

## The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 298, 377, 384, 50

The INTROIT

(from Ps.74:1,20-23)

*P: Have respect, O Lord, unto Thy covenant;*

**C: oh, let not the oppressed return ashamed!**

*P: Arise, O God, plead Thine own cause;*

**C: and forget not the voice of Thine enemies.**

*P: O God, why hast Thou cast us off forever?*

**C: Why doth Thine anger smoke against the sheep of Thy pasture?**

The COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou does promise, make us to love that which Thou does command; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

**Leviticus 18:1-5 (NKJV)**

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘I am the LORD your God. According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

THE GRADUAL

(from Ps.74:20-23; 88:1)

*P: Have respect, O Lord, unto Thy covenant:*

**C: Oh, let not the oppressed return ashamed!**

*P: Arise, O God, plead Thine own cause:*

**C: and forget not the voice of Thine enemies. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!**

*P: O Lord God of my salvation:*

**C: I have cried day and night before Thee. Hallelujah!**

The EPISTLE

**Galatians 3:15-22 (NKJV)**

Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law

given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Ps. 119:124)

*P: Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding:*

**C: that I may know Thy testimonies. Hallelujah!**

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Luke 10:23-37 (NKJV)

Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.”

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”

So he answered and said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.”

And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”

But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’

So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?

And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

## Galatians 3

19. Why therefore the Law? Of the transgression as favor (graciousness) was toward-placed until the one that should come, the Seed to whom was promised, having been ordained through angels in hand (means) of a mediator.
  20. But the mediator not of one is, but the God one is.
  22. But together-closed up the Scripture the all under sin (offense) in order that the promise out from faith of Jesus Christ should be given to the believing (plural).
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## Galatians 3:15-22 — “Why Therefore the Law?”

### INTRODUCTION

- I. WHY THEREFORE THE LAW?
- II. NOW THE MEDIATOR NOT OF ONE IS, BUT THE GOD ONE IS
- III. THAT THE PROMISE OUT FROM FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST SHOULD BE GIVEN

### CONCLUSION

## The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 298, 377, 384, 50

Galatians 3:15-22 — “Why Therefore the Law?”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

The sermon text is the Epistle reading appointed for the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, Galatians 3:15-22:

**Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.**

**What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.**

**Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### INTRODUCTION

Obedience is an act that is quite foreign to the fleshly nature. It is something that we simply cannot understand according to our senses and reason. We always imagine that a better way must exist than what has been decreed. We always imagine that if only we apply our reason and our full efforts to what we have been told is right and true, then we will be able to improve upon what is understood. This is because we are liars and therefore we are unwilling to believe that anyone else can right. We lie to ourselves about how good we are and how capable we are. We lie to ourselves about being able to provide for ourselves and to maintain our strength and to prolong our health and life. Thus, trusting in our own reason and strength we doubt everyone else. Most especially we doubt God.

When we are young we tell ourselves that we are invincible and we live as though we were above hurt and harm. When we grow older we begin to feel the consequences of our youthful arrogance and we begin to look for other sources of strength. Yet all that we find is temporal help that eventually fails us. Thus we become cynical and jaded toward everyone. Yet we still seek cause for hope, from ourselves and from worldly remedies. We invest fortunes in these sources that fail us. For this reason the LORD has given us His Law, that we may see what liars we are and what fools we are for looking to anyone but Him for our salvation and deliverance. He has promised to provide for us what we need, both temporally and everlastingly.

It is to this promise that the Law directs us, if we receive the Law according to the purpose for which God has given it.

## I. WHY THEREFORE THE LAW?

Today's text begins as St. Paul explains that a covenant or testament, once it is ratified, is not annulled or amended even when it is merely a testament of a man. A man's last will and testament is counted as unchangeable once he has sealed it by his death. Even today, a will can be contested only on the basis of what has been previously established by the one who made the testament. Evidence must be shown that somehow the current reading of the testament is not in keeping with the intentions of the one who made the testament. Otherwise it stands exactly as it is given.

St. Paul uses this to demonstrate that the testament that the LORD made to Abraham cannot be changed by something that came afterward. The LORD promised Abraham that the inheritance of salvation and everlasting life would come through the Seed, that is, Christ. This promise was that salvation and preservation in God's Holy Communion would be by grace, purely as a gift from God. This was a thing that God promised to do entirely according to His merciful love. Since this promise was ratified by God Himself through the testament of circumcision and through the birth of Isaac and through the test of Isaac's sacrifice and through other means, it could not be changed by something that was added later. The promise was that Abraham was given faith to believe and according to this faith it was credited to Abraham by God for righteousness.

