

Questions that Matter - 04.07.24 Adult Bible Class

The following script is that from the April 7, 2024 Adult Bible Class. The RED text is primary; the BLUE text is secondary (supportive).

Luther's Morning Prayer

I thank you, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings of life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your Holy angel be with me that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen

This morning, we will ask and answer questions that pertain to the Holy Spirit and that pertain to us as Christian believers. As we sing hymn 198, "Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty" consider that which pertains to the Holy Spirit.

Ghosts. Do you believe in them? Did you like the movies like "Ghost Busters" or (in my early day) "The Ghost and Mr. Chicken" or Bob Hopes "Ghost Breakers"? In our first house, the previous owner died in her bedroom, slipped between the bed and the wall. At times when we heard something unusual in the house we would say "Eta's here." We are in our 3rd house since then, and sometimes say the same in jest. Have you ever watched a full show where they seek to find and record paranormal activity? We don't need their devices, we know that there are spirits, good and bad. As we Christians have the Spirit, His Spirit, living in us, we should not have any fears.

Before Jesus was arrested, while celebrating the Passover, He said:

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:16-17)

This is ESV and the translators used "helper" versus "paraclete" (παρακλητον). Paraclete means "Comforter", "Counselor", "Helper", or "Advocate". He intercedes for us. I personally like "Comforter" as I at times feel "unloaded" after praying.

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So, who is this Holy Spirit? Together, let's recite the Third Article and Luther's What does this mean.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and 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 also, He calls, gathers and enlightens 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.

Maybe you used to think as I did, that the Holy Ghost got short shrift in this Creed. The Father was presented to us with 6 words, "Almighty Maker of heaven and earth". The 2nd Article referred to Jesus' life, but didn't say that He is our Savior or Redeemer. (I was surprised by this.) Did the Holy Spirit really not get any defining words? He didn't in the 3rd Article, but in the 2nd Article Jesus was "conceived by the Holy Ghost,". In this creed, just like in the Bible where He is frequently noted working behind the scenes, the Holy Spirit is very present, but He works mysteriously. So, first of all

Who is the Holy Spirit?

This article starts right out saying that we "believe in the Holy Spirit". Who is He? God the Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity, an equal part with the Father and the Son. He is immediately presented to us in the second verse of Genesis as "hovering over the deep". We typically know Him as the "Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son", (Nicene Creed), through whom Mary conceived Jesus, the one from whom the authors wrote the Holy Scriptures and from whom we receive faith. Before we delve deeper into who He is,

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What is faith?

It's to Accept, Believe, and complete Trust in God and His promises.

¹⁹ We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.
(1 John 5:19-20)

Why is faith important?

Without faith, we remain dead. Salvation, eternal life won't be realized. Those without faith are doomed to an eternal death in hell.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17)

How do we come to believe?

Most of us through Baptism. Paster will cover baptism and other Means of Grace in the coming weeks. Others of us come to faith by "hearing". Hearing what? The word. Paul wrote:

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
(Romans 10:17)

This goes back to what was stated in our last class where John 1 where Jesus is presented to us as being the Word. What is that which we hear? The word of Christ, Scripture, which came to the authors of the 66 books as inspired by the Spirit.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (2 Timothy 3:16)

It's through these words, the Gospel, that we receive faith.

¹⁴ To this He called you through our Gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

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When words are spoken, breath is used to form words which we hear. That breath is a vehicle of the Spirit.

And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22)

Just as Adam was given life by the Father by His breath, so we receive life, we are born anew, a new creation through the “breath” of the Holy Spirit when we hear the word of Christ. Recall, the Nicene Creed, He is “the Lord and giver of life”. He gives us faith, life, through the word. That’s why it’s so important to be in the word daily. Note that which He does.

²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; . . . ²⁵ And this word is the good news that was preached to you. (1Peter 1:23, 25)

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on his own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. (John 16:12-13)

Note the timing in this verse, “but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth comes”. Note too, “imperishable” seed. You who have family members that don’t believe, keep praying that the Holy Spirit will come to them, that He would continue germinating the seed, and that He will, in time, guide them right to the gates of heaven.

Did you hear anything to suggest that we have a part in this? No, we believe that the Spirit does it all. All we can do is reject it.

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. (John 6:63)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

But for us who have faith, what does sanctification mean? Being sanctified means being made holy and set apart in service to God. It’s what the Holy Spirit does

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through the life of a believer. The whole enchilada, from coming to faith through the gift of the Holy Spirit, to being sustained growing in faith and producing fruit, and finally to resurrection itself.

¹¹ And such were some of you. But **you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.** (1 Corinthians 6:11)

Now that we have faith, does the Holy Spirit leave us alone? No, Luther in the “What does this mean” says that He sustains us. Just as a gardener cares for his plants once they sprout by cultivating, weeding and watering, so the Spirit sustains and strengthens that which He has planted in us.

¹⁰ **Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.** (Psalm 51:10)

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, **He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.** (John 14:26)

Why? Because we are to be bearers of His fruit through being enlightened by the gifts He gives us (1 Corinthians 14:1-25).

²² **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** ²³ **gentleness, self-control;** against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because^[g] the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27)

Before we go on, are there any questions or comments? The 3rd article continues that we believe in the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. Luther’s explanation says that which He, the Holy Spirit, does for us, He does for the whole church! Paul in Ephesians states that it’s by the Holy Spirit that there is a church. What Biblical verses support this portion of the Creed?

