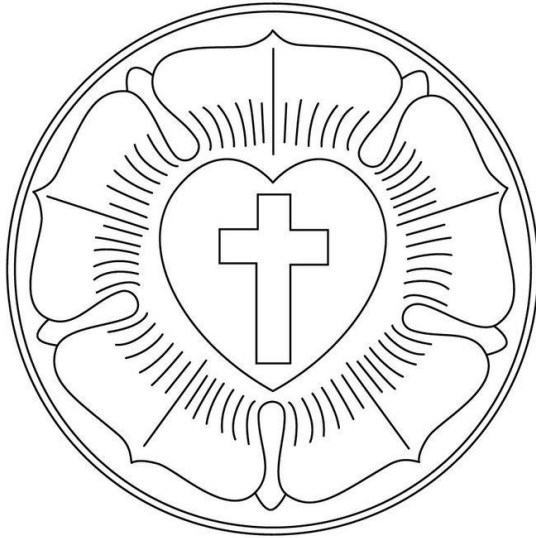


Christ Lutheran Church

2020 Lenten Devotions



Luther's Small Catechism and Related Bible Verses

We encourage every household to have a copy of Luther's Small Catechism. If you need help getting one, please talk to the office or the Pastors. You can also find the Catechism in The Lutheran Hymnal and Lutheran Service Book. For further reading, check out the Explanation section in your Catechism.

Week 1 (February 23 – 29)

Intro (Pastor Andrew)

An athlete, who wishes to succeed during competition, must know the basics. All great plays are made from the basics, and all failures stem from not doing the basic lessons. The Small Catechism is the drill book, the P90X workout, and prayer book for the Christian.

As you read through these devotions for the season of Lent, may it equip you and strengthen you. This is not a textbook, this is a workout book for all those wishing to compete in the faith. Here is the basic overview:

The Ten Commandments show us God's will, desire, and structure for life. These teach us that we have not been good in our workout as Christians. The Ten Commandments reveal to us a great lack.

The Creed then points us to who our God is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and then teaches us to confess that with our lips and lives. While the Ten Commandments show us what we lack, the Creed shows us our God who gives.

The Lord's Prayer is the natural result of the Commandments and Creed. Because of our great lack, and God's great goodness, prayer teaches us to seek that which God gives. Prayer teaches us to be like children again and to order our lives under the Heavenly Father.

Baptism is both then the givenness of God's gifts that we confess in the Creed and the answer to our prayers. In baptism we learn about how to die and rise with Christ every day of our lives.

Confession & Absolution is Baptism lived out. In it, we return to who we are. By it, we order our lives rightly. It is a gift from God to confess and receive absolution.

The Lord's Supper is the grand climax of the workout. This is the goal of our lives as Christians. To commune with God himself, to sit at his table, and to be in his rest. The body and blood of Jesus Christ nourishes us and feeds us as children who rely solely on him.

The Table of Duties, Daily Prayers and the Questions with Answers then form the result of the workout. If you want to improve on the workout and practice it every day, these sections will add to your devotional life and prayer life.

Get that workout in! As Christians, motivate one another and encourage each other on.

Sunday: Questions w/Answers, Table of Duties, and Daily Prayers

Monday: Ten Commandments

Tuesday: Apostle's Creed

Wednesday: Lord's Prayer

Thursday: Baptism

Friday: Confession and Absolution

Saturday: Holy Communion

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Week 2 (March 1 – 7)

10 Commandments (Pastor Andrew)

The Commandments begin our workout. We find out what kind of life God has made and how he wants us to participate in it.

Each of the commandments is expressed in the first: We should fear, love and trust in God above all things. To follow that commandment perfectly would allow us to follow all the rest.

Already we find that this workout will be stressful. The law sets a high bar and you will soon find that you can't jump it. As soon as you jump one well enough, you will notice that you knocked the other bars down in the meantime.