430 years later the Law was given through Moses. This later gift was not given to change the conditions of the Testament that the LORD made to Abraham and His Seed, but to affirm it. Nothing changed with the gift of the Law. Righteousness was still purely by God's grace and not by works. Rather, as was declared in absolute terms concerning Abraham, righteousness is credited or imputed toward those who receive the gift of faith and thereby believe God's promise.

The question then arises in our minds, **"Why therefore the Law?"** What purpose does the Law serve? If it is not to produce righteousness, why do we need the Law?

In contemplating God's gift of the Law we can consider our own laws. Why do we establish laws? Do we establish laws to make good people and good citizens? Certainly not. We even hear the frequent false complaint, **"You can't legislate morality."** This is, of course, a lie. Morality is exactly what we legislate. That is exactly what legislation is by definition. It is the decree of what is and is not counted as acceptable behavior among citizens who live under the jurisdiction of the legislative body. Laws are made and given with the intent of defining what things are good and acceptable. Simultaneously, when what is good and acceptable is defined, that which is not good and acceptable is prohibited and condemned.

So, even from our own laws we can see that God's Law is to show us what is good and acceptable. God's Law teaches us to know righteousness. Like with our own laws, God's Law simultaneously prohibits and condemns all things that are not of true righteousness.

And that is the answer to **"Why therefore the Law?"** The Law shows us that according to our own actions we are not righteous and that there is only one who is righteous, namely, God Himself. The Law teaches us that if we want to know righteousness that we must look to God. The Law teaches us that all of our efforts, even our very best and most noble efforts, all fall short.

Even our prayers and our worship are acts of unrighteousness.

As the Scriptures declare: The LORD is our Righteousness. When we understand this, when we have been brought to the point of believing and trusting this, then we no longer seek to find righteousness for ourselves, but we live in His righteousness, which He imputes to us through faith in Christ.

II. NOW THE MEDIATOR NOT OF ONE IS, BUT THE GOD ONE IS

**What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.**

Let's consider a direct translation along side of this.

**Why therefore the Law? Of the transgression as favor (graciousness) was toward-placed until the one that should come, the Seed to whom was promised, having been ordained through angels in hand (means) of a mediator.**

**But the mediator not of one is, but the God one is.**

St. Paul explains that the LORD added the Law on account of His graciousness toward those who transgressed against Him and His righteousness. The Law is God's gift by which He shows us that we dare not rely upon ourselves and that we need to trust in His righteousness for our salvation.

Yes, the Law, the hard word that shows us our sinfulness and our damned condition is placed toward our sinfulness as an act of God's loving-kindness. The gift of the Law is a bestowal of God's grace. The purpose of the Law is to call us to repentance through faith.

St. Paul reminds us that the Law is given to us as having been ordained through angels. Angels are messengers of God. The term is used both for the heavenly spiritual ministers that God created to serve us in His name, and also for the earthly spiritual ministers who serve us in God's Church on earth. Angels are messengers or preachers. They declare what God has declared. They hand down to us what has been handed to them by God. On Mt. Sinai this was done through the means of Moses. He was the instrument or hand of God by which the Law was given to the sons of Israel. Moses stood between God and Man as a mediator of the Law. He stood between God and Man as God's minister of the Law.

But St. Paul expounds upon this, making a very powerful distinction between Moses and The Mediator. He declares to us, **"But the mediator not of one is, but the God one is."**

Moses was a mediator but He was not The Mediator. For Moses was a sinful man like us who also needed the Law to direct him to the one in whom righteousness exists.

**"But the mediator not of one is."** The mediator stands between two who are at odds. The mediator is not of one but of two. But God is one. There is no division or schism in the LORD God. He is truly one LORD, one God. His righteousness is complete. His mercy and love are all encompassing. But the mediator of one is not.

