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*Concordia Lutheran Mission*  
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## “The Gospel is the Knowledge of the Lord that Restores the Image of God and Gives Life Eternal.”

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

**Isaiah 11:10**

### Introduction

What is this knowledge of the Lord that produces such peace among men? The knowledge of the Lord is the Gospel. For the Gospel reveals to us who God is, namely, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, One God in Three Persons, who freely forgives all sins for Christ’s sake.

This knowledge of the Lord restores in man the Image of God. Man perished when he lost the Image of God by his sin in Eden. Man then is restored to life eternal when the Image of God is restored.<sup>1</sup>

And this Knowledge of the Lord is the Gospel. The Gospel restores the Image of God because we learn who God is and that He forgives sins for Christ’s sake. For example, in Holy Baptism we are learn who the True God is because we are baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And we also have the happy knowledge of God in Baptism because baptism delivers to us the forgiveness of sins.<sup>2</sup> Through the Gospel, God brings peace between God and man.

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<sup>1</sup>“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” **St. John 17:3**. Luther: “[this is eternal life] that Christ, sent by the Father, is known. ... He does not want us to look to Moses or John the Baptist or to others who, indeed, were also sent, who had great commissions and did and accomplished much. But none of them was sent to bring and give eternal life by the knowledge of himself. Only Christ did this. ... This is our quarrel with the pope’s doctrine: he has taken all this away and will not allow us to retain the pure and bare knowledge [of Christ].” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 69, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>**Acts 2:38**. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

And where man is at peace with God, there he is at peace with his neighbor. For he realizes, too, God is merciful toward his neighbor as God has been merciful toward him.<sup>3</sup>

And this knowledge is plentiful for the Gospel has gone out into all the world and has saturated the public with this blessed knowledge of God, just as thoroughly as the waters cover the sea. For what Christ commanded has come to pass: The Gospel is preached among all nations.

This Knowledge of the Lord, then, is the Gospel through which comes the remission of sins, peace with God, peace with our neighbor, saving faith, the life everlasting, and the resurrection of the body.

## **I. God Restores Life Eternal in Man by Restoring in Man the Image of God through the Cross of Christ.**

### **A. Man was created in the Image of God so that he knew Holy Trinity by nature.**

To understand this knowledge of God in Isaiah, we must first understand man. Man is a creature of God created unlike all other creatures of earth *to know God*, i.e. to know the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God in Three Persons. The Holy Trinity is our Creator. Moses writes:

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.<sup>4</sup>

Before there was a creature, there was God's Word. For when God created, He created through His Word. God's Word, then, is God because God's Word creates and, therefore, is the Creator and is God.<sup>5</sup> So, St. John the Apostle says:

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<sup>3</sup>Hence, Jesus teaches us to pray in the Lord's Prayer: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." *The Small Catechism*: "We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins, nor on their account deny our prayer; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them; but that he would grant them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. So will we also heartily forgive and ready do good to, those who sin against us?" p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>**Genesis 1:3.**

<sup>5</sup>Luther: "From these words [Genesis 1:1-3] it is clearly proved that God has a Word, through which or by means of which he spoke, before anything was created; and this Word does not and cannot be anything that was created, since all things were created through this divine utterance, as the text of Moses clearly and forcibly expresses it, when it says: 'God said, Let

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, we see in the writing of Moses the Three Persons of the Godhead, the Father (the Speaker), the Son (the Word), and the Holy Spirit. “And the Spirit of God was upon the face of the deep.”<sup>7</sup>

Man was created to know by nature the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, because man was created in God’s image. Moses writes:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.<sup>8</sup>

Man was created to know or to have knowledge of the Holy Trinity and enjoy companionship with the Triune God, something which distinguished him from all other creatures of earth. This part of man’s constitution is called the Image of God. St. Paul writes:

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there be light, and there was light.’ The Word must therefore have preceded the light, since light came by the Word; consequently it was also before all other creatures, which also came by the Word, as Moses writes. ... But let us go father. If the Word preceded all creatures, and all creatures came by the Word and were created through it, the Word must be a different being than a creature, and was not made or created like a creature. It must therefore be eternal and without beginning. For when all things began it was already there, and cannot be confined in time nor in creation, but is above time and creation; yea, time and creation are made and have their beginning through it. Thus it follows that whatever is not temporal must be eternal; and that which has no beginning cannot be temporal; and that which is not a creature must be God. For besides God and his creatures there is nothing. Hence we learn from this text of Moses, that the Word of God, which was in the beginning and through which all things were made and spoken, must be God eternal and not a creature.” *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. 1.1, p. 175.

