

Confession and Absolution

555 Salvation unto Us Has Come

sts. 1–5

- 1 Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer.
- 2 What God did in His Law demand
And none to Him could render
Caused wrath and woe on ev'ry hand
For man, the vile offender.
Our flesh has not those pure desires
The spirit of the Law requires,
And lost is our condition.
- 3 It was a false, misleading dream
That God His Law had given
That sinners could themselves redeem
And by their works gain heaven.
The Law is but a mirror bright
To bring the inbred sin to light
That lurks within our nature.
- 4 From sin our flesh could not abstain,
Sin held its sway unceasing;
The task was useless and in vain,
Our guilt was e'er increasing.
None can remove sin's poisoned dart
Or purify our guileful heart—
So deep is our corruption.
- 5 Yet as the Law must be fulfilled
Or we must die despairing,
Christ came and has God's anger stilled,
Our human nature sharing.
He has for us the Law obeyed
And thus the Father's vengeance stayed
Which over us impended.

Text: Paul Speratus, 1484–1551; tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, alt.
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Stand

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

Invocation

- P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Exhortation

LSB 184

- P** Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.
P Our help is in the name of the Lord,
C **who made heaven and earth.**
P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Kneel/Stand

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

Confession of Sins

LSB 184

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

Absolution

LSB 185

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Stand

Service of the Word

Introit

Psalm 105:4–7; antiphon: v. 8

P He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations.

C Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!

P Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,

C O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones!

P He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

C He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations.

Gloria Patri

C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. **A** Amen.

Kyrie

LSB 186

C Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

C And with thy spirit.

P Let us pray.

O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Sit

Old Testament Reading

Genesis 12:1–9

¹The LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. ⁹And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Epistle

Romans 4:1–8, 13–17

¹What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." ⁴Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

⁷"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;

⁸blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." . . .

¹³For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Stand

Holy Gospel

John 3:1–17

P The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the third chapter.

C Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." ³Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

⁹Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³No one has

ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

Apostles' Creed

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

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.

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.

Sit

708 Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart

- 1 Lord, Thee I love with all my heart;
I pray Thee, ne'er from me depart,
With tender mercy cheer me.
Earth has no pleasure I would share.
Yea, heav'n itself were void and bare
If Thou, Lord, wert not near me.
And should my heart for sorrow break,
My trust in Thee can nothing shake.
Thou art the portion I have sought;
Thy precious blood my soul has bought.
Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord,
Forsake me not! I trust Thy Word.
- 2 Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy rich bounty gave
My body, soul, and all I have
In this poor life of labor.
Lord, grant that I in ev'ry place
May glorify Thy lavish grace
And help and serve my neighbor.
Let no false doctrine me beguile;
Let Satan not my soul defile.
Give strength and patience unto me
To bear my cross and follow Thee.

Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord,
In death Thy comfort still afford.

- 3 Lord, let at last Thine angels come,
To Abr'ham's bosom bear me home,
That I may die unfearing;
And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep
Until Thy reappearing.
And then from death awaken me,
That these mine eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, Thy glorious face,
My Savior and my fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer attend, my prayer attend,
And I will praise Thee without end.

Text: Martin Schalling, 1532–1608; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–78, alt.
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Sermon

Grace, Mercy and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Over the years, I have amassed a collection of quips – one liners – to rationalize or explain things in my life. Most are somewhat funny or ironic, poking fun at myself rather than fretting over brain blips or my sloppiness or a less than good habit or condition. Most of you have heard me say things like “I hate to think about what I will be like when I get old” as I struggle to remember something or someone’s name. Another quip is “Neat people don’t have nearly as many exciting discoveries as I do”.

In Romans 3, Paul made the point that the Law always convicts and cannot save. No one is righteous; no one is without sin. In Romans 3:22-24 Paul writes “²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” This is the Gospel. The Good News that was lost in the church in the days of Martin Luther. The Gospel needed to be discovered anew. Matthew 4:17 had been translated “¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say: ‘Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” That should sound strange to your Lutheran ears. “¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’” That should sound more familiar.

Luther was “all in”, especially when it came to piety. In the Roman Church, Luther was taught that only sins that were confessed were forgiven. Luther struggled to identify all his sins, every single one of them. Luther lived in fear and despair, beaten down by the law and his inability to keep the law. This led Luther to Confession with his Pastor, Johannes Bugenhagen, almost as quickly as he sinned. That led Bugenhagen to despair because Luther would spend hours confessing sins to return within minutes with even more sins to confess. Bugenhagen sent Luther into the Scriptures where Luther discovered the Gospel in Romans 3:28 “²⁸ For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.” and Ephesians 2:8-9 “⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Luther’s discovery changed *his* world. Luther’s discovery changed *the* world. So much so that Time magazine recognized Luther on its cover dated May 24, 1967. “Of few men can it be said with absolute certainty that they changed the course of history. Jesus was one; so was Karl Marx. Still another was Martin Luther.” Luther didn’t set out to change history but to call the church back to its Scriptural roots. God used Luther to bring the church back to what would later be called the three solas – Sola Gratia, Grace Alone, Sola Fide, Faith Alone, and Sola Scriptura, Scriptures Alone.

