

**Lent Vespers 2**  
3 March 2013  
*Concordia Lutheran Mission*  
Terrebonne, Oregon

## **“The Gospel Restores the Image of God in Men and, thereby, Saves and Gives Life Eternal.”**

“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**

### **Introduction**

What causes men to lack eternal life? Men’s lack of eternal life is caused by the loss of the Image of God.

What, then, is the Image of God? The Image of God means that, unlike all other earthly creatures, man was created to know who God is, i.e. to have a personal relationship with the Holy Trinity.

To be created to dwell in such rarefied air and keep company with such Elites as the Persons of the Holy Trinity is remarkable indeed. Obviously man enjoyed this relationship with the Creator. But this relationship soured when man rejected His Creator and sinned against Him in the Garden of Eden. While man still knew who the Holy Trinity is, man obviously lost the enjoyable relationship he enjoyed with God because He fled from Him in fear and dread.

Because man was cut off from God, with Whom man was created to keep company, man perished. But God in His Mercy saved man by restoring in man the Image of God. This Blessed and Saving Work God accomplished by sending His Only-Begotten Son into our flesh in order to atone for our sins against God and save.

This Blessed Knowledge of God’s Mercy in Christ comes to man through the Gospel. Through the Gospel man again learns Who the True God is, namely, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, One God in Three Persons, and that He freely forgives all sins for Christ’s sake. Here is the Saving Knowledge of God because through the Gospel man now knows again the True God and enjoys a blessed relationship with Him because of the absolution of all sin for Christ’s sake. In this way the Image of God is restored in man and life eternal is restored to man.

### **I. Man Perished when He Lost the Image of God.**

## **A. Man lost the Image of God through his sin.**

The Image of God in man is vitally, i.e. pertaining to man's life, important because Christ, on the Eve of His Passion, prays in His High Priestly prayer for the restoration of the Image of God in man and, through the restoration of the Image of God, restoring to man life eternal. Jesus prays:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.<sup>1</sup>

To understand the fall of man and the Gospel's relationship to fallen man, one must first understand the nature of man. Man was created in the Image of God. No other earthly creature was created in the Image of God. Man alone was created in the Image of God.

So, what is this Image of God that distinguishes man from all other earthly creatures? The Image of God consists in these characteristics: **A.** Man knew the True God, the Holy Trinity, and **B.** Man had a blessed knowledge of the True God. This Truth we learned in catechism:

**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.<sup>263</sup> [Ye] have put on the new man, which is renewed in *knowledge* after the *image of Him that created him*. *Col. 3:10*. B. That man was *perfectly holy* and blessed.<sup>264</sup> Put on the new man, which *after God* is created in *righteousness and true holiness*. *Eph. 4:24*.<sup>2</sup>

Man clearly had a personal relationship with God. All other earthly creatures cannot and do not enjoy a personal relationship with God because *they do not know Who God is*. *Only man amongst the earthly creatures knows Who God is*. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

Just as all things were created for the sake of man, so man was made to know God rightly as his Creator and to worship, love, and praise Him. ... For this reason God gave to man (whom He had created) the Law, from which man could and should have learned that he was bound by natural law to acknowledge and worship his Creator. The apostle discusses this purpose clearly in Acts 17:26; Rom. 1:20; etc. Because all other living creatures lack reason, they also lack the ability to know God as their Creator. Of all animate creatures, man alone has been endowed with reason. In fact, he was created in the image of God so that he might understand

---

<sup>1</sup>**St. John 17:3.**

<sup>2</sup>*The Small Catechism*, pp. 96, 97.

the purpose of his creation, know his Creator from His works, and offer him due obedience.<sup>3</sup>

But with the fall of Adam, man fell from the Heights of Heaven and personal closeness with the Holy Trinity to a status beneath the animals. The prophet Jeremiah writes:

Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.<sup>4</sup>

The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

Before the fall, in the mind of man created after the image of God, a bright light of the knowledge of God used to glow. As a result of and following the fall, however, terrible darkness was introduced into man's mind – for which no remedy can be provided except from the light of the Word. ... Satan, the great deceiver, knows that the doctrine of God and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the citadel and acropolis of true doctrine. As a result, Satan has stirred up so many errors against it and, by wretched delivery, has produced so many monstrous heresies that oppose it. ... That Person is not worthy of the name “human” who either does not know or does not rightly know his Creator as He reveals Himself in His Word. God is the greatest good for man. Whoever has and possesses that good and enjoys what he has is blessed. Whoever does not know, does not love, does not possess that greatest good, therefore, is most wretched and unfortunate. Hilary, *De Trinit.*, bk. 8, p. 187: “Whoever does not know God does not know how to know.” Jerome, *Epitaph. Nepot.*: “Every man who lacks a knowledge of his Creator is a beast. Augustine, *Confess.*, bk 5, c. 4: “It is an unfortunate man who knows all those things but does not know You [God]. But he is a blessed man who knows You. ... “ The same Augustine ... : “To turn away from Him is to fall; to turn to Him is to rise up again. To remain in Him is to stand unshaken. Not to know Him is to die; to know Him is to live. To reject Him is to perish, but to serve Him is to rule.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>*Theological Commonplaces ... On the Nature of God and the Most Holy Mystery of the Trinity*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, edited with annotations by Benjamin T. G. Mayes, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007, p. 3, underscore added.

<sup>4</sup>**Jeremiah 8:7.**

<sup>5</sup>*Theological Commonplaces ... On the Nature of God and the Most Holy Mystery of the Trinity*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, edited with annotations by Benjamin T. G. Mayes, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007, underscore added. p. 4.

Man did reject God in the Garden of Eden and subsequently fled in fear and dread. Moses writes:

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.<sup>6</sup>

In this flight from God, not only does man lose the happy relationship he enjoyed with God, but in time becomes ignorant of Who God is altogether and becomes like the beasts – or worse. St. Augustine writes:

... the slippery motion of falling away [from what is good] takes possession of the negligent only gradually, and beginning from a perverse desire for the likeness of God, arrives in the end at the likeness of beasts. ... The true honor of man is the image and likeness of God, which is not preserved except it be in relation to Him by whom it is impressed. The less therefore that one loves what is one's own, the more one cleaves to God. But through the desire of making trial of his own power, man by his own bidding falls down to himself as to a sort of intermediate grade. And so, while he wishes to be as God is, that is, under no one, he is thrust on, even from his own middle grade, by way of punishment, to that which is lowest, that is, to those things in which beasts delight: and thus, while his honor is the likeness of God, but his dishonor is the likeness of the beast ... .<sup>7</sup>

But doesn't St. Augustine speak a bit harshly about man after the fall? Not at all. For, as we've seen from the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord Himself reckons matters that way. Also, in the New Testament, Sts. Peter and Jude reckon man in the same terms. St. Peter writes:

But these, as natural beasts<sup>8</sup>, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption....<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>**Genesis 3:8.**

<sup>7</sup>**St. Augustin: On the Trinity [DE TRINITATE, LIBRI XV.]**, tr. Arthur West Haddan, rev. and annotated by William G. T. Sheed, Book XII, Chapter 12.17, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. III, St. Augustin: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*, ed. Philip Schaff, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, Grand Rapids; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprinted August 1998, p. 161.

<sup>8</sup>The Greek text reads: “alogia zoia”, namely a creature or a life without the Word, namely without the Wisdom of God and therefore without the image of God.

<sup>9</sup>**II Peter 2:12.**

St. Jude writes:

But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts<sup>10</sup>, in those things they corrupt themselves.<sup>11</sup>

The Greek text describes these “brute beasts” as “alogia zoia”, i.e. creatures or lives (“zoia”) without the word (“alogia”), namely, God’s Word. Hence, and not surprisingly, the Antichrist, i.e. the Papacy, is described in the Greek as a “wild beast” because the Antichrist is especially efficiently outside and against God’s Word and thrusts wildly about in every direction against the Gospel.<sup>12</sup> The Apostle St. John writes:

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast<sup>13</sup> rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. ... and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.<sup>14</sup>

Through disobedience to God’s Word, through his sin, man lost the Image of God, plummeting from the Heights of Heaven to a condition that is sub-animal.

---

<sup>10</sup>The Greek text reads: “alogia zoia”, namely a creature without the Word, namely without the Wisdom of God and therefore without the image of God.

