

## Session 2 Justification

Read: Chapter 1, pp. 29-47

### Introduction

This session looks at the various ways humanity has tried to reach out to God throughout history, exposing the futility of each of these attempts. Far from discouraging, though, this only encourages us as we realize that all that is needful is what has already been accomplished, in time and for eternity, in Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection.

### Opening Prayer – Collect 109 (LSB 305)

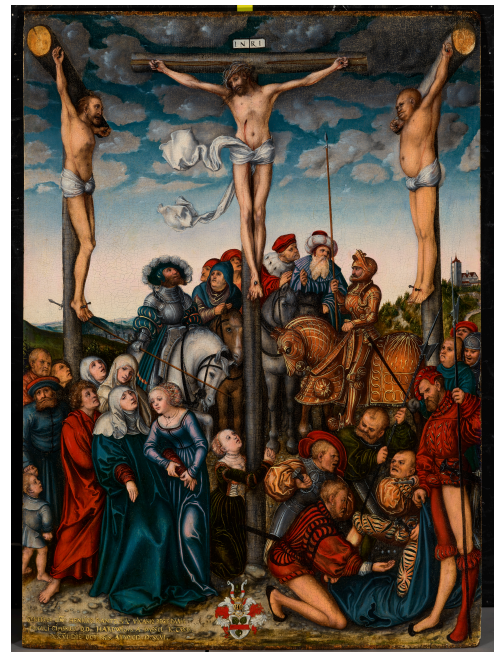
Almighty and everlasting God, You would have all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. By Your almighty power and unsearchable wisdom break and hinder all the counsels of those who hate Your Word and who, by corrupt teaching, would destroy it. Enlighten them with the knowledge of Your glory that they may know the riches of Your heavenly grace and, in peace and righteousness, serve You, the only true God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen)

### Opening Hymn – (LSB 573):

**Lord, 'Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee**

### Scripture – Romans 3:19-28

<sup>19</sup>Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup>For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. <sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it- <sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup>It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. <sup>27</sup>Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup>For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.



*Crucifixion*, Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1532  
Courtesy of the Indianapolis Museum of Art  
at Newfields.

The Spirituality of the Cross (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) by Gene Veith  
Study Guide by Pastor Rob Morris, Christ the King Lutheran Church

**Quotes and Questions from Veith:**

“Adolf Koeberle notes three kinds of spiritual aspiration:

- [1] Moralism, in which the will seeks to achieve perfection of conduct,
- [2] Speculation, in which the mind seeks to achieve perfection of understanding, and
- [3] Mysticism, in which the soul seeks to achieve perfection by becoming one with God.” (29)

- What are some examples of common practices of Christianity which tend towards one of these three kinds of spiritual aspiration. What about other religions?
- Which tendency best fits your personality?

“Most philosophies and theologies focus on what human beings must do to be saved; Lutherans insist that there is nothing we can do, but that God does literally everything.” (30)

“Koeberle says that the three approaches to spirituality are tied to the various faculties of the human mind: moralism exerts the efforts of the will; speculation exerts the efforts of the intellect; mysticism exerts the efforts of the emotions.

“Lutheran spirituality begins with the insight that *all* human effort to reach God is futile. The will, to use Luther’s term, is in bondage – not only can we not fulfill the moral law perfectly, on the deepest level, we do not *want* to. The intellect is in bondage of its own, bound by its limits and tainted by the sinful will. The emotions are likewise in bondage, apt more to lead us astray than to lead us to God. Far from ascending to God, we spend most of our time trying to run away from Him...

“The issue is not our ascent to God, but God’s descent to us.” (36-37, italics added)

- This could come across as either comforting or discomfoting. Which does it seem to you at first glance?
- How is it comforting? Discomfoting?

“In the New Testament, two short verses demolish each brand of human spirituality: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one [so much for moralism!]; there is no one who understands [so much for speculation!], no one who seeks God [so much for mysticism!]’ (Romans 3:10-11, NIV)” (38)

- Which of the two primary doctrines of Scripture does this convey?
- Taken by themselves, what effect do these words have?

“They (those justified by faith) are now in Christ, who said, ‘I am the way [so much for moralism!], the truth [so much for speculation!], and the life [so much for mysticism!]’ (John 14:6) As a result, through Christ, the will, the intellect, and the spirit are all set free.” (40)

- Which of the two primary doctrines of Scripture does this convey?
- What effect do these words have? Does remembering the previous verse (Rom. 3:10-11) weaken or strengthen this effect?

“Lutherans consider faith itself to be a gift of God, created in the human heart as His action through the Holy Spirit, working through Word and Sacrament...” (42)

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“Lutherans tend to be highly conscious of sin, without falling into moralism. They treasure theology and have a rich intellectual tradition, while emphasizing the limits of speculative reason and stressing their utter dependence on the revelation of God’s Word. They are skeptical of mystical emotionalism, but they cultivate an intense inner piety and a worship centered in ineffable mysteries.” (45)

- Are there any of these paradoxes which are out of balance in your own life? In the life of our congregation?

**Connections with Small Catechism:**

**The Creed:** *The First Article (explanation):* All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.

*The Second Article (explanation):* Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.

*The Third Article (explanation):* 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 looking at all three articles of the Creed, what do we “bring to the table”? What does God bring?

**Conclusion**

From the moment of our inception to the moment of our death, we are dependent entirely upon God. Without His act of creation, we could not exist; without His sustenance, we could not survive; without His sacrifice, we could not be rescued; and without His means of grace, we could not come to saving faith. At every stage of life, in every interchange with our Lord, He is the One who gives, entirely out of His own goodness. He alone creates, redeems, and reveals. No effort on our parts can bypass this reality. Thus, there is no aspect of our life, death, or salvation which depends on our strength of will or reason. In all things we can rely on Christ, who is more than sufficient for every need of body and soul.

**Closing Prayer**

**Notes**

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