

Fellow witnesses of the risen and ascended Christ, the chief hymn for today, *Salvation Unto Us Has Come*, will guide our meditation upon the Gospel lesson for this morning.

We sing the first verse of the hymn.

Salvation unto Us Has Come

**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.**

That verse is the purest proclamation of the Gospel for us sinners. That verse shows all that Jesus came to give us and accomplish for us, namely, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in the presence of God forever. We can do nothing to earn heaven and this precious gift. We confessed in the service, that we deserve temporal and eternal punishment; but that is not what we get. We get forgiveness of all our sins. We get eternal life. We get salvation, which is heaven.

Salvation is a word of promise, it means that we have been rescued, delivered and saved from sin, death, the devil and the condemnation of hell only because of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has purchased and won us from all of this by His holy precious blood and by His innocent, bitter suffering and death.

Jesus Christ has given us the gift of Holy Baptism, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Jesus Christ has given us the gift of His Supper, "Given and shed for the forgiveness of sins." Jesus Christ has given us the gift of absolution, "Not doubting, but firmly believing that our sins are forgiven before God in heaven."

These means of grace encourage us, reminding us that no longer are our sins held against us. They have been forgotten, they have been removed from us. We look to Jesus Christ and live. In Jesus alone is grace, mercy and peace.

We sing verses 2, 3, and 4 of the hymn

**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.**

These verses are pure law. These words condemn us. They make us feel guilty. God demands perfection and there is nothing perfect and holy in us. We are poor miserable sinners, and there will not be one sinner in heaven. We are born sinful and we cannot keep one of God's Ten Commandments not even a little bit. We are lost and condemned to hell.

We cannot work our way into heaven. We cannot make excuses and talk our way into heaven. We cannot be good enough to gain heaven.

We are like the Pharisee who compares himself to his neighbor, thanking God that he is not like him, trying to justify his entrance into heaven and God's presence.

We are also like Cain who did not give his best to God, but killed his brother Abel when God favored his firstfruit offering. We need to repent of our sinful ways.

Our heavenly Father does not grade on a curve. There is only A+ or 0. God does not consider some sins of less concern than others; nor does He consider our good works better than others. God does not overlook some sins. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Do not trust in yourselves. Repent and live.

We need to be like the tax collector, humbling ourselves before God, fearing Him, loving Him, and trusting in Him above all things.

We need to be like Abel who brings the firstborn of his flock to the God who created heaven and earth and still takes care of us.

We sing verse 5, 6, 7

**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.**

**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.

Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven, being born of a Virgin, to restore us to the perfect relationship that He had with our first parents Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Jesus is the Spotless Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Jesus once and for all perfect sacrifice paid the price that we owed. Jesus took our place before the judgment seat of God, that we would not have to endure the pain and suffering that we deserved. Jesus' death on the cross obeyed the Father's will. Jesus' blood broke and destroyed every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world and our sinful nature. No longer are we bound in sin, now we are free in Christ, to live before Him in righteousness and purity forever.

Having been set free from sin, we believe and hold fast to the Word of Jesus, the promise of forgiveness and the abundant blessing of His grace toward us. Guilt has no power over us. Satan's lying and deceiving words cannot harm us. We cannot think to ourselves, "I have done enough" and neither can we say to ourselves "Have I done enough?" Jesus has said, as He suffered and died on the cross, "It is finished."

We sing verses 8 and 9

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.

Our heavenly Father desires to have a loving and personal relationship with us, that is why we are here today. It is here, in the Divine Service, that our Lord and Savior speaks to us, showing us our sins and immediately forgiving them, assuring us of His grace and mercy, that we would live in peace and confidence all the days of our life. It is here at that altar that we are fed and nourished, by the very hands of our Good Shepherd, with His true body laid down for us, that we would have life and salvation. Jesus says, "I am the Bread of Life.

It is here that we drink from the cup of salvation the very blood of Jesus, shed for the forgiveness of sins, freely given to us as a gift. Our cup runs over, goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. We have nothing to fear. Jesus is with us always, loving us, caring for us, providing for us. We shall not be in want. It is in this place, as we hear the Word of Jesus and receive His Sacraments that we come to the cross and live.

All of this our heavenly Father does out of goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us. We are worthy of nothing. We deserve nothing. But our heavenly Father forgives us purely because of His Son our Lord, Jesus Christ. Our heavenly Father does not look at our sins, nor does He deny anything to us because of our sins. He loves us purely because of Jesus.

If we feel and think and act like the Pharisee, and we do; we need to repent and humble ourselves before the Triune God, who alone is righteous and holy.

If we feel and think and act like Cain, and we do; we need to repent and demand mercy from our God, trusting in His grace and blessing.

We need to be like the tax collector and cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is the one prayer Jesus cannot avoid; that is the one prayer Jesus eagerly and gladly answers.

We need to be like Able and give of the firstfruits of everything we have. We are forgiven, we are loved, we will be in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father, because we have placed our trust completely in Jesus. Truly we are blessed.

Remember, as we pray in the Collect of the Day, that our Almighty and everlasting God is more ready to give than we either desire or deserve; for we have a God of grace and abundant blessing, who loves us without measure. He richly and daily provides us with those good things we are not worthy to ask nor do we deserve, but by the merits of Jesus Christ.

For all this it is our duty to thank, praise, serve and obey Him. Our hearts trust in God, and we are helped. Therefore we greatly rejoice and with songs we praise Him. Amen.

We stand to sing verse 10 of the hymn

**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.**