

University of Arizona Document Delivery

Journal Title: Luther's works.

Trans. #: 999780

Article Author: Luther, Martin W



Article Title: Martin Luther's Last Sermon in Wittenberg ... Second Sunday in Epiphany, 17 January 1546

Call #: BR330 .E5

Location: Main Library IN LIBRARY

Volume:

Item #:

Issue:

Month/Year: 1959

Pages: unknown (scan notes and title/copyright pages for chapter requests)

CUSTOMER INFORMATION:

Imprint: Philadelphia (Pa.)Fortress press

Alan G Aversa
aversa@email.arizona.edu

The fulfillment of this request was due to an act of Providence. Without a page and volume number this may not have been found. Happily though the bindings had the basic content, i.e., "sermons" listed and it was by this device that the page request was fulfilled.

STATUS: Graduate
DEPT: NDSNDG

University of Arizona Library
Document Delivery
1510 E. University Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85721
(520) 621-6438
(520) 621-4619 (fax)
AskILL@u.library.arizona.edu

Paged by WAV (Initials) 11-3, 2100

Reason Not Filled (check one):

- NOS LACK VOL/ISSUE
- PAGES MISSING FROM VOLUME
- NFAC (GIVE REASON):

THE LAST SERMON IN WITTENBERG 1546

The Last Sermon in Wittenberg, Rom. 12:3,

January 17, 1546

The title of the printed version of this sermon reads: "The Last Sermon of Doctor Martin Luther of Hallowed Memory which He Preached on the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, January 17, 1546." It is the last sermon of which we possess a transcript (Rörer's). The printed version of 1549 was prepared by Stephan Tucher, pastor in Magdeburg, who heard the sermon himself but followed Rörer's transcript with remarkable faithfulness. After this sermon Luther preached five others before his death, on January 26 in Halle and on January 30, February 2, 7, and 15 in Eisleben. The present translation is based on both Rörer's macaronic and Tucher's German text.

Text in WA 51, 123-134, compared with CL 7, 411-417.

"For by the grace given to me I bid [every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him"] Rom. 12 [:3¹].

¹ The register of pericopes in Luther's *Neues Testament Deutsch* (1546) begins the Epistle for this day with verse 3, though Luther's earlier *Fastenpostille* (1525) began it with verse 6. In any case, Luther limited himself in this sermon to this one verse.

St. Paul, as was his custom, taught first the great chief articles of Christian doctrine—the law, sin, and faith, how we are to be justified before God and live eternally. As you have often heard and still hear every day, namely, that there are two points to be taught and preached: first we must see to it that faith in Christ is rightly preached, and second, that the fruits and good works are rightly taught and practiced.

Faith requires that we know what sin is, what the law is, what death is, and what it does, and also how we return to life and abide in it. This is the way Paul teaches in all his epistles; first concerning faith in Christ. First he plants the good tree, just as anybody who wants to have a good garden must have good trees. This is what Paul does; first he sets out the wild trees [cf. Rom. 11:24] and teaches how we should become good trees, that is, how we are to believe and be saved.

This he has been describing up to this point in the twelfth chapter. From here to the end of the epistle he teaches the fruits of faith, in order that we may not be false Christians, who have only the name of Christian, but rather real, true believers. This is the preaching concerning good works, which God commands, especially in the first and second table [i.e., of the Ten Commandments], that we, who have been redeemed through the blood and death of the Son of God, should live godly lives, as those who do not belong to this transitory life but rather to eternal life, provided that we rightly believe; in order that after believing we may not again follow the world, as Paul says in the preceding verse: "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind," etc. [Rom. 12:2]. Review therefore the good works, which are to be done, to the end of the Epistle. First he deals with the good fruits which the Christians bring forth among themselves as if there were no government except the government of the church through baptism, etc. Then in the thirteenth chapter he deals with worldly authority and the attitude of Christians toward it [Rom. 13:3]. In the fourteenth chapter he admonishes the strong to receive the weak in faith [Rom. 14:1].

Here he is teaching concerning the works of Christians. Now,

he is saying, now that we have been made rich through Christ the Lord, transferred from the dominion of the devil and the world to his kingdom [cf. Col. 1:13], that is, into the church of Christ; now that we have the Word and the sacraments, now that we have been baptized, now that we are sons and heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ the Son of God [cf. Rom. 8:17], who has given us eternal life, now it is necessary that we look to and really devote ourselves to the glorious calling and gifts.

