**Lent Vespers II,**

**The Third Week in Lent,**

3 March 2021.

*Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“Christ Lacked God on the Cross so that Men would Not Lack God nor His Blessings.”**

For Thou hast made Him [to do without God for a little while]:

and hath crowned Him with glory and honor.[[1]](#footnote-1)1

**Psalm 8:5**.

**Introduction**.

Everything here is upside down here. Man, the crown of God’s creation, is beneath inanimate objects like the moon and the stars. What goes on? Sin goes on. Sin inverts the order. When man sinned against God, he plummeted from the Heights of Heaven and the pinnacle of creation to the lowest part of all creation, even inanimate objects like the stars and the moon, to be forever bereft of God and his Blessings.

The Son of Man is even lower, beneath fallen man. The Son of man is lower than even fallen man because He bears the iniquity of fallen man.

The Son of Man, however, does not remain at the bottom because He is crowned with glory and honor. The Son of Man is crowned with glory and honor because He lacked or did without God for all men. Now all men are placed at the pinnacle of creation and restored to the Heights of Heaven with Christ.

Because Christ lacked God for all men, in Christ no man ever again lacks God or His Blessings.

**I. By His Passion Christ Lacked (wanted for or did without) God for All Men in order that Men would Never Lack God or His Blessings Again.**

**A. Man falls from the Heights of Heaven and the pinnacle of creation because of his sin.**

**Psalm 8**, which is a Messianic Psalm[[2]](#footnote-2)2, i.e., a Psalm about the Person and Work of Christ to save men from their sins, has a curious passage. It reads:

When I consider Thy Heavens, the work of Thy fingers: the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, What is man that Thou art mindful of him: and the Son of Man that Thou visitest Him? For Thou hast made Him [to do without God for a little while] ; and hast crowned Him with glory and honor.[[3]](#footnote-3)3

Everything here is upside down. Man, the pinnacle of God’s creation, lies beneath inanimate objects like the stars and the moon. God evinces a higher estimation of inanimate objects than man, the crown of His creation. What goes on here? Sin goes on here. Sin caused man to plummet from the Heights of Heaven[[4]](#footnote-4)4 and a glorious personal relationship with God and the pinnacle of creation to the lowest of the lowest depths of creation, lying even beneath inanimate objects like the moon and the stars. Of man’s plummeting from the Heights of Heaven and the pinnacle of God’s creation not only David writes of in **Psalm 8** but also the prophet Jeremiah writes of it when he records the Lord’s assessment of fallen man:

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.[[5]](#footnote-5)5

Because of sin, man falls beneath even the animals.

Sin turns everything upside. Sin places man at the bottom of creation -- man who formerly sat at the pinnacle of creation and resided in the Heights of Heaven in a glorious personal relationship with God, the Holy Trinity.

**B. Christ lacks God by His Passion so that men never have to lack God or His Blessings ever again.**

How could it be any worse than that? In fact, it can and was worse than that. The Son of Man was lower than even than fallen man. David writes:

When I consider Thy Heavens, the work of Thy fingers: the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, What is man that Thou art mindful of him: and the Son of Man that Thou visitest Him?[[6]](#footnote-6)6

Jesus speaks of this state of lowliness when He says:

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.[[7]](#footnote-7)7

Who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven? As David has noted in **Psalm 8**, it is the Son of Man. Why is the least greater than St. John the Baptist? The least is the greater because He is the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Son of God. Luther writes:

He himself says in Matthew 11[:11] that among those born of women there did not arise a greater one than John the Baptist; nevertheless the smallest in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. This smallest one is none other than Christ. No one has ever been humbled so deeply, no one has made himself smaller than did Christ, and for this reason, too, he alone may say: “Learn of me, I am meek and lowly in heart.”[[8]](#footnote-8)8

David, therefore, writes of Christ in the midst of His Passion:

For Thou hast made Him [to do without God for a little while]: and hath crowned Him with glory and honor.[[9]](#footnote-9)9

Luther writes:

David is amazed at this and says: “Is it really possible or ought one believe that God would be mindful of such a wretched and miserable man and care for a son of man who dies so miserably, executed on a cross? Is He supposed to be the dearest child and the chosen one of God, He whom everyone spits upon, mocks, and blasphemes? How foolishly God acts! Is He supposed to be God's Son, the Lord, our Ruler, whose name is glorious in all the lands and to whom thanks are given in heaven -- He who hangs on the cross and is regarded as a mockery and curse of the people?” David says this in great amazement, as though he were to say: “The whole world thinks that God has forgotten this Man and does not care for this Son of man. But ‘the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.’”1[[10]](#footnote-10)0

Christ lacked or wanted for God because God forsook Him because He bore the guilt of our sins. The Apostle St. Matthew writes:

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?1[[11]](#footnote-11)1

But what of the translation that reads:

For Thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels?1[[12]](#footnote-12)2

Being made “a little lower than the angels” again refers to God forsaking Jesus because He bore the guilt of our sins. God has never forsaken an angel, for the angels do always behold the Father’s Face.1[[13]](#footnote-13)3 But here Christ, who is the Almighty Angel of the Lord1[[14]](#footnote-14)4 who liberated Israel from Egyptian oppression and led them to the Promised Land, is forsaken by God because He bears the guilt of the sins of all men.

But this lacking God and wanting for God, David writes, is only for a “little while” because it comes to an end. Christ’s suffering is certainly not for a little while but for an eternity. But because Christ is also eternal, infinite, and Almighty, He can bring an eternity of condemnation and suffering to a close for all men by His Passion.1[[15]](#footnote-15)5 David writes of Christ completing His Suffering and overcoming lacking God or wanting for God:

For Thou hast made Him [to do without God for a little while]: and hath crowned Him with glory and honor.1[[16]](#footnote-16)6

Because God wanted of God for us and for all men, now we no longer want for God or any of His Blessings. David writes in **Psalm 23**:

The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.1[[17]](#footnote-17)7

The word used for “want” in **Psalm 23** comes from the same word in **Psalm 8** wherein David writes that Christ “wanted for or lacked God.” That Hebrew word is *chasar*, to lack, want for, or be in need of. Now that Christ has gone through wanting for God for us we no longer want for anything, neither God nor any of His Blessings.

**II. Christ Blesses Men through the Gospel so they Never Lack God or any of His Blessings.**

**A. Christ Blesses men through the Gospel**.

Christ Blesses men with the Blessings of His Passion through the Gospel. David writes in **Psalm 23** of Christ Blessing men through His Word and Sacraments, i.e., the Gospel1[[18]](#footnote-18)8:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.1[[19]](#footnote-19)9

The Rod and Staff that provide comfort are, of course, the Gospel. The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes:

In the “rod and staff” we can see God’s Word and Sacraments, by which God supplies His believers with fortitude and stamina for the worst perils of their heavenward way.2[[20]](#footnote-20)0

**B. Christ Blesses men with more than they need or want through the Gospel.**

Because men never lack God and His Blessings through the Gospel, men never want or lack for anything but have their treasures filled to the brim and overflowing. In **Proverbs 8** we read of Christ filling our treasures for all eternity:

I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.2[[21]](#footnote-21)1

These Blessings of the Lord Christians enjoy throughout all eternity. Luther writes of these boundless and everlasting blessings:

Behold, that is the consolation we derive from yonder life, that God Himself will be ours and that He will be everything to us. For picture to yourself all that you would like to have, and you will find nothing better and dearer and worth wishing for than to have God Himself, who is the life and an inexhaustible depth of everything good and of eternal joy. There is nothing more precious on earth than life. The whole world dreads nothing more than death and desires nothing more than life. And this treasure we are to have in Him without measure and without end. There the sky will rain down talers and gold, if you should choose, the Elbe be filled with pearls and other gems, the earth yield all kinds of delight, so that, at your word, a tree will bear nothing but silver leaves and golden apples and pears, the fields will bear grass and flowers which shine like emeralds and other beautiful gems. In short, whatever delights your heart shall be yours abundantly. For we read that God Himself will be everything to everyone. But wherever God is, all good things that one may wish for must also be present.2[[22]](#footnote-22)2

**Conclusion**.

Sin turns everything upside down. Christ, however, turns everything right side up by His Passion and exalts to the Heights of Heaven and the pinnacle of creation.

Because Christ lacked or wanted for God for us, we will never lack or want for God again but will forever be Blessed by His Presence and His boundless and everlasting gifts.