Here the apostle draws an immovable line between Moses and Jesus. For Moses could not be a true mediator. He could not accomplish the unity of being one with God. This could only be accomplished by the one in whom God and Man are truly one. This could only be accomplished by the one to whom the promise was made, the Seed of Abraham. In Jesus, both the God of righteousness and the Man of righteousness coexist as one. The Son of God and the Son of Man coexist as one Christ. Jesus is the mediator who stands as the true communion of God and Man. He is not like Moses who stood as a mediator between God and Man. Jesus Christ is the Mediator who is ONE. In the body of Jesus Christ the true unity of God and Man is restored. In the body of Jesus Christ there is no separation between God and Man. In the body of Jesus, the purpose of the Law is fulfilled and brought to its terminus.

### III. THAT THE PROMISE OUT FROM FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST SHOULD BE GIVEN

**Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.**

Indeed! Is the Law then in opposition to the promises of God? Certainly not!

It is our stubborn misuse of the Law that is in opposition to the promises of God. Whenever we attempt to be righteous through obedience to the Law, we profane the name of the Lord and blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. Whenever we strive to be good people by what we say and do, we mock the grace of God in Christ. Whenever we ask, **“Ok, I’m a Christian. Now what?”** We turn aside from living by grace and place ourselves under the condemnation of the Law.

God does not want us to strive to be good people. God wants us to hear His declaration that having been baptized into Christ that we have been regenerated in His goodness. This is why Jesus declares, **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness . . .”**

God does not want us to seek to be faithful and obedient. God wants us to trust in the faith and obedience of Jesus. St. Paul expounds this explicitly, saying,

**But together-closed up the Scripture the all under sin (offense) in order that the promise out from faith of Jesus Christ should be given to the believing (plural).**

If you can hear what St. Paul is teaching us, it is truly the most wondrous doctrine of God’s grace. By means of the Scripture the LORD has taken all of us as one according to our inheritance from Adam and has closed us up under the offense that Adam caused. Adam sinned against the LORD and the LORD called Adam to account for His sin and declared that all of Adam’s descendants stood under this same accounting of unrighteousness. Through Moses the Law was given in the Scripture so that no one would forget. And this was done in order that the promise that was given to the woman concerning her Seed and then again to Abraham concerning the same Seed promised to him, that this promise would be extended to us all, coming forth from the faith of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Christ, True Man and True God, lived by faith for us. Over Him the Law had no power, yet He placed Himself under the Law for our sake. That which the Law speaks concerning us, the condemnation that our sin has earned us, Jesus took into His own body and died in our stead. By His faith all faithlessness is overpowered. By

His righteousness, all unrighteousness is crucified and buried forever. Out of His faith, faith is given to us through the regeneration of Baptism and it is renewed in us through the Holy Communion. Through the preaching of the Gospel the faith of Jesus is given to us and we are regenerated as believing members of His body. As members of His body we receive the daily nourishment of His Holy Communion as the Holy Spirit keeps us with Jesus Christ in the one true faith unto life everlasting.

#### CONCLUSION

So then, why therefore the Law? The Law is given so that we may be directed to God's grace to us in Christ. He is the mediator through whom we are made to be one again with God in His Holy Communion. It is by His faith that we are made to be believers and communicants of His body. As we eat of His body we partake of the oneness of God. As we drink of His blood we partake of His life and receive the fullness of life in Him. And what is required of us to do? Are you still asking such a rebellious and unholy question? Have you not heard the promise of God in Christ? God requires nothing of you except what He Himself gives you. He requires of you the faith that He has bestowed upon you with the gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism. He requires that you continue to live in His grace, mercy, and peace as He preaches these to you in His Holy Communion of the Saints and as He feeds you the unity of His faith and the forgiveness of His sacrifice. What does the LORD require of you? Moses records it for us:

**And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? (Deuteronomy 10:12-13)**

Let's reflect upon this before we close. Fear God with the faith that He gives you. Walk in His ways, that is, walk in His grace, mercy, and peace that are poured out abundantly upon you in Christ Jesus. Love and serve or worship Him with the new heart that He creates and renews in you through Baptism and the Holy Communion. Keep or hold fast to His commandments and statutes which He commands for your good, that is, hold fast to the pure administration of His Gospel and Sacraments so that you may continue everlastingly in His grace, mercy, and peace.

Is there anything in this list that He does not create and establish and work for you? Sounds like the kinds of things that a loving Father sets forth for His beloved children. Sounds like the things that a loving Father works hard to accomplish for His children so that they may live in the luxury that He has provided for them. The Law shows us that we are not required to be good by our own strength, but are to turn from our own thoughts, words, and deeds to what God has already declared to be ours in Christ. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.