Feel that sweat as you begin to feel the curb of God's law, look in the mirror as you see that you are hopelessly beyond shape. Take courage that because you belong to Christ, he cleans you up and sets you back on your feet.

To end the workout here would be tragic, you would end in despair. To feel accomplished at this point will only produce pride. Here in the workout, you need to look outside yourself to find your strength. Keep reading to the Creed to see where your help comes from and who your help comes from.

Sunday: The Ten Commandments

The First Commandment: You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

The Second Commandment: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

The Third Commandment: Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

The Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

The Fifth Commandment: You shall not murder.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

The Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.

The Seventh Commandment: You shall not steal.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

The Eighth Commandment: You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

The Ninth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

The Tenth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

The Close of the Commandments: What does God say about all these commandments? He says, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments." (Ex. 20:5-6)

What does this mean? God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

Monday:

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-17

Deuteronomy 5:6-21

An expert of the law asks Jesus about the Greatest Commandment

Matthew 22:34-40

Tuesday:

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5-7

Wednesday:
Law and Gospel
Romans 1-4

Thursday:
Romans 5-8

Friday:
Romans 9-12

Saturday:
Romans 13-15

Week 3: (March 8 - 14)

The Apostle's Creed (Pastor Daryn)

This second workout might be compared to lifting weights. The usual procedure when lifting weights is not to do it all at once, but rather you break up all the repetitions (reps) into groups, or sets, quite often three.

What could be weightier than the Creed? This is what we declare that we believe about God, and we take God at his word. If you have a 45 lb. metal plate when you're weightlifting a barbell, you trust the writing on the side of the plate. It says, "45," and you believe it.

But that's not all! When it comes to faith in God, we place our faith not in ourselves but in God, that is, in God's gracious actions towards us. God's nature, his characteristics and his attributes, are revealed by his actions, for God acts with perfect integrity. Now, God is a God of glory, and it is his glory to be gracious and loving toward us. It is no accident, either, that the Old Testament Hebrew word for glory means weighty, substantial, solid, heavy, costly, etc. This heavy glory, this solid presence of God, is revealed in God's Word as it describes God's costly grace (costly to him, freely given to us).

So, too, in the Creed, there are three "sets" or "articles"—three parts to it. They line up according to the three persons of the Trinity. Three persons, One Godhead. In the Large Catechism, Luther said

that he preferred to break up his writing on the Creed in this way. And the three parts of the creed come together to form a summary of all God's gracious actions toward us poor sinners. A complete workout.

In the first set (i.e., article) we learn about Creation. Our confession regarding Creation is telling when it comes to what we believe about the veracity of God's Word. Jesus, in his earthly ministry, staunchly defended the historicity of the Old Testament, and so do we. Creation is not just an argument to be won, a scientific debate about unprovable trivialities, it is our framework for understanding God, placed at the very beginning of the Creed.

What difference does this make in our lives? A great deal of difference, for if we understand that God created the earth and all that is in it, the universe, and all that exists, then we also must come to the conclusion the universe continues to exist for one reason, and one reason alone: God sustains and preserves his creation. Put simply, God takes care of us. God provides for us. Even the everyday, seemingly mundane and trivial stuff, all of that is provided by God, and He gives us everything and everyone we hold dear—even every breath we breathe. After all, breathing is an important part of lifting weights.

And breathe, we do. Our muscles straining, our blood pumping, our sweat dripping. God's glory is no mere trifle, for God is solid as a rock, and these thoughts about God are so very big. That is why the Holy Spirit must work in us to produce faith. That is what is confessed in the third set. Be patient. We'll get there soon enough. The second set, or article, that one, is placed in the middle, in the center, because it is at the very center of God's dealings with us. Here it is. God the Father chose to deal with us according to and through his Son, Jesus Christ. If the first set was all about creation, the second set is all about redemption—how God purchased us to be his own through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus redeemed us, “not with silver or gold, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.”