***Amen.***

1. 1The text is from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 124. The translation from the Hebrew in brackets is mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2“Concerning Christ’s Kingdom, Suffering, and Glory.” *The Bible or the Entire Holy Scripture, Old and New Testaments, according to the German Translation of Dr. Martin Luther*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1897, p. 559, translation from the German is mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3**Psalm 8:3-5**. Text is from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 124, translation from the Hebrew is mine.

   “Luther and the Lutheran Confessions accepted the teaching of the New Testament that in the Psalms there were numerous predictions about the Messiah. Moorehead wrote concerning this matter: ‘The Psalms are full of Christ. They speak about His humiliation and exaltation, of His rejection by the world and of His final triumph over all opposition. But they go deeper, as we may say; deeper even than the gospels; they *let us into the thoughts and feelings when the billows of wrath were rolling over Him, when the heavy cloud of judgment which was all our own burst upon His devoted Head*.’”The Rev. Dr. Raymond Surburg,*Exegetical Essays and Materials Dealing with the Interpretation of the Psalms*, Ft. Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary, Press, p. 28, emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4“**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. 263 [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. 264 Put on the new man, which *after God* is created in *righteousness and true holiness*. *Eph. 4:24****.*** ... **114. Does man still bear the image of God?** Man *lost* the image of God when he *fell into sin*. In *believers*, a *beginning* of its renewal is made. Only in *heaven*, however, will this image be *fully* restored. 265 [Adam] begat a son *in his own likeness*, after his image. *Gen. 5:3****.*** ... 266 I will *behold Thy face in righteousness*; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, *with Thy likeness*. Ps. 17:15.” *The Small Catechism*, pp. 96, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5**Jeremiah 8:7**. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6**Psalm 8:3-4**. Text is from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 124, translation from the Hebrew is mine.

