

February 18-24, 2018
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A week to reflect on the small catechism

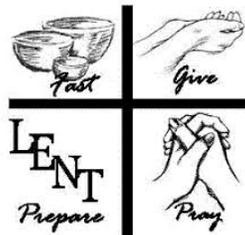
Sunday, February 18 - The 10 Commandments, #1-3

Text: Exodus 20: 2-11

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. ⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. ⁸Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. ⁹For six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

When you look closely, the 10 Commandments are all about relationships. The first three deal with our relationship with God. The second seven commands deal with our relationships with each other. Luther says the first commandment is the greatest and only commandment: “You shall have no other gods.” The other nine are just commentary on it. The First Commandment is a call to lay aside all our false priorities. Luther says in his commentary “...That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is, I say, really your God.” That means that we live in hope; and with God’s help we will continue to crash down the idols in our lives, in the church, and in society, until we shall finally stand in the shining mercy of God where the promise will be fulfilled: “You shall have no other gods.”

Let us pray: *God of Love, who gave the Law that Grace might abound all the more, bring release to all those captive to sin. Amen.*



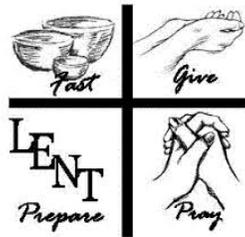
Monday, February 19 - The 10 Commandments, #4-10

Text: Romans 3:23-25a

For there is no distinction, ²³since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.

The “second table” of the 10 commandments deals with our relationships with each other. I find it more difficult to keep these commandments since I must deal with my fellow human beings almost all day long, every day. Only by God’s grace of the Holy Spirit are we able to be able to love our neighbor as our self, and only by God’s grace and forgiveness are we able to try again when we know we have failed.

Let us pray: O God, you are gracious in mercy and abounding with steadfast love. Today, and every day, help us to show our love and devotion to you by loving and serving our neighbors. Bless our ministry to bring peace, freedom from want and wholeness to those in need. May our Lenten acts of prayer, fasting and alms-giving help to proclaim Christ to the world. Amen



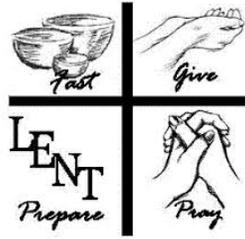
Tuesday, February 20 - The Lord’s Prayer

Text: Matthew 6:9-13

⁹*“Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.*

Perhaps you have heard from children these variations on the Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father, Who does art in heaven, Harold is his name,” or “And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets.” Someone once wrote, “To this day, I feast on the Lord’s Prayer like a child, eating and drinking from it and never get my fill. It is the very best prayer, even better than the Psalms, which are so very dear to me.” author unknown (Luther?) I too have considered this the perfect prayer. It reminds me that I do not pray alone, nor only for myself. It also gives hope for God to act in time of need.

Let us pray: Abba, Father, your Son taught us to pray by word and example. When life seems so busy that we don’t have time to pray, slow us down and help us to not only talk with you, but listen to you. Amen



Wednesday, February 21- Apostles' Creed

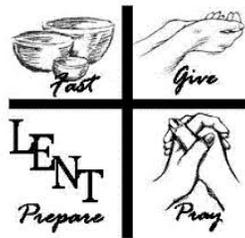
Text: Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

I have had encounters over the years with fundamentalists, liberalists, cultists, pentecostals and charismatics. As a college student, exploring different faith groups on campus, I found myself very distressed by conflicting theologies and practices of faith. Returning to Luther's explanation of the Apostles' Creed kept me anchored to my Lutheran understanding of God's love, forgiveness, and grace. I give thanks each day that I, like Luther, can exclaim, "I am baptized!" and rest in the knowledge that I am saved by God's grace, through my Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let us pray: Gracious God, thank you for making yourself known to us in Jesus Christ. Help us to daily grow closer to you, that our faith may be made manifest in showing the compassion of Christ to the world. Amen



Thursday, February 22- Confession of Sin

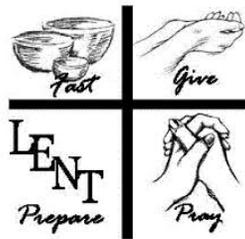
Text: Romans 6:1-4, 6-7, 11

⁶What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin.

¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Having just observed Ash Wednesday, we have been marked with the cross of Christ with the black ash of palm branches and reminded that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Perhaps you saw an image of a woman with the black cross on her forehead, as she cried and hugged youths around her. They were reacting to the horrific act of violence perpetrated by an active shooter at a Florida high school. It was an all too realistic reminder that the sins of the world were born by our Lord Jesus upon the cross so that the sting of death may be swallowed up in the victory of the cross.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, you prayed for forgiveness for those who killed you, you offered forgiveness to many who had sinned, and you offer your body and blood to us for forgiveness of our sin. Give us your grace to forgive others as we have been forgiven and to plant seeds of hope that bring life from death. Amen



Friday, February 23 - Holy Baptism

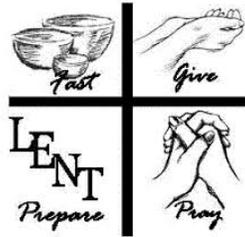
Text: John 3:1-8

3Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." 3Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." 4Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" 5Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' 8The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Lent is a time to lift-up Holy Baptism as many prepare for baptism and young folk prepare to affirm their baptism. Our Lord's baptism was a precursor to our own baptism. Jesus went into the wilderness to fast and pray immediately after his baptism by John, and it was from there that he went on to begin his public ministry. In baptism we all are called into ministry, even as infants. Once a little boy who I was visiting in the hospital asked me if I was afraid of the devil. My response was, "No, I don't have to be afraid of the devil because I am baptized!"

Let us pray: O God, as you poured out your Spirit on your Son in the waters of the Jordan and by that Spirit led him through the wilderness, so pour out your Spirit upon us and all who strive to be ministers with unique gifts and talents given through the power of the Holy Spirit - gifts and talents given not for the benefit of one group of people over another, nor for the personal

advancement or glory of the person sharing those gifts, but for the building up of the Body of Christ. Amen



Saturday, February 24 - Holy Communion

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

²³For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Was this Jesus' last supper, as we so often refer to it? Perhaps we should rethink this and call it his first supper. Indeed, this was the first meal of a new covenant, a new beginning for the followers of Jesus. From thereon we have dined together with Jesus at the Lord's Supper with all the saints in a meal that has no ending until we share at the heavenly banquet table.

Let us pray: Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

(Sundays and Seasons 2018 Ash Wednesday worship texts, post communion prayer)

