



LifeLight<sup>™</sup>  
FOUNDATIONS

# Law and Gospel



LEADERS GUIDE



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## Introduction

### Welcome to LifeLight

A special pleasure is in store for you. You will be instrumental in leading your brothers and sisters in Christ closer to Him who is our life and light (John 1:4). You will have the pleasure of seeing fellow Christians discover new insights and rediscover old ones as they open the Scriptures and dig deep into them, perhaps deeper than they have ever dug before. More than that, you will have the pleasure of sharing in this wonderful study.

### LifeLight—An In-depth Study

LifeLight is a series of in-depth Bible studies. The goal of LifeLight is that through a regular program of in-depth personal and group study of Scripture, more and more Christian adults may grow in their personal faith in Jesus Christ, enjoy fellowship with the members of His body, and reach out in love to others in witness and service.

*In-depth* means that this Bible study includes the following four components: individual daily home study; discussion in a small group; a lecture presentation on the Scripture portion under study; and an enhancement of the week's material (through reading the enrichment magazine).

### LifeLight Participants

LifeLight participants are adults who desire a deeper study of the Scriptures than is available in the typical Sunday morning adult Bible class. (Mid-to-older teens might also be LifeLight participants.) While LifeLight does not assume an existing knowledge of the Bible or special experience or skills in Bible study, it does assume a level of commitment that will bring participants to each of the nine weekly assemblies having read the assigned readings and attempted to answer the study questions. Daily reading and study will require from fifteen to thirty minutes for the five days preceding the LifeLight assembly. The day following the assembly will be spent reviewing the previous week's study by going over the completed study leaflet and the enrichment magazine.

### LifeLight Leadership

While the in-depth process used by LifeLight begins with individual study and cannot achieve its aims without this individual effort, it cannot be completed by individual study alone. Therefore, trained leaders are necessary. You fill one or perhaps more of the important roles described below.

#### The Director

This person oversees the LifeLight program in a local center (which may be a congregation or a center operated by several neighboring congregations). The director

- serves as the parish LifeLight overall coordinator and leader;
- coordinates the scheduling of the LifeLight program;
- orders materials;
- convenes LifeLight leadership team meetings;
- develops publicity materials;
- recruits participants;
- maintains records and budgeting;
- assigns, with the leadership team, participants to small discussion groups;
- makes arrangements for facilities;
- communicates outreach opportunities to small-group leaders and to congregational boards;
- follows up on participants who leave the program.

#### The Assistant Director (*optional*)

This person may assist the director. Duties listed for the director may be assigned to the assistant director as mutually agreeable.

#### The Lecture Leader

This person prepares and delivers the lecture at the weekly assembly. (**Lesson material for the lecture leader begins on p. 9.**) The lecture leader

- prepares and presents the Bible study lecture to the large group;
- prepares worship activities (devotional thought, hymn, prayer), using resources in the study leaflet and leaders guide and possibly other, outside sources;
- helps the small-group discussion leaders to grow in understanding the content of the lessons;
- encourages prayer at weekly leadership-team and discussion-leaders meetings.

**The Small-Group Coordinator (*optional; the director may fill this role*)**

This person supervises and coordinates the work of the small-group discussion leaders. The small-group coordinator

- recruits with the leadership team the small-group discussion leaders;
- trains or arranges for training of the discussion leaders;
- assists the director and discussion leaders in follow-up and outreach;
- encourages the discussion leaders to contact absent group members;
- participates in the weekly leadership-team and discussion-leaders equipping meetings;
- provides ongoing training and support as needed.

**The Small-Group Discussion Leaders**

These people guide and facilitate discussion of LifeLight participants in the small groups. (**Lesson material for the small-group leaders begins on p. 47.**) There should be one discussion leader for every group of no more than twelve participants. The small-group discussion leaders are, perhaps, those individuals who are most important to the success of the program. They should, therefore, be chosen with special care and be equipped with skills needed to guide discussion and to foster a caring fellowship within the group. These discussion leaders

- prepare each week for the small-group discussion by using the study leaflet and small-group leaders guide section for that session (**see p. 47**);
- read the enrichment magazine as a study supplement;

- guide and facilitate discussion in their small group;
- encourage and assist the discussion group in prayer;
- foster fellowship and mutual care within the discussion group;
- attend weekly discussion-leaders training meetings.

