Then if the Christians would be judged in the church court to be teachers of false doctrine, or wild spirits, then the slaves of the world through the law of the world could get a hold of the Christians' skin. Such hatred is in the hearts of the slaves of satan that they want to destroy the Christians just through the law, since the slaves of satan cannot punish the Christians according to the common law. The Pharisees now have the same intention, that they could accuse the disturber of the people, if He would have spoken something from which they could take a hold of Him through the law. At this time we must

observe how the Parisees take counsel of how they might entangle Jesus in His talk, that they might summon Him before the law, and also take from Herod's group government men for witnesses and accusers.

You have all heard from today's gospel that the Pharisees have united themselves to take counsel of how they might entangle Jesus in His talk. The Pharisees have such a belief that Jesus of Nazareth is a false teacher, a disturber of the people, and a great sorcerer who is in league with the devil, and so He must be destroyed and killed by all means. And this false belief about the Nazarene has come from that spiritual hatred which surges in the heart of the Pharisees, and this hatred is that serpent's poison which makes their hearts swell. This is that enmity which God, immediately after the fall into sin, put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and that same spiritual hatred has come from that, that the Nazarene has reproached the Pharisees' denomination as hypocrites. Namely, when the Pharisees avoid outward sins, commit much crookedness secretly of which the natural law cannot take a hold of them, and even if some Pharisees were fined according to the natural law, nevertheless they can bypass the king's law, when there is not such an accuser who takes them before the law. That sinful trade, which the Pharisees keep around the church, is certainly forbidden in the law, but there are no accusers. The Nazarene has reproved the Pharisees that they devour the widows' houses, that they strain at gnats and swallow camels, which signi-

fies that the Pharisees have sharp eyes to see the Christians' faults, but their own sins are covered, although they are as large as camels or horses. Even if a camel would be a stickle-back which the Pharisees swallow, the Pharisees of this time have the same nature, that they strain at gnats and swallow camels. The Pharisees can also commit adultery in the darkness, for they knew anyway that the sinful woman, who wept in the house of Simon, was a whore. And how did they know this? From their own experience, no doubt. And when the Pharisees bring the whore to Jesus to try whether He will forgive the impenitent whore, they all then slip out when Jesus or the Nazarene says, He who is free, let him cast the first stone. That signifies that whoever is free of this whore, let him cast the first stone. Then the Pharisees all slipped out as shame-faced dogs. But in their own opinion, anyway, the Pharisees were certainly meek and pious. The Pharisee comes into the church to pray before the publican. The publican stands afar off while the Pharisee stands and prays. It is heard that he prays thus, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." We hear, therefore, that although the Pharisee is an evil-doer, although he is an adulterer, although he is a drunkard, although he devours widows' houses, nevertheless he is surely godly in the church. Now when the Nazarene barks at such as hypocrites, mouth-Christians and generation of vipers, anger comes to the Pharisees from that; from that reproach the old Adam of the Pharisee rises. And

when the Pharisees do not know for which place they could first begin to accuse Jesus, then they go to take counsel of how they could entangle Jesus in His talk. The Pharisees of this time do just this also to the Christians. They first come together and take counsel of how they can get rid of Him through the law of the world, and when the Pharisees think thus, they also take from the crowd of Herod some government men as witnesses and accusers, for the Herodians are King Herod's servants.

Now you must know why the Pharisees are so angry at the Nazarene. Hatred has come because the Nazarene has barked at them as hypocrites and generation of vipers. He has said that the Pharisees strain at gnats and swallow camels; that is, the Pharisees have bright eyes to see the faults of the Christians, but their own dung they do not want to smell. From where has the hatred come into the heart of the Pharisees? Yes, from that the hatred has come, when the Nazarene has reproved them and called them hypocrites, since they have made promises to God both in baptism and in the Lord's Supper that they shall become truly penitent and make repentance. Such promises the Pharisees have made in the Lord's Supper, that they shall follow the will of God and better their sinful life. Such promises the Pharisees have made before the Lord's altar, that they shall sacrifice themselves to God. But the Pharisees do not remember those promises, but they only mock God with their ungodly life, adultery, drunkenness, cursing, stealing and whiskey trade. For those Pharisees who live around the

Church blaspheme God the worst with their sinful business, so that the Nazarene once had to take a scourge and drive out those buyers and sellers along with their cattle, and what else are they than cattle, and even worse than cattle, who make Sunday into a drinking day and a day of vanity, a cursing day, and a fighting day. And when they have lived during the day as cattle, they also live at night like cattle. But such are the worst to bear hatred toward Jesus of Nazareth. Such are the first to accuse Jesus that He is a disturber of the people, and proclaims a false doctrine, and expounds the words of the Scriptures wrongly, when He says to those who keep sinful trade around the temple, "It is written, my house is a house of prayer, but you have made it into a den of thieves." This doctrine must be a false doctrine that the Nazarene says to the drunkards and whiskey merchants, you make the house of God into a den of thieves. The evil spirit smells from their mouths when they come into the temple of God, some drink from the cup of the Lord and the cup of devil on the same day. Look! Such ones become the most angry at the Nazarene, and such Pharisees are the most zealous to accuse Jesus and also to incite the barbarian people to cry out, "Crucify!" These Pharisees have become angry with the Nazarene for this, that He ruins their liquor business! He spoils the drunkards godliness, they cannot drink in peace, not even the whores can whore in peace. The Pharisees have not received peace of conscience as long as the Nazarene is alive. This is the true reason why the Pharisees accuse Jesus

of Nazareth and seek for faults in His doctrine, in His speech, in His life; and when they succeed by no other means, they must begin to lie and to seek for six mark men, who are ready to swear for one or two drinks that they have heard Him say thus and so.

What now do the Pharisees think? What kind of counsel will they now take, and from where will they now get a hold of the Nazarene's skin? No doubt they will take someone from Herod's crowd as an accuser, if they could show that the Nazarene forbids paying taxes to the government. That matter is still now untried. The Pharisees have formerly tempted the Nazarene with one whore, and now they will try in another way if they can get some accusation against Him, for it can be surmised that these Pharisees will not get peace of conscience before they can get the Nazarene out of the way, as that royal harlot could get no peace from the enemy before she received John's head on a charger. So are the Pharisees as if on burning coals; they get no peace from the enemy until they get the Nazarene away, away! Away! For they have such a belief that the Nazarene is even worse than the devil, but if they had some accusation against Him so that they could get rid of Him, only then joy would come into their hearts. They would then become truly cleansed in the blood of the dragon, and they could soon have a funeral for Him. But their plot did not succeed this time, they could hardly get any accusations against Him. They had to depart as shame-faced dogs.

And since these matters have happened thus, from that can be seen that the Scriptures are fulfilled; especially David's words have been fulfilled, when he says in the Second Psalm that the rulers take counsel against the Lord and against His anointed. From that the disciples of Jesus can now receive the assurance that what the rulers do against them, it is the same as if it were done against the Lord and against His anointed. There now the faith of the disciples is strengthened, that this Christianity is right and that the Lord has taken them into His care, for thus read His words in the Acts of the Apostles, 4th chapter, 24th and the following verses, when Jesus' disciples were for the first time before the court of the church. They had also been threatened that they must no longer preach in the name of Jesus. Then when the disciples heard that, they lifted up their voice to God in one accord and said, "Lord Thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus." This great power of prayer has come to the disciples of Jesus after that remarkable day when they had stood before the church court for the first time. And now you disciples of Jesus, when you have seen that it has happened to you according to the Scriptures, that the rulers of the world have taken counsel against Christ when they have demanded that you come before the church court to answer for your Christianity, through which your faith is strengthened, be now fearless to speak the word of God to the heathens with all courage, for the Lord against whom the rulers have taken counsel is your own shelter, your strength and your power. Even if Herod from now on would put some disciples in prison so that the Jews would like him, certainly the Lord will even yet send His angel to release Peter and John from the iron chains of the enemy. That crucified and thorn-crowned King will strengthen your hearts with His Holy Spirit, that you could speak to the rulers and kings and princes, and testify of Jesus of Nazareth and His power to have mercy upon the penitent and to make them blessed, no matter how the crowd of the world rages and grinds their teeth, for you are nevertheless blessed, when you are hated and persecuted because of Jesus; for so they have done formerly so that they could fulfill their desire to kill, but finally they can see whom they have pierced. Amen.

Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity

“Render therefore to all their dues: Tribute to whom tribute is due; Custom to whom custom: fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.” Romans 13:7

Saint Paul advises the Christians that they should be subject to the government and pay taxes and customs to whom they are due. Likewise, Peter advises the Christians that they should be subject to all the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake. But the same Peter also said, “We ought to obey God rather than men,” namely in spiritual things. If the government demands something which wars against God's law, then a Christian must obey God rather than men. But in all other matters a Christian is obligated to obey the government. Therefore Paul says that the government is ordained by God as a help to the people, and Paul advises the Christians that they must be subject “not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake “ For the conscience demands that we must obey the government, which watches over our natural welfare and prevents evil men from doing violence. If there was no fear of the government, then the slaves of the enemy would first kill the Christians; for this reason the Christians receive much protection from the government. The government does not command the people to do evil: fines have been set for drunkenness, cursing, fighting, stealing, whoring, and for all kinds of sins which are customarily practised in the world. But the sorrowless do not

obey the government; they transgress the king's law right before the eyes of the government. Honest thieves steal under the protection of the law: for example, they who take another's property by the law. Such thieves do not worry about the forbidding of the conscience; when they can evade the king's law, then they do as much evil as they can. Whores also commit adultery, and liquor merchants sell their merchandise, although the king has forbidden it. What do they care about the king's law, who trample God's commandments under their feet? Some, who cannot deny their evil works, want to be honorable people without penitence and without repentance; through an obvious lie they want to be taken into the company of the Christians. And although all have done much evil against God and their neighbor, so that according to the judgement of the Christians they should suffer public church punishment, nevertheless the king's law has not been able to sentence any others to that punishment than those who are public whores or thieves and whose adultery or theft has become known. And they, again, are so hardened that they lie before God and the congregation that they are penitent of their sins although there is no sign of penitence. Even of this they lie before God and the congregation, that they intend to make repentance although there is not even a serious intention. And when in this way they have lied openly in the church; they imagine that God has already forgiven them all their sins and that the congregation is obligated to acknowledge them to be Christians; and as soon as

they are able, they begin again to commit adultery and steal as before. Under this condition even the devil would be ready to suffer church punishment, if the Christians supposedly would acknowledge him as their Christian brother when he has confessed in the church that he is a whorebuck, and also lies before the congregation that he intends to make repentance. The devil is not so foolish that he will prevent whores and thieves from confessing their adultery and thievery in church, when the adultery and thievery have become known publicly, for through such a confession God becomes well mocked, when whores and thieves lie in church.

He surely permits whores and thieves to promise to make repentance; but he does not permit true penitence to come to the whores and thieves, through which they would become freed from his clutches. But if the adultery or thievery have not become known, then the devil teaches them to deny and cover up their sin. All impenitent whores and impenitent thieves speak thus: "We do not need to cry out to the world; surely God sees our innocence and knows our honesty," So also do drunkards and liquor merchants when they are summoned before the law; they deny their evil deeds and even swear themselves to hell; they give their soul as a guarantee to the devil, that with a false oath they might be able to redeem themselves from liquor fines. It is better that the soul burns in hell than that here one confesses his adultery, theft, drunkenness, and liquor business. The devil of honor and the devil of greed whisper in the ear and say:

"Lay two fingers on the book and swear by God and His Gospel that you are innocent. Why do you need to cry out to the world that you are a whore and a thief? You become honorless if you cannot swear." "Do not confess." — so whispers the devil of greed — "Do not at all confess that you have been drunken or sold liquor; why do you need to confess that? Lay two fingers on the book and swear that you have not been drunken or sold liquor; if you swear, then you will escape the liquor fines," And what does that slave of sin care about his soul? The devil's slave must do as the master commands. He does not care about his soul, just so here he does not need to pay fines; the devil may grind his soul to flour, just so here he does not become honorless. Behold, such subjects are the slaves of this world! They are so obedient to the government that they evade the king's law and trample the king's commandments under their feet, and they hate those officers who want to teach the people of the world to live according to the law.

Because of this matter, all the apostles have advised the Christians to live according to the king's law and to be subject to the government for the sake of the Lord, who has established the government for the mutual welfare of the people. For if there were no government, then the devil's slaves would kill the Christians first. We know that the king has not commanded anyone to do evil; but the enemy, who cannot tolerate the Christians on earth, has often incited the government to persecute the Christians. The wise of the world and

heathenish pastors, who are the enemy's best friends, have gotten the government to believe that the faith of the Christians is a remarkable superstition. They have lied that the Christianity is harmful to the nation. And for this reason the government has become deceived and has begun to persecute Christians, when heathenish pastors have lied that the Christians are wild spirits. But afterwards it has been noticed that the heathens themselves are wild spirits, who so often make insurrections against the government. It has never yet been heard in the world that true Christians have raised an insurrection. But it has often been heard that the heathens, both the baptized and the unbaptized, have made an insurrection against the governments as it has happened even in these times, because of which civil war and great bloodshed have come in the kingdom. From this the enemy gets occasion to rejoice and to make sausage, "for he was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). So when the people become so insane that they begin to kill one another, then the enemy gets occasion to laugh.

Oh, if all good Christians would now pray God that He would give the government the right enlightenment that the living Christianity is not harmful to the country, as the heathen pastors and the wise of the world have lied; but on the contrary, that the government would begin to know that true Christians are also faithful subjects, and that none are so inclined to cause an insurrection as heathenish people who do not have any knowledge of true Christianity, especially that

heathenish people who have the Lutheran faith in their skull, but the devil's faith in their heart. Such heathens are virtuous whores, who swear before the court that they are free from adultery, so also honest thieves who swear themselves free from all debt, sober drunkards who swear before the court that they have not been drunken, and honorable liquor merchants who, before the law, swear themselves free from liquor fines, likewise tax thieves who steal customs money. Are there many people here who would not be worthy of fines even according to the natural law, if their former life should be examined before the law? Would not all be obligated to pay fines — some for adultery, some for tax theft, some for fighting, some for cursing, some for drunkenness, some for liquor business, some for neglecting the prayer day, some for transgressing the Sabbath. But although everyone is worthy of fines, even before a temporal justice, not a single one because of this is a whore or a thief or a drunkard, but they are virtuous, honorable, pious, and praiseworthy, honest and serious old Christians, daily makers of penitence, those who daily wallow in wilfull sins. But such subjects of the king and emperor would still need to be fined, that they might remember how they transgressed against the king's decree. — We now pray to the King of all kings that He would preserve our government from that heathenish people who first trample the king's commandments under their feet, and then also cause an insurrection when all scoundrels and rascals cannot live as they want. All true Chris-

tians have always, according to the apostle's advice, shown obedience to the government and willingly have paid taxes and customs to whom they are due; and we hope that they, even henceforth, shall do so. May the King of all kings grant the government wisdom, that all faithful subjects would become protected from violence and plots of evil men, and that Christianity would become helped forward by the government; as we hope that the King of the Christians will hear their petitions and protect them from evil. Our Father and so forth.

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-22

The Saviour said to the Jews in today's gospel: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." With the guidance of these words, we shall, through God's grace, consider how a Christian is obligated to the government and to God. First consideration; "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." Second consideration: "Render unto God the things which are God's."

First consideration: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." Although the Jews said to Pilate: "We have no king but Caesar", nevertheless they did not want to be Caesar's subjects because afterwards they rebelled and wanted to break themselves loose from Caesar's rule. And from all aspects of the matter we surmise that if the Jews would have converted to Christianity, they would in no way have made insurrection against Caesar. But

the Jews wanted to be independent. In their minds it was a great disgrace that they had to be subjects of a Gentile government and pay taxes to a heathenish government. The Jews were so holy that they did not go into the heathenish house of the Gentile judge; they feared that they would become smitten by heathenism if they would go through the gate into Pilate's house, and therefore they stood outside while Pilate examined Jesus. Although the Jews were now so holy that they feared that heathenism would cling to them if they would go into a heathenish man's house, on the other hand they were so insubordinate that they did not want to pay taxes to a heathenish government at all. Therefore they wanted to catch Jesus in a snare when they brought this question before Him: "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar or not?" Namely, they knew that the Jewish nation did not want to pay taxes to Caesar at all. If the Saviour had forbidden them to pay taxes to Caesar, then the high priests would have accused Him before the governor that He was opposed to the government. Again, if the Saviour had commanded them to pay taxes to Caesar, then the common people would have become angry at Him. This question was thought up with such great cunning that they thought they would get Him in a snare, no matter how He would have answered.

But we know assuredly that the Jews themselves were obstinate both against Caesar and against God. And even worse, this obstinacy of the Jews has adhered to all the slaves of the world, as the Jews said to the Saviour:

“We are born free and have not been slaves to anyone.” So all the world’s slaves think that they are free, and because of that freedom they want to live according to their own will. They cannot willingly bear it that the government through the law prevents their self-governing rule. They all complain that the law is harsh and the tax is heavy. So, for example, the liquor merchant becomes very indignant when he is fined for selling liquor. He thinks that it is an unjust law which prevents him from using his own merchandise as he himself desires. The drunkard also considers it evil when he is fined for drunkenness. In his mind, it is an unjust law which prevents him from enjoying this “God’s grain”. Whores also consider it evil that they have to pay fines to the church for “love” and even suffer the shameful church punishment. And also tax thieves who steal customs money do not consider such a theft to be a sin at all, but they think that it is an unjust law and that the “government is rich”. All of these become angry, especially at the informer and accuser, “who get their neighbor in trouble because of envy”. “Is that not a great sin,” say transgressors of the law, “that the accusers cause loss to their neighbors?” Through them drunkards, liquor merchants, and tax thieves have to pay fines and “the innocent lose their possessions”. “Is this not a great sin and injustice?” “Yes, certainly!” So think liquor merchants, especially, who first only from love give the drunkard a farewell drink so that the heart would become warmed; and when the drunkard’s lust for liquor has been kindled to burn

through that first drink, the drunkard’s heart becomes so loving that he gives the liquor merchant his last penny for the second and third drink. Therefore, is it not a great sin and injustice that compassionate liquor merchants must still be fined because they do good to the drunkards, who are in pitiful distress because of their desire for liquor? Although the liquor merchants and tax thieves have the assurance that the king’s prosecutors bring harm to their neighbors, no doubt they are also convinced that all drunkards shall thank them in eternity because they have kindled their desire for liquor and thereby have helped them into hell before their time. Because of these loving deeds they shall thank the liquor merchant and say: “Many thanks, dear brother, for this, that with your liquor you have helped me into hell before my time!” And whores also shall thank their whorbucks and say: “Many thanks, dear brother, that you have excited me into adultery, and through this have helped me into hell!” And the guardians of the law who have not brought harm to transgressors of the law shall receive thanks from all drunkards, saloon keepers and tax thieves, who say: “Many thanks, dear guardian of the law, that you have not caused us harm! Through the law you have not hindered us from running to hell!” And sorrowless pastors will also receive thanks and praise. Virtuous whores, honest thieves, sober drunkards and honorable liquor merchants shall thank them and say: “Many thanks, good teacher, that you have promised the kingdom of heaven

to all the impenitent; you have allowed us to go to hell in peace!”

Now since all can live according to their own free will: when the liquor merchants strip the drunkards naked, whores get illegitimate children and finally become a burden to the congregation, tax thieves can steal as much money as they want — then without a doubt the king’s law becomes fulfilled. When poor drunkards and poor whores become a burden to the congregation, no doubt they then have lived according to the king’s law; and when tax thieves steal the customs money, then no doubt they have paid taxes to the government. Surely the king does not want anything else for his subjects than that they would drink and fight, commit adultery and steal, make and sell liquor, knowing well that whores and drunkards are quite the soldiers, liquor merchants give them boldness to war and tax thieves bring taxes to the government, with which such an array is paid. “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s.”

Second consideration: “Render unto God the things which are God’s.” The Jews did not: want to give taxes to Caesar, but they themselves wanted to eat and drink their tax money. But they imagined that they were giving God the thanks and honor which is due Him, when they said to the Saviour: “Give God the honor and tell us if you are the Son of God.” I And according to their understanding, it was blaspheming God when Jesus confessed that He was the Son of God. But the Jews, however, considered themselves to be the children of God, for they once said to

the Saviour: “We have a father, namely God.” Nevertheless the enemy had reversed their eyes, for they considered the Saviour to be a false prophet who was in league with the devil. In their minds the Saviour was a disturber of the people who confused the people with false doctrine and counseled people to the wrong way. The devil had given them the assurance that Jesus of Nazareth was a dangerous person who should be destroyed; and they therefore imagined that they were doing honor to God when they began to accuse Him before the governor Pontius Pilate. Spiritual hatred became a matter of conscience; and therefore they said to Pilate: “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.” This matter, that the Saviour confessed Himself to be the Son of God, riled the Jews so much that they had to answer for the sake of God’s honor and give God that honor, that His Son was mocked, reviled, and despised, scourged like a thief and crucified like a robber.