<sup>6</sup>**St. John 1:1**

<sup>7</sup>**Genesis 1:2**

<sup>8</sup>**Genesis 1:26**

And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him ... .<sup>9</sup>

The Catechism states:

**113. What was the image of God?** The image of God consisted in this – A. That man *knew God* and was *perfectly happy* in such knowledge. ... B. That man was *perfectly holy* and blessed.<sup>10</sup>

Man was created in the Image of God and, therefore, by nature knew the Holy Trinity.

**B. Man loses the Image of God by the fall into sin.**

When we begin to realize man was constituted to know and to have knowledge of the Holy Trinity, then we begin to grasp the calamitous nature of man's fall. The very fact that the Holy Trinity now has to be revealed to us and that we struggle so in accepting it shows us we have fallen from the pinnacle and the heights of heaven into the lower recesses of the abyss and its darkness.

This fall from the Heights of Heaven to the deepest recesses of the abyss occurred in the Garden of Eden when Adam disobeyed God's Word. As a consequence of disobeying God's Word, Adam now fled God in fear and dread. No longer did Adam warm to God as one would expect the creature to warm to his Creator, but now fled from the presence of God and tried to hide himself from God. Luther writes of the fall of Adam and his alienation from God:

1. *The Lord said to him: But who told you that you were naked? Have you not eaten from the tree about which I had commanded you that you should not eat?*

Here Adam's conscience is roused by the real sting of the Law. It is as if God said: "You know that you are naked, and for this reason you hid. But your nakedness is My creation. You are not condemning it as something shameful, are you? Therefore it was not the nakedness that perplexed you, it was not My voice that frightened you; but your conscience convicted you of sin because you ate the fruit from the forbidden tree." Here Adam, hard pressed in this manner, was in the midst of death and in the midst of hell. He was compelled to confess that nakedness was not evil, for it had been created by God. On the other hand, he realized that the evil was this: that now he had a bad conscience because of the nakedness in which he had previously gloried as in a unique adornment, and that

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<sup>9</sup>**Colossians 3:10**

<sup>10</sup>*The Small Catechism*, pp. 96, 97

he was now terrified by God's voice, which previously he had heard with the utmost pleasure.<sup>11</sup>

No longer, obviously, was there pleasure for Adam in the Lord. Now he fled in fear and dread where formerly Adam enjoyed the closest friendship with God. So, while Adam still knew who the Holy Trinity was, he, nevertheless, lost the Image of God because he lost the blessed knowledge of God and only had now knowledge of God's wrath because of his sin.

### **C. Man is no longer at peace with God but is full of enmity toward God.**

And where Adam no longer enjoys a cordial relationship with God, there is the ugliest savagery and enmity. Moses writes:

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.<sup>12</sup>

Here Adam tries to shift the blame to God Himself for his sin. Luther writes:

See how superbly the vicious nature of sin is pictured here. Adam can in no wise be forced into a confession of his sin, but he denies his sin or excuses it as long as he sees that he has any hope or any kind of an excuse left. It is not amazing that in the beginning he hoped to be able to cover his sin and that he accuses God rather than acknowledge that he has sinned. But this is amazing, that he still persists in his excuse after his conscience has convicted him and he himself has also heard his sin from God. He does not say: "Lord, I have sinned; forgive me my debt; be merciful"; but he passes on the guilt to the woman. It is the nature of sin not to permit the soul to flee back to God but rather to force it into a flight away from God. ...<sup>13</sup>

After the loss of the Image of God, Adam turns on God in a most vicious manner.

### **D. Man turns on his neighbor after turning on God.**

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<sup>11</sup>*Luther's Works*, Vol. 1, p. 176

<sup>12</sup>**Genesis 3:12**

<sup>13</sup>*Luther's Works*, Vol. 1, p. 177

And if Adam turns on God so viciously, what can we expect of his treatment of his neighbor, in this case his wife, Eve? Nothing good. Adam throws Eve under the bus by blaming her in addition to God for his fall. Moses writes:

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.<sup>14</sup>

Luther writes of this ugly and terrible internecine strife:

Thus here Adam is minimizing his sin by saying that he did not listen to the serpent and that he did not pluck the fruit. “The woman whom Thou didst give to me,” he says, “gave me from this tree.” Not much different from this feeling is that of despairing people who, when they come to a knowledge of their sin, either hang themselves or curse God. Familiar are Job’s statements (Job 3:3, 11): “Cursed is the day on which I was born. Why was not my mother made my grave?” They pass on to God the guilt of their sin; they murmur against God that they were created for destruction and damnation. Man cannot do otherwise when no hope of forgiveness and promise of grace is available. Because death is unbearable for human nature, it begets despair and blasphemy.