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**Leadership Training**

LifeLight leaders will meet weekly to review the previous week’s work and plan the coming week. At this session, leaders can address concerns and prepare for the coming session. LifeLight is a 1½-hour program with no possibility for it to be taught in the one hour typically available on Sunday mornings. Some congregations, however, may want to use the Sunday morning Bible study hour for LifeLight preparation and leadership training. In such a meeting, the lecture leader and/or small-group coordinator may lead the discussion leaders through the coming week’s lesson, reserving 5 or 10 minutes for problem solving or other group concerns.

While it requires intense effort, LifeLight has proven to bring great benefit to LifeLight participants. The effort put into this program, both by leaders and by participants, will be rewarding and profitable.

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**The LifeLight Weekly Schedule**

Here is how LifeLight will work week by week:

1. Before session 1, each participant will receive the study leaflet for session 1 and the enrichment magazine for the course. The study leaflet contains worship resources (for use both in individual daily study and at the opening of the following week’s assembly) and readings and study questions for five days. Challenge questions will lead those participants who have the time and desire a greater challenge into even deeper levels of study.
2. After the five days of individual study at home, participants will gather for a weekly assembly of all LifeLight participants. The assembly will begin with a brief period of worship (5 minutes). Participants will then join their assigned small discussion groups (of twelve or fewer, who will remain the same throughout the course), where they will go over the week’s

study questions together (55 minutes). Assembling together once again, participants will listen to a lecture presentation on the readings they have studied in the previous week and discussed in their small groups (20 minutes). After the lecture presentation, the director or another leader will distribute the study leaflet for the following week. Closing announcements and other necessary business may take another 5 minutes before dismissal.

In some places some small groups will not join the weekly assembly because of scheduling or other reasons. Such groups may meet at another time and place (perhaps in the home of one of the small group's members). They will follow the same schedule, but they may use the cassette tape to listen to the week's lecture presentation. The discussion leader will obtain the tape and leaflets from the director. A congregation may record the lecture given by the lecture leader at the weekly assembly and duplicate it for use by other groups meeting later in the week.

3. On the day following the assembly, participants will review the preceding week's work by rereading the study leaflet they completed (and that they perhaps supplemented or corrected during the discussion in their small group) and by reading appropriate articles in the enrichment magazine.

Then the LifeLight weekly study process will begin all over again!

## Recommended Study Resources for Law and Gospel

*Concordia Self-Study Bible, New International Version.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. Interpretive notes on each page form a running commentary on the text. The book includes cross-references, a 35,000-word concordance, full-color maps, charts, and timelines.

Roehrs, Walter R., and Martin H. Franzmann. *Concordia Self-Study Commentary.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979. This one-volume commentary on the Bible contains 950 pages and is tailored for lay use.

Walther, C. F. W. *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel.* Translated by W. H. T. Dau. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. C. F. W. Walther was the first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and

a noted theologian and professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. This book is recognized as a definitive treatment of this subject. Translated from the original German edition of 1897, the book is a transcript of lectures delivered by Walther in 1864–65.

Walther, C. F. W. *God's No and God's Yes.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973. A 104-page condensed version of Walther's 326-page *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel.*

*Every Voice a Song: Pipe Organ Accompaniment for 180 Hymns and Liturgy.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House (order no. 99-1565). Use this set of music CDs for worship hymn accompaniment.

Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works, Vol. 26, Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1–4; Vol. 27, Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5–6; 1519, Chapters 1–6,* ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, © 1964). See Chapter 3 of the 1519 lectures in the appendix of this Leaders Guide.



# Hear the Stern Message of the Law

## Exodus 20

### Preparing for the Session

#### Central Focus

This introductory session is intended to define God's Law. Only when we clearly understand the Law and its demands, threats, and consequences for our lives can we appreciate the comforting message of the Gospel.

#### Objectives

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit, will

1. understand God's demands upon their thoughts, words, and deeds;
2. realize that God demands perfection from those He created without sin;
3. contemplate the eternal consequences of rebellion against God's immutable Law;
4. despair of trying to earn God's favor by good works;
5. realize anew the importance of the Law also for the renewed child of God.