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The Holy Christian Church

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

The Nicene Creed says that He (the Spirit) spoke through the prophets.

The Communion of Saints (κοινωνία, fellowship, mystical union)

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:3-7)

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (Romans 8:14-17)

This κοινωνία (fellowship) is not just a getting together kind of thing. It's mystical. Dr. Grobrien (CTSFW) notes “is not the same as the English “fellowship”, if by fellowship is meant simply a social relationship between two or more people. Rather, κοινωνία is a mutual sharing that two or more people have in a particular good, essence, experience. . . . This κοινωνία is of the divine life itself.”

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for He dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:17)

The Forgiveness of Sins

¹⁴ For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶ “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put My laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,”

¹⁷ then He adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. (Hebrews 10:14-18)

The Holy Spirit forgives our sins and the sins of all believers in Christ.

The Resurrection of the Body

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)

He made us in His image and at the resurrection we will again share His image. Here, Jesus is resurrected as it states that He is the firstborn, that is the firstborn of the dead. So, our bodies will be resurrected as was Jesus with the same physical image of Jesus.

The Life Everlasting

²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. (John 10:27-28)

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⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. (Galatians 5:5)

As Christian believers, our faith is sustained by the Spirit through the means of grace. As sanctified, we are made holy and are in His service. Through the word we have faith and one way we respond to Him is through prayer. We go to Him in prayer so that He hears from us that which we want and need. He wants to hear from us and encourages us to pray. Jesus said:

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. (John 15:16)

Using the Lord's Prayer, let's look into that which we should want to be and do as Christians. This is our model prayer; it's that which Jesus spoke to His disciples when they requested Him to teach them. Jesus said:

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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

Our Father Who Art in Heaven

This is an introduction to the prayer, which is followed by 7 petitions and a conclusion. The prayer begins by boldly addressing God the Father and acknowledging who He is, the only God, there is no other. Here with this simple statement, we are honoring him.

In the subsequent petitions, we are asking Him for His Spirit so that we do His will.

Hallowed be Thy Name

In this first of 7 petitions, we pray that we would not misuse His name but that we would hallow it by keeping His word pure and true and live according to it. What does that mean "keeping it true"? What are we not to do? We are not to change His Word, neither adding to it, deleting it, or changing it, nor are we to use it inappropriately.

¹³ And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of

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men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

This petition reminds me of the 2nd commandment. “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.” “Thou shalt not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Here we pray that we would use His name appropriately.

I am the LORD; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, (Isaiah 42:8)

In addition, He has put His name on us. We are part of His family, His children so of course we have His name too, and should act that way (letting His light shine)!

²⁷ “So shall they put My name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.” (Numbers 6:27)

Praise His name above all. His name is special to Him. In John 1, He speaks of those who know His name and those who don’t.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive Him. ¹² But to all who did receive Him, who believed in his name, He gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:10-12)

Note the following texts:

I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30)

So when we end our prayers “in Jesus name” we are including the Father as well. And are hereby, proclaiming their union.

Thy Kingdom Come

When we ask this, we are asking for the Spirit to come to us, to strengthen us,

¹¹ Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 52:11-12)

produce fruit through us, and are

³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:38)

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asking that the Spirit sustain us in the one true faith while anxiously waiting for Jesus' return, "Jesus, come quickly!"

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20)

Thy Will be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven

This petition is closely akin to the previous. As Christians, we want to do His will. What is His will? Following the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:22)

¹¹ For I long to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, ¹² that is, that we may be mutually comforted by one another's faith, both yours and mine. (Romans 1:11-12)

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:19-20) VIDEO??

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Ephesians 4:2)

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Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

This brings us back to the 1st article where we praise the Father for His creation and for providing all that we need. Here we pray for that His care would continue not just for the present time, but always and not just to us, but to everyone, including our enemies. (Luke in chapter 11 uses the words “Give us each day our daily bread.” Some discussion here would be encouraged.)

⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:45)

And Forgive Us Our Trespasses as We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us.

We, as believers, as Christians, recognize that we are sinners and that we are in need of forgiveness. Here we come to Him with repentant hearts seeking undeserved reconciliation. We too know that the Father has accepted Jesus’ redeeming sacrifice through which we, for His sake, are forgiven. This is what we as Christians believe. We are forgiven of all of our sins, original and actual, those we know and don’t know.

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

In the same manner, we ask the Father that we would also forgive as He has forgiven us. This isn’t a “quid pro quo”; we can’t earn forgiveness. He forgives us and expects us to do the same.

³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (Colossians 3:13)

Lead us not into temptation

We also recognize that we need the Spirit to watch out for us to protect us from anything that would endanger us, that is separate us from God. This includes temptations, weakening of faith, or threats to our faith.

⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

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But Deliver Us from Evil.

This is sort of a summary statement. After having asked for all the previous petitions, we ask Him to keep us, as His elect, through all heartache until He calls us from this evil dark world home.

¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 3:12-13)

For Thine is is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory Forever and Ever. Amen

Again, in this conclusion, we recognize and state that He is God, the only God, and that all falls under His reign. We believe that He is able to do all that is asked in these petitions.

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head above all.
(1 Chronicles 29:11)

Close with singing the Doxology