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7. 7**St. Matthew 11:11**. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 52, pp. 3, 4. “To this statement, Christ adds a correction: ‘Yet he who is very little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.’ ... One [interpretation] is that of Augustine and Chrysostom, that Christ is signifying Himself. Although He says that the Law and the Prophets prophesied until John, who, He affirms, is greater than both Moses and all the prophets, He doesn’t want people to understand that John is that prophet about whom the promise of Deu. 18:15 speaks, or the very Messiah about whom the rest of the prophets prophesied. He therefore had to add this correction. John indeed is greater than all the prophets, but there is in the kingdom of heaven another person who is greater than John the baptist himself. You see, the common folk and John’s disciples were leaning toward that opinion that John was the Messiah. Because the external appearance of the person, life and authority was less at that time in Jesus than in the Baptist (and this kept offending the disciples of John and others), He therefore says: ‘He who appears to be less important; no, He who *is* less important by virtue of the outpouring of Himself, (Diminishment occurs not only among the angels [Psa. 8:5], but even among people, Psa. 22:6: ‘I am a worm and not a man.’), He,’ He says, ‘is less significant by virtue of His outpouring of self and external appearance, yet is greater than the Baptist’ in dignity, majesty, person, and office.” Martin Chemnitz, Polycarp Leyser, John Gerhard, *The Harmony of the Four Evangelists*, Vol. One, Book Three, Part Two, tr. Richard J. Dinda, editorial assistant Rachel K. K. Melvin, Malone, TX: The Center for the Study of Lutheran Orthodoxy, 2014, p. 49, amplification in brackets and underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9**Psalm 8:5**. The text is from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 124. The translation from the Hebrew in brackets is mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 12, p. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11**St. Matthew 27:48**. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12**Psalm 8:5**. The text is from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” **St. Matthew 18:10** [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14“Jesus appears as God on the pages of the Old Testament. He reveals Himself under such titles as ‘the Angel of the Lord,’ ‘Jehovah,’ ‘Lord,’ etc. Whenever in the Old Testament the name ‘Lord’ occurs, it is pre-eminently not the Father, nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son of God. Ex. 13:21 Moses writes of the Israelites in the wilderness: ‘And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light.’ Who is this ‘Lord’? Ch. 14:19 He is called ‘the Angel of God,’ which is a well-known appellation of Jesus in the Old Testament. Here the Angel of God is directly termed ‘Lord.’ All doubt is removed by Paul (I Cor. 10:3-4): ‘Our fathers did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; *and that Rock was Christ*.’ ... Which person of the Godhead summoned Moses to the summit of Mount Sinai and gave him the two tables of the Law? Again it was the Son of God. The evidence is presented in the Ascension Psalm 68; vv. 7-8, and 17-18. And all doubt is excluded by Heb. 12:18-26, especially v. 24. ... Luther writes: ‘The God who led Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea; who went before them in a pillar of a cloud and of fire; who nourished them with bread from heaven and did all the miracles which Moses relates in his books; again, who brought them into the land of Canaan and gave them kings and the priesthood and everything, is this God and none other than Jesus of Nazareth, Mary’s, the Virgin’s, Son, whom we Christians call our God and Lord ... . Again, He it is who on Mountain Sinai gives Moses the Ten Commandments ... Yes, Jesus of Nazareth, who died for us on the cross is the God who says in the First Commandment: “I, the Lord, am thy God.” ... .’ So then, the same God on Sinai and Calvary. What comfort for the believers! Now the flames of Sinai can no longer fill us with terror. Indeed, we daily transgress the holy Law of Sinai, but we break through its condemnation and flee to the Redeemer on Calvary, who Himself fulfilled the Law for us and paid its penalty.” The Rev. Louis E. Roehm, *The Abiding Word*, Vol. 1, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946, pp. 20, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15“Others object: Christ did not in fact suffer eternal damnation; His suffering therefore was not vicarious. ... Scripture teaches plainly that the very punishment which we should have suffered on account of our sins was meted out to Christ. The very curse which was denounced against sinful man (‘Cursed is everyone that continueth not, etc.,’ Gal. 3:10), fell in its full weight upon Christ: ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, *being made a curse for us*’ (Gal. 3:13). Yes, the suffering of Christ was of comparatively short duration. But observe God’s method of computation. When Scripture measures the value of Christ’s Passion, it does so by the exalted dignity of the Sufferer. It was the suffering of the Son of God, 1 John 1:7: ‘The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.’ Acts 20:28: ‘His [God’s] own blood.’ The teaching of the ‘orthodox theologians’ that the brief suffering of Christ, as that of the Son of God, is equivalent to the eternal suffering of mankind is not a ‘dogmatic construction,’ but the doctrine of Scripture.48[48Dorscheus (in Baier, III, p. 87): ‘The eternity of human suffering is compensated for by the majesty and excellence of the Person (Christ).’] Christ ‘fully balanced the account,’ the settlement is ‘mathematically’ correct as God views the matter.” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 354. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16The text is from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 124. The translation from the Hebrew in brackets is mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 17**Psalm 23:1**. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 18The Gospel is God’s Word and Sacraments. “But let us speak of the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, I Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e.* of the Gospel and the Sacraments. And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in God’s stead, be ye reconciled to God*. Thus the term *leitourgia* agrees aptly with the ministry.” The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*,* **Article XXIV. (XII.): Of the Mass**, *Of the Term Mass*.80, 81, *Triglotta*, p. 411. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 19**Psalm 23:4**. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 20The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, tr. the Rev. H. W. Degner, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, *Lectures on Select Psalms*, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. 21**Proverbs 8:20-21** [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. 22*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 28, p. 146. These blessings are the fruits of the Beatific (Blessed) Vision of God Christians will behold through eternity. “Since eternal life consists in seeing God, only this beholding of God beatifies man. While the believers in this life know God only through His Word, hence in an image ... , God reveals Himself to the blessed without image or veil, face to face, immediately .... . Scripture distinctly teaches that this beholding of God is the cause of heavenly bliss, since such seeing will transfigure the believers both in soul and in body, the glory of God being reflected in them. 1 John 3:2: ‘Beloved, now ... are we the sons of God, and it doth not year appear ... what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ... ; for we shall see Him as He is.’ ... We must remember that here on earth Christians, like Christ Himself, are woefully underrated. ... To keep up their courage and Christian morale, they follow the directions of Christ and fix their gaze on the eternal blessedness awaiting them in heaven. ... Luther: ‘We have the promise and hope of heaven, and the recompense and reward of our present misery will be so great that we shall rebuke ourselves severely for ever having dropped one tear or sigh on account of this contempt and ingratitude of the world. Why, we shall say, did we not suffer even worse things? I never would have believed that there could be such surpassing glory in eternal life; else I should not have so dreaded to suffer even much worse things.’” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, pp. 550, 551, 555. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)