**Note for the small-group leaders:** Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 47.

### Session Plan

#### Worship

Begin the session with the hymn and the prayer printed in the study leaflet. Hymn accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Worship* (refer to hymnal index). Note: Concordia Publishing House has available *Every Voice a Song*, a nine-CD set of organ accompaniments for 180 hymns and liturgy. All the initial worship hymns in the LifeLight courses are included in this resource. It's especially helpful

for mission congregations and small parishes. See the list of study resources on page 7.

### Lecture Presentation

#### Introduction

There are several reasons why the study of Law and Gospel is so important—indeed, so essential—for every Christian. The entire body of doctrine in the Holy Scriptures may be classified as either Law or Gospel. Therefore, as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, we want to know precisely what is meant by the word *Law* and by the word *Gospel*.

Furthermore, it is essential that we distinguish the two concepts properly. For example, we dare not lessen the severity of the demands of the Law, nor dare we subtract anything from the sweetness of the Gospel. If we mingle the two or add elements of one to the other, we endanger our very salvation.

"The distinction between the Law and the Gospel is a particularly brilliant light. It serves the purpose of rightly dividing God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15) and properly explaining and understanding the Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles" (FC SD V 1). Indeed, only the proper distinction between Law and Gospel enables us to understand all of Scripture correctly.

#### 1 The Law Defined

Let us look first of all at the Law itself. What is it? It has been defined as "that doctrine of the Bible in which God tells us how we are to be and what we are to do and not to do." What better place to find the Law of God than in the Ten Commandments given by God to His people through His servant Moses on Mount Sinai? Yet, every person, even one who has never seen a Bible, has some knowledge of the Law, a fragment written in his or her heart even after the fall of humanity. More about that later. However, in the Ten Commandments we hear God say plainly, "You shall . . . you shall not."

God expected His people to keep that Law. When Moses took the two tablets that he had cut from stone and

climbed Mount Sinai to have them inscribed, the Lord said to him, “Observe what I command you this day” (Exodus 34:11). In addition, the people were told later to “teach them diligently to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Indeed, God’s people were told to keep God’s Law *perfectly*. (Leviticus 19:2) “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy”. Many people who believe that a good life will merit heaven think God will be satisfied if they are *pretty good*, if they are better than the “bad” person down the block, if they don’t murder, commit adultery, or steal.

That’s not enough. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord reminds us, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). That includes perfection not only in deed but also in thought and in word. Not just murder is forbidden but hatred as well, for “everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). It includes not only adultery but also lust, for “everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). It includes not only stealing but also coveting, as the Ninth and Tenth Commandments remind us. If that is not enough to humble us, the Lord says through James (2:10), “Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.”

## 2 Condemned and Cursed—No Salvation by the Law

To come up short, as all of us do, is to stand condemned and cursed by that Law. St. Paul tells the Galatians, “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them’” (3:10).

Small wonder then that the people of Israel reacted as they did to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Exodus 20:18–19 says, “Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, ‘You speak to us, and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die.’”

The fact is that the Law condemned us even before we had our first evil thought, spoke our first careless word, or committed our first sinful deed. As descendants of the first man, Adam, we died when he died. St. Paul discusses this at some length in the fifth chapter of his Letter to the Romans, stating that (v. 19) “by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners.” Therefore, even before God gave the Law on Mount Sinai, (v. 14) “death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam.” This is why David must confess in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

We all come up short. Listen to these passages from Holy Scripture. Psalm 14:3: “They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.” Ecclesiastes 7:20: “There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.” Isaiah 64:6: “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.” Even we Christians who want so much to please our Father in heaven in response to His mercy and grace in the Savior must confess with St. John, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

The result? There is no salvation by the Law. (Galatians 3:11) “No one is justified before God by the Law.” See how sternly the apostle makes this point throughout his Letter to the Galatians. They believed it was necessary to keep the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament to be saved. Paul’s answer: (Galatians 3:11) “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.”

## 3 So, Why Did God Bother?

Well then, if the Law cannot save us, why did God bother? Why would He give us laws that He knows we cannot keep? The Bible speaks of the three purposes of the Law. First, the Law serves as a *curb*. That is, it helps to control violent outbursts of sin and thereby keeps order in the world. As we mentioned before, even the person who has never seen a Bible has what is called a “natural knowledge” of God and the Law. Even without any law, everyone knows it is wrong to murder. Everyone knows it is wrong to break into a neighbor’s house and steal or to commit adultery with another person’s husband or

wife. Romans 2:14–15 speaks of this: “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.”