After baptism there still remains much of the old Adam. For, as we have often said, it is true that sin is forgiven in baptism, but we are not yet altogether clean, as is shown in the parable of the Samaritan, who carried the man wounded by robbers to an inn [Luke 10:30-37]. He did not take care of him in such a way that he healed him at once, but rather bound up his wounds and poured on oil. The man who fell among robbers suffered two injuries. First, everything that he had was taken from him, he was robbed; and second, he was wounded, so that he was half-dead and would have died, if the Samaritan had not come to him. Adam fell among the robbers and implanted sin in us all. If Christ, the Samaritan, had not come, we should all have had to die. He it is who binds our wounds, carries us into the church and is now healing us. So we are now under the Physician's care. The sin, it is true, is wholly forgiven, but it has not been wholly purged. If the Holy Spirit is not ruling men, they become corrupt again; but the Holy Spirit must cleanse the wounds daily. Therefore this life is a hospital; the sin has really been forgiven, but it has not yet been healed.

So there must be preaching and everyone must also take care that his own reason may not lead him astray. For, behold what the fanatics do. They have accepted the Word and faith, but then, added to baptism, there comes wisdom, which has not yet been purged, and wants to be wise in spiritual things. They want to master both the Scriptures and faith by their own wisdom, and they perpetrate heresy. If we were wholly clean, we should not need everywhere the ministry of the Word. If we were altogether pure, we should have no need to be admonished, but would be like the angels in heaven with no need for a schoolmaster, and do everything willingly of ourselves. But since we are still confined to this

miserable carcass—which in time the worms will devour, though it deserves something worse, to burn in hell eternally—it is necessary constantly to resist and put off the old man and his works and put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him [cf. Col. 3:10]. Usury, gluttony, adultery, manslaughter, murder, etc., these can be seen and the world understands that these are sins. But the devil's bride, reason, the lovely whore comes in and wants to be wise, and what she says, she thinks, is the Holy Spirit. Who can be of any help then? Neither jurist, physician, nor king, nor emperor; for she is the foremost whore the devil has. The other gross sins can be seen, but nobody can control reason. It walks about, cooks up fanaticism [*Schwärmerci*] with baptism and the Lord's Supper, and claims that everything that pops into its head and the devil puts into its heart is the Holy Spirit. Therefore Paul says: As I am an apostle and God has given me the Spirit, so I appeal to you [cf. Rom. 12:1; I Cor. 4:16].

But you may say: Am I not a Christian nevertheless? Very well, but take heed, take heed to yourself, the sin has not yet been fully purged and healed. If I say to a young man or girl, "You should not have your father's or your mother's sickness," this is impossible. But if you follow your lusts you will become a fornicator. Here the gospel admonishes you: Don't do it, don't follow your evil desires. The sin is forgiven, but see to it that you remain in grace. The remaining evil that still clings to the flesh is forgiven, but not yet fully purged, as in the case of him who fell among robbers. I am talking about lewdness, which is a gross sin and everybody feels it. Thus if a man does not heed the admonition of God to resist the devil when he is tempted, his sin has not been forgiven.

And what I say about the sin of lust, which everybody understands, applies also to reason; for the reason mocks and affronts God in spiritual things and has in it more hideous harlotry than any harlot. Here we have an idolater running after an idol, as the prophets say, under every green tree [cf. Jer. 2:20; I Kings 14:23], as a whorechaser runs after a harlot. That's why the Scriptures call idolatry whoredom, while reason calls it wisdom and holiness. How the prophets inveighed against this lovely whoredom, idolatry! It is a wild thing which is not easily caught and its foolishness is in-born, but it considers itself the height of wisdom and justice, and

still it cannot understand the things of God. We must guard against it, as the prophets say: You must not serve God on the mountains or in the valleys or under the trees, but in Jerusalem, which is the place that God appointed for his worship and where his Word is. But here again, reason says: True enough, I have been called, circumcised, and adjured to go to Jerusalem, but here is a beautiful meadow, a fine green mountain; if we worship God here this will please God and all the angels in heaven. After all, is God the kind of God who binds himself only to Jerusalem? Such wisdom of reason the prophets call whoredom.

Therefore, when we preach faith, that we should worship nothing but God alone, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we say in the Creed: "I believe in God the Father almighty and in Jesus Christ," then we are remaining in the temple at Jerusalem. Again, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" [Matt. 17:5]. "You will find him in a manger" [cf. Luke 2:12]. He alone does it. But reason says the opposite: What, us? Are we to worship only Christ? Indeed, shouldn't we also honor the holy mother of Christ? She is the woman who bruised the head of the serpent.² Hear us, Mary, for thy Son so honors thee that he can refuse thee nothing. Here Bernard went too far in his "Homilies on the Gospel '*Misus est Angelus.*'"³ God has commanded that we should honor the parents; therefore I will call upon Mary. She will intercede for me with the Son, and the Son with the Father, who will listen to the Son. So you have the picture of God as angry and Christ as judge; Mary shows to Christ her breast and Christ shows his wounds to the wrathful Father. That's the kind of thing this comely bride, the wisdom of reason cooks up: Mary is the mother of Christ, surely Christ will listen to her; Christ is a stern judge, therefore I will call upon St. George and St. Christopher.