<sup>11</sup>**Jude 10.**

<sup>12</sup>“Christ says that eternal life consists in knowledge of Him. But they [the Papists] say: ‘It is not enough; there is much more to it than that. You must listen to the councils, follow the doctrine, life, and example of the holy fathers,’ etc. ... The text does not say here: ‘This is eternal life: if you live and act in this way, make decrees and establish laws.’ Rather, [this is eternal life:] that Christ, sent by the Father, is known. ... 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].” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 69, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup>The Greek text reads: “therion” from therion: “(wild) animal beast” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature, A translation and adaptation of the fourth revised and augmented edition of Walter Bauer’s Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der ubrigen urchristliche Literatur*, tr. William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Second Edition Revised and Augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker from Walter Bauer’s Fifth Edition, 1958, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 361, s.v. therio, ou, to.

<sup>14</sup>**Revelation 13:1, 2.**

## **B. Man perishes without the Image of God.**

And without the Image of God, man perishes. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.<sup>15</sup>

The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

... that original corruption includes spiritual death, the condition of being dead in trespass and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5), of being alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18), and that if this spiritual death is not removed through faith in Christ, who blots out sin, it will be followed by temporal death and by eternal death, eternal damnation.<sup>16</sup>

## **II. The Gospel Restores in Fallen Men the Image of God and, thereby, Gives to Men Life Eternal.**

### **A. Christ atones for the sins of men to restore the Image of God.**

And while, indeed, the damage done by the fall of man is of a magnitude beyond human comprehension, the solution is remarkably simple and explains the simplicity of the Gospel: *simply restore in man the Image of God by making known God's Name comprehended in and connected to God's Mercy in Christ.*

There is no doubt that the damage done by the fall of man is incomprehensible and beyond the powers of man to correct. The Lutheran Church confesses:

But, on the other hand, we believe, teach, and confess that original sin is not a slight, but so deep a corruption of human nature that nothing healthy or uncorrupt has remained in man's body or soul, in his inner or outward powers, but, as the Church sings:

Through Adam's fall is all corrupt,  
Nature and essence human.

This damage is unspeakable, and cannot be discerned by reason, but only from God's Word. And [we affirm] that no one but God alone can separate from one another the nature and this corruption of the nature, which will fully come to pass through death, in the [blessed] resurrection, where our nature which we now bear

---

<sup>15</sup>**Romans 5:12.**

<sup>16</sup>*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 551.

will rise and live eternally without original sin and separated and sundered from it, as it is written Job 19, 26: *I shall be compassed again with this my skin, and in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold.*<sup>17</sup>

In the first place, the Blessed Knowledge of God must be restored in man because the loss of this Knowledge is what causes man's flight from God and in that flight death. Man lost the Blessed Knowledge of God when he sinned and fled God in fear and dread. Moses writes:

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?<sup>18</sup>

Here's what drove man from the relationship he was created to have with His Creator: *sin*. Sin made man a different person<sup>19</sup> who could no longer relate to His Creator, except to flee in fear and dread or revile and hate God<sup>20</sup>. Hence, for man to return to God, this hostile situation had to be remedied. And God remedied it by reconciling Himself to fallen man through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ, for the sins of men. Moses writes:

---

<sup>17</sup>The Formula of Concord, Epitome. I. Of Original Sin.8-10, *Triglotta*, p. 781.

<sup>18</sup>**Genesis 3:8-11**

<sup>19</sup>“The reason Adam gives for fleeing from God is that he heard the voice of God. But that reasoning was utterly foolish. [Luther]: ‘Had he not heard the voice of the Lord before, when the Lord forbade him to eat of the fruit of the tree? Why did he not then also fear and hide himself? How was it that then he stood with joy and with uplifted countenance, seeing and hearing God? He is no longer the same Adam; he is totally changed ... and has become quite another man; he now looks about for a lie and a false cause for his defense.’” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, pp. 545, 546, amplification in brackets and underscore added.

<sup>20</sup>“Therefore the perfect natural endowments in man were the knowledge of God, faith, fear, etc. These Satan has corrupted through sin; just as leprosy poisons the flesh, so the will and reason have become depraved through sin, and man not only does not love God any longer but flees from Him, hates Him, and desires to be and live without Him.” Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 1, p. 165.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; [He] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.<sup>21</sup>

Here God intervenes in behalf of man to crush the head of the devil. Because of this Divine intervention, man knows now that God is not going to condemn him as did He the serpent, but has separated man and his newly found master the devil utterly.<sup>22</sup> God removes man's evil conscience because of sin and replaces it with the Blessed Knowledge of the Absolution of all sin for Christ's sake. Luther writes:

“This text it was that restored Adam and Eve to life and raised them again from death to the life which they had lost by their sin” ... . “This text is the absolution acquitting him and us all. For if this Seed is so strong that He crushes the head of the serpent, He also crushes all its power; so, then, the devil is conquered, and all damage which Adam suffered is repaired. Adam enters again the estate in which he was before.”<sup>23</sup>

Finally, *God must publish His Name comprehended and connected to this Blessed Knowledge of God.* In this way, fallen men come to know *Who* the True God is, the Holy Trinity, namely, One God in Three Person, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and men also come to know *What* God has done, namely, freely forgiven all sins for Christ's sake. Moses writes:

... in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.<sup>24</sup>

Jesus prays in His High Priestly Prayer:

---

<sup>21</sup>**Genesis 3:15.**

<sup>22</sup>“It was through Satan that man fell into sin; and so now the judgment of Satan and that of man are not the same. God does not link them together in the punishment, as He had a right to do, but separates them to the utmost. Although He is also angry with man for obeying the enemy of God against God, yet His anger against Satan is far greater. He simply condemns and convicts him before the eyes of Adam and Eve, so that through the condemnation of their enemy Adam and Eve may regain their composure to some extent and realize that their situation is better. So the first part of the comfort lies in this, that because of Adam and Eve the serpent is accused and cursed, and Satan together with the serpent.” Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 1, p. 190, underscore added.

<sup>23</sup>Quoted in the Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 535.

<sup>24</sup>**Exodus 20:24.**

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.<sup>25</sup>

The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him ...<sup>26</sup> And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.<sup>27</sup>

Luther writes of this Saving Knowledge of God that saves by restoring in man the Image of God:

Concerning this knowledge and its power the prophets have spoken gloriously and clearly prophesied, as in Isaiah 53[:11]: “By knowledge of Him shall He (My Servant, the Righteous One) make many just or righteous.” This means: “He will redeem them from sins and snatch them from the devil’s jaws solely through this; that they know Him and who He is.” ... Likewise, Jeremiah 9[:23-24] says: “Let no one boast of his wisdom nor of his might nor of his riches” – in short, let no one boast at all – “but if anyone wants to boast, let him boast in this, that he knows Me and knows who I am: the Lord, who does good and establishes righteousness and justice on earth.”<sup>28</sup>

Christ restores the Image of God by atoning for the sins of all men on the Cross.

**B. God Publishes the Saving Knowledge of God in His Word and Sacraments and, thereby, restores the Image of God in men and gives life eternal.**

And as to the publishing of this Saving Knowledge of God, this Blessed Work God does through His Word and Sacraments. God’s Word and Sacraments publish the Saving Knowledge of God. Holy Baptism, for example, reveals to us Who God is and What God has done, namely, freely forgiven all sins for Christ’s sake. The Apostle St. Matthew writes that Holy Baptism reveals the True God, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, One God in Three Persons:

---

<sup>25</sup>**St. John 17:3.**

<sup>26</sup>**Colossians 3:9-10.**

<sup>27</sup>**Ephesians 4:23-24.**

<sup>28</sup>Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 69, pp. 35, 36.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ...<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup>

Likewise in the Word, obviously, God's Name and Mercy in Christ are published.

And, again, in the Lord's Supper, God's Name and Mercy in Christ is published. The Apostle St. Matthew writes:

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.<sup>31</sup>

God, then, publishes His Name and when He does so He publishes His Name connected to and comprehended in His Mercy in Christ so that at the mere hearing<sup>32</sup> of His Merciful and Glorious Name life eternal is given. Jesus prays in His High Priestly Prayer:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.<sup>33</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Sin created catastrophic damage in man beyond words and caused man to lose life eternal. But God restores life eternal in man through the simplicity of the Gospel. *In the Gospel God publishes His Name comprehended in and connected to His Mercy in Christ.* In that way, God restores to man the Blessed and Saving Knowledge of God. And where we have this Blessed and Saving Knowledge of God, there have life eternal.

*Amen.*

---

<sup>29</sup>**St. Matthew 28:19.**

<sup>30</sup>**Acts 2:38**, underscore added.

<sup>31</sup>**St. Matthew 26:27-28.**

<sup>32</sup>“So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” **Romans 10:17.** Faith saves. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” **Ephesians 2:8-9.**

<sup>33</sup>**St. John 17:3.**