Second, the Law accuses us and shows us our sins. It is a *mirror*. This is the chief purpose of the Law. (Romans 3:20) “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” It shows us the great need we have for the mercy and grace of God as we know it from the holy Gospel. St. Paul says it is “our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). Yes, we confess with St. Paul, (Romans 7:7) “Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’”

Third, the Law is a *guide* for us Christians. It teaches us Christians what we should and should not do to lead a God-pleasing life. The power, of course, to live a life according to the Law comes from the Gospel. Yes, the Law is there for us even after we have come to faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. As children of God, we want to please the God who has been so gracious to us, who has become our God. Though we know our works could never make us worthy of His grace, the good we do and the evil we avoid is our way of saying, “Thank You, dear Lord.” Note how St. John expresses this: (1 John 4:9, 11) “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

## 4 Do I as a Christian Still Need the Law?

Do I really still need the Law even after I have come to faith in Christ? Since the Spirit of God has brought us to faith and lives within us, aren’t we automatically able to do those things pleasing to the Lord? Surely, we need the Law no longer, some might argue.

On the face of it, such an argument sounds reasonable. But it overlooks the fact that because we are not *perfectly* sanctified in coming to faith, we still need the Law. The old sinful flesh, inherited from father Adam, stays with us as long as we live and battles the new spirit created

within us, pestering and tormenting us with every kind of evil temptation.

St. Paul discusses this in Romans 7 and bemoans the fact that “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing” (v. 19). Indeed, he says, “I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out” (v. 18).

This doctrine of the Law is needed by believers in order that they may not make up a holiness and devotion of their own. Using God’s Spirit as an excuse, they must not set up a self-chosen whorship, without God’s Word and command. For it is written:

“You shall not do according to . . . whatever is right in [your] own eyes,” but “be careful to obey all these words that I command you,” “you shall not add to it or take from it.” (Deuteronomy 12:8, 28, 32)

Finally, we should mention that even when the Law reminds us of those works that are pleasing to God and that we as His children should follow—its use as a *rule*—it still *always serves as a mirror* to show us where we have failed. When, for example, the Law says that we are to worship the true God alone and to have no other gods, at the same time it reminds us, “Yes, but here again you have failed.” Yes, “the Law always accuses.”

How grateful we can be that the message of the Law is not the only doctrine found in the Bible. There is also—and above all—to be found the Gospel, the Good News of God’s mercy and grace in our Savior. Of that we shall hear more in the next lecture.

## Concluding Activities

Distribute the enrichment magazine and encourage participants to read it as part of their weekly study. Make any necessary announcements. Then distribute the study leaflet for the next session. Pray the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, we hear the thunder of Your Law from Mount Sinai, and we are brought to our knees in repentance. We have sinned and done evil in Your sight and have so often failed to walk in those good works for which You have created us anew by Your good Spirit. Spare us Your righteous judgment. Remove all self-righteousness from our hearts, and flood our souls

with the comfort of Your mercy and grace in Him who is our life, even Jesus Christ our Savior. We ask it for His sake and in His name. Amen.

## Hear the Comforting Message of the Gospel

### Romans 3:21–28; 2 Corinthians 5:14–21

#### *Preparing for the Session*

#### Central Focus

As harsh and demanding as is the message of the Law, so sweet and comforting is the message of the Gospel, which speaks to us sinners of God's mercy and grace in His Son, our Savior.

#### Objectives

That participants, led by the Holy Spirit, will

1. see the glory of the Gospel message in the light of the cross and the empty tomb;
2. know the assurance that God has in Christ pronounced forgiveness upon the entire world;
3. rejoice in the work of the Spirit, who creates and sustains saving faith and thus makes God's pardon their personal possession;
4. praise God daily for His grace, that is, His undeserved love in Christ.

**Note for the small-group leaders:** Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 49.

#### *Session Plan*

#### Worship

Begin the session with the hymn and prayer printed in the study leaflet. Hymn accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Worship* (refer to hymnal index). Note: Concordia Publishing House has available *Every Voice a Song*, a nine-CD set of organ accompaniments for 180 hymns and liturgy. All the initial worship hymns in the LifeLight courses are included in this resource. It's especially helpful for mission congregations and small parishes. See the list of study resources on page 7.

