



CRAFT OF PREACHING

FORGING FAITHFUL PROCLAMATION

“Dear Christians, One and
All, Rejoice”

Midweek Lent Series 2021
Prof. John T. Pless

1517

“DEAR CHRISTIANS ONE AND ALL REJOICE”*

The season of Lent marks the time in the church calendar where the church is called to repent. This penitential season is often marked by fasting and prayer as we prepare to remember the Passion of our Lord and celebrate His Easter victory over death. However, the focus of the church’s repentance is not one of mere personal sacrifice or self-imposed discipline. The focus is on the saving work of God in Christ Jesus. Thus, the call to repent is incomplete if we overemphasize our sorrow and sin. Repentance, though certainly a call to turn *from* something, also means to be turned *toward* something, or rather, *someone* else! The preacher's job in Lent is to point repentant sinners away from their sins to the saving work of the triune God.

To this end, John T. Pless of Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, IN has prepared a midweek Lenten sermon series that will fix our eyes on the saving work of the triune God. Based on Martin Luther’s hymn “Dear Christians One and All Rejoice” (Lutheran Service Book #556), these weekly meditations will provide the preacher with an opportunity throughout the season to proclaim the saving work of God to their hearers. Luther’s “hymn of liberation”¹ will enable the congregation to recognize the gravity of their sin and trust the unfathomable, yet certain, grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Below you will find an outline of the series, recommended scriptural texts to go along with the stanzas, hymn suggestions, sermon ideas, and notes about this masterful hymn.

It is our prayer that this series will help you boldly preach the full counsel of God this Lenten season.

-Rev. Bob Hiller
Content Editor
Craft of Preaching

¹ Bayer, Oswald. *Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*. Translated by Thomas Trapp. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. Pgs. 214-225

Series Outline with Suggested Texts and Hymns

ASH WEDNESDAY

“Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” -556 Lutheran Service Book (LSB) (Stanza 1)

Sermon Theme: “Rejoicing in Repentance”

Text: Psalm 51:12-15/Romans 1:16-17

Lectionary for Ash Wednesday

Psalm: Psalm 51

Additional Hymns: “Baptismal Waters Cover Me”-616 LSB

“From Depths of Woe”-607 LSB

“O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days”-418 LSB

“Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness”- 636 LSB

MIDWEEK IN LENT I

“Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” -556 LSB (Stanzas 2-3)

Sermon Theme: “Possessed by Sin and Bound by Death”

Lectionary: John 8:31-38/Romans 3:9-20

Psalm: Psalm 130

Additional Hymns: “When in the Hour of Deepest Need”-615 LSB

“If Your Beloved Son, O God”-568 LSB

“In Adam We Have All Been One”-569 LSB

“In the Very Midst of Life”- 755 LSB

“God Loved the World So That He Gave”-571 LSB

“Lord, ‘Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee”-573 LSB

“All Mankind Fell in Adam’s Fall”-562 LSB

MIDWEEK IN LENT II

“Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” -556 LSB (Stanza 4)

Sermon Theme: “From the Father’s Heart”

Lectionary: John 12:27-36/Romans 3:21-28

Psalm: Psalm 6

Additional Hymns: “Christ, the Life of All the Living”-420 LSB

“My Song is Love Unknown”-430 LSB

“Lamb of God, Pure and Holy”-434 LSB

“Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing”-421 LSB

“Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness”-563 LSB

MIDWEEK IN LENT III

“Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” -556 LSB (Stanzas 5-6)

Sermon Theme: “Jesus: God’s Son and Your Servant”

Lectionary: John 13:1-20/Romans 5:1-21

Psalm: Psalm 38

Additional Hymns: “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth”-438 LSB

“Jesus, I Will Ponder Now”-440 LSB

“Drawn to the Cross, Which Thou Hast Blessed”-560 LSB
“Oh, How Great Is Your Compassion”-559 LSB

MIDWEEK IN LENT IV

“Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” -556 LSB (Stanzas 7-8)

Sermon Theme: “Your Ransom and Your Rescue”

Lectionary: John 14:15-27/Romans 8:1-11

Psalm: Psalm 32

Additional Hymns: “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded”-450 LSB