And even now this is the best honor which the Jews can give to God: namely, hating and persecuting Christians. The Saviour Himself has said that they will think they are doing God a service when they kill the disciples of Jesus. But which God is it, to whom they do this service? The Apostle Paul testifies that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not.” And in another place the same apostle says: “... God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that all might be damned who believed not the truth.” (2 Thess. 2: 11-12) If

the god of this world has not blinded the understanding of the unbelieving ones, no doubt they would take heed of the time of grace, but since the god of the world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, then the God of heaven has also sent them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie; they believe more easily what the devil, the world, and their own flesh reveals within, than what the word of God shows. Thus they believe a lie and deny the truth. They believe that their former life should be acceptable to God, although the word of God shows that the former old life is not acceptable before God at all. They also believe that the former dead faith should save them, but they do not understand that "faith without works is dead". They believe as the Jews that God is their father, because they are born of Christian parents, have also been rightly baptized, have learned to understand the chief articles of the Christian doctrine, can read, go to church and to the Lord's communion a few times, say prayers on Sundays, and other such things. They believe that this outward service of God should be acceptable to God, but they have not believed that this outward service of God presses them into hell, since through it true penitence and repentance have not come to them, a change of heart and mind has not come, true conversion and new birth have not taken place. In this way they have given God thanks and honor with the mouth, but with the heart and life, or with thoughts, words and deeds, they have given honor to the god of this world who has blinded their minds or re-

versed their eyes so that they see true Christianity as a false doctrine, superstition, or wild disease, but their natural condition they see to be true Christianity. Since the devil has given them the assurance that Christians are false prophets and wild spirits, he has undoubtedly also given the world's children the assurance that they are true Christians and children of God. The Jews did not know either that they were the devil's children, but they imagined that they were God's children because they said: "We have a father, namely God." But the Saviour said to them: "Ye are of your father the devil; ye do that which ye have seen with your father." And Apostle John says: "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God; he that committeth sin is of the devil." If we, according to this sign, want to distinguish God's children from the devil's children, then all would become the devil's children who live in willful sins, as in drunkenness, lewdness, envy, hatred, and cursing. And this kind of life is acceptable to those who oppose Christianity, who hate the Christians and think they are doing God service when they kill the disciples of Jesus. Such old Christians are certainly godly in church and ungodly behind the church; they sing in church and howl behind the church, bless in church and curse behind the church, are virtuous in church and commit adultery behind the church, are sober in church and drunkards behind the church, are honest in church and steal behind the church; they drink from the Lord's cup in

church and behind the church they drink from the devil's cup. Such are "old Christians" who serve God with the mouth but with the heart they serve the devil.

Therefore give honor to God, you few souls who have felt God's great power in your hearts. Confess yourselves before the world to be God's children, as our Saviour confessed Himself to be the Son of God before the church council. Do not give the devil that honor that because of fear of the world you deny the great power of our Lord Jesus Christ to help sinners from the devil's dominion, although slaves of the world consider it blasphemy and a sign of pride, that a whore and thief confess themselves to be children of God. But the Saviour Himself has said that "the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you...but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." The children of the world have not received the assurance from above that they are God's children, but they imagine that they will become saved when they die. And the devil himself has given them this presumption, so that they would remain in their sorrowlessness.

You also, you awakened souls, give God the honor, and fearlessly confess before the world what the preceding grace of God is effecting in your hearts through true repentance and penitence. And you penitent robber, rebuke the other, although you yourself have not yet received the promise; proclaim the truth to the world's impenitent robbers, and then turn yourself to the crucified and thorn-crowned King and say:

"Lord Jesus, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!" Perhaps He will give you that great and precious and weighty promise: "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Upon this promise of grace you can die in blessedness. Amen.

24th Sunday after Trinity.

The angel said to Tobit, "It is good to hide the secret of a king: but honorable to reveal and confess the works of God." (Douay wording) Tobit 12:7.

[Finnish Bible says that the works of God must be highly praised and proclaimed.]

These words are found written in the book of Tobit and we hear from them that a person keep must secret the counsel of kings but the words of God must be proclaimed. However people do contrary to this command. If the king tells someone what he intends to do very few men are so trustworthy that they can keep that secret to themselves that they would not divulge it to anyone even if it causes harm to the kingdom if someone reveals the secret counsels of the king. But not many want to reveal the works of God's grace for great harm and shame come to the devil if someone begins to cry out to the world what God has effected in them. If, for instance, a Christian would begin to tell the world how the spirit of God has effected a change of heart and mind in him, and how he has felt the effects of God's grace the enemy immediately be-

comes angry and says, "You boast of how good you are." The enemy does not want to give honor to God, that God would have done some good. The enemy wants to find much injustice in God's rule. In the enemy's mind, God is an unjust God if He condemns such a pious and honorable man to hell; and therefore he does not give God that honor that God would have effected something good. The god of the world wants to own that honor for himself that he has done what God has done. Certainly the enemy will allow such a work of God to be revealed which he has spoiled, for instance the work of creation. The enemy allows his slaves to say that they were created in the image of God, for he knows well that they no longer have the image of God, since after creation he has spoiled that image of God and painted God's image black, or changed God's image to be like the devil. The devil certainly allows his slaves to confess that God is their father as long as they do the deeds of the black father, but the enemy does not allow that people would proclaim such works of God which the enemy cannot spoil, as for example the effects of God's grace. Those effects the enemy cannot spoil when they are felt in a person but he wants to make naught of them and persuades his slaves, also, that such are of the devil. For example the awakening and torment of conscience, "they are nothing else than the effect of the devil", so also signs of grace and spiritual joy: the devil has affected in them, so say the slaves of the enemy. Likewise also of spiritual sorrow; "it is nothing other than a trick of

the enemy". All that God does and which the enemy cannot change, spoil, or bring to naught, that the enemy takes and owns for himself or persuades his slaves that they are of his doing. But the enemy does not allow that his work would be revealed from which shame would come to him; for example, adultery, stealing, lying, etc. The devil has such great honor that he denies confession of sins and says, "It is not necessary to cry out such to the world." He always wants to cover up and hide sins so that the world would not know what he has done in darkness. When the world keeps him as a meek and honorable man, he always wants to own for himself that he is a meek, honest, and honorable man. If someone blames him for their sins he denies it and says, "You are lying", for he does not take any sin upon himself no matter what. When the first woman blamed him for sin, he became angry at the seed of the woman and still wants to destroy those who can bring his works into the light. Said in a word: the devil has such great honor that he denies and covers up his own evil deeds so that the world would always think well of him. But those works of God which he cannot spoil, change, or bring to naught, those he owns for himself, and gives his slaves that faith that the effects of God's spirit are of the devil. And although he cannot get the awakened into such a faith that the effects of God's spirit are of the devil, nevertheless he causes them to be ashamed of them so that they would not reveal the effects of God's spirit. Namely if the awakened souls would begin to cry out to the world what they

have felt of the effects of the spirit of God, God would receive honor through that, but the devil has such great envy that he would not allow at all that some soul upon the earth would give honor to God and confess openly what the spirit of God has worked in him. Therefore the enemy makes the newly awakened ones feel ashamed of the workings of the Holy Spirit, so they do not dare to reveal to anyone what the spirit of God has effected in their hearts. Namely if he reveals the effects of the spirit of God to the world, the children of the world would begin to mock the newly awakened and say, "You brag about yourself and make yourself so good." Moses' brother Aaron and sister Miriam said, "Does God speak only through Moses?" They became envious and the devil of envy put them to mock Moses that he made himself good. Other slaves of the world became angry with Moses and said, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy — wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" Numbers 16:3.

They wanted to accuse Moses of pride when they themselves were in pride. If an awakened person cannot hide the effects of God's spirit, the slaves of the devil say, "even he became crazy," he has caught the dog's disease; "even he became a wild spirit". Because of this mockery and persecution the enemy causes some newly awakened ones to be ashamed of the workings of God and to hide the effects of the spirit of God, so that honor would not be given to God but to the devil. But we hear now from the afore-mentioned

words which are found written in Tobit 12:7 that the angel told him to proclaim the works of God when he says, "It is good to hide the secret of the king but honorable to reveal and confess the works of God. "

Would the angel then have been in spiritual pride when he commanded Tobit to cry out to the world what a great grace had happened to him? Now some thieves of grace concede that it is not spiritual pride which speaks of God's grace, for they themselves can confess "that they lie at the foot of the Savior's bloody cross every day". And certainly the enemy will allow them to cry out that much to the world, for he knows that thieves of grace are secret enemies of the cross of Jesus, although they imagine that they are at the foot of His cross. But he entirely prohibits confession of sin and says, "no one need to cry out his sins to the world". Through that confession of sin shame comes to the devil, therefore he does not allow his slaves to confess their sins. But what do those words signify which are found written in Numbers 5:7. "Then they shall confess their sin which they have done ... and give it unto him against whom he hath transgressed." But thieves of grace want to expound this place so that a person must confess his sin only to his neighbor against whom he has transgressed and not to others. Therefore we must find other passages in the Bible which show that God demands an open confession of sins.

But since in today's gospel is given us an example of how honor of the world prevents one grace-seeking soul

from confessing before the world the poor and wretched condition in which he finds himself to be, and how the same devil causes some grace-needing souls to steal grace from the Savior; it would be necessary to pray to God and that great Crossbearer that He would open all eyes of the blind youth to see how the enemy, because of honor of the world, misleads even those who know their wretchedness. He causes those grace-needing souls to hide that poor condition in which they are and steal grace from the Savior. If now all who suffer the issue of blood would reveal openly before the world what a wretched and poor condition they are in, then the whole world would know what has forced them to beg for grace. Hear Thou great and exalted King of heaven, all the sighs of the wretched, sorrowful, and down-pressed ones. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel Matthew 9: 18-26.

Two miracles that Jesus performed are recorded in today's gospel. First He healed one woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years and, second, He awoke a ruler's daughter from the dead. We will take the first event under consideration: How they who try to steal grace in secret from the Savior must finally confess openly what they have done.

We must first take heed of what Mark and Luke have additionally written about this woman who has suffered this issue of blood for twelve years. From these we know that this woman who slipped through the crowd and got so close to the Savior that she could

touch His garment, intended to go home without saying a word. But when the Savior began to question who had touched Him, this woman had to confess with trembling what she had done. From this we surmise that grace thieves cannot get away with stolen grace without questioning. Perhaps this woman was able to steal grace in the way in which it is written in the gospel, therefore all grace thieves can get so close to the Savior that they can surely steal His grace, for some have never suffered the issue of blood and nevertheless they think that the Savior is merciful to them.

That great crowd who followed Jesus then because of curiosity and pressed closer was only an idle crowd who had gathered because of curiosity and they crowded and pressed closer to the Savior. No doubt they imagined they were worthy of touching Him. Now the sorrowless do likewise. They crowd and press closer to the Savior even though they have no distress; and then when the question arises of who has touched Him they deny everything. After a short while these idle, sorrowless people are ready to cry out, "Crucify". Such now is the love of the sorrowless crowd toward the Savior, although they imagine that they lie in the Savior's bosom. Once they cry out, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and another time they cry out, "Take him away! Crucify!"

It is still more remarkable that those few souls who suffer from the issue of blood can still steal grace like this woman who, because of shame or honor of the world, did not dare to come

before the eyes of the Savior and to openly confess what kind of a sickness she had. She did not dare to fall on her knees and to pray that the Lord Jesus would help her. Nor did she dare to cry out: "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!" But the devil of honor caused her to sneak and crowd among the throng so that she could get so close to the Savior that she could touch the hem of His garment. Therefore this woman had the intention to steal and those unbelieving wretches who say that a person cannot steal grace can now see by this woman's example how clever a thief of grace is at sneaking behind the Savior's back. Other distressed people are accustomed to always come before the Savior's eyes and lament of their distress. They fall on their knees and pray, and they who because of blindness cannot come very close to the the Savior cry out afar off, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!" But this woman began to steal grace very nicely. It was remarkable that the theft turned out some way. But when the question of who had touched Him came up all denied it; and this woman did not dare to reveal herself immediately. Honor of the world was so great in her that she certainly would have left like a sneaky dog if Jesus would not have begun to question further who had touched Him. The Savior certainly knew who it was but He wanted to try that woman, if honor of the world would allow her to confess her theft. Now the Evangelists Mark and Luke write of that woman that she finally had to confess her theft when, namely, distress came to her and she saw that

this matter was not secret. Mark says that the woman feared and trembled knowing what was done in her; and Luke says that she came trembling and falling down before Him, declaring unto Him before all people why she had touched Him. From this you see, thief of grace, that Jesus does not allow thieves of grace to go without questioning. Truly you see what kind of fear and trembling will come to grace thieves when the conscience begins to accuse them that they have touched the holy person of the Savior without permission. Thirdly you see that thieves of grace must finally confess before the whole world why they have touched Him secretly and without permission, although present-day thieves of grace say, "No one needs to cry out to the world why they have begun to steal grace." This woman, however, had to confess, not only to the Savior but to the whole nation, how she had suffered the issue of blood for twelve years, and what she had thought when she went to steal grace from the Savior. That issue of blood is a shameful sickness although it was put upon her by God, but before the world it is considered shameful; and therefore a grace thief does not dare to confess that she has such a disease before distress comes. The devil of honor caused her to hide it. Even now the devil of honor causes some to hide their condition that they have contracted the issue of blood. They do not dare to reveal it to the world because they fear that they will be ridiculed. It is shameful before the world that they have become such ones. They spend much on doctors, but the issue of blood is not

such a sickness that doctors are able to cure. Evangelists remember that she became worse and not better when she had been to the doctors. Spiritual quacks cannot cure those who suffer the issue of blood, nor can other doctors, but only the Savior can cure that sickness. But it is worse that such patients do not go immediately to the Savior, and still worse they come on the sly and squeeze through the crowd. They do not come openly to the Savior and to the whole world to confess, to cry out, to pray to that great Cross-bearer that He through His great grace would help them, but they sneak behind His back to steal grace from the Savior.

Such now are those thieves of grace who suffer the issue of blood. They are truly in need of grace, but they have such great honor of the world that they do not dare to reveal themselves to the world nor to the Savior before the question arises, "who has touched Him?" That sorrowless crowd who, without reason and because of curiosity force themselves upon the Savior, press from every direction and almost walk on Him with their feet, they all deny that they have touched Him. They certainly are able to lie that they have not pressed Him, although they have shoved Him with the elbows of sin and trampled Him with their feet, and with their bodies crowded His holy person. Nonetheless they lie and deny that they have touched Him. This sorrowless, idle crowd are so bold to press and obstruct and push themselves upon the Savior that Peter had to say to the Savior, "Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee." Peter was con-founded

at their stupidity and complained that this idle crowd did not hold hold the Savior in better esteem, nor were they at all ashamed to shove and press themselves upon Him. What did they care who are like magpies and forest devils, who do not even know to fear the Son of God? Don't worry, when judgement time comes then they will see whom they have trampled and oppressed! Then they will begin to accuse the Savior like He has formerly revealed, "Lord we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets," we have preached in thy name, which signifies that we have been well acquainted with each other, but He will say, "Depart from me ye workers of iniquity. I know ye not."

Take heed now all you people who suffer from the issue of blood; take heed of this woman who intended to steal grace because of honor. Take heed for your souls that you would not go to steal grace, but come openly to lament of your distress before Him, even if the whole world would hear what kind of a sickness you have. Although grace thieves say, "You do not need to cry out your sins to the world," and with that word they give honor to the devil and not to the Savior who does not allow grace thieves near Him without questioning. His will is that all secret matters must be openly proclaimed. Let no one depend upon this, that this woman could keep that stolen grace which she had stolen. That came from the great love of the Savior, when He began to question who had touched Him. But if the Savior had allowed her to go with stolen grace without questioning, then

the devil would have received joy from her that she would not have thanked the Savior for that grace which had happened to her. The devil of honor, who prevented her from confessing her distress, would also have prevented her from thanking the Savior, and that would have been contrary to the Bible which says, "The works of God should be highly proclaimed." If the works of God do not become manifest, then God is forgotten and the devil receives all the honor. When the children began to cry out, "Hosanna to the Son of David," the lords did not like it that the children honored the Savior, but the Savior said to them, "If these shall hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." But God help me, few are they who thank God. Even those who have felt God's grace are so unthankful that they do not remember very long from what a terrible sickness they have been saved through the grace of the Savior. Amen.

Twenty fifth Sunday after Trinity

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo! here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders; inso-much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Matthew 24:23-24.

In this place Christ warns His disciples of false prophets and of false Christs, and this is a very necessary warning, especially at this time, when

true Christianity is kept to be false as it was in the Saviour's time. Then the people also kept true Christianity to be false, but the false prophets were held to be right. Especially then when outward persecution had come upon the Christians, than true Christianity was kept to be false, but that old dead faith was kept to be right, as true Christianity has at all times been held to be false by the Jews, heathens, and Catholics. It is not easy to distinguish what true Christianity is, since the Jews preach their faith and keep that to be right, the heathens preach their faith and keep that to be right, so also the Catholics preach their faith and keep that to be right. But the Saviour has, in another gospel, namely for the eighth Sunday after Trinity, given a sign by which the false prophets are distinguished; He says in that place, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves." Public heathens are not therefore those false prophets of which the disciples of Jesus must beware, for no one would believe them if they would begin to preach of their faith, but the false prophets come under the shadow of godliness, and preach so that even the Jews like their sermons. These false prophets do not demand that the Jews should make true penitence and believe upon the crucified Saviour, nor do the false prophets demand that the Jews would take the cross of Jesus upon themselves and begin to carry it, but the false prophets preach that Christ will come from Heaven to help those Jews who, through disobedience, came under the chastisement of the government. If

the Jews become poor through drunkenness, then the false prophets preach: "That poverty has come from God; Christ will come down from Heaven to help the poor drunkards from their poverty." If the Jews commit adultery and become poor and sickly, then the false prophets say, "It is not a sin, surely Christ will come from Heaven to help the whores from the bother of children." If the Jews keep crooked and sinful trade behind the church, and even if such trade takes place in the Lord's temple, then the false prophets say, "It is not a sin, Christ will come from Heaven to help the liquor merchant from his fine." If the Jews would also devour the houses of the widows and would teach their children to say "Corban", the false prophets do not forbid that. Said in a word, the false prophets rebuke no one of sin, nor do they demand confession of sin, nor do the false prophets demand a true penitence and repentance, but they preach only of that false Christ, who is in the skull of the Jews, but not in the heart. If the Jews then come into some natural distress, then the false prophets say, "Christ will come from Heaven to help the liquor merchants from their fines, Christ will come to help the whores from the bother of children, Christ will come to help the thieves from straits, Christ will come to help the drunkards from the earthlings," And then they say to the Jews, "Here is Christ, here is the Messiah. This is the effect of the Spirit of God." When a whore weeps serpent's tears after her honor, then the false prophets say, "This is the effect of the Holy Spirit." This is the best sign of

the false prophets, that they comfort the Jews when, because of their own pride, they have to suffer poverty in behalf of body. So it happened to the former Jews when they came into severe distress because of heathenish pride, then the false prophets came to comfort the Jews and to preach, "Do not fear, you Jews, Christ will come from Heaven to help the Jews, Christ will come from Heaven to help the Jewish thieves from straits. Christ will come from Heaven to help the drunkards from the earthlings," And who is that Christ who helps the drunkard from the earthlings? Is it not one great sorcerer who is in league with the earthlings? The Jews do not ask from where the help will come; if God or the devil helps it is all the same to the Jews, only that they get help. False prophets do not accuse the Jews of sin, but they preach of that false Christ, upon which they believe, although such a Christ has not yet come into the world who has promised to help the thieves from straits, the drunkards from the earthlings, and the whores from the bother of children.

But there are also other false prophets, who preach such a doctrine which the heathens like; they preach of such a Christ who is very loving and merciful to impenitent whores and impenitent thieves. These false prophets promise life and salvation to all the bucks and goats. Their first article of faith and teaching is that "you do not have to cry out your sins to the world." This same faith the thieves also have when they are taken ahold of by the law: "one need not cry out his sins to the world"; and the whore has the same

faith when a confession is demanded of her: "one need not cry out his sins to the world." So also the liquor merchant, when he is taken before the court because of selling liquor, says, "One does not need to cry out one's sins to the world." And this kind of doctrine is in the whores' and thieves' minds the right doctrine. The second article of faith of the doctrine of the false prophets is allowance for sin, that Christ is not so strict if one just drinks moderately, and commits adultery moderately; it is so pleasant to be a Christian and to whore, it is pleasant to be a child of God and to steal. "This is that right doctrine, but the doctrine of the Nazarene is false, which demands a holy life of a Christian." The third article of faith of the doctrine of the false prophets is that freedom that no one needs to repay or pay for their evil deeds. And the fourth article of faith, which is the most important of all of the doctrine of the false prophets, is this, that these followers of Jesus of Nazareth and disciples of Jesus are one false and dangerous sect, or heresy, who do not give honorable people peace of conscience. This is the best article in the doctrine of the false prophets, but it is not saving until they can lap Christians' blood. Then the false prophets will receive a saving faith when they can lap the blood of Christians, then their hearts will become cleansed in the blood of the dragon.

Today the abomination of desolation is portrayed before your eyes. Today you heard, all you hardened ones, what end will come to the hardened who have seen the light of the gospel

and have not taken heed in the time of grace when it was a time of visitation. Would there be one here now, who would understand how terrible God's righteousness is when He punishes the whole nation because of the lasciviousness of some? The Jews have heard more of the Word of God than any other nation, they have also seen more signs and wonders than other people. They have seen Christians and know also from where this Christianity has come and what kind of change it has effected. But they have hardened so that they do not receive the chastisement, therefore God has finally given the Jews into the care of Satan, namely into the care of hardening, so that there is no more grace of penitence. Take better heed of the time of grace than the Jews, so that you do not perish with them, and flee with your life to the mountains of Israel and pray, you disciples of Jesus, that your flight would not occur in the winter or on the Sabbath. Hear, Thou Shepherd of Israel, the sighs of those who have fled from Babel. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 24:15

In the explanation of today's gospel the Saviour prophesies of the destruction of Jerusalem, and we have heard how this prophesy was fulfilled, when the unfortunate inhabitants of this city had to also eat their own children because of hunger. It appears to our eyes as though God was terribly wroth with His own people when He gave the whole nation into the care of Satan, so that not even one soul was saved, ex-

cept chose few souls who had become Christians. We know seriously that not one Christian perished there, although the whole kingdom was destroyed. For the Christians took better heed of the signs than did the Jews. The Christians fled away from the kingdom in time, but the Jews did not believe that God would give them up into Satan's care. The Jews had the same faith as the sorrowless of this time, that God will protect them from all evil. The Jews had that faith that God would help them from the claws of the enemy. And from where did the Jews get such a firm faith and trust in God? No doubt the same hero of faith had strengthened the faith of the Jews as he who has now given the Jews of this time that firm faith that God protects them from all evil; they allow themselves under the merciful protection of God and say, "Certainly God will protect us as well as the Christians." How do you know that God protects you from all evil? How do the drunkards know that God protects them from poverty, sickness, and the earthlings? God no doubt gave you such a firm faith, namely the god of the drunkards, who lives in the lower heaven. How do the whores get such a faith that God protects their children from syphilis? God no doubt has given them such a faith, namely the god of the whores who lives in the kingdom of adultery. Who has given the thieves such a faith that God protects them from straits? God no doubt has strengthened their faith, namely the god of stealing, who lives in the cave of darkness. Thus has the god of this world strengthened their faith that the God of

heaven protects them from all misfortune; but why did God not protect the Jews although they had such a firm faith upon God? Why did God allow their enemies to split open their bellies with knives? The Christians have not had such a faith that the pagans cannot kill them, but the Jews have such a firm faith that the pagans cannot kill them. From where did the Jews get such a firm faith and trust in God that God will protect them no matter how evil they would live, no matter how they would mock the Parent's tears, no matter how they would throw rocks at the Christians; surely the Jews' faith will stand. The Jews will not believe before the skin gets hot, that the pagans will open their bellies with knives and dig out the ill-gotten money from their intestines. The Jews of this time do not doubt of their salvation and even yet they are able to believe that God protects them from all evil. Surely the Pharisees also are able to believe that it will not go with them like with the sinful Jews. Surely the drunkards are also able to believe that God protects them from the earthlings, and if God protects them from the earthlings, then certainly the devil will protect them from tribulation of conscience; there probably could be found some sorcerer who could free them from the earthlings if some earthlings would be raised upon them. Surely the whores also are able to believe that a child will not result from the first act of adultery, and if not from the first, then certainly not from the second or the third act of adultery. Surely the thieves also are able to believe that God is able to protect them from

straits, and surely the liquor merchants are able to believe that God protects them from the whiskey fine. Are the tax thieves also able to believe that God protects them from the claims of the toll collectors? For sure no doubts have come to them of their salvation, they still have faith like a rock, that God will protect them from all evil in behalf of body and soul.