### Lecture Presentation

#### Introduction

In the days of the sixteenth-century Reformation, a controversy arose regarding the use of the Law in the life of the Christian. Some argued that since the Christian has been born again through faith in the Savior, he or she no longer needs the Law. Now, they claimed, the Christian is free from the Law and will spontaneously do the things the Law demands. We saw, however, that the Bible clearly teaches that we Christians do indeed still need the Law (a) to remind us continually of our need for Christ, and (b) to know which works are truly pleasing to God.

There was, however, also a dispute regarding the role and purpose of the Gospel. On the one side were those who stated that the Gospel is not only a doctrine that reveals God's mercy and grace to the sinner but that it also proclaims repentance and rebukes the sinner of unbelief.

Part of the problem resulted from the fact that the word *Gospel* is not always used in the same sense in Holy Scripture. At times, it is used in a very broad sense to include all that our Lord and Savior taught. For example, St. Mark begins his Gospel with the words, (1:1) "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." What follows in the history of our Lord's ministry includes, of course, not only Good News but also Law. For example, on many occasions the Lord rails against the false teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. Used in this broad sense, the Gospel does indeed include demanding repentance and condemning unbelief.

In the strict or narrow sense, however, the Gospel refers only to the Good News of what God in Christ has done and continues to do for our salvation. In Mark 1:15, for example, Jesus is heard to say, "Repent and believe in the gospel." Here the strict or narrow sense is obviously what our Lord intends by the word *gospel*. It is in that sense that we use the word *Gospel* when we speak of "Law and Gospel," and we now turn to that by way of explanation and clarification.

What is the Gospel, this Good News that God has

brought to our hearts and that we want to share with the world? Let's try a one-sentence definition: *The Gospel is the Good News that God, for the sake of the merits of Jesus Christ, His Son, has forgiven the sins of the whole world, a treasure that is ours through faith in the Savior.* (John 3:16) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

## **1** God Forgives for the Sake of the Merits of Jesus Christ, His Son

God forgives? How can this be? God is just. He is not some doting grandpa who makes light of our disobedience. God hates sin. Sin is an offense to Him. He must punish sin. Romans 6:23 reminds, "The wages of sin is death": temporal death, spiritual death, eternal death. In Galatians 3:10, St. Paul quotes from the Book of Deuteronomy and writes, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." And remember the words that close the Second Commandment? (Exodus 20:7) "The LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." God is, as verse 5 of that chapter reminds, "a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me."

Yes, God is just, but the Gospel tells us that He is also "the justifier," the forgiver, as Romans 3:26 says. The Father punishes the sin, but He punishes sin upon His Son. That is why the Son came into the world and took human flesh. (2 Corinthians 5:21) "He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." Seven hundred years before, the prophet Isaiah had foretold, (53:5–6) "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray . . . and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Perhaps you saw Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. Most reviewers commented on the violence, especially the severity of the beating that Jesus took from the Roman soldiers. Graphic indeed was the portrayal. However, the greatest suffering Jesus endured was that of soul. He was made to feel that He was the one who had broken the holy Law of God, not we. It is only in that context that we can understand the depth of agony

He expressed when He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And His cry, "It is finished" (John 19:30), does not signify simply the end of His suffering, but the completion of His work as the Sin-bearer for us. He gives His life for the wayward sheep. Here is the great exchange: our sin becomes His sin, and His righteousness becomes our righteousness.

There is another, often overlooked aspect to the fact that God forgives sin for the sake of the merits of Jesus Christ. Our Lord not only went to the cross as our substitute. He also fulfilled the Law of God for us. He was "born under the law," Galatians 4:5 says, and kept perfectly in our place the commandments we have broken. This subject is treated most fully in Romans 5. St. Paul, after describing the fact that Adam's sin was passed along to us—we talked about that in the first presentation—speaks of the Second Adam, Jesus. Verses 18 and 19 sum it up: "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience [Adam] the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience [Jesus] the many will be made righteous."