“If God Himself Be for Me”-724 LSB

“From God Can Nothing Move Me”-713 LSB

“When I Behold Jesus Christ”-542 LSB

MIDWEEK IN LENT V

“Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” -556 LSB (Stanzas 9-10)

Sermon Theme: “In Trouble He Will Comfort You”

Lectionary: John 16:1-33/Romans 8:31-39

Psalm: Psalm 143

Additional Hymns: “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”-451 LSB

“Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow”-428 LSB

“All Depends on Our Possessing”-732 LSB

“Evening and Morning”-726 LSB

*It is suggested that “Dear Christians One and All, Rejoice” (556 LSB) be sung in its entirety at each of the midweek services. The alternative would be to sing stanza 1 and then the stanzas appropriate for the week and conclude with stanza 10.

JTP+

Notes on “Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” -556 LSB

- Heading of an early printing of the hymn, “Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice”: “A hymn of thanks for the highest deeds of benefactions that God has shown us in Christ” (Bayer, “The Being of Christ in Faith” 137)
- Luther draws on the Psalter’s pattern: Report of disaster, report of salvation (Bayer,137)
- Bayer observes how the hymn narrates and praises the Gospel. Bayer connects the hymn to Luther’s Preface to the NT written just a few months earlier in 1522. See AE 35:358-359. Here Luther speaks of the Gospel as a “good message” that tells us of “A true David who strove with sin, death and the devil, and overcame them...”This gospel is also called a New Testament for in it a dying man bequeaths his possessions. These possessions are life in which death is swallowed up, righteousness by which sin is blotted out and salvation which overcomes everlasting damnation. This is comfort for a poor man, dead in sin and consigned to hell...”he must laugh and be glad over it, if he believes it true” (Bayer, 137-138)
- Bayer compares the two-part cry/answer to Romans 7:24-25a and Psalm 22 (Bayer, 138)
- This hymn is a confession of faith that stands alongside of Luther’s great Reformation writings that deal with justification and law/gospel. It is a hymnic expression and commentary on Romans 1-8 (Leaver, *Luther’s Liturgical Music*,163)

Stanzas	Romans
Stanza 1	1:16-17
Stanzas 2-3	1:18-3:20
Stanzas 4-6	3:21-6:23
Stanzas 7-10	8

- The hymn expresses Trinitarian theology but in a way different from Luther’s “We All Believe in One True God” (Leaver,163)
- Luther contrasts the synergy of the Godhead in our salvation with any suggestions of the synergy of the saved (Leaver, 164)
- Trinitarian structure: God the Father loved and planned our salvation, God the Son accomplished it, and God the Holy Spirit applies it (Leaver, 164)
- Johann Olearius: “Luther’s beautiful hymn, *Nun freut euch lieben Christen gemein*, is an excellent and comforting summary of the totality of the evangelical = Lutheran) foundation of faith, and within which is thus found the whole of Theology, Christology, and Anthropology, or what we should know from the word of God about God, about Christ and our wretchedness and its solution in the kingdom of grace through the merit of Christ, as well as the certainty of the eternal joyful kingdom” (Leaver, 164).

Suggested Biblical Texts for Each Stanza

Stanza 1 Psalm 32:11; I Cor. 6:20; I Peter 1:18-21

Stanzas 2-3 Romans 7:13-24; Hebrews 2:14-15; Revelation 20:10; Psalm 38:4

Stanza 4 John 3:16; Luke 15:20-22; Luke 1:54; I Tim. 2:4

Stanza 5 Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 2:7; Matthew 11:5; Luke 4:18; II Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:14-15

Stanza 6 Philippians 2:6-8; Isaiah 7:14; Hebrews 2:17; Ephesians 4:8 (Psalm 68:19)

Stanza 7 Galatians 2:20; Luke 22:44; John 17:23; Romans 8:38-39

Stanza 8 Luke 22:20 (Blood in Lord's Supper); I Corinthians 15:53; Hosea 13:14; John 1:29; I Peter 1:19; Ephesians 2:8