No, we have been by God's command baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, just as the Jews were circumcised. Therefore, just as the Jews set up all over the land

² Gen. 3:15. The Vulgate translates: "She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her foot," and the Roman church refers this to Mary.

³ Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153). The reference is to *Homilia II super "Misus est"* [Luke 1:26]. Opera (Mabillon), I, 2, Col. 1672-1673. Cf. WA 47, 99-100 for another sermonic reference to Bernard's ascription of divine honor to Mary.

their own self-chosen shrines, as if Jerusalem were too narrow, so we also have done. As a young man must resist lust and an old man avarice, so reason is by nature a harmful whore. But she shall not harm me, if only I resist her. Ah, but she is so comely and glittering. That's why there must be preachers who will point people to the catechism: I believe in Jesus Christ, not in St. George or St. Christopher, for only of Christ is it said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" [John 1:29]; not of Mary or the angels. The Father did not speak of Gabriel or any others when he cried from heaven, "Listen to him" [Matt. 17:5].

Therefore I should stick to the catechism; then I can defend myself against reason when the Anabaptists say, "Baptism is water; how can water do such great things? Pigs and cows drink it. The Spirit must do it." Don't you hear, you mangy, leprous whore, you holy reason, what the Scripture says, "Listen to him," who says, "Go and baptize all nations" [Matt. 28:19], and "He who believes and is baptized [will be saved]" [Mark 16:16]. It is not merely water, but baptism given in the name of the holy Trinity.

Therefore, see to it that you hold reason in check and do not follow her beautiful cogitations. Throw dirt in her face and make her ugly. Don't you remember the mystery of the holy Trinity and the blood of Jesus Christ with which you have been washed of your sins? Again, concerning the sacrament, the fanatical antisacramentalists say, "What's the use of bread and wine? How can God the Almighty give his body in bread?" I wish they had to eat their own dirt.⁴ They are so smart that nobody can fool them. If you had one in a mortar and crushed him with seven pestles his foolishness still would not depart from him.⁵ Reason is and should be drowned in baptism, and this foolish wisdom will not harm you, if you hear the beloved Son of God saying, "Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you;⁶ this bread which is administered to you, I say, is my body." If I hear and accept this, then I trample reason and its wisdom under foot and say, "You cursed whore, shut up! Are you trying to seduce me into committing fornication with the

⁴ *Ich wolt, das du müstest mit dem hindermaul etc.*; cf. CL 7, p. 414n.

⁵ Cf. Prov. 27:22 and Ernst Thiele, *Luthers Sprichwörtersammlung, op. cit.*, p. 222.

⁶ The form which appears in the Small Catechism.

devil?" That's the way reason is purged and made free through the Word of the Son of God.

So let us deal with the fanatics as the prophets dealt with the spiritual harlots, the idolaters, the wiseacres, who want to do things better than God does. We should say to them, "I have a Bridegroom, I will listen to him. Your wisdom is utter foolishness. I destroy your wisdom and trample it under foot." This struggle will go on till the last day. This is what Paul wants; we are to quench not only the low desires but also the high desires, reason and its high wisdom. When whoredom invades you, strike it dead, but do this far more when spiritual whoredom tempts you. Nothing pleases a man so much as self-love,⁷ when he has a passion for his own wisdom. The cupidity of a greedy man is as nothing compared with a man's hearty pleasure in his own ideas. He then brings these fine ideas into the Scriptures, and this is devilishness pure and simple. This sin is forgiven, but when it reigns in one's nature, not yet fully purged, then assuredly the true doctrine is soon lost, however willingly one preaches and willingly one listens. Then Christ is gone. Then they fall down before the devil on the mountain and worship him (Matt. 4 [:8-10]).

Therefore I exhort you, says Paul, by the grace God has given me, not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought to think [cf. Rom. 12:3]. What he is saying is: You still have your own proud ideas, as well as other gross sins; therefore take heed to yourselves. Hitherto you have heard the real, true Word, now beware of your own thoughts and your own wisdom. The devil will kindle the light of reason and rob you of your faith. This is what happened to the Anabaptists and the antisacramentarians, and now we have nothing left but instigators of heresy. I have had more than thirty fanatics come to me and try to teach me; but I refuted all their arguments with this passage: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" [Matt. 17:5]. And up to now I have by God's grace been sustained by this passage; otherwise I should have had to accept thirty different faiths.