You might be thinking “I didn’t hear the word discovery in the Epistle. Where is Pastor getting that? Occasionally, the underlying language contains nuances that translators struggle to incorporate in the English text. This morning, the word “gained” in the first verse has a broader meaning not only indicating possession, but also connotes discovery. Abram, as he was called in the Old Testament reading, was an ordinary guy for whom God would make a name, in sharp contrast to the people in Genesis 11 who were building of the Tower of Babel to make a name for themselves. Abram was a “young” man in those days, just 75 years old and with no children. While Abram no doubt wanted to be the father of a great nation, imagine how impossible that must have been in Abram’s mind. How could God’s words come true? Abram’s wife Sarai was 65 as well, well past the age of bearing children. But Abraham believes. Abraham is faithful. Abraham loads up his possessions, his wife, and his nephew and away they go. Belief precedes action. Belief precedes works. God made the first move. Abram didn’t play “let’s make a deal” with God in that moment. There was no sense of “what is in it for me?” or “what do I have to do?” Abram just did.

Later in chapter 12, Abram and Sarai scheme to save Abram’s life, saying Sarai was just his sister instead of his wife, a lie they will tell again with Abimelech in Genesis 20 after God gives Abram the name Abraham, the father of many nations, and Sarai the name Sarah, the mother of many nations. Abram will, at God’s instruction, cut the covenant in Genesis 15 and while Abram was in a trance, God walks between the bisected animals, indicating the God will fulfill both parts of the covenant, both God’s part and man’s part.

God does this for you as well. God does all the work in your relationship. God sends His Holy Spirit to work faith in your heart and to call you to the waters of Baptism where your sins are washed away. Your old Adam drowns in the water and your new, Spiritual Adam arises. God calls you by His Gospel and provides His Own Son, Jesus Christ, your Lord, to be your high priest. Jesus offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for your sins, and my sins. Jesus intercedes for you at the right hand of God, taking your prayers to the God of All Grace and Mercy. The only true God who, as you heard moments ago, “so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him”. What an exciting discovery for Nicodemus and you!

Just like Abraham, sin is a part of your life. God created knowing you would need Jesus to save you from your sins. God created you, forming you in your mother’s womb. God knew that you would have other gods, created things to which you turn for all good things and in times of trouble. You would misuse His name, lying and deceiving in His name instead of praying, praising and giving thanks. You would not always have your relationship with Jesus and the Father as the foundation of your life. You would not always honor and obey those in authority over you, those placed in authority over you by God to care for you. You would hurt and harm your neighbor instead of loving, serving and putting the best construction on all things. You would covet things and people that God hadn’t given you. Sexuality would be misused outside of marriage. The things of this world would take precedence over the things of heaven.

Just like Abraham, God returns to you. God calls you back from your sin. The Holy Spirit works repentance in your heart. The Holy Spirit builds and strengthens faith, forgiving your sins, and reconciling you to the Father. The Holy Spirit causes you to discover God’s mercies anew every morning. God calls you into His Word, the Scriptures, to discover and cling to His promises. God calls you to be His own dear child who responds in love to the love of God by loving and serving one another until you are called to be in God’s presence for all eternity. Amen.

And now, may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

Stand

Offertory

Prayer of the Church

In peace, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For hearts to remember the gracious works of God in Christ, that we would proclaim His name to the world He has loved, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For faith unto eternal life, that we may receive God's promised inheritance not because of His law but because of His promise to Abraham and to us, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all fathers, who are given the calling to hand down the faith, that their hearts would be filled with the words of Christ; and that they would show forth His mercy, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our nation and its leaders, that God would bless all who make, administer and judge our laws; and that He would enable us to be good and responsible citizens, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the sick and the suffering, [*especially _____,*] that God would comfort them with His divine promises and grant healing according to His will, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

In thanksgiving for all those who celebrate birthdays, especially John Albers's aunt, Millie Schiubert as she celebrates her 90th, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the comfort of Christ as we wait to join the saints in heaven and in the life of the world to come, that we would stand ever confident in Him who gives life to the dead, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Hear us, heavenly Father, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

LSB 196

P Our Father who art in heaven,
 hallowed be Thy name,
 Thy kingdom come,
 Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
 give us this day our daily bread;
 and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
 and lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.

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

Prayer

Almighty God, grant to Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom that comes down from above, that Your Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, so that in steadfast faith we may serve You and, in the confession of Your name, abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Benediction

LSB 202

P The Lord bless you and keep you.
 The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.

C **Amen, amen, amen.**

555 Salvation unto Us Has Come

sts. 6–10

6 Since Christ has full atonement made
 And brought to us salvation,
 Each Christian therefore may be glad
 And build on this foundation.
 Your grace alone, dear Lord, I plead,

Your death is now my life indeed,
For You have paid my ransom.

7 Let me not doubt, but truly see
Your Word cannot be broken;
Your call rings out, “Come unto Me!”
No falsehood have You spoken.
Baptized into Your precious name,
My faith cannot be put to shame,
And I shall never perish.

8 The Law reveals the guilt of sin
And makes us conscience-stricken;
But then the Gospel enters in
The sinful soul to quicken.
Come to the cross, trust Christ, and live;
The Law no peace can ever give,
No comfort and no blessing.

9 Faith clings to Jesus’ cross alone
And rests in Him unceasing;
And by its fruits true faith is known,
With love and hope increasing.
For faith alone can justify;
Works serve our neighbor and supply
The proof that faith is living.

△ 10 All blessing, honor, thanks, and praise
To Father, Son, and Spirit,
The God who saved us by His grace;
All glory to His merit.
O triune God in heav’n above,
You have revealed Your saving love;
Your blessed name we hallow.

Text: Paul Speratus, 1484–1551; tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, alt.

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