Stanza 9 -10 "Trinitarian soteriology" (p. 102); John 20:17; Matthew 23:10; John 16:5-13, 20; Matthew 28:20

Rejoicing in Repentance

Ash Wednesday

“Dear Christians One and All Rejoice” (556 LSB; stanza 1)

Psalm 51:12-15

Introduction:

It may seem a bit strange and out of place on the first day of this somber Lenten time, on this ashen and gray winter Wednesday, to call the church to “rejoice with exultation springing.” Now is the season for lamentation and weeping over sin. Is it not the case that we have buried our Alleluias? Six weeks down the road, we can take them up with gladness. Then our songs of praise will be unbounded as proclaim that Christ is risen, victorious over death and the grave. Then the unbroken light of Easter morning will shine as fresh sunlight after a dismal storm. But if this is the case, why such an exuberant hymn that bubbles joy right here in the shadows of the Savior’s suffering, right here in the bleakness of Lent’s first day?

No, “Dear Christians One and All Rejoice” is right at home in Lent for the kind of joy which Dr. Luther has us sing is not to be found apart from repentance and where repentance is going on there is joy. Jesus says that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (see Luke 15:7). It is the joy of which David speaks when He makes supplication to the Almighty: “Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit” (Ps. 51: 12). It is this genre of joy that causes the sweet singer of Israel then to confess “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness” (Ps. 51:14). Where there is repentance, there is joy. Where there is repentance, there is the declaration of what God done.

I. Rejoicing Comes When and Where the Law Does its Proper Work

A. There are only two outcomes where the law is at work

1. By the holy law of God sinners will die **in** their sins.
2. By the holy law of God sinners die **to** their sins
3. To die in sin is hell; to die to sin is heaven. There are no other options.

B. David dies to his sin

1. Recall to story of David’s evasive attempt to live with his sin (see Samuel 11:1-12:15)
2. David confesses his sin, that is, he declares that God’s verdict is right (see Psalm 51:4)
3. His bones, broken by God Himself, rejoice in the Lord’s mercy which restores to the joy of salvation. The Lord takes away David’s sin and his mouth is opened to declare His praise.

II. Rejoicing Comes Through the Gospel

A. Heart and voice are united to proclaim the wonders God has done

1. Christ Jesus does for us what He did for David. He takes away our sin.
2. The whole focus of Lent is not on our piety, not even on the quality or magnitude of our contrition, but on the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
3. Jesus is proclaimed so that sinners might believe with the heart and confess with the lips (see Romans 10:9-11)

B. The Gospel declares that the price of His ransom is for you.

1. Lent reminds us that Jesus did not choose the easy part. See Lenten Gradual from Hebrews 12:2....for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.
2. His death that purchases and won you from sin, death and the devil. See I Peter 1:18-21; Luther's Explanation to the Second Article.
3. His Gospel is the power of God for your salvation. See Romans 1:16-17

Conclusion

Dear Christians one and all rejoice for in giving you Jesus, God bestowed on you His "dearest treasure." In repentance and faith return to this treasure on this Ash Wednesday for God does not leave us in dust and ashes. His right arm stretched out on the cross has won for the victory for us. Your sins are forgiven. As often as you eat His body and drink His blood, you proclaim His death until He comes. In that death you have life in His name.

ASH WEDNESDAY: Hymns and Texts

"Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice" -556 LSB (Stanza 1)

Sermon Theme: "Rejoicing in Repentance"

Text: Psalm 51:12-15/Romans 1:16-17

Lectionary for Ash Wednesday

Psalm: Psalm 51

Additional Hymns: "Baptismal Waters Cover Me"-616 LSB

"From Depths of Woe"-607 LSB

"O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days"-418 LSB

"Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness"- 636 LSB

Possessed by Sin and Bound by Death

Midweek in Lent I

“Dear Christians One and All Rejoice” (556 LSB; stanza 2-3)

John 8:31-38

Introduction:

Do you think that you are free? After all you live in “the land of the free and the home of the brave.” Our age champions personal liberty, interpreted to mean, you can do or become anything you please—perhaps with proviso that you don’t hurt anybody or interfere with their freedom. Autonomy (literally, a law to oneself) has become one of the watchwords of our public vocabulary, especially in the area of ethics. So sexual permissiveness, abortion and euthanasia are claimed as options in the increasingly unbounded arena of personal freedoms.