The heretics are always looking for quarrels and dodges to make us retreat, and relax, and give in. But I say to them, we shall

⁷ The word *philautia*, coined here by Luther, exists only in the Greek adjectival form *philautos*; cf. II Tim. 3:2.

not do it, God helping us. When they hear this they say: You are proud dunces. Well, I will suffer all kinds of reviling from them, but not one fingerbreadth will I depart from the mouth of Him who says, "Listen to Him." I foresee that, if God does not give us faithful ministers, the devil will tear our church apart through the sectarians and he will never cease until he has accomplished it. In a word, that is simply what he has in mind. If he cannot do it through the pope and the emperor, he will accomplish it through those who are still in accord with us in doctrine.

Therefore we need to pray from our hearts that God may give us pure teachers. Now we are so secure and we do not see how horribly the prince of this world is taking possession of us through the pope, the emperor, and our learned doctors, who say, What harm is there if we yield here? No, we should not yield a hair's breadth. If they will stick with us, very well; if not, let them go. I did not receive the doctrine from them, but by divine grace from God. I have been taught wisdom by experience. Therefore earnestly pray God that he may leave the Word with you, for some surprising things are going to happen. "Ah!" say the jurists and the wiseacres at court, "you're proud, the result will be an uprising," and so on. Our Lord God help us confidently to resist these perilous temptations!

You may think that you have been blessed above others with splendid gifts and sincerely thank God for them, but don't go too far, but only as far as accords with faith and is like faith. If an idea occurs to you, I would not throw it out altogether, but let it have some value. But go easy; St. Paul says, "in proportion" [Rom. 12:6]; don't be misled by it. How can I know, then, how far? Paul answers, "in proportion to our faith,"⁸ that is, as far as it is in accord with faith. So you must keep your own ideas in check. Just as the evil lusts of the flesh are to be bridled, so conceit is original sin. Thus one may have a desire for a young woman which is "according to the measure of faith." How? The answer is that you should love the young woman (or young man) only in such a way as to desire her (or him) as a married partner, for the sixth commandment prohibits illicit love. Lust is in our corrupt nature; but when you "proportion" it thus: "I want to love the young woman, not to

⁸ The original reads: *secundum analogiam fidei*.

commit fornication with her"; then the desire has its proportion, namely, that it is not contrary to the sixth commandment, and the sixth commandment becomes the measure by which the desire is controlled.

So it is with this hellish, whorish lust of thinking that everything was fine under the papacy; you are taking pleasure in your own conceit. Hang a clog on the neck of that lust, set a limit to it, so that it will not become presumptuous, but rather remain subject to faith, which is the overlord of all the gifts we have, not only of our conceit. Everything should be subject to faith, or rather, the fine gift of conceit should not be wiser than faith. See to it that it is in accord with it.

When you hear a fanatical antisacramentalist say, "There is only bread and wine in the sacrament of the altar," or "Do you think that at your word Christ is going to descend from heaven into your mouth and your belly?" You just say to him, "Ah, I like what you say; what a learned bride the devil has! But what do you say to this: 'This is my beloved Son, listen to him' And he says, 'This is my body' [Matt. 17:5; 26:26]. Go, trot to the privy with your conceit, your reason! Shut up, you cursed whore, do you think you are master over faith, which declares that the true body and the true blood is in the Lord's Supper, and that Baptism is not merely water, but the water of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?" Reason must be subject and obedient to this faith.

Likewise, those who say that we are proud and ought to give in; are they talking about material things? No, they are really talking about matters of faith. But it is written here that we are to accept conceit and reason only in so far as it is not contrary to faith; you must not make faith a servant nor cast Christ out of heaven [i.e., rob Christ of his divinity].

Therefore Paul has exhorted us to withstand the high evil lusts, not only the low and mean ones. I must hang the word of faith like a clog on the neck of the high lusts. Reason, wisdom, would you lead up a green mountain, there to worship contrary to the commandment of God? No, I will not do it, I will worship him in Jerusalem. I don't care whether you can worship God in other places too: God has forbidden us to worship him under a green tree. I know very well that God is able to help us through the

SERMONS

mother of the Son; but he does not will to help us except only through the Son, Jesus Christ the Lord, in whom we should put all our trust and hope. God could have said: If you say a *Paternoster* [the Lord's Prayer] to this saint, you will be saved. But God doesn't want you to do this; in fact, he has sternly forbidden it. This is the evil which St. Paul means in this passage—that we should be on our guard, not only against the gross lusts, but also against the high lusts, which break the unity of faith and bring about whoredom, which is idolatry.