The only way for us to believe this is that the Holy Spirit works inside of us to create faith. This is called sanctification, in the broad sense of the word. The Spirit works through the Bible and through the Sacraments to connect us to the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus, and in that resurrection, we have a new life, a life that the Holy Spirit helps us to live, a life that exists to serve God and help others, a life that reflects God's glory and bears witness to God's love.

The word for Spirit is the same as the word for wind or breath. So, breathe. As the weight of God's glory and gracious activity sinks in, inhale the fresh, life-giving oxygen of God's self-revelation. And as the Spirit gives you the strength to grab on to this confession, as you lift this confession heavenward and outward, exhale, breathe out, for the Spirit of God is a life-giving Spirit, just as the Creed is a life-giving confession of faith, and this life is meant to be shared with others.

Since this way of living is often difficult, and since we are opposed by the devil and the forces of evil, God has also given us a prayer by which we are strengthened for the fight, the Lord's Prayer.

Sunday: The Creed

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household:

The First Article: Creation

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

The Second Article: Redemption

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, 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. This is most certainly true.

The Third Article: Sanctification

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Monday:

Creation

Genesis 1

Psalm 104

Tuesday:

The Word Became Flesh

John 1:1-8

Jesus' Birth

Luke 2

An Early Creed

1 Corinthians 15

Wednesday:

He Ascended into Heaven

Acts 1:1-11

The Resurrection of the Dead

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Thursday:

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Matthew 25

God's Kingdom

Psalm 145

Friday:

The Holy Christian Church

Matthew 28:19

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

John 14:15-21

A Chosen People

1 Peter 2:1-10

Saturday:

Eternal Life

Revelation 7

Revelation 22

Week 4: (March 15-21)

Lord's Prayer (Pastor Andrew)

The workout is hard. You feel your energy drained. But you have now heard of the Triune God who gives. As a child, you call out for aid:

Father! You who are in heaven! Help me to keep your name Holy! Bring me into your kingdom, for I cannot deliver myself through my effort!

My will desires for me to quit and walk away from you. Crucify and kill my will so that I may never leave you. Feed me with all that I need to support my daily life.

Forgive me Lord, for I have sinned. Help me to remember that forgiveness from your Son as I turn to forgive others the sins that they have committed against me.

Do not let me wander from the race, either from the right or the left. Guard me that my sin, the devil and this world would not lead me from you!

Protect me O Lord! For threats of violence, evil and death seek my end. Deliver me from all this evil and bring me to you.

Truly Lord, you have brought me to yourself. For you hear my prayer for I am found in your Son Jesus Christ!

This is no ordinary workout, and now we turn to that which fuels and saves us in Christ Jesus.

Sunday: The Lord's Prayer

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household:

The Introduction

Our Father who art in heaven.

What does this mean?

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

The First Petition

Hallowed be Thy name.

What does this mean?

God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

How is God's name kept holy?

God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!

The Second Petition

Thy kingdom come.

What does this mean?

The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God's kingdom come?

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.

The Third Petition

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What does this mean?

The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done?

God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die. This is His good and gracious will.

The Fourth Petition

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

The Fifth Petition

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

The Sixth Petition

And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean?

God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.

The Seventh Petition

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

The Conclusion

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.* Amen.

What does this mean?

This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen means “yes, yes, it shall be so.”

**These words were not in Luther's Small Catechism.*

Monday:

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

Children of God

1 John 3:1-10

Galatians 3:23-29

Tuesday:

God's Name

Exodus 20:7

God's Kingdom

Mark 4

Wednesday:

God's Will be Done

1 John 2:15-29

Thursday:

Daily Bread

Proverbs 30

Friday:

The Unmerciful Servant

Matthew 18:21-35

Saturday:

Trials and Temptation

James 1:1-18

Where Does My Help Come From?