Are you free? Not really. Werner Elert, a Lutheran theologian of the last century spoken of autonomy as an unfulfilled illusion.

I. Autonomy: An Assertion Without Substance

A. The Jews asserted: “We are descendants of Abraham, and we have never been in bondage to anyone”

1. Really? What about those years down in Egypt?
2. Really? What about the enforced exile in Babylon?
3. Really? What about the Romans who even that day patrol the streets of Jerusalem keeping

B. If you start with the assumption that you are free, you will only end in bondage (Forde)

1. The assumption that we are free ends in bondage, a servitude from which you cannot liberate yourself.
2. It is the blindness of denial. We claim to be alive yet we are captive to death and you cannot set yourself free.

C. Luther sought freedom in the monastery but instead discovered bondage.

1. It was not so much bondage to the rules and regulations of the Augustinian order that bothered Luther.
2. It was the bondage to his own sin, his inability to be free from the curse of the law, the torment of a conscience that accused and terrified.
3. The law left Luther with a God he could not but hate.
4. Here the preacher may note how Luther later came to sing of it in stanzas 2-3

- II. There is Only One who is Free: The Lord of Heaven and Earth
- A. Jean Paul Satre: Even if the biblical God did exist, we would have to deny His existence in order to be free in the way we think we want to be free
1. So we see the illusion of freedom pompously strutted out on the stage of history.
 2. But the costumes cannot hide our sin and the death that it brings.
 3. We are not free. You try breaking the boundaries God has set in place they will finally break you. It is not so much that we break the law, but the law breaks us.
- B. “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed”
1. In the freedom of His will to be your Savior, God sent His Son into the flesh to fulfill the law by His life of perfect obedience and to suffer and die in your place.
 2. He has redeemed you a lost and condemned creature, purchasing and winning you from all sins, from death, and the power of the devil.

Conclusion:

You are free for the Son of God Himself has freed you from the curse of the law, the darkness of death, and condemnation of Satan. You are free-you need no longer live in enslavement to self. An old hymn has us sing “Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free.” And that is the wonder of our freedom in Christ. Freedom is not to be found in living as though God did not exist so that we can be who and what we will to be. Freedom is found only in Christ. Shortly before his death, Luther scribbled a few words on a scrap of paper found in his vest pocket after he died. The note read, in part: “We are beggars. It is true.” The tired, worn-out old man knew the truth that before God we can stand only as beggars, but beggars set free to live by faith in the gracious promises of a merciful God. Freedom is found only in Jesus’ words. “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” Amen.

MIDWEEK IN LENT I: HYMNS AND TEXTS

“Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” -556 LSB (Stanzas 2-3)

Sermon Theme: “Possessed by Sin and Bound by Death”

Lectionary: John 8:31-38/Romans 3:9-20

Psalm: Psalm 130

Additional Hymns: “When in the Hour of Deepest Need”-615 LSB

“If Your Beloved Son, O God”-568 LSB

“In Adam We Have All Been One”-569 LSB

“In the Very Midst of Life”- 755 LSB

“God Loved the World So That He Gave”-571 LSB

“Lord, ‘Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee”-573 LSB

“All Mankind Fell in Adam’s Fall”-562 LSB

From the Father's Heart

Midweek in Lent II

"Dear Christians One and All Rejoice" (556 LSB; stanza 4)

John 12:27-36

Jesus moves ever closer to the cross. He had entered the holy city on Palm Sunday; now he speaks of His impending glorification. Glory will come to Jesus not in the way that princes are elevated to their thrones but by a cross which will lift up the Son of Man as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Jesus speaks of His crucifixion as the purpose for which He came to this hour.

This hour was in the mind of the Father from all eternity. So Luther's hymn shows us the Father who beholds the misery and wretchedness of our sin "before the world's foundation" and so there in mercy plans for my salvation.