Therefore the statement “The woman whom Thou didst give to me” is full of resentment and anger against God, as if Adam were saying: “Thou hast burdened me with this trouble. If Thou hadst given the woman some garden of her own and hadst not burdened me by making me live with her, I would have remained without sin. Therefore the guilt for my having sinned is Thine, since Thou didst give me a wife.” Here Adam is presented as a typical instance of all sinners and of such as despair because of their sin. They cannot do otherwise than accuse God and excuse themselves... . Such an awful evil is sin when hearts are not given encouragement in time through the promise of the forgiveness of sins. And such is the working of the Law that, when the Law stands alone without the Gospel and the knowledge of grace, it leads to despair and ultimate impenitence.<sup>15</sup>

Where, then, peace with God is lacking, lack of peace and much enmity and strife quickly spread to our neighbors.

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<sup>14</sup>**Genesis 3:12**

<sup>15</sup>*Luther’s Works*, Vol., 1, p. 178

**E. Without the blessed knowledge of God in the Image of God, man is forever doomed to vicious strife.**

And where the blessed knowledge of God in the Image of God is lacking, man is forever doomed to vicious strife with God and neighbor. Luther writes:

Thus we see Adam and Eve so fallen and sunk in sin that they cannot sink deeper. After unbelief follows the disobedience of all man's powers and parts. After this disobedience follows later on the excuse and defense of sin; and after the defense, the accusation and condemnation of God. This is the last step of sin, to insult God and to charge Him with being the originator of sin. Unless hearts are given courage through trust in mercy, this nature cannot be urged on beyond this point if there are successive steps of sin.<sup>16</sup>

**F. The Image of God is restored through the Blessed Knowledge of God in the Gospel of Christ-Crucified and, thereby, peace with God established.**

For there to be peace with our neighbor, we must, as we have seen, have in the first place peace with God. For our enmity toward our neighbor originated in our enmity toward God. So, in order to be a peace with our neighbor, we must first find peace with God.

And apart from the blessed knowledge of God, there is no peace for man with God or neighbor. But Isaiah writes today of peace between neighbor through the knowledge of God:

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.<sup>17</sup>

What Knowledge of the LORD is this that brings peace between men? This Knowledge is the Gospel, i.e. the knowledge that Christ has atoned for all sins. St. John the Apostle writes:

Jesus answered and said, ... Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>*Luther's Works*, Vol. 1, p. 179

<sup>17</sup>**Isaiah 11:9**

<sup>18</sup>**St. John 12:30, 31-33**

Christ atoned for the sins of whole world, of all men. This means that all of our sins have been paid for. All of our sins against God and all of our sins against our neighbor Christ has atoned for. Through this Knowledge of the Lord we gain peace with God. St. Paul writes:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup>

And realizing we have peace with God through this Knowledge of the Lord, then we are at peace with our neighbor because we likewise know that the same forgiveness that covers our sins covers our neighbor's sins against us. Christians, therefore, treat one another in a forgiving fashion as Christ has treated us and our sins against Him. Jesus, therefore, teaches us to pray:

And forgive us our debts *as we forgive our debtors.*<sup>20</sup>

In Catechism we learned:

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 upon our sins, nor on their account deny our prayer; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them; but that He would grant them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. So will we also heartily forgive, and readily do good to, those who sin against us.<sup>21</sup>

Likewise the Lutheran Church again confesses:

Everything, therefore, in the Christian Church is ordered to the end that we shall daily obtain there nothing but the forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. Thus, although we have sins, the [grace of the] Holy Ghost does not allow to them to injure us ...

Or as the Lord says in Isaiah: "they shall not hurt nor harm on my holy mountain," i.e. in the Church where the Gospel resides. We continue with the statement of the Lutheran Church:

Thus, although we have sins, the [grace of the] Holy Ghost does not allow them to injure us, because we are in the Christian Church, where there is nothing but

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<sup>19</sup>**Romans 5:1**

<sup>20</sup>**St. Matthew 6:12**

<sup>21</sup>*The Small Catechism*, p. 14



[continuous, uninterrupted] forgiveness of sin, both in that God forgives us, and in that we forgive, bear with, and help each other.<sup>22</sup>

Peace with God, then, is established through the restoration of the Image of God by the Gospel, the Knowledge of the Lord.

