

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✕ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Disciples were confused. Truth be told, they spent the better part of three years being confused. The Lord's Words are clear enough: "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. After He is killed, He will rise the third day."

From our perspective this is easy to understand. We have the accounts of the Apostles and Evangelists. But St. Mark, disciple of Peter and Paul, records that at the Lord's clear teaching "...they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him."

So too the Lord's clear assertions "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all", and "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent me."

To us these Words are clear – for we have the Lord's teaching on the faith of a child, and the Scriptures that help us understand, if it were possible, the Divine and Human Natures of the One Christ.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes: "the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword..." It divides those with faith from those in unbelief. And it cleaves, it prods, it pokes, it tears back the façade that we would don and exposes our sin.

It is in that context that Hebrews teaches that the Word of God pierces even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In our efforts to understand the Word of God, it is common among us to discuss the "rightly dividing" of the Word of God that the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts. That is to say that in Lutheran parlance we distinguish rightly between Law and Gospel. The Law only and always accuses. The Gospel proclaims God's love for us in Christ Jesus.

But the Gospel is more than just an expression of "love" as the world knows love. God's love is not a nebulous, ethereal, emotive state or action. God's love for us is concrete and tangible, visible and audible, as the Old Testament would put it, flesh and bone.

So the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches that we have a Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, a High Priest that was in all pointes tempted as we are, yet without sin. God gave His only-begotten Son to conquer sin, death and the devil. The Son of God took on Flesh to die for us.

So the Word of God is rightly divided when Law and Gospel are rightly divided. Without this proper division, God's Law becomes a to-do list for man, and the Holy Gospel is wrongly made to be something that fallen men go forth and do.

Still, it is not our division of the Word of God that the Epistle to the Hebrews expounds, but rather the Word dividing us. The Word of God is living. The Word of God is powerful. The Word of God is sharp, sharp like a sword. Swords do not unite. Swords divide. They split and cleave.

By the sharp sword of the Word is man divided soul and spirit, as the thoughts and intents of his heart are laid bare. This is the work of the Law. It strips back the arrogant veneer of man, and shows him to be what he is – a sinner.

But the Word also divides man from his sins. The Gospel proclaims Christ's bearing of that sin for you. The Gospel proclaims that your sin is removed from you as far as the east is from the west. And so too does the Gospel proclaim that the Church is divided from the world, set apart, declared holy, yes, by the same sharp Word.

According to the Law, the fact that no creature is hidden from God's sight is a fearful and terrible decree. Our sins, each of our sins, is clearly visible to God. But thanks be to God, when He sees us in Christ Jesus, God sees us as holy and pure. He looks at us and sees us

covered in the Blood of His Son. He makes His face to shine upon us, and He is gracious to us. He lifts up His countenance upon us, which is to lovingly behold us as His dear redeemed children.

The Word of God divides. Today we are sundered from the unbelieving, set apart from the world, divided from those perishing outside the ark of the Church.

And the Word of God unites. For by dividing us from the fallen world, today God unites us, setting us apart as His holy people, and bringing us Holy Things. He gives us faith that receives His Word, and the Wisdom of Christ to understand and believe the great Mysteries of Holy Scripture, which are all fulfilled in Christ.

God's love for us is concrete and tangible, visible and audible, Body and Blood. We hear His Word. We see chalice and paten, as the Body and Blood of our crucified, risen and ascended Great High Priest fill our mouth and our soul.

We feast on the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, our Great High Priest, and by that Word we are united, made one, blessed, kept diligent to enter the true Sabbath Rest.

Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠Son, and of the Holy Spirit.