Psalm 121

Week 5: (March 22-28)

Holy Baptism (Pastor Daryn)

John Bingham, a Runner's World columnist and author of Running for Mortals (among his many books), frequently told audiences: "The miracle isn't that I finished. The miracle is that I had the courage to start." (Higdon, Hal. Run Fast. Potter/Ten Speed/Harmony/Rodale. Kindle Edition.) There is something glorious about something's beginning, whether it be a new job or a new hobby or a new sport or a new workout.

It is very true that half the battle (at least) is *starting* a workout, or an exercise program, for that matter. In the case of running, you must overcome the idea—what will people think when they see me start running down the road? It's funny that I still look around, at the beginning of a run, to see who's watching, if anybody. Early morning runs when it's still dark out are golden!

What about the start of our faith? For many of us, this happened when we were an infant, being baptized. The miracle involved isn't one of courage, nor anything in us. All the miracles involved are being done by God. That is why Baptism is such a rock-solid foundation to our life of faith. The faith we have, which receives baptism's blessings (forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation), is a faith that is itself given in baptism (along with the Holy Spirit, who works faith in us).

How gracious and how amazing! The gifts are given along with and including the system of delivery. God is truly wonderful! We give Him all the credit, for it is He who does it, when it comes to the "doing" of Holy Baptism.

The basis for this grace, and the basis for faith, the very basis for what God does in Holy Baptism, goes back to the basis for our eternal redemption. It all goes back to the death and resurrection of Jesus. By faith we are joined, in baptism, to Jesus' death and resurrection. Every day we remember, with celebration, all that God has done for us as we remember our baptism. Audaciously we celebrate our baptism for all the world to see.

With such a rock-solid foundation, we now dare, in faith, to come before God and ask forgiveness... all for the sake of what God has done in Jesus Christ....

Sunday: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household

First: What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word.

Which is that word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 28:19)

Second: What benefits does Baptism give?

It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are these words and promises of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

Third: How can water do such great things?

Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying." (Titus 3:5-8)

Fourth: What does such baptizing with water indicate?

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Rom. 6:4)

Monday:

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:19-20

Mark 16:15-16

Tuesday:

Born Again

John 3:3-7

The Little Children

Luke 18:15-17

Wednesday:

Repent and Be Baptized

Acts 2:38-39

The Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-39

Saul is Baptized

Acts 22:12-16

Thursday:

Dead to Sin

Romans 6:1-4

You were Washed

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Friday:

Clothed Yourself with Christ
Galatians 3:24-27

As Christ Loved the Church
Ephesians 5:25-27

Saturday

Buried with Christ
Colossians 2:11-15

Washing by the Holy Spirit
Titus 3:4-7

Baptism Now Saves You
1 Peter 3:18-22

Week 6: March 29 – April 4

Confession & Absolution (Pastor Andrew)

The Lord has supplied all these gifts. I am his child. Strength floods the limbs as you feel renewed in your workout.

But suddenly, you crash and burn. Your strength still fails you. He baptized and cleaned me, but yet I have failed again. The workout seems doomed. You cannot accomplish it. What can you do?

Yet his power is made perfect in weakness because you must always rely on him.

Wash me! Do not remove your Holy Spirit from me! I will confess my sins to him and trust that he will bring me back to who I am in the waters of Baptism.

To confess is to return to your identity in baptism. It is to die and rise in those waters again. It anticipates the end of the workout and the great rest given by God the Father. You are forgiven and one day that forgiveness will be seen as it is now believed. "In the stead of Christ...I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

This part of the workout prepares you for the final climax of the workout and the joyous gift that is to be given: The Lord's Supper

Sunday: Confession

How Christians should be taught to confess:

What is Confession?

Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's

Prayer; but before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?