But now the devil of meekness arises from his den, and dead faith rises from grave and says, "Shouldn't a person trust in God?" Yes, you must trust upon God, but do not trust upon a false god like the Jews; there the Jews became deceived, that they began to trust in a false god. When the Jews do not know the true God, do not comprehend the nature of God, then they must serve a false god. That false god is first Pride, who does not allow the Jews to know and confess how they have lived. The devil of pride does not allow them to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. The devil of anger is one false god who the Jews serve, and that devil of anger teaches them to throw stones at the Christians. The devil of honor is a false god whom the Jews serve; this god preaches to the Jews, "You do not need to cry out your sins to the world." The devil of adultery is one false god which the Jews serve; that god teaches the Jews to commit adultery and to tempt Christ with whores. The devil of adultery teaches the whores to trust upon God that He will protect them from syphilis. And the devil of greed teaches the thieves to believe that God protects them from straits. If the Jews would understand what kind of

nature God has, they would not dare to anger God in that way. God must finally give them into the care of Satan; there is no more grace of penitence for the Jews. But God did not give them into Satan's care without warning; certainly it had been said to the Jews how it would go with them. John has preached how the axe is laid at the root of the tree. Jesus of Nazareth has preached that not one stone would be left upon another of their church building. Peter has preached how they have crucified the Lord of Glory, and Stephen has preached how the Jews have opposed the Holy Spirit. But this preaching of repentance affected nothing, they have just hardened more; they have become more zealous to hate and persecute the Christians. Such is now the story of the life of the Jews. But the Jews of this time do not yet take heed of those signs for themselves; they also are yet able to blaspheme and oppose the Christians. The Jews of this time also are able to drink and fight, commit adultery and steal, are able to be proud, and keep a whiskey trade, are also able to worship idols, but the Christians flee away from the city of corruption when they see what signs of the times begin to appear in the world. The Christians and all of the disciples of Jesus flee with their lives when they see that the end of the world is beginning to come. The Christians believe what the Saviour has said about the abomination of desolation. They flee to the mountain of Israel, where the Shepherd of Israel calls out for His lost sheep. On every house top they are watching what is happening in the city of corruption. Do not step

down into the world to take something from your house, no matter how precious substance there would be there to which your hearts would be attached. Whoever wants to save his soul and truly flees from the city of corruption, does not have time to be busy with the world and to tarry there. Because the children of Israel cannot tarry in the heathen land when the enemy attacks, they must quickly flee from their homes and travel to the shore of the Red Sea until that time that Moses raises his staff. Whoever is on the field, let him not return to take his clothes, all the rags of self-righteousness he must leave on the strip of the field next to the ditch when he goes to flee from the city of corruption. This land is not the land of Canaan to the disciples of Jesus when the enemies come to rob and kill and burn the Jews, but theirs is the land of Canaan, that promised land which the meek shall inherit if they are able first to travel through the wilderness of this world. But pray, you disciples of Jesus, that your flight would not come in the winter, when the cold wind of the world blows through the body and, who knows, also makes ice around the heart, from which a sickness of shakes and chills will come on the edge of the grave. When the old rags must be left on the edge of the large field next to the ditch, where the sower has sown seeds, then you who must flee from the city of corruption must leave with your shirt. Certainly the chills will come to many if they must flee in the winter time, and chills have already come to many when the cold wind of the world has blown through the body and has made ice

around the heart. Those wretches will probably freeze on the road, who start on the journey with so little clothing that they have not been covered and clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. Woe! to the pregnant and those who give suck in those days. Surely it is difficult for the pregnant to flee, especially if they are burdened with the sorrow of the world and cares of the world; but even more difficult for those who give suck, who have such a crying child who always wants to suckle and who constantly wants chewed food. Then must the whore's troubles be such which have never been since the beginning; of the world, nor ever will be, but the Jews do not believe that until the enemy splits open their bellies and straightens out their intestines with a knife. They do not believe that such suffering will come. And if those days were not shortened, then no flesh would be saved, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened; here the elect are such who God has foreseen will be saved. Namely, all have not yet become Christians whom God has foreseen that they must become saved. For their sake the tribulation will be shortened and so those elect will remain living, because all the Christians have fled from the city of corruption. But those elect mentioned in this place are such whom God in His wisdom has foreseen that they will be converted and become Christians, It is one great grace from God that some are spared, but few nevertheless are those elect. Why then are the sorrowless so proud although they know that their life is a very evil and ungodly life? Why do they

blaspheme God's truth and travel with all their strength to destruction? Yes, no doubt for that reason that they think as the Jews, that this Christianity is not right; they look at the Christians to be false and wild spirits. They think that Christians have gone on the wrong road and are going to destruction. Why do the sorrowless not seek for the right road if they think this Christianity is wrong? But the matter is such that pride will not allow that they confess this doctrine to be the right doctrine. And then the god of this world has also blinded their consciences that they must believe lies; what the devil brings to their minds, that they believe. Their blind intellect is their leader and their guide. For that reason they oppose, although they know well that their own life is not the right life. Now when distress comes, they must condemn themselves to hell. This awakening has effected so much that all sorrowless must condemn themselves to hell as impenitent, if awakening does not come. The sorrowless cannot accuse the Christians on judgement day, that they have not been able to hear the truth, that they have not been told to where such a life will lead them. In that place the Christians have freed their souls. Amen.

**Twenty Sixth Sunday after Trinity.
Last Judgement.**

**“The day is surely drawing nigh
When God's Son, the Anointed, Shall
with great majesty appear As Judge
of all appointed. All mirth and laugh-
ter then shall cease, When flames on
flames shall still increase, As Peter
truly telleth.”**

Today's hymn is found written in the Finnish hymn book, no. 404, the first verse: “The day is surely drawing nigh, When God's Son, the Anointed, shall with great majesty appear, as Judge of all appointed. All mirth and laughter then shall cease,” — here the sorrowless laugh and are joyous in sin and make jokes, also mock and overlook God's word, but that time will soon come that all mirth and laughter shall cease when Christ comes in all His glory to keep the judgement with the good and the evil. The sorrowless are not able to laugh when death comes like a snare upon them. But that is worse that they laugh until that time that distress comes. They do not prepare themselves for judgement although this time of grace is so short. Christians have always awaited the judgement because they know the Judge is merciful to them. But the sorrowless have never awaited the judgement because they have lived so that they have nothing good to wait for, but when the judgement comes, they faint because of fear and awaiting those things which will come upon the earth. How many now would be ready to step before God's judgement of that great flock who here mock and laugh at God's truth? The

drunkards and liquor merchants no doubt first step before the judgement to accuse the Christians as they have accused here. Then, no doubt, the whores and thieves come to accuse the Christians; they come, no doubt, to ask after their honor, who are so honorable. Who knows if some coverlet could be found for shelter when their shame is revealed and the whole world can see how meekly they have lived. The cursers and fighters also come before the judgement; no doubt they shake their fists at the Judge when He judges wrongly. After them those meek men will probably come, who do not believe that the Judge can condemn them when they have dealt rightly with all men. In their company probably are those meek whores, honest thieves, and temperate drunkards who have never even thought evil, let alone then committed it. And lastly come those humble Christians who haven't barked at anyone, and they think they are the Judge's best friends although they have not given any gifts to the Judge. But that is worse that the Judge accuses them of such sins which they have never committed. When, namely, the Judge accuses them of being merciless toward Him, then they say, "Lord, when saw we Thee in distress and have not served You?" Thus now the Judge becomes a wrong judge, when He judges the grace thieves of those sins which they do not know they have committed. What will then become of the Christians who here are hated and persecuted by the world's throng? The whole world awaits to see what kind of a judgement they will have because of their pride, who al-

ways judge others and hold themselves to be so good. I think that the Christians have given gifts to the Judge and persuaded Him; if the accuser of God's children wants to stand on his rights and demands that the Judge must judge all according to justice and merit, then the Judge says, "I will be merciful to whom I shall be merciful." But surely the accuser and all of his flock will become terribly angry at the Judge, when the Christians become free of the judgement, they threaten revenge — but what does it help? They must with shame go into that lake which is prepared for the devil and his angels.

Give gifts now to the Judge, all penitent and believing ones. Bear to Him gold, silver, and precious stones, give Him all your possessions and embrace His feet and weep upon His feet, before He sits upon the judgement throne and pray that He will be merciful to you! And we hope that He can so turn matters that the accuser will draw the fine and the transgressors of the law will be freed. Hear, merciful Judge, the sigh of the penitent and believing ones, and receive their gifts, that fear of the judgement would disappear and their hearts would become lighter, and be their Advocate on Judgement Day. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 25: 31.

With the guidance of our holy gospel, we must consider: Why does the most high Judge accuse the sorrowless of such sins which they do not know they have committed? It seems clear from the gospel that they, who are on the left side, have not seen the Judge in

distress when they ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, naked or in prison, or sick, and did not serve you?" Here now is one great blindness which the sorrowless do not comprehend. They confess with their own mouths that they have never seen Jesus in distress, although the sorrowless can say, "Neither have the Christians seen Jesus in distress." But they have nevertheless helped Him. Many a sorrowless wretch says to the Christians, "I have helped the poor more than you have." And let that be the boast of the sorrowless, that they have helped the poor more than the Christians; but the Catholics help the poor much more than the sorrowless Lutheran congregation. But we hear from the gospel how the most high Judge says to them who are on the right side, "What you have done to one of the least of my brethren, that you have done to me."

Who now are Jesus' brethren? The sorrowless do not believe that these despised Christians are the brethren of Jesus, but they think that all people are Jesus' brethren, especially the poor, but we hear that He could not keep others as His brethren, only His disciples who do the will of the Father. He could not, therefore, have kept those sorrowless poor as His brethren, but He says to Judas who also was concerned about the poor, "You have the poor always with you, etc." How will it go now with the sorrowless who have not seen Jesus in distress? Will they admit their blindness that they have not known who were Jesus' brethren? The disciples of Jesus are accordingly His brethren, and those who help Jesus' disciples when

they are brought before the courts because of Christianity, brought into prison, or fined and because of that matter, come to suffer hunger, cold, and nakedness, or thirst and sickness. He helps Jesus when He is in distress, for Just they are Jesus brethren who the sorrowless hate, blaspheme, overlook, and keep as false prophets and wild spirits. But how can the sorrowless keep them as Jesus' brethren who they hold to be false prophets and wild spirits? They must hate them, and there the sorrowless do rightly the will of their father who is in the lower heaven. They who stand on the left side could never have seen Jesus in distress, nor have they known His brethren, for Jesus' brethren are, in the eyes of the world, like their own enemies. We also see from that, when help is solicited for poor Christians, that the sorrowless do not recognize them to be their neighbor, let alone Jesus' brethren; so the sorrowless do not have anything but goat hair, when they throw a few coins into the purse of the poor and say to the Christians, "I have helped the poor more than you have." Brother, you have not helped the poor as much as the Catholics have, although you always have the poor with you, and you can do good to them whenever you wish, but Jesus is not always with you. And if the correct accounting would be made, then I think that the boast of the sorrowless would be brought to naught! For who helps and has helped the poor more in this congregation than the Christians?

But the true reason that the sorrowless have not helped Jesus is this, that they have been so blind, that they have

not seen Jesus in any distress. And Solomon writes, "That their wickedness has made them blind." Surely the sorrowless of this time could help Jesus if they would know Him, but they do not know Him, since the devil has reversed their eyes that they look with the eyes of the Pharisee, and see Him to be a false prophet and a wild spirit. As the Pharisees of that time said to Jesus, "Thou art a Samaritan and thou hast a devil," so also the Pharisees of this time say to the Christians, "You false prophets and wild spirits." Neither the sorrowless nor grace thieves believe at all that these Christians are Jesus' brethren; they cannot keep them as Christians. True sorrowless have never kept true Christians to be Christians, for Jesus' brethren have always been unknown to the world. At every time and in every place where true Christians have appeared, they have always been kept as false prophets and wild spirits. Do you see now, blind wretches, why Jesus accuses you of hardness of heart and mercilessness toward Him? You are the enemies of the cross of Jesus, you have hated and persecuted His brethren, you have over-looked and mocked them, for Jesus Himself and His brethren are unknown to you.

Again, what pertains to helping the poor, upon which the sorrowless build the hope of their salvation, they cannot spare too much to the poor, for some stray into the liquor merchants house, when they should come to church, and there the silver coin gets left which they were to save for the poor. Some build beautiful courtyards and come into debt so they have nothing with

which to help. Some buy beautiful horses and the horses eat the share of the poor. Some buy Swedish serge and silk scarves with which they get to honorably travel in the kingdom of darkness. Some whore so much that they themselves become poor. How many are left of those who have not wasted their substance through foolishness, adultery, finery or drunkenness? And those who become poor say, "God has made us poor."

Now you have seen the signs of the last times in Heaven. Soon God will begin to pour the vials of His wrath upon the earth. Nations must faint because of fear and because of suspense.

The sorrowless have not seen Jesus in distress, but the Christians have helped Him although they do not remember when they would have helped; they have not put their good deeds in memory as the builders of self-righteousness. But all mirth and laughter then shall cease when Christ in all His glory will keep the judgement with the good and the evil. The true disciples always await the judgement, but the sorrowless think the judgement will never come, not at this time anyway, and for that reason they are bold to blaspheme and hate the brethren of Jesus, for which reason they are condemned. Make repentance and bear gifts to the Judge, before He sits upon the Judgement throne. Amen.

Twenty seventh Sunday after Trinity.

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child cried travailling in birth and pained to be delivered. Rev. 12: 1-2.

John saw this woman in Heaven, although he was bodily on the earth, both John and the woman who he saw crying in pains of birth. This woman is not only that first Christian congregation which cried in the pains of rebirth, but also every Christian, who cries in the tribulation of conscience, when the new man must be born. She was clothed with the sun, that is, the light of Christianity encompassed her, and the moon under her feet; is the natural intellect, which one penitent person must tread down, and on her head a crown which had twelve stars, signifies the twelve apostles, who had spread the true Christianity. Here is the picture of one penitent person painted before our eyes. She has become pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit, which has made her sorrowful and heavy-hearted. She cries in tribulation of conscience when the new man must be born. Jesus has opened her understanding to understand the scriptures and this spiritual light is that sun with which she is clothed. But the natural intellect wants to be a great hindrance on the way of life; if a penitent one follows the light of the intellect, then God will be rejected and the world will appear to be beautiful and the Word of God will be under-

stood wrong and the true penitance will become fanaticism and living Christianity will become wildness in the eyes of those who follow the light of the intellect. For that reason a penitent one must tread the intellect under foot. For the way of life is so narrow, that no one can see it by moonlight, but full light is needed, and the sun must shine before a person can see the road which goes to Heaven.

Many have now through unwatchfulness lost this narrow way and many have begun to stagger along the wall and cannot find the door, many have lost that light which shone brightly at first, perhaps quite far away, many have become so blind, that they do not see where the way goes to Heaven any more. Many have in the beginning of the awakening been clothed with the sun and the moon under their feet, and a crown on their head which had twelve stars. Where now is your crown, you bride of the Saviour, who John saw in Heaven crying in pains of birth? Have you so forgotten the former time, that it does not come to mind, how beautiful and attractive you were then, when the crown was on your head and the twelve stars shone in the crown? Although you then cried out in pains of birth, you nevertheless had that hope and firm assurance in God, that the new man which was to be born of you would be like the Father, and that you would be taken into the church as a bride. Remember now the time of your youth, daughter of Zion, and be not shy! Do not sit as the devil's brides sit with the neck high, head tilted, whose neck the devil of honor flexes, but lift up your

head, look up to heaven, from where you await the coming of the King of Kings! Look in that direction where the sun rises and remember, that you were once clothed with the sun, when you cried in pains of birth, then was the Son of God beautiful in crimson garments, carrying a purple robe and a crown of thorns; then you were able to see how beautiful the Son of God was in bloody array! But now you look into the world and begin to love the sons of men. Who knows how long you will love them before you give the devil a kiss, for he laughs and licks his lips when he can kiss the bride of the Son of God, knowing well that he will win the heart and mind when he has enticed him with the world. What do the former pains of rebirth avail when you no longer have the crown on your head, which had twelve stars? What does the former joy avail you of this, that a new man was born into the world, if this new man is dead, who was like the Father, beautiful and full grown, which the Lord took up when he lay in his blood and wept, who had received the spirit of the elect children wherein he cried, "Abba, dear Father"? Up to that time the voice of the new man was always heard when some visitor came into the house. Then there was a holy abiding place in your home, the new man cried so much that the devil could not sleep in peace, not in the temple nor in the livingroom nor in the chamber, but now the devil has taken over in almost every house. Has the new man died? Or has he grown so mature that he cannot cry any more no matter how the son of Hagar would trouble him? His voice is not heard no

matter how the parent calls his name. Just so the new man has not run to the house of the enemy where all evil will be taught to him. I hear the heavenly Father calling and lamenting, I have raised children for myself but they have left me and become hard of hearing! I saw the Shepherd of Israel seeking the lost sheep on Mt. Sinai, on the shore of the Red sea and near the river Jordan! He traveled those heavy and troublesome steps and cries so the mountains and hills answer, but he has not received an answer from many in these times. Behold now, daughter of Zion, how the Lord laments over you and the parent seeks with a sorrowful heart, with the love of the bridegroom he knocks on the door of your heart and says, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him. Prepare now your lamps and take heed if you have oil! Soon the cry will come, "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him!" And remember how you bowed your knees in Jesus' name when you cried in the pains of rebirth. Bow yet your knees in Jesus' name and pray that He would rekindle in you the first love, that your lamp would begin to burn. Hear heavenly bridegroom the sigh of the poor bride. Our Father who art in heaven, etc.

The gospel Matt. 25:1-13.

Since today's gospel is understood in two different ways, some expounders of the scriptures say the sorrowless are the foolish virgins and some say those who have fallen from grace are the

foolish, so we must at this time consider, 1. Who are the foolish virgins? 2. For what reason do they have no oil? 3. For what reason do the wise have no oil to give to the foolish?

1. Who are the foolish virgins? Are they such sorrowless who have never awakened? Or are they such awakened who have been aborted or such Christians who confess their faith but nevertheless do not fit with the Christians? Or are they those who have fallen from grace, who have begun to oppose and hate the Christians? I think the foolish virgins are such thieves of grace, who have awakened so much, that they began to make an outward repentance, they stopped drinking, swearing, fighting and whoring, but finery is allowable, a small drink is allowable, worldly mindedness is allowable. And when they have in this half-awakened state, owned for themselves the grace of rebirth from God's proceeding grace, they have received the wrong understanding of the order of grace. The devil has transformed himself into an angel of light in their consciences, for that reason they look at the true Christians as false and themselves as true. They say they lie at the foot of Jesus' cross every day although they lie at the foot of the devil's cross. Selfrighteousness is their foundation of salvation, although it is hidden from them. The best sign of these grace thieves is this; that they are envious of the Christians, overlook God's severe righteousness, do not have fellowship with the Christians and argue with the Christians. Certainly those who have truly fallen away can come into the same soul condition,

but nevertheless the fallen ones have a bad conscience, which accuses and condemns them although they oppose and blaspheme the Christians contrary to their conscience, but those true grace thieves definitely have a sleeping conscience. They have no more doubt of their salvation, they say as the Jews who believed upon Christ, We have a Father, God, to us the door of grace is open. If God's law is preached to them, they cannot bear to hear it, if the gospel is preached, that does not touch their heart either. It is no wonder that they have no oil when death or the judgement comes. Just then they know that they have no oil in their lamp, they have no faith, which will stand in death. There are many at this time of grace who are in that unfortunate self deceit just as Peter was before his fall. That deceitful enemy had deluded him and perverted his eyes. But how did it go? Dead faith did not stand in the right trial.