## **II. The Knowledge of God in the Gospel Restores in Man the Image of God and Brings about Peace between God and Man and Peace Among Men and Gives Life Eternal.**

### **A. The Knowledge of the Lord is the Gospel and brings peace between God and men.**

And this Knowledge of the Lord is the Gospel. For the Gospel reveals to us who God is and that He freely forgives all sins for Christ's sake. For example, in Holy Baptism we are Baptized in the Name of the True God, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, One God in Three Person, for the remission of sins. Jesus says:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.<sup>23</sup>

Holy Baptism reveals to us the True God and also that He freely forgives sins for Christ's sake. St. Peter states:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup>

And this Knowledge of the Lord, as we have already noted, brings peace with God and with our neighbor. Hence, the prophet Isaiah writes:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of

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<sup>22</sup>*The Large Catechism, Part Second, Of the Creed, Article III.55, Triglotta, p. 693*

<sup>23</sup>**St. Matthew 28:19-20**

<sup>24</sup>**Acts 2:38**

Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.<sup>25</sup>

What is it that causes people to beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks? It is the Word, i.e. the Gospel, that goes out into the world and brings peace among the nations through peace with God. Jesus says:

Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.<sup>26</sup>

And wherever we have the Gospel, there we have Mount Zion<sup>27</sup> and all its blessings. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

Many people to-day entertain strange ideas indeed as to the manner in which a person enters the kingdom of God; they think of pilgrimages to Palestine, to Jerusalem, and to Mount Zion. Contrary to such false views, however, we must firmly maintain that no pilgrimages or changes of location are required to come to Jerusalem or to Mount Zion in the New Testament sense. Of all those who believe in Christ Holy Scripture declares: “Ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God ... .”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>**Isaiah 2:2-4**

<sup>26</sup>**St. Luke 24:46-47**

<sup>27</sup>Mount Zion and the Lord’s House are wherever God’s Word and Sacraments are. Luther writes: “I think everyone knows that “God’s house” means where He dwells, and that He dwells where His Word is, be it in the field, in church, or on the sea. On the other hand, where His Word is absent, He is absent, nor is His house there; but there the devil dwells, though it be a church of gold blessed by all the bishops. But where God’s house is, there is pure blessing, grace, and life, as the psalmist says: “We bless you from the house of the Lord.” You are blessed, because you are in the Lord’s house. God says (Ex. 20:24): “In every place where I cause My name (that is, My Word) to be remembered , I will come to you and bless you.” In this passage this verse in the psalm had its origin. *Wherever God sends out His Word, by which His name and work and not our name and work are praised, there He also comes with pure grace and every blessing, as Moses declares.” Luther’s Works, Vol. 14, p. 103, italics added.*

<sup>28</sup>*What is Christianity? and Other Essays, pp. 40, 41*

Hence, because God's Holy Mountain, i.e. the Holiness of Mt. Zion that makes sinners holy through the absolution of the Cross, is the Gospel, then the Knowledge of the Lord covers the earth and brings peace amongst those who believe. Isaiah, therefore, writes:

They shall not hurt not destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.<sup>29</sup>

**B. Because the Gospel restores the Image of God, it saves and gives life eternal.**

And because the Gospel restores the image of God because it is the blessed Knowledge of the Lord, it gives life eternal. For man's fall was the loss of the Image of God. The restoration of the Image of God, then, can mean nothing but salvation and eternal life. Jesus, therefore, says of this Knowledge of God bestowing on men eternal life:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.<sup>30</sup>

**Conclusion**

The Gospel, then, gives to man eternal life by restoring in man the Image of God. For the fall of man was the loss of the Image of God. And where the Image of God is restored through the Gospel, there man gains life eternal.

And this saving Knowledge of the Lord has spread throughout all the earth through the Gospel. The Lord has made salvation richly available. For wherever men hear of the Holy Trinity and that He freely forgives sins for Christ's sake, there is the saving Knowledge of the Lord that gives life eternal and the resurrection of the body.

*Amen.*

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<sup>29</sup>**Isaiah 11:9**

<sup>30</sup>**St. John 17:3**