A Short Form of Confession can be found in the Lutheran Service Book pg 292-293

What is the Office of the Keys?*

The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

*Where is this written?**

This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (John 20:22-23)

*What do you believe according to these words?**

I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

**This question may not have been composed by Luther himself but reflects his teaching and was included in editions of the catechism during his lifetime.*

Monday:

Blessed is the One Whose Transgressions are Forgiven

Psalm 32

Create in Me a Pure Heart

Psalm 51

Tuesday:

Light or Darkness

1 John 1

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper

Proverbs 28:13-14

Wednesday:

Prayer of Faith

James 5:13-16

The Wickedness of Judah

Isaiah 1

Thursday:

No One is Righteous

Romans 3

Friday:

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5

Saturday:

Repent

Matthew 3

Week 7: April 5-11

The Lord's Supper (Pastor Daryn)

God made our bodies for exercise, but our bodies can only function very well for a limited time without receiving the proper fuel for exercise, such as food, water, and rest. We need food, and we need it often. In a way, it's strange that so many people are more concerned with losing weight and reducing the intake of food rather than with eating healthy food and regularly exercising. (I was honestly surprised that I lost weight by doing nothing extraordinary other than running regularly.) It is the food that sustains the exercise (along with rest), not the other way around.

“As often as...” These three little words in the Words of Institution are a big deal. “*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*” (1 Corinthians 11:26, ESV)

This Holy and Precious Meal is one to regularly partake of. It used to be that people were worried about taking Communion too often. They thought that they would trivialize or disrespect it. Some were worried that you might have been too sinful during the week (or however long since your last reception of Holy Communion). This error in thinking is particularly unhealthy for the Christian, however. It is precisely because we are poor sinners that we need Christ's own body and blood, in with and under the bread and the wine, given and shed once upon the cross, so that we can receive forgiveness from God and the strengthening of our faith.

Luther put it this way in the Lg. Catechism, as he discussed the benefits of the Lord's Supper:

“These are shown in the words: “Given and shed for you, for the remission of sins”; namely, that in the Sacrament, (1) forgiveness of sins, which includes all others, (2) life, in communion with God, and (3) salvation, are given us through these words. These blessings God has bestowed upon us in his Word and in Baptism, but as we have so often sinned God restores them to us in the Lord's Supper, and would thus make our Christian life complete. Jn 15:5; 6:53–58; 1 Jn 1:7. “It is the food of the soul.”¹

¹ Luther, M. (1907). *Luther's Catechetical Writings: God's Call to Repentance, Faith and Prayer*. (J. N. Lenker, Trans.) (Vol. I, p. 188). Minneapolis, MN: The Luther Press.

Eat heartily. Eat often. The Lord's Supper is meant for regular and consistent reception in each of our lives!

Sunday: Sacrament of the Altar

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Where is this written?

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul write: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me." In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?

These words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: "forgiveness of sins."

Who receives this sacrament worthily?

Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words "for you" require all hearts to believe.

Monday:

The Lord's Supper
1 Corinthians 11:17-34

The Last Supper
Matthew 26:17-30

Tuesday:

The Last Supper
Mark 14:12-26

Fellowship of Believers
Acts 2:42

Wednesday

The Bread of Life
John 6

Thursday:

The Last Supper
Luke 22:7-30

Friday:

Good Friday – The Crucifixion
Luke 23-24
John 19
Mark 15
Matthew 27

Saturday:

Rest

Sunday:

Easter Sunday – The Resurrection
Luke 24
John 20
Mark 16
Matthew 28

Conclusion

If you are reading this little conclusion, it is our prayer that the Bible and Small Catechism readings, along with the devotions we have written will be of great benefit. If you waited to read this conclusion to the very end and have completed this Lenten journey, well done! If not, do not dismay. As with any exercise program, what matters is your effort going forward. Start now and work your way through this devotional booklet, catching up on any readings you may have missed, or perhaps even re-read everything and see where the Holy Spirit leads! Start now! Let the joy and excitement of the Easter proclamation spur you on, knowing that you are treasured by God for the sake of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

S.D.G.

*Soli Deo
Gloria*

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- 1 Timothy 3:14-17