2. For what reason did the foolish virgins have no oil in their lamps? For that reason that it had run out if they had any in the beginning. We can sometimes doubt if some have even had oil in their lamps when they begin to prepare themselves to meet the bridegroom. But since the gospel does not say if they had oil or not, we must leave that place without consideration, and only consider further, for what reason the foolish had no oil when the cry came? The reason is this, that the foolish did not take oil along when they went to await the bridegroom. The exponents of the scriptures have also considered that custom of the land

which was in Canaan, namely the groom came to get the bride and took her to his own house. The bridesmaids were also with the bride in the bride's house and they had to receive the groom with burning lamps. And so that all the idle fools could not peek in and force themselves to enter into the wedding chamber, the wedding was kept at night when it was dark so that the wedding guests could have their enjoyment in peace. Now it is to be surmised, that these foolish virgins had only so much oil in their lamps which was necessary to receive the groom, if the groom had come then, but when the groom tarried, their oil ran out. From this we now understand how this matter of the lamp is. The foolish virgins are such who had oil in their lamps after the first sign of grace, and if the groom had come then, when they felt the sign of grace they would have been ready to receive him. That is; if judgement or death had come then when they felt grace, then they would have died with joy. But when the groom tarried, when death did not come quit then after the first sign of grace, then the first zeal began to end, carrying the cross became troublesome, that female devil, the world, began to show it's beauty to them, as the world's whores bare their breasts to the whore bucks, so this female devil the world, bares it's breasts of fornication to the Christians and entices them with it's beauty. Say now yourselves, you fallen ones, has it not happened so? Many would have been ready to die after that first sign of grace, if death had come then, but when the groom tarried,— woe woe you un-

fortunate wretch, when the groom tarried, you became sleepy! You could not watch and pray for one moment says Jesus to the disciples who wrestled with sleep. If the children of Israel had reached the promised land of Canaan then when they crossed the Red sea, surely they would have remained in the covenant of grace, the complaining and impatience would not have come. But that travel through the wilderness of this world — this troublesome journeying — it put an end to their faith, it brought them impatience, it caused them to become angry with Moses, the impatience came from the troublesomeness of the journey and from that impatience came the desire to turn back to the heathen land. Did Moses spoil their faith, who was severe at condemning? Did Joshua and Caleb eat their Christianity, who tried to get the people to settle down and urged them to believe upon God? So the children of Israel thought, that those hard Christians wanted to lead the people to their destruction. But God gave a testimony to these men that they had spoken rightly.

See now, foolish virgins, what the right reason is that your lamps go out. You have slept and that while the oil has run out of your lamps. You have through sleepiness lost your faith. You had faith at one time and then you could have died with joy. But when the groom tarried, and did not then come to get his bride, then the sleep of sin became sweet, the conscience began to sleep, the world became dear and beautiful Some began to love the sons of men and to them finery became allo-

wable. Some because of the sorrow of the world became unbelieving. Some because of impatience lost their faith. Some through unwatchfulness and some through carelessness and laziness lost their faith. But when the cry comes, then there is haste, then comes fear of death, then comes a new awakening. But then these foolish virgins realize that their lamps are gone out. When death comes upon the unprepared, then there is not power of prayer or boldness of faith; there is not strength to knock on the door of grace. Then they say to the wise, "give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out." They call Christians to come to them. They demand that the Christians speak to them, they watch if the Christians can give them faith. But neither do those wretches have any too much faith since they have lain together with the foolish.

3. Thirdly, let us now take notice, for what reason do the wise virgins not give the foolish of their oil? Some expounders of the scriptures think, that the wise are not obliged to give oil and say that each one must have faith of his own. If this word is understood rightly, it is true, that each one must have faith of his own. But the sorrowless add one more word here, that that faith, which comes thru' some Christian's speaking and encouraging, is not acceptable before God. But this word the sorrowless have received from the devil to shelter and defend the old adam so that the Christians would give them peace of conscience. For if we look in the Bible in what way the true and saving faith has first come into the world, we will find, that just through man even the

first Christian has received faith, just through man, that is through the apostles, and when the apostles died, faith was then spread again just through men. But it is not man-given faith; but the spirit of God which has spoken through the mouth of the Christian, He is the giver of faith. So it is not spoken rightly to say that the wise virgins were not obligated to give oil to the others; but it is said to them for shame, that they had nothing to give, when they lay together with the foolish. They themselves did not have too much faith. Is this not now apparent among all Christians, that the Christians cannot anymore pour the oil of faith into the unbelieving hearts, it is very rare that one has such a gift of the Holy Spirit, that his speech effects power of faith in some others. It seems as though the Holy Spirit has become tired in the Christians hearts. Although it was in the first Christianity or the apostolic time the same kind of happening, that Peter's first first sermon on Pentecost effected more than his last sermons. But this is not for a Christian's honor, but said for shame and reproach, that the wise had nothing to give to the foolish. Because why did they lie together with the foolish? If the wise had been watching, they would not have allowed the foolish to have peaceful sleep. It is namely impossible to think that one watchful Christian will allow a sleeping person to have peaceful sleep. But they were lying down. There, no doubt, is now the right reason why they had nothing to give the others. The Holy Spirit had become tired of rebuking as it is written in the book of Moses. My spirit shall

not always strive with man, for he is flesh. But if the Holy spirit ceases to rebuke through the mouth of a Christian, then all the foolish virgins can sleep in peace. But the reason is there that the wise lie together with the foolish, therefore they have no oil to give to the foolish. When such a Christian, who himself is sleeping must encourage another to believe, then he gets doubts of himself that his speech no longer effects. And therefore the wise said, not so lest there be not enough for us and you. The wise knew that they themselves would lack faith when their speech no longer effected. And truly there is fault in their faith when their speech no longer effects.

Now all virgins, both wise and foolish should begin to prepare their lamps for soon the cry will come, "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him." When namely the bridegroom has tarried a little, the wise and the foolish lie together in the lower corner of the world and they lie there until the cry comes. Who knows how much oil will be found in the lamps then? who knows? The wise will not have anything to share with the foolish when they lie together — But you few souls, who the Lord finds watching when He comes — you bridesmaids! Do you have oil in your lamps? Do you have so much oil that you can with joy receive the Bridegroom when He comes? Certainly I know that you have nothing to give others, but do you; have that much oil that your lamp will begin to burn when the bridegroom comes? Try and look at your lamps, if there is so much oil that you can with joy and rejoicing

receive the bridegroom, for soon the cry will come, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him! Soon the heavenly bridegroom will come to get his poor bride! Soon the visitors from heaven will cornel soon the bridesmaids will get to leap and dance on the clean floor of heaven! Those who have clean feet, those who have white raiment, those who have rings and forehead ornaments, those who have a gold crown on their head, those who have a cross on the breast, she is a bride, she is that chosen one who sits near the bridegroom now and forever. Amen.

Candlemas Day, Sermon A.

"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" Malachi 3: 2.

Thus the prophet Malachi writes in today's epistle; he writes of Christ's coming but his words are so terrible that all should fear that Christ is not so merciful as the sorrowless and grace thieves imagine. "Who may abide the day of His coming?" That is, who is able to stand before Him when He comes? All grace thieves imagine that Christ is so merciful that He will cast no one into hell. But in these aforementioned words of the prophet Malachi is heard of a terrible severity being with Christ, when he doubts that not many can stand before Him. For He is like a silver refiner's fire and like a fuller's soap. "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold

and silver.” The sons of Levi are priests of the Old Testament, and it sounds from the threatening words of the prophet that Christ intends to try the priests especially, how they have gone before the blind people with false doctrine and an offensive example. We know also from the writings of the ewangelists that He reproached and severely rebuked the high priests, scribes and Pharisees, and threatened them with terrible judgement and punishment. But if the chief priests would have preached the true doctrine and the right order to the people, Christ would not have judged the priests so severely. But the sorrowless people would have received severe judgement. Although Christ yet condemned that sorrowless people and salted all as a whole when awakening did not come to many from His preaching, how can we await that the sorrowless people should awaken from our preachings when the Son of God Himself was not able to awaken the hardened ones, and who was so powerful to preach repentance to the sorrowless people. It sounds from this, that not even God Himself can awaken the hardened from the sleep of sin. John the Baptist had already for several years preached repentance, nor was there any better awakening than what the gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke relate, that some confessed their sins and allowed themselves to be baptized unto repentance. And they who awakened from John’s sermons of repentance became Jesus’ disciples and went to school, but how many of them were there compared to that great multitude who came and listened to the sermons

of Jesus? It is mentioned that there were 70 disciples and 12 apostles who always followed Him. And not even they had yet truly awakened until just after the Saviour’s death, when they received true sorrow when they no longer had refuge in the world or in heaven, but to hell they had to turn their hope. Such is the true awakening which the disciples had after the Savior’s death. That awakening is not befitting which had come to some from the law sermons of John the Baptist, that they confessed their sins, as the grace thieves think, as a whole or in one lump. Although we have that faith, that they confessed especially those committed sins, but in that awakening they did not weep nor lament as the disciples of Jesus did on Easter day, nor did anyone become pricked in the heart as some did on Pentecost. Such then is the true awakening. Not one before that awakening lamented that his heart was hard and sore, no one else but that sinful woman in the house of Simon the leper, who wept on His feet, and, who knows, that palsied man who was carried to Jesus, Zaccheus, who promised to repay his wrong doing four-fold, and the woman of Canaan who had such a firm faith. All others who cried out, “Jesus, Son of David” and “Jesus, dear Master” were only in natural distress, and because of natural distress they came to Jesus, but natural distress has only very seldom effected true awakening. Therefore it is not strange that Christ was so severe at barking and condemning almost the whole nation, as the prophet Malachi has written of Christ many years before: “Who may abide the day

of His coming?" Who can stand before Him when He is so severe in judging? Unrepentant sinners cannot stand before Him, when He comes again to judge the quick and the dead. Only those few souls who have felt that they cannot stand before Him with self righteousness, and so have, with old Simeon, awaited the consolation of Israel and finally been able to embrace Him; they can go to death with joy. Pray, all you who await the consolation of Israel, that He would soon come into the temple, that you could see the Lord Christ before you go to taste death. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 2: 22-32.

We heard from the above-read holy gospel, that the old Simeon was awaiting the consolation of Israel, and had also received that assurance from the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord Christ. We must therefore observe how many now await the consolation of Israel?

The first consideration: Do the sorrowless await the consolation of Israel? No, for in Simeon's time it was not heard that the sorrowless would have awaited a spiritual Saviour, but they surely awaited a natural Saviour, whom they thought would soon come to deliver them from natural distress. A sorrowless person also feels natural lacking and imperfection, as sickness, poverty, slavery, lack of money, but he does not believe that this want comes from his own foolishness and lack of right Christianity, he does not believe that the devil makes him poor. The

Jews had such a faith that when the Messiah comes, he will deliver them not only from under the power of the Romans, but would also win over the whole world under Him and make all rag devils rich. And the sorrowless people of this world still await that same thing, namely, a natural Saviour who would be so rich that the sorrowless would not have to pay their debts, but would receive everything free. Such a Saviour who would feed them free of charge, and would allow them to drink rum and punch and whiskey, as much as would possibly go down the throat, such a one would be the very best Saviour. When Jesus had once fed 5,000 men free of charge, then this sorrowless nation wanted to make Him a king. In Simeon's time others did not await the consolation of Israel, no others awaited a spiritual Saviour than only this Simeon and Anna the Prophetess. Others do not await a spiritual Saviour, than only the truly awakened, who cannot live without a Saviour, they have a distressful desire after a Saviour. At this time there are not many souls who await the consolation of Israel with all their heart.

The second consideration: Do the grace thieves await the consolation of Israel? No, for they have that faith, that they have already found the Saviour, but what kind of a Saviour have they found? The disciples had no distress before the Saviour's death, but they truly believed upon the visible Saviour, they believed that after a short time He would become the King of Israel. They were so attached to the world that they could not await nor hope for anything

else than only a natural Saviour, through whom they would become rich and become lords of the world. With that faith they became grace thieves, that they were so attached to the world, as the grace thieves of this time, who do not want to repay their wrong doings. The honor of the world is so great with grace thieves, that they do not want to confess their sins; they do not want to be reconciled with their neighbor. For that reason grace thieves await such a Saviour who permits them into heaven with their possessions and honor. They imagine that they have already found the true Saviour, but it is a false Saviour upon whom they believe, neither do they know the Father or His Son. And surely all the sorrowless and hardened ones would go to heaven with their honor and wrong substance, so that the devil of honor nor the devil of greed would have to go out of the heart. Therefore we see that there are not many who await the consolation of Israel. No others but Simeon and Anna the Prophetess, no others than truly awakened people, who feel that without a Saviour they will go to hell. They await that blessed moment that they could see the Lord Christ before they die. Some sorrowless depend upon that penitence, which should come to them before they die. But this trust is a false hope, and the devil has given them this assurance. But Simeon had the assurance of the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord Christ, and he came into the church from the effect of the Spirit, at the same time as Mary came with the child into the church, and he could see the Lord

Christ, and through this seeing he became prepared for death. Come now, Simeon and Anna, when Christ is carried into the temple; come now to see how beautiful He is; come and see before you die, so that you can die with joy, from beholding the Son of God. Amen.

Candlemas Second Sermon.

“For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” Job 19: 25, 26.

When that holy man Job was in great pain and tribulation because of the trying of his faith, Job’s friends reproached Job of an ungodly life, although outwardly he had shown himself to be pious and godly, as the servants of self righteousness usually have the faith that God does not trouble His children without reason in that way. The servants of self-righteousness have such a faith that if a Christian has to suffer something in this world, he has certainly well merited it. The friends of Job had such a faith that Job was a secret evil-doer, although his outward life was pious and blameless. But Job had a clean conscience; he could not take such false reproach upon his conscience from the servants of self righteousness, but took refuge in God, knowing well that they who want to live in a godly manner in the world can suffer much from the children of the world because of righteousness. And at the same time Job’s faith was strengthened, when

even those best friends came upon him with false accusations. In that Job's faith became stronger, that even though God sometimes allows His children to become tempted by the devil for the trying and strengthening of their faith, nevertheless there is one God in heaven who sees and knows the troubles of a Christian when he is persecuted for righteousness sake. Upon that firm confidence Job said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; And although after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." This great grace also happened to Job that he, in his flesh, saw God. From this we hear first that the servants of self righteousness want to reprove Christians of such sins which they themselves commit, although the servants of self righteousness are pious in their own opinion. Second, when God places some pain or tribulation upon a Christian as a trial of faith and for an example of patience, then the servants of self-righteousness think that the Christians have well merited such punishment. To some joy even comes over a Christian's misfortune, when Christians can suffer because of their faith and because of conscience. Job's friends had such a thought that Job was a secret evildoer, that otherwise God would not have allowed Job to be so terribly tempted and troubled by the devil, unless he had been a great sinner and evildoer. But we hear both from the book of Job and from other places in the Bible, that Job was set as an example of patience for all saints, and that God allowed this man to be tempted by the devil to show

the devil and the world that a child of God does not give up his faith, no matter how he would be tempted by the world and the devil. But a Christian's faith is even strengthened more through such trials, partly that a Christian comes to know himself better through such trials, and partly that a Christians faith is strengthened through trial. The devil of self-righteousness says, "Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Satan thought that Job would yet give his faith to Satan when he had to suffer something for righteousness sake. That devil who is the accuser of God's children thought that if Job gives up his faith and blesses God before the eyes, that is, blasphemes God when he is more severely tempted and troubled because of his faith, and so even now all the devil's angels think that this Christianity is only hypocrisy and put-on piety. The devil's angels have the same intention as that chief devil who tempted Job, that if these awakened ones also, who make themselves to be and say they are Christians, would be tempted and have to suffer some tribulation for the sake of Christianity, certainly they would soon cease howling and barking at people, and would become the same as other people of the world.

But the devil had the same thought about Job, that he would give up his faith and become like a devil. What did the devil win from Job? Has the devil rightly known Job's heart? Has the devil rightly surmised when he thought that Job feared God because of the recompense, and that Job was a hypocrite and sanctimonious? Did not the devil

become deceived and a liar in that place? Who knows how it will go with those angels of the devil, who during these times rejoice over the fall of Christians and over the misfortunes of Christians, and say, "Skin for skin. These false prophets who call themselves Christians will become beautiful. Let them become tempted a little, then you will certainly see them begin to blaspheme God before your eyes." But do not rejoice too soon, you devil's angel; it will not be any easier for you even if all the Christians were killed. The tribulation in hell will not be any easier, even if all the Christians would fall and become like you. But the devil's joy over the misfortune of a Christian is as cursed as serpent's tears are cursed. The devil has not often been overtaken in a lie, but there, in Job's case, the devil became a liar. He thought Job would give up his faith and become like the devil, but the devil became a liar. It is certain all the angels of the devil hope the same thing which the devil himself hoped of Job, that the Christians would become the same kind as they are. They have not yet ceased hoping, although they know that in Job's time their father, the devil, became a liar. But now the Christians can have a comforting and upbuilding example of Job's faith and patience, when they see that a Christian does not therefore give up his faith, even if he is tempted by the devil and troubled in behalf of body. The faith of a true Christian is strengthened through this, that he is persecuted for righteousness sake. Then with better confidence than before he can say to the servant of self-

righteousness, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." And as that saint Job had received that blessed assurance, that in his flesh he shall see God, so also old Simeon had received that assurance from the Holy Spirit that he should not taste death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And the same assurance is given even yet to all the sorrowful, penitent, and doubting souls who await the consolation of Israel that they shall see the Lord's Christ before they leave the world. But in that seeing is needed the same kind of patience in tribulation as Job, the same kind of waiting and longing after the Lord's Christ as Simeon, for no one can receive that assurance from the Holy Spirit that he shall see God in the flesh, who has not awaited the consolation of Israel in sorrow, penitence, and faith. And those few souls who await the consolation of Israel in spiritual poverty, and who have the heartfelt desire that they can see Christ before they die, will soon receive that blessed assurance from the Spirit that they will not taste of death before they have seen the Lord's Christ in the flesh. They must also come into the temple through the effect of the Spirit, in that covenant when the Lord's Christ is carried in there. You sorrowful, penitent and doubting ones, have you waited a long time in spiritual poverty for the consolation of Israel? Have you received that assurance from the Holy Spirit that you shall see Christ? And you few souls who have seen Christ and carried

Him in your arms, pray as old Simeon, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all the people. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Hear thou Consolation of Israel, the sigh of all the sorrowful, penitent, doubting and believing. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 2: 22-32.

The evangelist Luke has written in today's gospel that old Simeon was ready to die when he had seen the Lord's Christ. In accordance with that, we shall through God's grace observe how a Christian leaves this world with joy when he has been able to see the Saviour of the world.

We hear that old Simeon was ready to die when he had seen the Saviour of the world. But he was one of those few who awaited the consolation of Israel. At that time many awaited the consolation of Israel but they awaited for a natural saviour who should help them in all natural distress. The lords of the world, Pharisees, scribes, and elders of the people awaited a change in the government, for they had come under the rule of a pagan government, and in their estimation it was a great shame that God's people had to be under a pagan government. Their power and honor became lessened thereby, when they had to be subjects of a pagan government. The rich of the world awaited a natural saviour who would become their king, that they too could get

to eat and to be like lords at the king's table. But especially the poor of the world awaited a natural saviour to come soon to feed them free of charge. All, therefore, awaited the coming of the promised Saviour, but not for the reason that they would have had a fear of hell. They did not have such a feeling that without the Saviour they would perish eternally; but they had such an intention that they all would become lords and rich men in the kingdom of the Messiah. They had such a hope that they would become free of all taxes and burdens in the kingdom of the Messiah. They had such a trust that they would all become rich and gain worldly honor when the Messiah comes. The Jews did not think that a spiritual Saviour was more necessary than a natural one. And how did they, who no doubt were holy and pious, know to await a spiritual Saviour. They had no doubt of their salvation like the penitent have; they did not have fear of death, judgment and eternal destruction as the doubting ones usually have, for they have such a conscience that all the people are holy, and that all will reach the bosom of Abraham. But Simeon was one of those who awaited the consolation in a spiritual sense; he awaited a spiritual Saviour who would save the people from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He felt that he needed a spiritual Saviour, and also saw that the whole country had sunk into the corruption of sin. He awaited such a Saviour who could save the souls of the people. He saw that the people had a terrible and ungodly life, and if a change did not come soon in the faith and

life of the people, then every single soul would be lost. Because of this matter he awaited a spiritual Saviour who would have the spiritual power to awaken that ungodly people from their sorrowlessness and to effect a change in the faith and life of the people. And from where did old Simeon receive that enlightenment that a spiritual Saviour was more necessary than a natural Saviour? And from where did he conclude this, that the Messiah was a spiritual Saviour, when all others awaited a natural Saviour? This enlightenment he had received from the Holy Spirit. As the Jews then awaited a natural Saviour, who would make them rich men and lords, so even now the sorrowless yet await a natural Saviour who would make them rich men and lords, for the sorrowless do not feel that they need a spiritual Saviour. The Saviour of a sorrowless person is in the world. There is his god. But a penitent person would soon fall into doubt if he were not told that a Saviour is found, and although he always awaits the appearing of the Saviour, however he needs the assurances of the Holy Spirit that he shall not taste of death until he has seen the Lord's Christ. He who has not had such an assurance from the Holy Spirit cannot come into the temple through the effect of the spirits into that very covenant when Christ is carried into the temple. Although all the sorrowless say that they have received such an assurance that they also shall see Christ before they die, when death comes then they must confess that they must go to hell. From where then had this assurance come that they shall see Christ before

they die, since on the death bed they must confess that they have not seen Christ? So all the sorrowless have confessed on the death bed that Christ is far from them, and that they must go to eternity without seeing Christ. It must have been the wrong spirit which formerly revealed to them that they shall not taste of death before they see the Lord's Christ. The spirit of falsehood certainly preaches thus to the sorrowless, "God has not created us for destruction; surely we, too, will become saved if it is God's will that we shall become saved." One priest has written that God would not be almighty if He were not able to draw those up from hell who fall in there, and all sorrowless believe that he is quite the spiritual pastor who so preaches that all who fall into hell will be able to get up from there. If he had written that God would not be almighty, if He would not be able to draw those up from hell who have fallen there in this time of grace, then it would be more possible to believe his doctrine, although the Bible shows that God has not been able to draw up even all of those who have fallen into hell in this time of grace. Namely, Judas in this time of grace had already fallen into hell when the conscience awakened, but Judas was so heavy that God was not able to draw him up. Although that is impossible for the intellect to believe that God was not able to draw Judas up from hell, nevertheless it has so happened. But God was able to pull Peter up out of hell. Some sorrowless believe that even Judas is in the kingdom of heaven, but not all sorrowless are able to believe that.