It is for the sake of this "active obedience" that our Lord was circumcised and later insisted on being baptized. He had no sins to wash away. He is "holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). Yet, as John the Baptist was reminded when he objected to being the baptizer of the Messiah, "Let it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

And the resurrection? Here is more Good News, more Gospel. Here is the proof that He who claimed to be sent by the Father is truly the Son of God. He "was declared to be the Son of God in power . . . by His resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). So Paul reminds the Corinthians, who had in their midst those who denied the resurrection of the Lord, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). It is as Romans 4:25 declares: He "was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." Therefore, we join with the whole Christian Church to sing, "Now no more can death appall, Now no more the grave enthrall; You have opened paradise, and Your saints in You shall rise. Alleluia!" (LW 126:6).

## 2 God for Jesus' Sake Forgives the Sins of the Whole World

God pronounces forgiveness upon the entire world, upon every last sinner. What a comfort! How awful if we could not be sure this is true! Am I included? Yes! Are my sins perhaps too great to be forgiven? No! You mean every last sinner? Precisely! It is a pity that there are those who feel Jesus died only for the believers. John the Baptist pointed his disciples to Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The apostle John writes, (1 John 2:2) "He is the propitiation [the atoning sacrifice] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." No, we shall be reminded shortly that this universal pardon does not teach universalism and does not mean that all people will be in heaven. Yet it is true that "in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

This reconciling, this forgiveness, this pardon is what Scripture means when it talks about the justification of the sinner.

## 3 A Treasure Ours through Faith in the Savior

We will have much more to say about faith in succeeding lectures. For now let us look at what we mean by that word and how it fits into the Gospel picture. What is faith? It is not simply knowing the story of the Savior's work for us, nor is it a mere acceptance of the truth of the biblical witness. Faith has been called "the beggar's hand" that reaches up to grasp what God in mercy offers, namely, the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. It is the trust and confidence that "Jesus died for me!"

That is what St. Paul meant by faith when he wrote, (Romans 3:28) "For we hold that one is justified [forgiven] by faith apart from works of the law." A little later he says, (5:1) "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And so he answered the question of the jailer in Philippi by saying, (Acts 16:31) "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

Yes, the gift of salvation has been provided for the entire world. And yes, God has absolved the world of sin for the sake of the merits of Christ. Yet the majority of the

world's people remain outside the kingdom and will spend eternity in hell. Not because God does not love them. Not because the Savior refused to die for them. Why then? Because they are without that saving faith. (John 3:36) "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

## 4 The Creation of Faith

How then is faith created? It is true that *we* believe, but it is the *Spirit* who creates that faith within us. (1 Corinthians 12:3) "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit." God the Holy Spirit comes through the Gospel message in Word and Sacrament and both creates and sustains that trust in Christ within us.

## 5 Grace and Works?

Because even faith is not our work but God's alone, we say with certainty that God gives us salvation out of pure grace and mercy. Now about that word *grace*. It is used in different ways. We say, "That woman has a certain grace about her," and we mean that she has a certain charm or graciousness. At other times, grace means a gift. So Paul urges the Christians in Corinth to increase in the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:6-7).

However, when Scripture says we are saved by grace, it refers to the undeserved love of God by which He forgives sin. We "are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). So when certain Jews in the church in Judea wanted to insist that Gentiles be circumcised in order to be saved, Peter reminded the church, (Acts 15:11) "We believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus." And what could be plainer than Ephesians 2:8-9: "By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Grace, then, is the opposite of works. One cannot claim to be saved by grace *and* works or by faith *and* works. There are those who say, "Yes, Jesus died for me, but I must make myself worthy of that salvation by what I do." No, (Romans 11:6) "If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace."

## Closing Activities

Ask the participants about their use of the enrichment magazine. Encourage them to read it as part of their weekly study. Then distribute the study leaflet for the next session. Pray the following prayer:

O God, our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we praise and thank You for Your grace and mercy in the Savior. You have laid upon Him all our sins and for His sake granted us pardon and peace in the blood of His cross. By Your Spirit in Word and Sacrament we have been brought by faith into fellowship with You and with the whole Christian Church on earth. Remove from our hearts all pride and self-righteousness. Protect us against the temptations of the evil one, who would rob us of our inheritance. Continue to sustain us with the Gospel message throughout our pilgrimage and keep us safe unto everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Redeemer. Amen.