- I. The Cross is Not an Afterthought with God
 - A. The God whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting is the Lord who even from eternity wills to be the Savior
 1. The story of salvation of which our hymn sings does not begin in Eden with the fall into sin but in eternity from the heart of God
 2. God's love is such that He is always seeking to bestow blessing, to give of Himself
 - B. The cross is not an "emergency measure" or a "plan B" with the Triune God.
 1. Even before the creation of time, even before the reality of sin came into the creation, God purposed to be Redeemer. See Ephesians 1:3-14
 2. On the cross, we see the fatherly heart of God revealed (Luther)
- II. He Turned to Me a Father's Heart
 - A. The question raised by the terrified and therefore skeptical conscience is "How is God toward me?"
 1. The question invites speculation. Taken apart from the Gospel, the question of predestination or election, for example creates either despair or carnal security. It becomes as Martin Franzmann once put it, a teaching that has broken many a heart and mind.
 2. Our sins accuse us and our hearts condemn us. We conclude, therefore, that God must be our enemy.
 - B. We do not look to our own troubled and chaotic hearts, but to the Father's heart.
 1. Luther: "For in all three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart and his pure, unutterable love. For this very purpose he created us, so that he might

redeem us and make us holy, and moreover, having granted and bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has also given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. For, as explained above, we could never come to recognize the Father's favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father's heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible judge" (LC II:64-66, Kolb/Wengert, 439-440)

2. This is the heart laid open, broken and bleeding for your salvation
3. "It is the office of Christ to make God certain" (Bayer).

Conclusion:

God "did not choose the easy part but gave His dearest treasure." That treasure was and is His own Son, begotten of the Father from all eternity and born of the virgin Mary." When God turned to you a Father's heart, He gave you Jesus. He gave you His Son to be His Brother. When our hearts condemn us, we indeed have One who is greater than our hearts. We have God's own heart. We have His Son crucified and raised. Amen.

MIDWEEK IN LENT II: HYMNS AND TEXTS

"Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice" -556 LSB (Stanza 4)

Sermon Theme: "From the Father's Heart"

Lectionary: John 12:27-36/Romans 3:21-28

Psalm: Psalm 6

Additional Hymns: "Christ, the Life of All the Living"-420 LSB

"My Song is Love Unknown"-430 LSB

"Lamb of God, Pure and Holy"-434 LSB

"Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing"-421 LSB

"Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness"-563 LSB

Jesus: God's Son and Your Servant
Midweek in Lent III
"Dear Christians One and All Rejoice" (556 LSB; stanzas 5-6)
John 13:1-20

Introduction:

From the beginning, God's Son is your servant. Jesus was born under the law to redeem those under the law says the Apostle (see Galatians 4:4-5). The previous stanzas of our hymn have confessed our human plight: fast bound in Satan's chains, brooded over by death, tormented by sin with life itself becoming a living hell. Good works are no help. The freedom of the will is worst than powerless for it fights against God's judgment. If we are to be saved, it will not come from ourselves. It will take a Savior who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

I. God's Beloved Son: Bright Jewel of His Crown

A. From heaven to earth, He comes

1. Religions built ladders to God: moralism, rationalism, mysticism (see Köberele)
2. God gives us His Son on the cross, not ladders. God comes to us when we could not come to Him
3. "If they bore their way into heaven with their heads and look around they will find no one, because Christ lies in a crib and in a woman's lap. So let them fall back down again and break their necks" (Luther, quoted by Bayer, 46)

B. Jesus is declared God's beloved Son in His Baptism

1. Baptized in a sinner's baptism not for Himself but for us
2. He comes to do His Father's will. He comes to die a sinner's death that sinners might have His righteousness and live.
3. Isaiah 42:1-4 is echoed in Jesus' Baptism. Jesus is the Servant in whom the Father delights and who is given the Spirit.