Since now the matter is such that even the sorrowless imagine that they receive that assurance from the Holy Spirit that they shall not see death until they have seen the Lord's Christ, then it is necessary to consider the spirits, for many sorrowless base their salvation upon this, that they have received such an assurance that they will not see death until they have seen Christ. And that spirit, which has given them such an assurance, has been a lying spirit. Since they must confess on their death bed that they have not seen Christ, and that they must go to eternity without seeing Christ, then it is necessary to consider in what way old Simeon had received such an assurance from the Holy Spirit that he shall see Christ before he dies. First the evangelist says that "he awaited the consolation of Israel." Assuredly, that man was sorrowful since he awaited consolation. And he was so sorrowful that he no longer found consolation in the world. But the sorrowless have never become so sorrowful that they would have doubted of their salvation, for they have always found some consolation in the world. Some have found consolation in the liquor flask, some have found consolation in adultery, some in greed or the money chest, some in finery, some in honor of the world. Nor has such a distress ever come to the sorrowless that all consolation would have ended in the world. But old Simeon did not find consolation in the world, since he began to await consolation from above. There now is the reason why the sorrowless cannot see Christ. Such a sorrow never comes to them that all consolation in the world

ends. Like the Jews they always await a natural Saviour, and that they can find in the world. But the penitent, who are in such heavy sorrow that they no longer can find any consolation on the earth, begin to await the consolation of Israel from heaven, and in that awaiting, in that heavy sighing, they can sometimes receive that assurance from the Holy Spirit that they shall not see death before they have seen the Lord's Christ. And I believe that everyone, when he has received such an assurance from the Holy Spirit, will also come into God's temple through the effect of the spirit, into that very covenant when Christ is carried in there. There he can take the Son of God into his arms, and His mother will also willingly allow it, that such ones who in sorrow and spiritual poverty await the consolation of Israel, can take her Son into their arms and look at His bright eyes, His sweet mouth, His snow white and innocent hands. But the sorrowless do not care to take the Son of God into their arms, for they keep Him as an offspring of a whore.

Is there now here some old Simeon or Anna, the Prophetess, who would take the Son of God into their arms? Is there here some virgin Mary, who with such love and a mother's heart could take care of that beautiful Son of God, who smiles in His mother's arms when she talks to Him? The mother of God would probably not dare to give her son to such ones who want to kill Him, nor to such ones either who because of unbelief tremble so exceedingly that they would drop her son to the ground. The mother of God would probably not dare

to give her son to such ones who have hands cold as ice. The Son of God would shudder if he would be left in the clutches of such who have hands as cold as ice. Nor would the mother of God dare to give her son to such people who have hard hands, who cannot even hold their own children. But to such ones the mother of God would willingly give her Son who, with a sorrowful and penitent heart, await the consolation of Israel, and have already before received such an assurance from the Holy Spirit that they shall not taste of death until they had seen the Lord's Christ. Come now, old Simeon, if you have a desire to see Christ before death. Come now, Anna the Prophetess, to speak of Him to all those who await the consolation of Israel in Jerusalem. Come now, virgin Mary, into God's temple, when the days of your purification are accomplished. Come now, all children from Bethlehem, before you are slain; come now, all chickadees, swallows, and young of the dove, to look at that tiny Son of God, and say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Amen.

Virgin Mary's Day.

At a certain time our Saviour asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" And the disciples answered, "Some say you are Elijah and some, one of the prophets." And then He asked the disciples again, "But whom say ye that I am?" And Peter answered, "Thou art the Son of the living God." Matthew 16:13-16.

From these surmisings we hear that those people who saw Jesus while He was in the days of His flesh, had many kinds of surmisings about Him| they surmised what man He could be. Some thought He was the prophet Elijahs and some thought He was some other prophet, but Peter had received that assurance that Jesus was the Son of the living God. And this faith was given to Peter from above, as we hear from the Saviour's own mouth when He says to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." And upon this confession of Peter the grace thieves now found their faith, that Peter at that time had living faith. But if no more is needed for salvation than only that confession of Peter, that Jesus is the Son of God, then all the whores and thieves would become saved, for in these times no one denies that Jesus is the Son of God, except some worldly wise who do not want to confess that Jesus is the Son of God. All peasants and all drunkards and whiskey merchants, all whores and thieves confess that Jesus is the Son of God. But they do not become saved with that confession for they, nevertheless, do not believe that from the

heart although they say it with the mouth, when the life of the sorrowless is such that the god of the world is more befitting as a god than that God who lives in heaven, who is unknown to them. For if they believed from the heart that He is the Son of the living God and believed upon Him, they would not be able to mock Him with their ungodly life. Peter could have had such an intention then, that he believed it from the heart, but afterward Peter became deceived through that same faith, when he confessed that he was ready to die with Jesus and, however, was not ready. Then he could experience and know that he did not yet have a living and saving faith, when his faith did not stand in the trial. But only after he received the Holy Spirit did he receive a living and saving faith.

But let us now observe what the scribes and Pharisees believe of Jesus. They believed, first, that according to His natural birth He was a bastard child and an illegitimate child, whom Joseph, a carpenter from Nazareth, had conceived in adultery; and some wise of the world who held themselves to be very wise, thought also that Jesus was Joseph's son, "and as children of whores are always prone to mischief, so also was Jesus of Nazareth sly and deceitful in deceiving people with His sorcery." In the minds of the Pharisees He was a Samaritan, a disturber of the people, who had learned His tricks of sorcery in Egypt, when already in Moses' time there were sorcerers and the doctrine of sorcery. Such a faith the scribes and Pharisees had then, and some worldly wise have the same faith even

now, who cannot confess that Jesus is the Son of God. No doubt they will also be saved with that faith, if only they believe?

But what faith did Nicodemus have, who came to Jesus at night? No doubt Nicodemus had the right and saving faith, when he confessed with his own mouth that Jesus was a teacher sent by God? No doubt, Nicodemus believes now that the doctrine of Jesus is the right doctrine. But in that place of new birth, Nicodemus did not want to follow Jesus' doctrine, for Nicodemus surmised, "Can an adult person enter into his mother's womb and be born again?" There is the strait place, through which Nicodemus cannot go. And in that place of new birth, probably all of Nicodemus' brothers in faith will be caught, for they are so big and fat that they do not fit in at the strait gate. Now Peter and the other disciples have the right faith, but it is not living before they receive the Holy Spirit, and therefore such a faith as Peter had does not help us before we receive the Holy Spirit. No doubt you see from the third Article of the Creed in Luther's catechism, that a person cannot believe upon the Lord Jesus of his own strength or understanding, before he receives the Holy Spirit. But when now have the sorrowless received the Holy Spirit? Have they received it on Pentecost or on Easter Day? It seems as though they would have received the Holy Spirit at market time. Then it is told that they have a great and joyous time shouting and cursing, and when they have been able to experience this great joy and rejoicing in the kingdom of darkness,

then they can beat their beast of burden and cry out, "Off the road, satan and the devil!" But Mary had received the Holy Spirit as soon as the Son of God was conceived; Mary became elated when she saluted her cousin Elizabeth. She has sung thanks and praise to God saying, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." For Mary knows that she bears the Son of God under her heart; she knows that the Son of God has effected that she has become fruitful; if even the whole world would say that He is an illegitimate child, Mary knows and all Christians know that He is the Son of God. Although Joseph first doubted of the faithfulness of his betrothed bride, nevertheless he also believed that it had come from the power of the Holy Spirit when the angel revealed it to him. Now Mary, Joseph's betrothed bride, the world barks at you as a whore, and your son will be shamed and called a bastard child. How can you be joyous, when you are so despised by the world? But your heart rejoices nevertheless and is glad in the Lord, when you know and feel that the Son of God lives in your heart. Let the world call you a whore, do not be concerned about that, when the angel from heaven has revealed to you that the Holy One who is in you will be called the Son of the most High. So bow your heart in the Lord Jesus' name to pray that the Son of God would always live in your heart. If the sword would yet go through your soul, then pray, nevertheless, that the Holy One who is in you, namely the Son of the living God, would take you up to heaven when you die. Hear, you

living Son of God, the sighs of the poor and down-pressed. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 1: 26.

The angel Gabriel has revealed to the virgin Mary that the Son of God would be born of her, but the world does not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. So we must at this moment observe through God's grace what each one believes of Him. First consideration: What do the scribes and Pharisees believe of Him? Second consideration: What does Nicodemus believe of Him? Third consideration: What do the sorrowless people believe of Him? Fourth consideration: What do the disciples and women believe of Him?

The first consideration: What do the scribes and Pharisees believe of Him? That He is Joseph's son and was conceived before wedlock in adultery. From where have the scribes and Pharisees received such a faith? From their own experience, no doubt. Namely, they themselves are whores and think others are the same kind. They themselves lie in adultery and imagine that others do too. There is one devil's spirit which has given them that enlightenment, that the Son of God is a bastard child. And it is also another devil which confirms that faith, it is the devil of anger when namely Jesus barks at them as an adulterous generation; all the meek whores become angry and say, "You yourself have been conceived in the bed of adultery, and you come to bark at us." When the spiritual hatred is kindled to burn, the Pharisees receive that enlightenment from hell that Jesus of

Nazareth is a bastard child, for the Pharisees and scribes cannot believe that Jesus is the Son of God. If they believed that He is the Son of God, then they would believe His word also and His doctrine to be true. But spiritual hatred; that is the devil of anger, gives them that enlightenment that Jesus is the Son of Joseph the carpenter and was conceived in adultery. The scribes and Pharisees also have the same faith, that Jesus of Nazareth is a bastard child, who had been in the school of sorcery in Egypt and has been a great sorcerer and reverser of the eyes, and the disciples were ignorant and simple, who believed such tricks of sorcery and thought that He did them with God's power. As the scribes and Pharisees then said, "He drives out devils with the power of Beelzebub," so also the scribes and Pharisees of this time say that the effects of the Christianity are of the devil, and that the awakened are possessed of evil spirits, and that the Christians are false prophets and wild spirits. Such descriptions the devil paints before the eyes of the sorrowless, when the effects of true Christianity are changed to be false and the effects of the devil's spirit. When the light of Christianity appears before the eyes of the world as the devil's torch light and that great change which occurs in a person's heart is proclaimed as delusion, then the devil has reversed the eyes of the world, then Christ changes to be a sorcerer, and the Son of God changes in the eyes of the scribes and Pharisees to be the son of Joseph. And that Holy One, who was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, changes

into a bastard child. The scribes and Pharisees imagine that a pure virgin is a secret whore, but a whore is called a virgin by the world. And are the scribes and Pharisees alone in that faith, that the Son of God is the son of Joseph? Do not the sorrowless people also follow that same doctrine or faith of the Pharisees? When Christ, the Son of God, revealed His spiritual wisdom, then the sorrowless people said, "Is this not Joseph the carpenter's son? And how does He know the Scriptures?" The sorrowless people follow the faith of the Pharisees, and also drive Jesus out of the church when He brings forth such places from the Scriptures, which come against the breast. The scribes and Pharisees and also the sorrowless people had such a faith that the Son of God is Joseph's son, that the Holy One, who was conceived in the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, is the seed of a whore.

The second consideration: What kind of faith did Nicodemus have? What kind of a man did he think Jesus was? Nicodemus had once confessed his faith when he came to Jesus at night. He then revealed his faith when he said, "Master, we know that Thou art a teacher sent by God," but this confession of faith is not such as Peter's confession of faith, "Thou art the Son of the living God." And we now understand from this Peter's confession of faith, that Nicodemus' faith is not the right faith, for if Nicodemus confesses Jesus of Nazareth to be a right teacher, then it is not a saving faith. Many are right spiritual teachers, but there is only One Son of God. Nicodemus confesses

his faith that Jesus of Nazareth is a right spiritual teacher, but that is not a saving faith when he does not believe all that this spiritual teacher says to him, for example, of new birth. And if he would even believe that it is necessary that a person must be reborn, and however does not come into that rebirth, it avails him nothing. And so Nicodemus' faith is partly false faith when he has a different faith than the disciples. He does not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and his salvation is founded only upon natural meekness. When he comes to bury the body of Jesus, he has that assurance that God will repay him for his trouble, and the brothers in faith of Nicodemus even now have the same faith, that God will repay them for their trouble if the people do not pay, and what a person lacks in meekness, that God will give him by grace. The faith of the disciples is not such. Luther's faith is this, "that they are duty bound to do all these, and although a person would do only good, nevertheless all is sin that he does in a natural state." If he gives all his possessions to the poor, it is a sin as long as he is in an unconverted state without new birth, and if he gives nothing, then it is a still greater sin; said in a word, Nicodemus and all who follow him will go straight to hell.

The third consideration: What do the sorrowless people believe and what kind of a man do they think Jesus is? Some believe that he is Elijah and some believe that He is a prophet. But finally they reveal their faith when the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees incite the people to cry, "Crucify"; then their

faith becomes evident. If the lords say to the people, "Ask for the release of Barabbas," then the sorrowless people ask. If the lords say to the people, "Cry, 'Crucify'," then the sorrowless people cry out, "Crucify!" Such is the faith of the sorrowless people. But, however, this sorrowless people surely have a desire to peer. The people gathered from every city to hear the teachings of Jesus; they gathered to peer. He is in their mind one strange and extra-ordinary man, who preaches so that some from among the people go to cry out. But these sorrowless people are not gathered for that reason, that they believe His teachings to be rights nor for the reason that they would need to hear where the road goes to heaven, but the people came only to peer. And when Jesus of Nazareth gives them some word which conflicts with their blind intellects, they turn their back and say, "This is a hard saying, who can bear to hear it?" And so this sorrowless people go to hell, if the same kind of change does not come to these people as to the disciples on Pentecost. Then the sorrowless peoples came to mock the effects of the Holy Spirit, but some were taken ahold of by the power of the Holy Spirit, when Peter reproached them of the murder of the Saviour, and that speech went through their hearts, and they began with fear and trembling to ask, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But the sorrowless were filled with anger and rashness to war against the truth, and because of this anger they sunk even deeper into hell. Because of anger they grit their teeth and thirst for Christian's blood.

The fourth consideration: What do the disciples and women believe of Him? Peter has confessed his faith and said to the Saviour, "Thou art the Son of the living God," and this confession of faith has come from Peter's mouth before he received the Holy Spirit. This faith of Peter is surely right, but it is not saving before the Holy Spirit comes into the heart and there effects the feeling of life, for all grace thieves now believe that Jesus is the Son of God, although Jesus is entirely unknown in the heart; they believe and mock His tears; they believe and trample His blood; they believe and hate the Christians. Peter had the right faith according to the letter, but power of faith and fruit of faith were far from him, until the time that the Holy Spirit came into his heart and made his faith living. Behold! To that point everyone must follow Christ, that he be filled with the Holy Spirit and power, that he can live and die in faith, that he is able to strive in faith until death, that he can give his life and blood because of Jesus. Such a faith Peter had after Pentecost, and that same true faith all Christians have, who have followed Jesus' bloody footsteps from the garden to the place of the Skull, to the grave, and finally to the resurrection, so that the power of resurrection becomes alive in the heart, from which follows spiritual joy. Then the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Just at this place of resurrection, the disciples of Jesus are filled with the Holy Spirit and preach with new tongues; when that former dead faith becomes living they are given power to preach to the Jews and Gentiles

the living gospel of that Crucified one. Although the word of the cross is an offense to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, nevertheless the Galilean has now won a few souls for the kingdom of heaven, and these souls, who are few, rejoice and are exceedingly glad in the wedding of the Lamb now and forever. Amen.

St. John the Baptist Day.

The Evangelists have remembered and written of several places in the law sermons of John the Baptist, which are very significant and harsh. One place in John's sermons is written in the gospel of Luke where the words are thus: "**I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable.**" Luke 3: 16-17

We hear from these words that John the Baptist was a man diligent in barking, although it happened mostly through parables. Therefore it is no wonder that the meek people of that time became angry at such a dog who barked so angrily that all the meek whores begged for his head on a platter, and did not receive peace of conscience before John was beheaded. John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Saviour. He was sent by God to prepare a

way into the hearts of the people. But in preparing this road he had to pry up with an iron bar those rocks of offense which the enemy had rolled into the hearts of the people already from their youth. The preparer of the way came first upon completely blocked roads. The prophets had truly traveled that road before him and tried to pry up those rocks of offense, which the enemy had dragged upon the road, but the tracks of the prophets could not be seen anymore in the hearts of the people when John began to prepare that same road. With the iron shovel of truth he had to break the snow banks which the storms and tempests of the world had gathered there. Nothing else could be seen there except the tracks of the wolves when the preparer of the road began to wade in the blocked road. The devil had dammed all the schemes of the mind; the understanding and intellect were darkened. They read the Bible backward. Natural meekness and dead faith were the foundation of their salvation. The forerunner had to first tear down these wrong foundations of salvation with the iron bar of truth; the axe of death was laid at the root of the trees. "Every tree, which does not bear good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." We well surmise that John spoke of the Saviour when he said, "One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." Here he first confesses his unworthiness in regard to the Saviour, for the people of that time began to believe that John was the Saviour, but the forerunner of the Saviour did not want to own for himself that honor; he con-

fessed openly that he was not worthy to unloose the shoe latches of the Saviour. Therefore how do some Pharisees and grace thieves intend to give the Saviour a kiss? To equals we can give a kiss, but not to the Saviour, whose shoe latches John did not feel himself worthy to unloose. Now that part of John's parable comes, which shows what power this man had who came after John. "He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." That word which afterward came from the Saviour's mouth now fits in this place, "I am come to send fire on the earth and what will I, if it be already kindled?" But it is not hell fire, which the Saviour came to kindle, but it is a spiritual fire which is sometimes felt in the heart of an awakened one. When the disciples said, "Did not our heart burn within us," then the spiritual fire was already kindled, but those wretches did not yet understand what it signified that their heart burned. On Pentecost also there were cloven tongues like as of fire seen sitting upon each of them. This now is what John meant when he said that "the Saviour will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." But this fire of the Saviour, when the world saw it, appeared to the crowd of the world that it was the devil's fishing fire. More broadly John says, "Whose fan is in his hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor and will gather the wheat into His garner, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." This is one heart-moving parable. We hear from this parable of John that the Saviour is not so merciful as the grace thieves think He is. The grace thieves

think that the Saviour is merciful to all who trust upon Him, but it must be a vain trust, if they think that the Saviour does not make a distinction between the penitent and the impenitent. The sorrowless think that the wheat are meek people who need no repentance. And the grace thieves think that the Saviour has suffered and paid all in their behalf, that they need only to believe that they will be saved, no matter how contrary to the Word of God they live. But what then are the chaff, which He burns with unquenchable fire? They must be the meek whores and the honest thieves and temperate drunkards and the honorable whiskey merchants, who are kept as, the best men in the world. But are the chaff such wild spirits who bark at honorable people? The Baptist was also such a wild spirit and false prophet, who barked so terribly at the best men in the congregation that they had to say, "That man has a devil." Assuredly John was in spiritual pride since he condemned the best men of the congregation to hell and kept himself to be good. One or the other of these are likened to chaff in this place: the world's meek whores and temperate drunkards or these false prophets who do not allow peace of conscience to honorable people. But now the meek whores of this world say, "It is not now like it was at that time when John preached. Now the time has changed much from what it was formerly. Not one is now so foolish that he thinks he can become saved through meekness or through works of the law, as the Jews thought. The doctrine of Christ is now cleared up to us and people are taught

the Word of God, so that no one needs to be in ignorance as to how he should live so that he would be saved. We have been born of Christian parents, and already as children were taken up into God's covenant of grace through baptism. We have been brought up in the doctrine of Christ and have practiced Christian habits. Why are we then barked at as pagans? Although John preached harsh law to the people of that time and condemned besides, such a judgement does not befit us, who are enlightened and old Christians. They were pagans to whom John preached, but we are not pagans." So preaches old Adam when he has received enlightenment from hell through the natural intellect, which shows the natural man where the road goes to heaven. The natural intellect gets its enlightenment from the liver, where the devil of self-righteousness lives, and from the spleen where honor of the world lies, and also from the colon, where the devil of greed has built his home, and lastly from the gall where spiritual hatred drips. All these devil's angels, which lie in a natural person's flesh, give the natural intellect that enlightenment, that this Christianity which now has appeared cannot be any other than the deceit of the devil. Self-righteousness says, "Certainly you will not be saved by this, that you struggle in pain and tribulation of conscience, as these wild spirits do. But live meekly and read diligently." The honor of the world says, "You do not need to cry out to the world, but confess your sins before God if you have done wrong in some place or other." Greed says, "You do

not need to begin to repay and reconcile all the trifles. When you are reconciled with God, you are also reconciled with your neighbor." Spiritual hatred gives the intellect that enlightenment that these awakened ones are in spiritual pride when they condemn honorable people. It is also one devil's angel which gives the intellect that assurance that one drink of liquor will do nothing. When the natural intellect now receives such an enlightenment from the flesh, he makes that determination, "God has not created man for that reason that He would destroy him in hell." Has the Saviour Himself not said that "God sent His Son not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved?" And the Apostle John testified, "If we sin, God is righteous that He forgives our sins," from which some wise of the world have concluded that God would be false if He did not forgive sins. "Why then do you fear hell?" says the worldly wise. "It is nothing other than an old story which the priests have dug up because of tithes, to frighten the simple ones. If John the Baptist had preached severely at that time to the Jews, they have merited it, they were pagans who crucified the Saviour. We are no longer so foolish that we would begin to believe such stories and lies of the priests." Look! Such things the natural intellect preaches, and old Adam likes such a doctrine well. Such a doctrine and such wisdom take away all fear and all sorrow over the soul's salvation. It makes a person very bold to mock God and to mock the Christians. What distress does old Adam have now, since God is so merci-

ful that He takes all the goats and bucks, all dogs and swine into the kingdom of heaven without sorrow, without trouble, without penitence, without repentance. Meek whores, honest thieves, temperate drunkards, and honorable whiskey merchants now will reach the kingdom of heaven. But what then are the chaff which He burns with unquenchable fire? What are those unfruitful trees at whose roots the axe is laid? What are the offspring of the viper, which John mentions? They must be natural serpents, to which John preached so severely. Perhaps John's severe reproach was not just so unavoidably necessary to those awakened and graced souls, who through this dog's barking have come into the right knowledge of sin and become reconciled with the Heavenly Parent! Nevertheless since there are many pagans and many grace thieves who need to hear John's biography, and the awakened also need to remember that they have been pagans, for that reason we must observe, according to old custom, how this forerunner of the Saviour, through the preaching of the law, prepares the way for the Saviour into the hearts of the people. May God give him strength and power to pry up the large rocks with the iron bar of truth, and to chop the dried trees with that axe which is laid at the root of the tree, to prune the dry branches from the green trees with the sword of the spirit, to tear up by the roots the old and decayed trees, and to smooth out the holes so that the Lord of glory would get to travel downward from above, and so, more broadly, from the heart to understanding, and from

understanding to the conscience, and from the conscience to the will, and from the will to the right life. Hear, merciful King, the sigh of those who are in heavy labor on the road, and give prosperity to their work when they strive to eternity after Jesus. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Luke 1: 57-80.

From the gospel we heard Zacharias, John's father, prophesying that his son must prepare the way of the Lord and give the people the knowledge of salvation, and give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Following this we must, through God's grace, consider how John the Baptist prepares the way for the Lord Jesus into the hearts of the people. May God, the great Creator, allow his work to prosper. May the great Crossbearer allow His trouble to lighten the travel of the poor travelers, and may the Holy Spirit give the right enlightenment, how he must prepare this way, that the Lord of Glory would get to travel. — It is first a greatest trick how he must find the way into a person's heart. Many have sought for that road but have not found it. The prophets before him have certainly sought for that road and have partly found it. But they are so few, who have sought for the way into the hearts of the people, that even those who have found it have not been able to prepare it so that it would have remained a longer time. For while the prophets were opening it by force, that while the tempest of sin closed it. But from the time that Moses went up on

Mt. Sinai, all the prophets according to the commandment of God have gone and measured the road from Mt. Sinai to Golgotha; however, this aforementioned road which the prophets had measured was so blocked by the storm, that John had to quickly open it again by force., Paul testifies that the veil of Moses was always hanging before the hearts of the Jews when the Old Testament was read, that the chief priests certainly did not find that place where the way went into the hearts of the people. Nor did the chief priests truly care so much to seek, for they thought, "If only we would find the way into the memory and understanding of the people, then we certainly have prepared the way for the Lord." Even yet the high priests figure that the way to a person's heart is through the intellect. Whoever has not seen Mt. Sinai, nor has seen those flashes which proceed from Mt. Sinai, nor has heard the thunder roar with a terrible sound on Mt. Sinai, says, "Certainly the road does not go that way." Why did Moses become so terribly wroth in God's behalf when he came down from Mt. Sinai that he broke those tables of stone which were in his hand? Now the chief priests say, "Must we take those pieces of stone which Moses left there, and begin to cut the hearts of the people! We will not do that at all. They would soon flee from the church like the children of Israel fled, because of fear and trembling, far from Mt. Sinai." So the chief priests figure that all the crowd would leave the church if they would begin to roar the curse of the law, as God roared on Mt. Sinai. But never mind: that light-

mindful and worldly people, who cannot bear to hear the curse of the law on Mt. Sinai, will nevertheless not get along without God. They say to the chief priest, "Make us gods who will bring us to the land of Canaan." And this chief priest was ready to follow after the mind of the people. He commanded all the beautiful girls to tear off their earrings and gold rings, not for that reason that they would give them to the school or to the poor, but for the reason that from that gold a god would be made for them. And assuredly they, who have a gold heart in their bosom and gold chains on the neck, worship that gold god, for not all of the beautiful women and girls have dared to give them to Aaron. But what good or what kind of thanks did Aaron get because he went after the mind of the blind people and did as they commanded? It was not long after that the same people wanted to stone him. Such thanks that priest will finally get, who sees the foolishness and blindness of the people, and does not reveal to them that misfortune which will finally follow that worship of idols. He thinks, no doubt, like one Catholic bishop, who saw how the people had been deceived through that false faith of the Pope, so he said to himself, "Since this people wants to be deceived, let them be deceived." But Moses did not speak so when he came down from Mt. Sinai and saw the foolishness and blindness of the people of Israel. He became terribly wroth in behalf of God, and in that zeal he broke those tables of stone upon which God had written the ten commandments, and commanded Aaron to burn the golden

god to ashes and put the ashes upon the water, so that the children of Israel could drink their god of gold in the ashes mixed with water. That gold which they had borrowed from the pagans because of adultery, and placed upon the women folk for finery, had to finally smart in their intestines, where the devil of greed lives. So it happens even now that the gold which the beautiful girls buy in the foolishness of youth will finally smart in their intestines, when they become poor because of adultery and the intestines begin to get thin; in their old age they can eat ash porridge because they have borne a gold heart in their bosom. This gold heart is made of yellow rock, which must be taken away from their bosom, for it is dead and devoid of feeling. "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh," says the Lord, "and I will give them a new heart and a new spirit," says the Lord, "and I will give them an heart of flesh, which is not so devoid of feeling as the former heart of stone." But the heart of flesh must also be circumcised, and as Zipporah, Moses' wife, took a sharp stone with which she circumcised her son, so also has John taken the sharp pieces of stone from the tables of the law, which Moses in his zeal broke at the foot of Mt. Sinai. And with those sharp stones John has circumcised the fleshly hearts when he first has found the way into a person's heart. He also took such heart-moving parables of rocks and trees, axes and swords, wheat and chaff, serpents and fire, so that God's severe righteousness, which formerly was written on tablets of stone since people had a heart of stone,

through these parables became written on the tablets of the fleshly hearts as Paul testifies. But it is to be surmised that the heart became sore when God's law was written in the fleshly hearts. Formerly when people had a golden heart in the breast, this heart of stone was devoid of feeling; nothing effected there. No matter with how sharp a stone the letters of the law would be written there, a heart devoid of feeling feels nothing. And what does the stony heart feel? But John went to Mt. Sinai and found there those sharp stones which Moses had thrown there in his zeal, and with them began to write into the fleshly hearts of men, began to circumcise the foreskin of the fleshly heart. From that some received a sore and sorrowful heart, they began to feel their sins. And to those who had a broken heart, John pointed with his finger to the Saviour, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." This was John's intention, that the heart would become sore through the circumcision, sorrowful and broken, that they must become sinful and as such to go to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. But that makes the chief priests and lords of the world feel badly, that the publicans and sinners run to the Saviour. John was already kept as a fool and it was said that that man had a devil, when he did not eat or keep doings or celebrations as other lords did, nor did he drink liquor or punch as other lords, but only barked and reproached honorable people as whores and generation of vipers. "Was he a person who in that way spoiled the nation, that people began to become de-

lirious and to run after the Saviour?" The chief priests could not even clean the devil's dung from their own hearts, what then from other's hearts? How do the chief priests and the lords of the world know what lives in another's heart, who do not even know their own heart, since they have a heart swollen with spiritual hatred and natural pride. Then they say that John has a devil. For this confessor of the truth began with the iron shovel of truth to work and scrape the devil's dung which had dried in the people's hearts; then the seeds of the serpent began to squirm in the bottom of the heart. The meek whores especially were angry at John. The meek whores did not get peace of conscience before John's neck was severed and they could have John's head on a charger.

But that is not enough that John finds the hearts of the people, which the lords of the world have not found, for the chief priests have not studied or pondered upon how they could find the hearts of the people, but they have studied more in what poor clothes he was clothed, how he deceived the people, and how they could get some legal grounds against him. But although John the Baptist now finds the hearts of the people, and the people also come from many directions to ask advice of what they should do, as it is written in the third chapter of Luke, it is not known if they all follow his teachings, or if they go back into the world, since he does not promise grace to the Pharisees and hypocrites, without true penitence and repentance. Some nevertheless ask him, "Who are you?" Or what are you who

cries out in the wilderness so and barks at honorable people? Are you Christ? Or are you Elias since you so shamelessly bark and condemn people? The same question was also brought to the Saviour when He began to reproach the lords of the world because of greed and hypocrisy. Then they said, "Whom makest thou thyself? Are thou the Son of God?" And even if God the Father would have come from heaven to admonish the evil people, surely the lords of the world would have asked, "Who art thou?" Are you God who condemns meek and honorable people to hell? Perhaps, say I, John the Baptist found the people's hearts and thereby was able to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus. Certainly there was still much left unprepared when the Lord Jesus Himself came and began to purify with the gospel the hearts of those who had awakened from the law sermons of John. Man is not such a creature that he becomes loose from the world all of a sudden. Even though the conscience was awakened, even if the heart was broken, and even if one had felt the feelings of grace of the Holy Spirit, surely nevertheless satan shoots his darts from the flesh toward the heart, and wants to confuse some and get them on a wrong road. The enemy especially wants to sift their souls and make them into flour, who after the first awakening own for themselves the promises of God's grace too soon, although the old man is not crucified by spiritual sorrow, as for example Peter, who kept himself to be the best Christian before he felt the deceit of the heart and satan's deceit. Certainly many are yet in that

same self-deception, who keep themselves to be the best Christians and cannot stand the judgement, but only want to own the promises of the gospel. If formerly in the sorrowless condition such have had a golden heart, finally they get a silken heart where self-righteousness lays hidden like a bear in the moss. They become holy and sinless through grace, so that they no longer have much temptations, and also want to draw others into the same faith in which they themselves are, namely into spiritual sorrowlessness. Such false prophets are praised by those who are in natural sorrowlessness, for they do not wound the old Adam as John the Baptist, who barks and bites. There are also those who stop at the first awakening of the law and decay in the net of the Holy Spirit, since the fishermen are lazy in examining their nets. Such are baptized by John into the law or bound to the law; they stand under the law and cannot go farther, they cannot come into grace. Paul found twenty of those kind of men in the city of Ephesus, who were baptized with the baptism of John the Baptist, but he commanded that they be baptized anew in Christ. Nevertheless, Paul did not have that intention that they who are released from under the law into a condition of grace can trample the law, as the thieves of grace who make Christ a servant of sin and commit sin upon grace, thinking that all things are pure to the pure. It is true that all is pure to the pure, when the question is what kind of food would be allowable for Christians to eat. But nevertheless sin is not allowable for a Christian to commit. But the reverser of

the eyes wants to make some sins allowable, as for instance: the sin of laziness. Old Adam does not want to trouble his body, and many imagine they are doing good to God and bad to people when they lie lazy at home or travel in the town and eat from the substance and trouble of others. Old Adam wants to be quite the lord. "A Christian does not need to serve," so thinks the old man. But who will finally be serving, since a Christian does not want to serve? Must the devil, who the Christians have formerly served, now begin to serve them? Why not, if the Christians promise their souls to him, surely he will then serve them, but if they promise their flesh to satan and their souls to the Saviour, then old Adam must come into a bind, as Paul says, "Deliver the body to satan that the soul might be saved." That signifies that he must suffer trouble and be in chastisement so that the soul would be saved. For old Adam is such a lord that he does not want to serve anybody. The sorrowless are just such ones who do not want to serve for a reasonable wage. They are free lords who serve the devil, but not God. Who knows how it will finally go with them, the free lords, if they must finally eat straw and pine bark before they die, and even after death can regret their foolishness. So it happened with the former free lords, who had despised the voice of one crying in the wilderness. They have said that John has a devil. What do they now say in hell? They probably must now preach thus: "We have followed dangerous roads, the sun of righteousness has not shown for us, we have despised all warnings in the

time of grace, we have blasphemed the preachers of truth, we have borne hatred toward those who have demanded repentance, and now we can regret our foolishness eternally." But the voice of one crying in the wilderness now sits in the kingdom of heaven and cries out, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Now he sits on the high roof of heaven and cries, "Hosanna to the Son of David, and blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord." Now he beholds the Son of God face to face and his face shines like the face of an angel. So he preaches to the heavenly wedding throng. The friend of the groom rejoices when he sees the groom coming with His bride. The friend of the groom is John, who came to prepare the way of the Lord, and he has cried out so powerfully in the wilderness that the ears of the deaf finally open. And our hope is that everyone who cries out repentance in the wilderness must rejoice at the voice of the Groom, and sit on His right side in the heavenly wedding, and he must see the Son of God coming in the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and the dead. And then he must go in and cry out to all the children of God, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Amen.

On Saint Michael's Day.

Woe unto the world because of offenses: for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh! Matthew 18:7

These are the words of Jesus in today's holy gospel. He speaks in this place of all kinds of offenses, not only anger which is one offense when a person becomes angry, or with a devilishness makes other people angry, but by offenses in this place is to be understood all bad examples that take place in the world, like drinking, cursing, finery, foolishness, riotous living, and more of the same kind. For example, when children hear their parents curse, they are offended in that in this way, that they learn to curse; and this offense is one terrible sin, if the parents themselves curse within hearing of the children. If children hear other older people speak filthy tales, the children are offended in this in such a way that they imitate the older ones' offensive speech. If children see older people raving while drunk, there comes a great offense to the children of that, because they imitate the drunken sots' speech and actions. And still more horrible is this offense, if their own parents go before the children with such an evil example, because a child's mind is inclined so soon to that which is evil, but a person is slow to learn that which is good. We have seen sorrowless parents who want to teach their children to live virtuously. We have seen how even sorrowless parents are horrified when their children go into the company of fools

and mockers, and learn from them to curse and practice all kinds of devilishness which causes sorrow to the parent, how they do harm to the parent and cause severe pain to the parent's heart. Sorrowless parents, who want to live a little more meekly, try in all kinds of ways to prevent this, that their children would not go into the company of fools and mockers. But what does it help? The parents cannot be so watchful that the fools would not get to entice or allure them; therefore Jesus says: "Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!" Woe to that man who goes with a bad example before children, because Jesus says: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea." Here is proclaimed a terrible judgement to all fools and mockers who go around the corner and sneer; this terrible judgement is proclaimed to them; for them is the millstone prepared. But certainly not even for the sorrowless parents will it be more tolerable, although they at times scold the children when they come from the other house where the fools and mockers are gathered; nevertheless they do not show a good example to the children as long as they themselves drink, curse, fight, babble worldly trash, slander Christians, and quarrel amongst themselves; to such parents the Saviour has said: "Ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for

ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.”

“Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!” And what do sorrowless parents do other than offend their children when they deprive their children of Christianity? They themselves drink, curse and fight, nor do they hide everything from the children’s eyes, though they live so ungodly. Yet they deprive their children of Christianity. They also teach their children to mock Christians. Do you not think, unfortunate parents, that the millstone is prepared for you? Do you not believe that the devil will drown you in the depths of the sea? You yourselves do not want to go into the kingdom of heaven, neither will you permit your children to go there. “Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!” Think now, unfortunate parents, what the children learn at the liquormerchant’s house, where all the fools and drunkards gather; there they fornicate, there they curse, there they carouse, there they vomit and there they sing drunkard’s songs. But not even the liquor merchant thinks that they receive to themselves enjoyable fruit of their children when they learn all kinds of evil and foolishness in the saloon; finally the liquormerchant himself also becomes a drunkard and just then shows the children a beautiful example. Their own children finally must curse such parents, as the Saviour

says, “Your children must be your judges.”

“Woe unto the world because of offenses! but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!” Now life is so sorrowless in the world, that the meek devil himself is horrified by the rough and terrible living. But what does it help that a few meek parents counsel their children to meekness, as meekness will help neither them nor their children into the kingdom of heaven? Some sorrowless parents scold their children for cursing, fighting, drinking, and gathering with mockers, but these meek parents have never shown their children how true penitence and repentance take place. The children have not heard the sorrowless parents sigh under the burden of sin; the children have not seen the sorrowless parents weep for themselves and for their children as Jesus has advised them. How then can the children remember how the parents have been in true sorrow for their souls’ salvation? This place would have been a good example to the children, if the children would have seen tears of penitence flowing from the parents’ eyes; if they would have heard how heavily the parent sighs, and how fervently the parent has prayed to God in behalf of his children. But sorrowless parents have not done any of these, but only this has remained in the child’s memory that the parents have scolded in anger and whipped the children, and have lived contrary to their teaching. In this place also has come only an offense, when for example one sorrowless parent curses his neighbor in anger and spans his children for cursing; or if one sor-

rowless parent scolds the children for drinking, and nevertheless is himself drunk as a pig; or if he disciplines the children for stealing and he himself steals; or if one sorrowless parent reproves his children for fighting, and nevertheless he himself fights with his neighbor when old Adam rises. Such teaching is not upbuilding to children, but offensive. Therefore the Saviour says: "Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh! But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."

By the grace of God we must consider who it is, the Christians or the sorrowless, who are the worst offenders of these innocent children who believe upon Jesus. But we must first ask for wisdom from on high, that this explanation of God would be upbuilding to those souls who want to receive the right enlightenment and the right understanding. But we know that the Saviour was not able to open the understanding of the disciples to understand Scriptures until on Easter day, when they were in great sorrow and longing after the Saviour. Then the explanation of God's word was also necessary for them. But before, when even they, wretches, were in sorrowlessness and dead faith, no matter how much Jesus would speak to them of His suffering and death, it was hidden from them. It did as much good as if He would preach to that wall so it would answer.

So much even now does the explanation of God's word affect the sorrowless. Yet they do not believe anyway, before their consciences awaken, that God's word is explained rightly to them, because the sorrowless throng and grace thieves are offended by right speech; but may it be upon their conscience until their conscience awakens. We know that Jesus' sorrowful disciples are not offended by right speech, and we pray in their behalf that the Lord Jesus would open their understanding to understand the Scriptures. Hear, dear Heavenly Parent, the sighs of the sorrowful, penitent, and believing ones! Our Father, which art in the heavens.

Gospel: Matthew 18:6,7.

When sorrowless and grace thieves take false consolation from today's holy gospel and turn this Scriptural passage entirely perversely, we must through the grace of God consider, who is it who offends those who believe in Him.

First consideration: Do the Christians offend the consciences of the sorrowless and grace thieves?

Second consideration: Do the sorrowless and grace thieves offend the consciences of the children of God?

So that not even one of those little ones who believe in Jesus would become offended, that is the text of our sermon, and they who become offended, may they yet become even worse. This is a true saying.

First consideration: Do the sorrowless and grace thieves become offended at the Christians' speech and Christians' movements? Answer: they do. All sorrowless and grace thieves say that

they become offended at the Christians' speech and Christians' movements. And that faith the world's lords have also, that the sorrowless become offended at the Christians' speech and Christians' movements. Therefore a great gulf is now fixed between them, both here and also in eternity, although the sorrowless do not believe it, that he ends up in one place and the Christians in a different place. But when the sorrowless have said that they become offended at the Christians' movements, they must go to a different place, because sorrowless are not able to be in that place where the Christians are. They must go away and separate from God's children when they cannot lap Christians' blood. Sorrowless and grace thieves have now the belief that they are those little ones who believe upon Jesus and from that side they turn this word against the Christians: Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea. See now! how the devil opened their understanding to rightly understand the Scriptures. Now are the sorrowless and grace thieves those small breast-fed children who believe upon Jesus, and Christians are enemies who offend such breast-fed children. Oh, how nicely the prince of this world now supposedly expounds Scriptural passages! Only that the devil would not make a new; whip for his tail. But we let it be so now, that sorrowless and grace thieves become offended at the Christians' speech and Christians' movements. It is also belie-

vable that they become offended at the Christians' speech, because the Jews were also offended at the speech of Jesus. Lawyers also were offended at His speech; they said to Him: You ridicule us also with that speech. And Pharisees were offended not only by the howling of the sinful woman in the house of Simon the Leper, but also by children crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Thus it is surmised that the Jews, lawyers and Pharisees of today become offended by the Christians' speech, the sinful woman's howling, and the crying of the breast-fed children. But how does it now happen when all the Jews, lawyers and Pharisees end up in a different place just because of this offense? They do not come to that place at all where the Christians are. If now the Christians come to the kingdom of heaven, the sorrowless go to hell along with the grace thieves who believe that they are the breastfed children, and they must go away from the company of the Christians just because of the movements. And where do they go then? If the Christians are in heaven, the grace thieves do not want to be there, but they must go away. And where do they go? The pope's faith has three places where people can go after death, namely the first is the kingdom of heaven, the second is hell or the place of torment, and the third is the middle place, which is not heaven nor hell but halfway between. But Luther took away this middle place entirely, and said: Heaven or hell, there is no third place. Where do present day Jews then go when they are offended at movements. They do not want to go to hea-

ven if the Christians are there; they do not want to go to hell if devils are there. For them finally there is no place anywhere, not in heaven nor in hell, and they nevertheless must depart from this world when death comes to take them. They must leave against their knowledge and against their will, no matter how they kick against it.

But are they, the sorrowless and grace thieves, now those little breast-fed children of whom Jesus has said: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea." Are the sorrowless and grace thieves those little breast-fed children, those whom the Christians offend by their speech and movements? If the Christians would know that, that they are those little breast-fed children, the Christians would by no means offend them; but when sorrowless show both by speech and works that they are the devil's breast-fed children whose paps they suckle, thus the Christians cannot be without offending them, especially when they know that God has placed enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Christians cannot be without offending the serpent's seed; they thrust the rod of Moses into the serpent's nest. If now the sorrowless are offended from this, they can accuse their Creator, who has placed this enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The seed of the woman does not give the seed of the serpent peace as long as they live together upon the earth, and

therefore the father serpent and mother serpent now become terribly angry with the Christians who do not give their offspring peace. But has the Saviour denied that Christians cannot offend even one of these little breast-fed children, who suckle at the paps of the devil? I think that Christ has spoken of those little ones who believe upon Him, who are so small that they fit into the lap of the Heavenly Parent and nurse at His breasts. Jesus has spoken nothing of the devil's breast-fed children who suckle dragon's poison from the devil's paps, but He has spoken of such little ones who nurse from His breast and hang on His neck. And thus as it touches the dragon's heart if someone pushes his breast-fed children into hell, so it also touches the heart of the Heavenly Parent if someone offends His breast-fed children.

Second consideration: Do the Christians become offended by the lives of the sorrowless?