II. The Father to the Son: It's Time to Have Compassion

A. Baptized in the Jordan, Jesus' life is lived in perfect obedience to the Father

1. His is a perfect life of love...."love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be."
2. His life demonstrates divine compassion for those who are lost like sheep without a shepherd.
3. In that compassion, He heals the sick, restores sight to the blind, causes the lame to walk, and gives life to the dead

B. But Jesus is more than the embodiment of divine love

1. He loves His own to the end: "...having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1)
2. In love, He is our servant even to death on the cross

III. Out of His love, God's Son Becomes Our Brother

A. "A servant's form, like mine, he wore"

1. He comes in the garb of flesh and blood
2. His power is hidden in the weakness of the baby of Bethlehem and the man of Calvary

B. He gets the job done

1. From sin and sorrow we are set free for Jesus has put death to death by dying
2. He leads the devil captive that your conscience is free in the forgiveness of sins

Conclusion:

Jesus came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom (see Mark 10:45). The old Adam is ever the activist, always devising some scheme for serving God. Jesus puts an end to it all as He comes to give what we could never achieve. Righteousness is received not achieved. Behold God's and your Servant; He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

MIDWEEK IN LENT III: HYMNS AND TEXTS

"Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice" -556 LSB (Stanzas 5-6)

Sermon Theme: "Jesus: God's Son and Your Servant"

Lectionary: John 13:1-20/Romans 5:1-21

Psalm: Psalm 38

Additional Hymns: "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth"-438 LSB

"Jesus, I Will Ponder Now"-440 LSB

"Drawn to the Cross, Which Thou Hast Blessed"-560 LSB

"Oh, How Great Is Your Compassion"-559 LSB

Your Ransom and Your Rescue

Midweek in Lent IV

“Dear Christians One and All Rejoice” (556 LSB; stanzas 7-8)

John 14:15-27

Introduction:

In stanzas 7-8 of our hymn, Luther has Jesus preaching to us. He pledges Himself to you as “your rock and castle.” You are the one for whom He strives and wrestles.” He promises that where He is, you will remain and that the old evil foe will not divide you from Him. He shed His blood to make it so. He suffers scorn and reject, bearing the wrath of God in your place. He suffers it all for your benefit, for your good. And to you He says be steadfast and believing for His victory snatches life out of death, His innocence bears your sin “and you are blest forever.”

I. Jesus is Your Ransom

A. Slaves cannot free themselves

1. In the Scriptures, sin is not just accumulated misdeeds, things done or left undone. Sin is a power that holds its victims captive.
2. Old Testament background for the language of ransom/redeem as to do with slavery. Slaves are under the possession of another. They belong to their owner. The law diagnoses your captivity (i.e, who or what “owns” you?)

B. Jesus comes to redeem those in sin’s captivity

1. He redeems not with gold or silver but His own holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death to paraphrase the Small Catechism
2. Note language of I Peter 1:18-19. You are redeemed by a Lamb without spot or blemish, but by the precious blood of Christ.
3. The redemption is in the blood. This is the blood that cleanses us from all sin (see I John 1:7). This is the blood that we receive in the cup of the New Testament.
4. Redemption won at Calvary in Jesus blood is now delivered and bestowed to us in Jesus’ blood given us to drink in the Sacrament. There we are one with Him and He with us. There we have the promise that nothing will separate us from His love.

II. Jesus is your Rescue

A. The Lord who gives Himself for us in His sacrificial death is the Christ who wins us from our enemies: sin, death, and hell.

1. Jesus is both the Victim who suffers vicariously for us and the Victor who wins the battle on our behalf.

2. Listen to how Luther sings of it in his Easter hymn: “It was a strange and dreadful strife/When life and death contended/The victory remained with life/The reign of death was ended/Holy Scripture plainly saith/That death is swallowed up by death/Its sting is lost forever” (LSB 458:4)
3. In the weakness of His passion and death, He wins!

B. His innocence has borne your sin and you are His forever

1. You have a new and different Lord. Not sin, death or the devil but Jesus crucified and raised from the grave.
2. You are relocated from slavery to freedom. Hence the Catechism says that Jesus has redeemed us that “I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.”

Conclusion:

Jesus goes to the Father, that is He goes to the cross, that you may be His forever. By His atoning death He has purchased and won you to be His own. You are not left as orphans but heirs of God’s grace through faith in Christ Jesus. You are His and He is Yours. His blood says so. Amen.