Certainly they become offended by their ungodly life, not so much for their own part, but for their children who see bad examples from the world and learn from the sorrowless to ridicule the Christians, learn to curse, learn to steal, learn to drink, learn to avoid the eyes of the parents, learn to become mischievous and deceitful. Behold, this is now the place of which Christ has spoken: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea. Christians are not offended so much of this, that pagans hate and persecute them,

neither do Christians become offended of this, that they get to stand in the place where the women stand who have not been taken into the church, because Christians know that they will otherwise be taken into the church as a bride — and yet until evening they stand there. But this offends the Christians' consciences when deceivers and fools entice their children by their bad example. Just this place is a tender place in the Parent's heart. The devil cannot hurt the Parent's heart worse than in this way, that he entices and allures the youngest child of the Heavenly Parent into sin. Woe, Woe, what sorrow comes to the Heavenly Parent from this matter; how the heart of the Heavenly Parent became sore when the youngest and dearest child became unfortunate because of these deceivers and fools. Fools become happy from this, that they were able to wound the Parent's heart. If he would bark at the Parent as a whore, thief, deceiver, devil, Satan and wild spirit, it would not touch the heart of the Parent as much as this devilish guile, through which he makes the Parent's youngest child unfortunate in time and eternity. In this place the words of Jesus now belong: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, etc." He who entices the innocent ones into sin, he becomes the devil and Satan. So David said to one man who incited him to avenge his enemy! Will you make Satan of me today? And just what is one tempter, one enticer, other than Satan, who entices and allures innocent ones to sin. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! But woe to that man by whom

the offense cometh. It were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea." But deceivers and fools only laugh when they are able themselves to do evil, and yet incite innocent children to commit evil. No matter is so horrible. Nothing does so much hurt to the heart of the Parent as this enticement of innocent children into evil. In this place the Parent's heart is so tender that He would sooner suffer many kinds of trials and troubles Himself than allow fools and deceivers to entice the children into evil. Do you not see now, parents, at which place the Parent's heart is tender? Do you not see now, you sorrowless parents, what a terrible punishment rests upon you, when you go before your children with bad examples, and you make your children two-fold more the children of hell than yourself. Do you not see now around whose neck the millstone should be hung? Obviously you think that you are those breast-fed children who the Christians must not offend, but you yourselves are those Pharisees who became offended at the children's crying, when they cried: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Yours are the necks of the millstone, of which Satan has made flour. If you would know what terrible responsibility is upon you, you would immediately make repentance in sackcloth and ashes, but now it is hidden from your eyes. "Your children must be your judges," says Jesus. Your own children must testify against you on judgement day, that you have led your children to hell, and then you must say: "Blessed are the barren, and the

wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.” And you must cry “to the mountains, fall upon us; and to the hills, cover us.” Amen.

All Saint’s Day

At that time when Jesus was preaching to the poor, a woman cried out from amongst the crowd, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps which thou hast sucked.” And Jesus answered, “Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.” Luke 11. 27-28

This woman who cried out, “Blessed are, etc.” must have been one of those whose hearts the Word of God had touched, and she must have thought how fortunate that woman was who had given birth to such a son. But all blessedness does not stand in that, that someone has given birth to the Son of God, but in this is blessedness, that someone hears the Word of God and keeps it. The Word of God is that holy seed which the Lord of the Seed Himself has planted into those hearts who preserve it and receive it, that it becomes living and fruitful. Not many became Christians in the Saviour’s time, although they went to school and listened to His teachings. But when the Holy Spirit began to effect in the hearts of the disciples, then they preached the gospel powerfully, and then some became Christians. In comparison to the great multitude, there were no more than those few chosen ones who were

marked: namely those twelve thousand who were marked from the beginning of the world. In the Apostolic time there must have been one Christian for every fifty people. And when you see that there have not been many Christians in the world, and even of those few who have truly become Christians, some go back into misfortune, so take heed you few souls who yet are striving in your most precious faith, that you would come into that communion of saints in that new Jerusalem. Take heed how dangerous this world is and how deceitful the enemy is to entice even those who have been released from under the power of the devil through God’s grace, that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect. The enemy has now become terribly angry when, in these last times of the world, he has allowed some to escape from his kingdom. And he is especially terribly angry at those who do not allow peace of conscience to his offspring. But on the other hand, the Heavenly Parent has become sorrowful when the slaves of the enemy do not allow peace to His children. But our hope is that that children of God will not give up their faith for that reason that the dragon shows his teeth to them. But that appears to be the worst enemy, which lives in a Christians own flesh, who comes upon them like an enticing serpent, into whose mouth the chickadees go when they become frantic from that poisonous odor which the enticing serpent emits from its body. And that deceitful spirit, which changes itself into an angel of light, is very dangerous to a Christian. It is self-righteousness, who

is the accuser of God's children night and day, and he preaches there in the intellect, "How can you become saved, who are so evil and who commits so much sin every day with thoughts, lusts, and desires?" But if there were not an advocate before the Father for the Christians, to whom they can flee when self-righteousness attacks them, then they would all have sunk into doubt. But may that great Advocate before the Father, who is the Guardian of all the orphans and minors, guard, protect, support, and strengthen the feeble knees, lift up the weary hands, pick up the naked wretches who lament on the cold floor of this world, wash the newly reborn with the water of life and wrap them in clean linens and allow them to suckle of Your grace-flowing breasts! Hear, You great Advocate before the Father, the sigh of all the sorrowful and penitent when they cry out to You with a broken heart. Our Father, etc.

The Gospel: Matthew 5: 1-12

In today's gospel the order of grace is brought forth in that way, that all oracles which pertain to salvation are mentioned there in that order in which they are experienced by a Christian: namely 1) spiritual poverty, 2) spiritual sorrow, 3) meekness, 4) hunger and thirst for righteousness, 5) mercy, 6) purity of heart, 7) peacemakers, 8) persecution for righteousness sake. And so there are eight oracles of grace from which not one can be left out. Whoever wants to be saved must experience all of these and go through them. So let us

consider through God's grace the eight oracles of grace.

First: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This is always the true sign of awakening, that all whose conscience has truly awakened feel poverty and shortcomings, and feel lacking in all things which were the basis of salvation before, as faith, hope, love, meekness, honesty, purity, honor, righteousness. Before the awakening, all these spiritual goods were in a sorrowless person's mind. The sorrowless one did not feel any lack of faith or lack of love. He has been honest and done rightly to all. Even now the sorrowless base so much upon that meekness and honesty when they say, "I have not stolen, thanks to God; I have not done wrong, thanks to God; I am not a whore, thanks to God; I am no drunkard, thanks to God." All of these false foundations crumble when the conscience awakens. Faith ends, love ends, honesty ends. He becomes a whore and a thief, and so must sink into hell. This is therefore the sign of spiritual poverty, that all spiritual substance is gone. And to such ones the kingdom of heaven is now promised, from whom all one's own goodness has ended.

Second: In that spiritual poverty, spiritual sorrow also comes. When faith ended from the disciples, hope ended so that they had no more hope in heaven or in the world. Then such a sorrow came to them that they had to begin to weep and lament. Many say, "There is no faith that with this life I will become saved." but do not have sorrow because of that. Such a one is not spiritually poor, when he is able to

live without faith. But he is spiritually poor who has an outwardly visible sorrow, heavy-heartedness, and sighs. Such sorrowful ones will be comforted when Jesus becomes alive in their hearts.

The third oracle of grace is thus: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Here it cannot be a question of natural meekness, under which pride often lies hidden; but with meekness in this place is understood that change of heart which came to the disciples after Pentecost, that they were able to suffer the hatred and blasphemy of the world without murmuring, although before they had a proud heart and demand for revenge. It was spiritual meekness and quietness. If now the naturally meek can inherit from their parents, then also the meek in spirit and in truth can inherit a better earth and heaven, which will never go into a poor condition.

The fourth oracle of grace is thus: "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." After spiritual poverty comes spiritual sorrow, and after sorrow comes meekness and then comes a hunger and thirst after righteousness. When self-righteousness ends, which has followed the awakened a long time, then comes a hunger and thirst after righteousness. From where does righteousness come now to those who have no self-righteousness? From where does nourishment come to those hungering and thirsting ones? Do you know, you hungering and thirsting ones, where nourishment comes from when hunger and thirst greatly press you? In this

wilderness hunger and thirst after righteousness often come to the journeymen, where there is no bread in the land, nor berries on the trees, there is not pure water in many places. Jesus has promised to you hungering and thirsting ones nourishment from His righteousness if all of the leaven of self-righteousness has ended with you.

The fifth oracle of grace: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." Merciful is he who has mercy over another's soul when he sees him in distress. It is another mercy which is called spiritual mercy; it is not the mercy of the whiskey merchant who has mercy on the thirsting. It is not the whore's mercy who has mercy on the whorebucks. But a spiritually merciful one has mercy on another's soul especially, and also helps his neighbor in natural need. Whoever is thus merciful shall also receive mercy from the Father of light above.

The sixth oracle of grace is thus: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Of this purity of heart there is a great doubt of how it should be understood, when all awakened ones have such an experience that the heart, feels like it is always full of filth and evil. But the sorrowless and thieves of grace do not feel any evil of heart. Do they have a pure heart and the awakened a filthy heart? I know that the devil has cleansed the hearts of the grace thieves, and their hearts are cleansed in the blood of the dragon. But the heart of the awakened one is not cleansed in the blood of the dragon. For that reason the heart feels devilish and filthy. Who now cleanses your hearts, you

penitent ones who feel how unclean, wicked, and filthy the heart is? I have that faith that your hearts are cleansed in Jesus' blood if you believe, although you feel otherwise. But there self-righteousness causes a quarrel: "How can you believe that your heart is pure when you feel that your heart is unclean? You will begin to lie against your heart if you believe contrary to what you feel. Believe only then that your heart is cleansed in the blood of Jesus, when you feel that it is cleansed." Do you know who is preaching now? Yes, self-righteousness preaches so to the penitent. But thus the Spirit of God preaches: through faith your heart becomes cleansed in the blood of Jesus. And then you are blessed and shall see God.

The seventh oracle of grace: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." The grace thieves expound this place so that the meek pagans become peacemakers, but the Christians become makers of unrest who do not allow the pagans peace of conscience. But if the Christians are makers of unrest, no doubt the pagans are peacemakers, who quarrel and fight. I have that faith that the Christians, for whose sake unrest came into the world, especially at the time of Christ and the Apostles, are nevertheless peacemakers, for through them peace has come in many places where before there was a restless life, and because of that peace they are called the children of God.

The eighth oracle of grace is known to all Christians, for they are hated for righteousness sake and blasphemed

for Jesus' name sake. But rejoice and be exceedingly glad, you disciples of Jesus, when you are hated and persecuted for righteousness sake, when the world speaks all manner of evil against you falsely for Jesus' name sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. But soon you will arrive at peace where no one will hate you for righteousness' sake. Amen.

First Rogation Day.

Account the longsuffering of our Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation.

2 Peter 3:15.

In this place Apostle Peter writes to the Christians that they should account the longsuffering of our Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation, when He has been so longsuffering that He has not punished them according to their merit. Not only at the time when they were still heathen has Christ been so longsuffering that He has waited for their repentance, but also after they became Christians and children of God. It is a gracious Saviour who is so longsuffering that He allows them to live, although they are fickle in so many ways. This longsuffering the Christians should account as salvation, when they see and feel how longsuffering Jesus Christ is, that He does not punish them according to their merit. If namely the Lord would judge the Christians according to merit, not one soul would become saved. All Christians who are

watching feel this. They feel how much sin and how much evil they have. They feel that if Christ would not have been so gracious and longsuffering they would have been eternally lost long ago, but because of the longsuffering of our Lord Jesus Christ they have been able to enjoy that great grace that they have come to know what grace is, if they would be able to so watch and strive in their most precious faith so that the world, the devil and their own flesh would not rob them of their faith and would not press them away from Christ, as some have already fallen into unbelief and doubt, whom the enemy has gotten to turn back to the world and through the world into destruction. Self-righteousness has tired many and pressed them away from Christ, although now it can be seen that all who flee into the world sink into hell because of the sorrow of the world and must in the end condemn themselves, that there is no hope for a better life.

Account now the longsuffering of our Lord Jesus Christ to be your salvation who has allowed you to live until that day that this light has come into the world, through which many have come to know their wretched and unfortunate condition; and many have through this enlightenment realized where the road leads to heaven, and are forced to begin to cry with such a loud voice that the voice is heard in heaven; and many repentant ones have received the answer just like the repentant thief on the cross. And through death many have departed from this life with joy and great freedom of faith. It has happened to them who have accounted the longsuffering

of our Lord Jesus to be salvation, since He has been so gracious and longsuffering, that He has kept us wretches until that day that the light has dawned from above, and has not allowed all to die in their blindness, but has allowed some souls to realize where they were. This has truly been the longsuffering of our Lord Jesus Christ which Peter has commanded the Christians to account as salvation. If now former drunkards thought how unfortunate they would have been if God would have allowed them to run headlong to destruction; if former whores and thieves thought where they would have gone if God would not have awakened them from the sleep of sin and taken a hold of them in the race of sin, so there would already have been reason to account God's longsuffering to be salvation, as He has been so longsuffering and so patient with them that He has not thrown them into hell in their blindness. If they would see how longsuffering God has been, who has saved them until that time that the blind wretches' eyes are opened, and even to that day that they could see where the road leads to heaven, so there would certainly be reason to account the longsuffering of God to be salvation. It is understood in this way, that as God has saved the ungodly to that day that He has caused them to stop in the race of sin, and to return from the road of destruction, so the longsuffering has happened for their salvation, namely to those who have received that grace; and to these God's longsuffering has come to be destruction, who have despised the richness of God's longsuffering. Since therefore

Saint Peter writes to the Christians: "Account the longsuffering of our Lord Jesus Christ to be salvation", it is without doubt His intention that Christians should remember how longsuffering and patient God is, who has waited for their penitence, if they know what a great grace this is, that God has not allowed them to go to eternity in blindness. Account now this longsuffering of our Lord Jesus Christ to be salvation, and remember how unfortunately it would have gone if God would have thrown you into hell as you have merited when you were yet His enemies. But do not draw God's grace into fornication or lightmindedness, and do not allow sorrow of the world to burden your heart, and war with all your strength against the devil.

Be equipped with war weapons of righteousness, with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, because now is such a time that if it were possible, even the elect would be lost. There are not many souls any more who are able to believe that the Son of God will come soon to take His own away from this valley of sorrow. Account now the long suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ to be salvation, and pray that the great Crossbearer who has not spared even one drop of blood which He has not given to flow for the redemption of repentant and believing ones, would fight yet in behalf of those who the world hates and persecutes for Christ's name's sake, that they would be able to carry His cross to Golgotha's hill and follow His bloody footsteps from the Garden to Golgotha, and finally be able to see that great Crossbearer

on Mount Zion, and be able to enjoy beholding Him forever. Hear, Thou King of repentant and believing ones, the sighs of the sorrowful and down-pressed! Our Father, which art in the heavens.

The Gospel: 2 Peter 3: 9.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The evening sermon text for the first rogation day is also written in the third chapter of the second epistle of Peter, ninth verse and the words sound thus. The Lord "is longsuffering toward us not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

By the guidance of the above mentioned read holy text we must, at this holy moment, consider why the Lord is so patient toward us. Saint Peter has revealed in the words of today's text why the Lord is so patient toward us, namely: He waits for repentance from all. But not many take heed of the richness or God's longsuffering, because some postpone their repentance from day to day and year to year until that time that death begins to squeeze their hearts excessively. Then they would hasten to repentance if they could. But as Peter now writes such words to the Christians that God is patient toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should turn and come to repentance, so it sounds from these words like Peter was demanding that the Christians repent, although it is not written or what

place they should repent. Certainly Christians do have reason to repent, but not like the sorrowless demand, because the sorrowless also demand repentance of the Christians, but not such a repentance as God demands. But the sorrowless demand that the Christians repent in such a way that they should consent to the deeds and goings on of the sorrowless; namely, begin to drink and whore with them and live after the fashion of the world. But Peter demands such a repentance of the Christians where they truly are faulty, for example the love of the world, which already in Peter's time began to appear among the Christians, as we see from the epistle of James.

Apostle James severely rebukes the Christians of hardness of heart and mercilessness when he writes in the second chapter: "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there comes in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, stand thou there, or sit under my footstool, are ye not then partial in yourselves, and become judges of evil thoughts?"

"If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye wanned and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

In this place you Christians can hear reproach. First in that, that they cake a bad separation between the poor

and the rich, and secondly, they do not help the needy but leave them helpless in behalf of body. This is one fault of which the Christians should repent. Love of the world is such that it will exclude love and make the heart so hard that there is no compassion. Love of the world and greed make the conscience so blind that the conscience does not even demand that one helps the needy. From this place Apostle James has reproved the Christians, and Peter writes in today's text that God is patient with us and does not will that some would be lost, but that every one would turn to repentance. Here is heard that Peter also demands repentance of the Christians, but not such a repentance which the sorrowless demand but that kind of repentance which God demands, for that repentance which the sorrowless demand of the Christians is wrong. The sorrowless demand that the Christians should become angels. But Christians have never become angels, not in the Saviour's time nor in Peter's time, for Christians are always faulty. But the devil's angels do not gain anything thereby, that they accuse the Christians, but the accounting of the sorrowless only becomes greater on judgement day, since the sorrowless have not made penitence and repentance but have hardened their consciences.

And when James writes of these who go about in flashy clothes, so assuredly has he preached against finery, although we do not know if they have been Christians who have gone about in flashy clothes. Truly there are also those kind here who go around in flashy clothes and bear the name of a Christi-

an. Some Christians also love these clothes that glitter before the world. But we believe that those who truly are Christians stop wearing flashy garments. We do not know for sure whether the Christians in the time of Apostle James wore finery, but Paul also speaks to the women folk about finery and preaches against it. There are many other occasions in a Christian's home life where, no doubt, repentance is needed, if Christians would feel what a great grace it is that God is so patient with them that He still waits for repentance, for impatience is so great in the Christians that they sometimes have to give their mortal members into the service of sin; when they are not watchful, so also old Adam is allowed out, and this old Adam wants to rob many of their faith, that they sometimes have to confess afterwards: "I am not able to believe; my old Adam arose in me." Because of this old Adam, selfrighteousness rises as an accuser and a judge so that they therefore become powerless. Oh, if they would very hastily repent and would be reconciled with their brother in strife, they would certainly be able to immediately arise. But they give themselves under the judgement of selfrighteousness and lower themselves to the bottom, and finally go entirely into the world. Nor do they then remember how patient God is, and that He does not will that some would be lost, but that every one would turn to repentance. There is still one place of which the Christians should repent, namely of muteness and lack of speaking, which is beginning to trouble the Christians, In the beginning of this awakening all

cried out: "Make repentance!" But now there are not many taking heed, and it appears that the Christians are silent and for that reason that their word does not effect anything. But this fruit of unbelief should be removed from God's vineyard, because he who is not able to believe that his speech will effect, how is he able to believe that the Holy Ghost is yet within him? The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed seeds in the ground, and went away and ate and slept, and the seed grows of itself, first sprouts and then produces a head, and finally in the head produces a kernel. So remember, you few souls who are placed as sowers, that the seed grows of itself, and remember also how patient the Lord is with us, that He wills not that even one would be lost, but that every one would turn to repentance! Now the Lord has been patient with us, who first has awaited for the sorrowless to repent, although not many have made repentance, but the Lord is still longsuffering and patient, who yet waits for the Christians to repent of those places which they truly need to repent of. And our hope is that Christians make repentance, that they from now on begin to remember better how patient the Lord is who yet waits for us. Truly we need to make repentance in many places! Remember, you few souls who yet are watching and striving in your most precious faith, that soon will come the cry: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." Soon the Son of God will come to take away His poor bride. Soon the guests of heaven will come to behold how beautiful the Redeemer's bride is. Soon

God's children can rejoice and be glad on Mount Zion, where all who account the longsuffering of God to be salvation give thanks to their Creator and Redeemer in the Holy Ghost now and forever. Amen.

Second Rogation Day

God does not wish that even one sinner would die, but the will of God is that everyone who has life and spirit should turn and come to the knowledge of salvation. Ezekiel 33.