MIDWEEK IN LENT IV: TEXTS AND HYMNS

“Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” -556 LSB (Stanzas 7-8)

Sermon Theme: “Your Ransom and Your Rescue”

Lectionary: John 14:15-27/Romans 8:1-11

Psalm: Psalm 32

Additional Hymns: “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded”-450 LSB

“If God Himself Be for Me”-724 LSB

“From God Can Nothing Move Me”-713 LSB

“When I Behold Jesus Christ”-542 LSB

In Trouble He Will Comfort You
Midweek in Lent V
“Dear Christians One and All Rejoice” (556 LSB; stanzas 9-10)
John 16:1-33

Introduction:

Martin Luther noted that “holy Christian people are externally recognized by the holy possession of the sacred cross. They must endure every kind of misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh (as the Lord’s Prayer indicates) by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness, in order to become like their head, Christ. And the only reason they must suffer is that they steadfastly adhere to Christ and God’s word, enduring this for the sake of Christ” (AE 41:164-165). Jesus speaks of this suffering ahead of time. On the eve of His death, He tells His disciples that they will be put out of the synagogue on account of Him and whoever kills them will imagine that they are offering God a service.

Yet in the midst of this dire prediction, the Lord Christ makes a promise. It is to their advantage that He goes to the Father by way of the cross. For by His going, He will send them the Helper, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. So Luther summarizes our Lord’s farewell discourse in the final two stanzas of our hymn.

I. Jesus’ Departure is for Your Good

A. Jesus’ going to the Father is His crucifixion

1. It was for this purpose that Jesus came into the world. He came to die as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
2. His death is not His defeat but His glorification.
3. By His death on the cross sin is atoned for, death is robbed of its power, and Satan is judged as the liar that he is.

B. Jesus’ going to the Father results in the sending of the Holy Spirit

1. The Spirit preaches Jesus: Luther writes “Here Christ makes the Holy Spirit a Preacher. He does so to prevent one from gaping toward heaven in search of Him, as the fluttering spirits and enthusiasts do, and from divorcing Him from the oral Word of the ministry. One should know and learn that He will be in and with the Word, and that it will guide us into all truth, in order that we may believe it, use it as a weapon, be preserved by it against all the lies and deceptions of the devil, and prevail in all trials and temptations....The Holy Spirit wants this truth which He is to impress into our hearts to be so firmly fixed that reason and all one’s own thoughts and feelings are relegated to the background. He wants us to adhere solely to the Word and to regard it as the only truth. And

through this Word alone He governs the Christian Church to the end” (AE 24:362).

2. The Spirit is “the shy member of the Holy Trinity” (Hordern) for He does not call attention to Himself but Christ crucified. This is the “heavenly wisdom” that Luther has us sing in stanza 9.

II. We are Not Left Alone

A. The Spirit is no mere stand in for the absent Christ

1. The Spirit takes what belongs to Christ and declares it to us. He gives us Jesus’ words of spirit and life in the preaching of the Gospel. Christ remains with His church in sermon and sacrament.
2. He turns our sorrow into joy for He gives us consolation rather than condemnation in the absolution.

B. Christ’s kingdom comes through the preaching of the cross

1. Second Petition: “God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.”
2. It is through this preaching rather than the “base alloy” of false gospels of human actions, feelings, or understanding that God gives us the certainty of salvation in the forgiveness of sins.

Conclusion:

Jesus says “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” The hymn and this Lenten Season then draws to a close where it began: “Dear Christians, one and all rejoice/With exultation springing/And with united heart and voice/And holy rapture singing/Proclaim the wonders God has done/How His right arm the vict’ry won/What price our ransom cost Him.” Amen.

MIDWEEK IN LENT V: TEXTS AND HYMNS

“Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice” -556 LSB (Stanzas 9-10)

Sermon Theme: “In Trouble He Will Comfort You”

Lectionary: John 16:1-33/Romans 8:31-39

Psalm: Psalm 143

Additional Hymns: “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”-451 LSB

“Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow”-428 LSB

“All Depends on Our Possessing”-732 LSB

“Evening and Morning”-726 LSB

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John T. Pless
Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana
XII. 30 2009