From these words of God we hear that God does not wish that a sinner die, but it is God's wish that people would come to the knowledge of salvation. He wants that a person should know salvation, not only to believe that it would be found, but he should himself feel and taste salvation. He should already here feel a foretaste of salvation and the power of the Christianity. And when God says through the prophet Ezekiel in the 33rd chapter, 11th verse, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked," so it is to be surmised that God does not wish that one penitent sinner would sink into hell; but it is God's will that an ungodly one would be lifted up from hell. But not one wants to become lifted up from hell before he feels that he has fallen into hell. A sorrowless person of the world does not know that he is ready to fall into hell before his conscience awakens. But an awakened person has that fear that he will fall into hell, and when he yet feels the burning of the conscience, or a foretaste of hell, then the Lord

says: God does not wish that a sinner die, but that the sinner would turn from his way and come into the knowledge of salvation. But many an awakened person does not dare to believe that God can lift him up from hell. An awakened person certainly believes that there is a hell which, in the state of sorrowlessness, he has not felt. When he feels the curse of the law, just then he begins to believe that there is a hell, but he no longer believes what God has said, that the kingdom of heaven is also found, and that God does not want the death or destruction of a sinner, but He wants that a sinner should come into the knowledge of salvation. And since it is now God's will that the penitent ones must be helped up from hell, that they must taste of grace, then I would be cursed if, through the curse of the law. I would want to press those souls even deeper into hell, who have been pressed into hell through the accusation of the conscience. But through the gospel, I want to comfort the sorrowful as much as I can and am able, as I know how merciful the Saviour is toward the penitent ones. Whenever He feels the least beginning of penitence, to them He proclaims the forgiveness of sins. Truly not many, to whom He promised grace, have been in such deep penitence that they would have fallen into doubt; and I think that not one penitent sinner needs to fall into doubt, if that self-righteousness were not so terrible great, but that self-righteousness is so great, that not one can by-pass that slough which is called the bog of doubt. And certainly the first Christians did not have such great doubt as it appears

some now have, but it probably comes from that, that they did not have so much of that self-righteousness. They, on the contrary, had stronger faith, and following that also a greater spiritual joy, a stronger feeling of grace, and a more burning love. It was also one sign of grace in them that they were merciful. Their hearts were not so attached to the world as our hearts are. The world appears to be dear even to those whose hearts have been whipped. If the heart would have become loosed from the world, certainly the poor would be helped. But the law by itself cannot kill the devil of greed, for the law cannot give life. When a person is not yet assured of that, that he is a child of God, or as long as a person yet fears that he will fall into hell, love of the world wants to be attached to the heart. He does not want to lose either the world or heaven. But if a penitent sinner becomes assured of that, that he is a child of God, assuredly he becomes better loosed from the world and from the chains of the devil, if his faith is living. But dead faith does not release anyone from love of the world. Whosoever has dead faith, he loves both the things of the world and his own flesh. If the love of the flesh is greater than the love of possessions, he places all his possessions into his own throat and thinks, "It is better to eat and drink than to save." If he loves his possessions more than his own flesh, then he gathers as much possessions as possible, and does not dare to feed himself. Some gather possessions both by right means and by crookedness, so that they could waste it on drinking parties and other parties, and

in that way gain worldly honor. But I think that a Christian's heart would become better loosed from the world, when through living faith he begins to believe and feel that he is a child of God. What does he need his possessions for, when his soul is in heaven? Who knows, someone might want to turn the question around and ask, what does he do with possessions, who feels himself condemned to hell? But the matter is not so, he who is in hell wants to gather even more possessions, although it does not help him, for the Saviour says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." But if a person's best treasure is in heaven, then his heart has become somewhat loosed from the world. Therefore, we believe that a person's heart does not become loosed from the world, even if his soul were in hell, but then he becomes loosed from the world when his soul is in heaven. And in accordance with this, doubting souls should be lifted up from doubt, if it were in man's power; and the sorrowless slaves of the world should be pressed into doubt if it were in man's power, but neither, are possible for a person, though before God nothing is impossible. He can certainly plunge the hardened ones into hell and can raise up the doubting ones from hell. It is also our hope and our trust that the merciful Saviour can and wants to have mercy on the penitent and to help the doubting up, if they would only go along with, or with patience await, until redemption comes. Oh, Lord, do not cease chastizing the hard of hearing until the heart breaks; whip the hard hearts until they become ten-

der. Squeeze the hardened until blood squirts from the mouth and nose, but help also with your grace those who are in distress, and heal the wounds of the heart with one drop of your innocent blood, that they would believe upon you, Lord, and become helped through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Father, etc.

The gospel: Luke 23:26. Since today's text speaks of grace and sets before the penitent that redemption which has happened through Christ, so today through God's grace we want to lead Jesus' crossbearers to the hill of Golgotha, showing first the road which goes through the city of corruption to the hill of Golgotha, and secondly, who it was who was required to carry the cross of Jesus, and third, how Jesus takes that cross upon Himself, which the crossbearer has carried when he comes to the hill of Golgotha.

We hear from the history of the passion of Christ that the crowd of the world took Jesus out to crucify Him when first He had been tortured, scourged, and blasphemed. He first bore His cross, but since Jesus was already so very tired in behalf of body that He was not able to go so quickly as the crowd of the world wished, then the crowd of the world took Simon the Syreanean by force and required him to carry the cross of Jesus. We hear, therefore, that the crossbearer is put by force and against his will to carry Jesus' cross. A person does not want to carry this cross in the first place. It is, namely, such a great shame before the world to bear the cross of Jesus; by bearing the cross man loses his honor. If it was a silver chest, or a broadcloth coat, or a bride's

crown, certainly everyone would gladly carry it. But Jesus' cross, which is full of curses, upon which everyone spits, and which the respectable men of the world would not want to touch with the tip of the finger, is nevertheless at first heavy to bear, not because it is of itself too heavy, but because it is the cross of that Man who is blasphemed and despised by the world, and condemned as the greatest rogue. That man himself is beheld to be a scoundrel and a rogue, who takes care of the carcass of an executed scoundrel or rogue. He must be really poor and despised, who begins to carry such a Man's cross. He is no better than Him who is condemned to be crucified. In the cross of Jesus there is the hatred of the world, and the mockery of the world; there are all the curses of the world put together. And it would also be lighter if the road went through the lane or the woods in the wilderness where not one person would see. But that road where the crossbearer must travel goes through the city of corruption, where all meek whores spit upon the crossbearer, all innocent thieves bark at him, all merciful whiskey merchants throw mud upon the crossbearer, all the hounds of the city gather around him, and all the devil's angels laugh at him. This blasphemy and laughing of the children of the world becomes heavier for the crossbearer than the cross itself. Many a crossbearer thinks that Jesus has placed the cross upon him. But of that he feels badly, that it is the crowd of the world which by force makes him carry this cross. If Jesus Himself had placed this cross upon him, then the crossbearer could think that he

will receive thanks from Jesus; but now he receives no thanks for that, but only sorrow and bitterness of mind. Although Jesus has said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light," the crossbearer does not feel it to be easy or light, but it becomes very heavy and unbefitting, especially for the reason that Jesus has not placed that cross upon his shoulders, but the crowd of the world has by force required that he carry Jesus' cross. Some crossbearers think they will receive something for that, that they carry the cross of Jesus. They think and await that the Saviour must pay the crossbearer something for his trouble, but the crossbearer will get nothing for that trouble. He will not even receive thanks for that, and from the crowd of the world he will receive nothing but shame. Listen well, you crossbearers, you probably are in that faith that you have merited a great reward by carrying the cross. But you will not receive one penny for that, although many a crossbearer thinks that he almost merits life and salvation thereby. But he will receive nothing for his trouble, not as much as "a large thank you, dear Christian, for this trouble." And who must thank the crossbearer for that? Jesus has certainly not placed this cross upon him, but the crowd of the world has his own foster children whom he has suckled and brought up; his own home sins which he has loved: pride, greed, cursing, stealing adultery, anger, lying, love of the world, honor of the world, and self-righteousness. Look, those home sins are that crowd of the world which forces you to carry Jesus' cross, although you think that Je-

sus has placed His cross upon you. But it is not so, you have put the cross upon Jesus, but Jesus has not put it upon you. You have crucified the Saviour, but not the Saviour, you. You found your salvation upon bearing the cross, but do not found it upon that, but only upon the merits of Jesus. Some carry the cross of the world and found their salvation upon that, and think thus: since I have become poor, come into an unfortunate marriage, lain in sickness, lost my possessions through evil people, and suffered sorrow of the world, then I think that God must repay me a thousand fold for the temporal suffering, and give the joy of heaven because of all that trouble which I have suffered in the world. But if the crossbearers of the world become deceived when they take for themselves the wrong foundation of salvation, certainly the crossbearers of Jesus' cross will also become deceived, if they begin to build their salvation upon bearing the cross, and not only upon the merits of the Saviour. A person is not able to pay for his sins with his own strength, no matter how much he suffers, but Jesus has paid all sins, when He took the cross upon Himself, and allowed Himself to be crucified.

Namely, when the crossbearer through great tribulation and ado finally reaches the hill of Golgotha, then the cross is taken from his shoulders. Jesus then says to the crossbearer: Through your sins you have deserved to carry this cross into eternity, but I see that you, wretched sinner, are not able to carry this cross a league, much less into eternity. You are weary already a quarter of the way, and many times have be-

come angry and struggled with impatience. How many times have you already become angry with the Saviour, who you think is the cause of that, that such a restlessness came upon you. Many times you have become angry with people, whom you have beheld to be evil when they began to trouble the old adam, and although it is only a quarter of a mile to the hill of Golgotha, you have become weary many times and grumbled and threatened to cast the cross off of yourself. Do not be so impatient, but carry this cross anyway until the time that it is taken away from you and is placed upon Jesus. Upon this cross tree Jesus, Himself, is now crucified, and upon that same tree all the blasphemies and cursings of the world are crucified, so that all honor of the crossbearer has ended. He keeps that as nothing, that people blaspheme him because of the Christianity. The hatred of the world effects nothing in the crossbearer, when he has reached the hill of Golgotha. But he has not yet become entirely free from the lust of the flesh before the flesh is crucified with Christ, together with the lusts and desires.

I now want to lead crossbearers to the hill of Golgotha. I want to say to them, "Lay down your burden on Golgotha's hill, where Jesus Himself is nailed to the cross, and suck the moisture of grace from His wounds! When you have become weary of bearing the cross, then lay down your cross at Jesus' side, that He Himself can bear it, you nevertheless are not able to carry it any farther."

Today's holy text means this, that the crossbearers must lay their burdens

on Golgotha's hill, since St. Paul says, "Christ Jesus has given Himself for redemption in behalf of all." If self-righteousness were not such a hindrance, then assuredly everyone would believe these words and would take consolation for themselves from Christ's perfect merit, and would not doubt at all that his sins have been forgiven. But self-righteousness causes distress to many. Namely, they do not want to believe that the blood of the Saviour is the full price. Namely when sins become manifest, then a person wants to lessen them with his own repentance. He would want to become an angel and only then receive grace, but angels need no grace; they reach heaven with their own repentance and self-righteousness; they need not beg. Therefore I must say to those who do not want to flee to the Saviour as sinners: go, therefore, to heaven with your self-righteousness; reform your own heart. When the heart feels hard, soften it with liquor. When the heart feels cold, warm it with brandy. When the heart feels burning, take a coolant from the bottle. When the heart feels evil, make it good with devil's dung. If you do not receive that medication which flows from the Saviour's wounds, then take that medication which flows from the devil's wounds. Much pus flows from the devil's wounds these days; take medication from that if you do not care to suck the moisture of grace from the Saviour's wounds. From the wounds of one or the other you have to seek medication, since your heart is sore. The confessors of dead faith, whose hearts have never been sore, take a little pus from the

devil's wounds and a little blood from the Saviour's wounds, and make from the two substances a mixture, and take of that in the evening and the morning as much as the heart needs. They do not know before the heart decays that in that mixture there are two portions of poison and a third portion of honey. Do not mix honey with poison, good people, but if the heart is sore, then take some drops of grace, pure and unmixed, which have flowed from the Saviour's wounds just for such ones whose hearts are sore. And those drops of grace are the best medicine for the wounded and broken hearts. Do not believe that the devil flees from the mixture, but the pure reconciling blood, pure grace, that is poison to the devil; he cannot even stand the smell of the blood of Jesus.

But these drops come only to the chickadees and the young of swallows, who shudder when thunder roars on Mount Sinai, and take refuge in the crevices of the living vine. For those who are hardly able to open their mouths this milk is prepared, and for those sick ones whose heart has become sore, this honey is to be poured; not to the young of the raven, who eat decayed flesh and not to the wolf whelps, who tear at lambs and suck people's blood; to them should be given poison, so that they would begin to smart everywhere. And the scorpions, who have sucked poison from honey, and have eaten salt from sugar, and sucked gall from sweets, to them must be given bitter medicine, that they would become purged and vomit out all that devilishness which they have swallowed. Some have such a har-

dened skin that they do not feel the chastisement of the Father. The more the Parent chastises, the more they harden. These hardened children tell the Parent: "Kill now! take my life also since you have taken my possessions." The cross of the world avails nothing to the hardened ones, so the Bible says that they bite their tongues because of the pain, but they, nevertheless, will not submit or pray, "Father, forgive me. I have been hard of hearing". On the contrary, they will not let out a sigh or allow a tear of penitence to fall from their eyes when the Father chastises them, but only threaten revenge when they grow bigger, so that they are able to strike the aged parent to the ground, and to trample on his breast. Is grace promised to such ones? Do they have a part in the reconciliation of Christ? It is true that the Parent's tears have flowed even for the hardened ones, though they mock the Parent's tears? Will not the Parent's tears someday burn their consciences? I fear that the Parent's tears will become hot upon the conscience, when they can see whom they have pierced.

Some laugh when the parents weep and say to the parent, "You do not need to weep over us. We have been meek and in all matters have fulfilled the Father's will. We have fed the poor and helped the needy; our conscience does not reprove us. We think that we have so lived that no one needs to reprove us of iniquity. Certainly God sees our innocence and will repay our honesty." Do such ones need grace, who have lived meekly? It is not very likely, for Pilate and all other meek pagans wash

their hands in the water of innocence, and say, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." It has been the pagans' belief that meek people become saved and that the ungodly go to perdition, and the same paganish faith is even yet in the skull of the meek ones. There are still some confessors of dead faith who say they do not depend on meekness, but on grace, although there is not much known of their lives, for they can certainly weep and laugh, bless and curse, love and fight, be honest and steal, drink and be sober, whatever is convenient. But if someone touches their old adam, then the serpent's tears begin to flow from their eyes. Are they Christians who do such deeds? However, salvation is not promised in the Book to such ones who steal grace with their own permission. I fear that distress will finally come to thieves of grace when their faith is stolen away. Now since there are wolf whelps here, young of the raven, grace thieves and small chickadees, we must distribute to each one according to their nature. Namely, to the wolf whelps poison; to the young of the raven, decayed flesh; to the grace thieves, a whip, and to the chickadees of grace, honey, so that not one would be left with little or without. But to those crossbearers who are in great pain and spiritual distress, that great Crossbearer has promised comfort and refreshment when they finally reach the hill of Golgotha. There they shall eat manna which rains from heaven, there they shall eat of the tree of life which is in Paradise, and their tears will be wiped away. May the Lord Jesus drip one drop of grace into

the mouths of those who are hungry! And into the eyes of those who have been born blind, may eye salve be poured, that they could once see the light of God. Amen.

Examination Sermon

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing." 2 Cor. 7:9

Saint Paul writes in his second epistle, seventh chapter, to the Christians in Corinth, that he made them sorry when he, in the first epistle, had preached a severe judgement and reproached them. For among them were dissensions and strife, they went to court for temporal gain, and among them was a harlot and other iniquity, for which Paul in his first epistle speaks to them. And for this reason the Corinthians had become sorrowful; but that this sorrow had led to repentance, he therefore writes that he repents not that he through severe speech had made them sorrowful. But he became more joyous over this, that this sorrow had led them to repentance and that they in no way had been harmed by the former severe speech. As Paul, after this severe speaking became joyful when he heard that it had effected a sorrow and grief which is after the mind of God, so even I am glad over this, that many hard hearts have been broken through the preaching of the Gospel which has been

preached according to the severe law, and that many poor and wretched souls have come to feel the power of grace and had a foretaste of the kingdom of Heaven. I am also convinced of this, that the former severe speaking and law sermons have not in any way been injurious to you, but for repentance and edification. And you shall finally thank such a teacher who has spoken, reproached and barked at you, when you have in your own heart experienced what this barking has effected. Even as Paul became joyous when he heard that his reproaches and severe speaking had made the Corinthians sorrowful, so have I also gotten joy from this, that the former severe speech and law sermons have effected the sorrow and grief which is after the mind of God, and this sorrow has brought about repentance unto salvation, to many, of which no man repents. If there yet would be some unfortunate souls whose heart has not broken, if there should be some poor blind one, whose eyes have not yet opened, if there should yet be some deaf and dumb one who cannot speak or hear, then he should know that God has through the teacher's mouth spoken to such hard of hearing ones, but they themselves have opposed it. Or does a single one in this congregation dare to say "For your sake I have hardened, for your sake I have sunk into doubt, you have condemned us to hell, you must answer for our souls," If such a person is found who hardens through the teacher, he can blame himself that he has not taken heed of the teacher's severe exhortations and warnings for repentance and upbuilding. May he

who has become hardened with the Jews blame himself. The Jews surely hardened in John the Baptist's time and hardened also in the Saviour's time, when Jesus himself proclaimed to them God's severe righteousness, and old Simeon had already then seen, that Christ has been set for the fall and rising again of many in Isreal, and for a sign which shall be spoken against. Is it the Saviour's fault that some fall into hardening when He proclaims God's severe righteousness? Is it the teacher's fault that some become hardened when the teacher proclaims God's severe righteousness to the sorrowless? It is their own fault that some harden because of chastisement and because of the judgement. But if the teacher does not warn the sorrowless of the terrible judgement and destruction when he sees the sinners living in ungodliness, then the Lord intends to demand the sinners' souls at the teacher's hand, as it has been written by the Prophet Ezekiel, And through such a teacher's sermon, the sorrowless have occasion to accuse him saying: "You saw our life; you knew our blindness and wickedness, but have not warned us. You saw us living in open ungodliness, but you have not rebuked us. Answer now, dumb dog, for our souls," Those few souls who through the dog's barking, have awakened when their house was burning, must testify that it was a faithful dog who barked so that people awakened and escaped with their lives out of the fire and fled from the anguish of flames. But the dog's barking is at times heard the distance of even six miles. If even the people who are further

away would awaken, it would be good! And those people who live in the house do not become angry at the dog although he barks so loud that they awaken; but thieves hate dogs, for thieves do not dare to steal as long as a dog barks, because they guess that the people of the house will awaken by the dog's barking. But if the dog does not bark then the thieves have occasion to steal, I know that grace thieves become very angry, not only at me, but even at other dogs who bark so loud that the people awaken. But I also know that the people who through the barking of the dog have awakened, consider it good that the dog barks.

If the dog had not barked, then the people would have slept forever, For that reason I say as Paul writes to the Corinthians: I do not repent that I made you sorry, but I rejoice over this, that your sorrow led you to repentance, because you became sorrowful after the mind of God, Therefore in no way has injury come to you through us. Testify now, all you awakened souls in this congregation, if injury has come to your soul through this! What kind of life was in this congregation a few years ago, when all the people slept in the sleep of sin? They were all grace thieves who imagined they they all would be saved, although their life was entirely a heathenish life. Some kept a whiskey business some fought, some stole, some committed adultery, and in spite of this they had the faith that God would take them to heaven without penitence. At that time no one doubted of his salvation, but all had a firm faith. But how would it have gone with you if

you had been allowed to sleep in peace? You have afterwards perceived and felt that such a life leads directly to hell. And now you have, a few anyway, awakened out of the sleep of sin. You have perceived that such a life is acceptable to the devil but not to God. Who awakened you? A dog first began to bark and this barking awakened other dogs to bark, and the pups began to whine and the people, through this, began to awaken and the thieves began to fear that they would go to hell and did not dare to steal anymore. And this same barking was heard yet further away, and for which, the thieves became very angry at these dogs. But all who through this barking have awakened from the sleep of sin, consider it a good thing that they have been barked at. But many who have awakened in the night still want to become sleepy during the day. Some thieves steal even though they are barked at during the night, because dogs are not able to do more than bark. If thieves nevertheless steal, although the dogs bark, then it is not the dogs' fault. But if the dog is so foolish that he barks at the people of the house and especially at the children, then the Master says: "For shame! The dog of the house should soon know the people of the house, especially the children, who live in the house." If the dog begins to bark at the children, then he will be whipped by the master of the house.

Paul rejoiced over this, that because he had formerly barked at and reproached the Corinthians and this barking had effected the sorrow and grief which as after the mind of God. So even I re-

joyce over this, that the former reproaches have effected a true sorrow and grief within you. Many have through the former barking come to know their sins. Through the barking many have become awakened from the sleep of sin. Many have had to flee to the Saviour, Many have experienced signs of grace and a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven. All the awakened and graced souls must confess that no harm has come to their souls when the former barking has effected in them penitence unto salvation, which no man repents of. By no means has there been too much barking. But now I have become tired of barking; as long as the sheep stay together, then the dog must also be silent. But if the sheep begin to run away or if the goats begin to steal the sheep's food, then the master sets his dog after those who escape to the woods and the dogs drive away the goats; but dumb dogs will be hung. And if the dogs begin to bite the sheep then all their teeth will be filed off. But you know also that the dog has to walk behind. If the dog goes in front of the sheep, then he does the master of the sheep more harm than he is a help to him. For this reason the dog must go behind the sheep and only then when the flock has been driven home, can the dog come inside, I have once seen, that a certain dog went in front and the sheep followed after, but it had as a pup been trained to go in front, and the sheep had been trained to follow after. In the morning the dog was put with the sheep to go to pasture and in the evening the dog brought the sheep home. But such a dog can not be found in

many places, I am not such a dog that I could go before the flock, but I have always had to go behind; and it is well if the master finally lets the dog in even at the end. But now I have tired of barking at those sheep who stay together; but I must bark at those who leave the flock to run into the woods and who knows if they will take others also with them. And at them I must also bark who butt the weak or trample the pastures or foul the water with their feet, I must yet bark at those, too, who stay far away; but especially at those who come before the sheep to steal; at them I must bark, And at grace thieves I must bark although thieves always curse those dogs who bark so loud that people awaken.

Testify now, you awakened souls who have awakened through the barking of the dog. Remember, and testify if the dog's barking has become injurious to you. Testify now, you sheep of Jesus, if the dog has bitten or wounded you. Testify now, all small lambs, have I driven you into the woods or have I, like an angry dog, bitten your hearts or ravaged your consciences so severely, that your Saviour could not heal your wounds of the conscience. Testify, all thrushes and finches, have I so severely bitten through your hearts, that the teeth have gone through your hearts. Testify now, all thrushes, finches, nightingales and titmice, have I caught your souls with a snare or bullet. Testify now, all small fish who have been caught in the net of the Holy Ghost, testify now, have I and other fishermen caught you with seine and net with the intention that I could boil or roast you.

Have not I and others caught you for that reason that all small fish, thrushes, and finches might be freed from the talons of the hawk and that all Jesus' sheep might be preserved from the wolf's mouth and so that all trembling lambs might escape to the Shepherd, For this reason I have barked, that all lost sheep, frightened by the barking of the dogs, might run to the Shepherd before the hawk comes to eat and ravage their souls. For this reason I have barked, that the young of all thrushes, nightingales, and finches would flee to their nest in the cracks of the Living Vine before the hawk comes to eat and to ravage the sheep of the Great Crossbearer Jesus. According to the Great Crossbearer's command, I have cast my net for the drought, and have caught a few small fishes and a few small gold fishes, who now swim in the waves of the Red Sea. And on the shore of the Red Sea all the nightingales and thrushes twitter on the branches of the Living Vine. On the shore of the Red Sea the sheep of Jesus also go to pasture And on the shore of the Red Sea the lambs of Jesus leap with Joy and rejoicing. And on the shore or the Red Sea all swallows, thrushes, nightingales and finches sing: Amen, Halleluja, Thanks and Honor and Power and Praise be to the Great Crossbearer now and forever. Amen.