

Advent Sermons.

Interpretation

of the

**Most Important Prophecies of the
Old Testament.**

by

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Foreword.

The Advent sermons presented here were preached by the undersigned during the Advent season of the last eight years in his previous congregation and, before they were handed over for printing, were reviewed, changed and partly reworked. Finally, six sermons on Old Testament pericopes have been added.

It is the noblest, best-known prophecies of the Old Testament that are interpreted here. The author is aware that his interpretation follows the path that the orthodox church has always followed in explaining the words of the Old Testament prophets. From time immemorial, Christianity has interpreted the promises made to the fathers as words of the Spirit of God pointing to Christ. Of course, this Christian understanding of prophecy no longer finds much favor with more recent theologians. We are firmly convinced that the so-called Christian-popular understanding of the Old Testament promises can also stand up before the judgment seat of theology. True doctrine of God and scriptural scholarship, which draws only from Scripture and proves only with Scripture, will never achieve a different result. Of course, the sermon is not the place for actual theological discussion. However, every simple-minded Christian who searches and investigates the Scriptures, comparing Scripture with Scripture, prophecy with prophecy, prophecy and fulfillment, can attain clarity and certainty

that this ecclesiastical understanding of prophecy rests on solid ground.

It is the peculiarity of Old Testament prophecy that it usually presents the whole counsel of God concerning our salvation in a short summary, that it describes in broad outlines the salvation that is present in Christ. All the prophets have prophesied of the grace of Jesus Christ, which has also been granted to us. Superficial listeners and readers may become weary of the apparent monotony that confronts them in the prophecy and therefore also in the interpretation of the prophecy. Souls eager for salvation, on the other hand, rejoice when they find everywhere the one thing that is needed, the One apart from whom there is no other salvation; they would not feel satisfied if something other and lesser than Christ the Lord were presented to them in Scripture and in the explanation of Scripture. And if they reflect more closely on the Scriptures, they also recognize in the One the inexhaustible riches of divine thoughts. It is precisely in the Old Testament prophecies that the Holy Spirit has painted the grace and truth of the New Testament before our eyes in the most varied expressions, in the sweetest, richest colors, images and parables, and thereby wants to awaken in us heartfelt joy and pleasure in the one Savior of sinners, the Son of God and the Son of Man, and to make the one great main thing, on which everything depends, quite firm and certain for us. May God help us that this interpretation of the prophecy may also serve this purpose!

G. Stöckhardt.

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First sermon. [^]—

Genesis 3:15.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

During Advent, Christianity has always rejoiced in and been edified by the promises of the Old Testament. We now put ourselves in the position of the fathers of the Old Covenant. They celebrated Advent for four millennia until the one they were waiting for came. Their eyes were fixed on the future Christ. The future and the salvation to come were probably still shrouded in a certain veil for their eyes. But the word of prophecy gave them enough light and knowledge that they could believe and be saved through faith in the promised Savior. And the mysteries, the unfathomable depths that still lay hidden in the prophecy, encouraged the pious fathers to test and investigate what time the Spirit of Christ was pointing to, and increased their longing, love and hope. 1 Pet 1:11 The faith of the ancients was essentially hope. The longing soul reached out for the one who was to come. And now, during Advent, we follow in the footsteps of the fathers, as it were, preparing ourselves for Christmas by contemplating the promises that were given to them and awaiting the fulfillment of which the Christmas message tells us.

Looking at the Old Testament promises strengthens our faith. The ancients believed the mere promise. We can believe all the more easily and joyfully because we see both together: Prophecy and fulfillment. If we now focus our attention on the promise, it is impossible for us to ignore the fulfillment. We now see the full brilliance of the sun and cannot artificially conjure up the Old Testament veil before our eyes. The contemplation of the Old Testament promises increases love, longing and hope. After all, we do not yet see with our eyes the one who has now come. We are still waiting for the last

Advent, the appearance of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. And from the pious fathers of Israel we now learn to wait, to wait, to hope. We can wait and hope all the more confidently because the first Advent is behind us, because the greatest work of God proclaimed beforehand by the prophets, the redemption through Christ, has already been accomplished. The rest of what has been promised to the redeemed children must also be fulfilled. Now the conclusion of God's great saving deeds cannot fail to come. So the prophecy is still of benefit to us. The prophets have served us with their promises. 1 Pet 1:12. Both belong to us: prophecy and fulfillment, promise and gospel.

This prophecy, the first promise of the Old Testament, takes us all the way back to paradise. We put ourselves in the position and soul of our first parents. We stand with them, the first human beings, the first sinners, before the face of God and hear the promise that God made to them. From Adam and Eve we have flesh and blood, we have also inherited sin. But so does the promise of grace, which comforted and lifted up the first human beings after their fall. The Redeemer of the human race is promised to the first human beings, the progenitors of the human race. A twofold statement is made about him. He is the blessed seed of the woman. And he is the treader of serpents. We now know from history, from the Gospel: both have been fulfilled. The woman's seed has come. And He crushed the serpent's head. And that concerns us all. As surely as we have flesh and blood from Adam and Eve, as surely as we have become partakers of their sin and guilt through our bodily birth, so surely we also have a part and inheritance in the Redeemer of sinful men. That which only has flesh and blood, all men, that which is only corrupted by Adam's fall, all sinners, shall come and behold the Redeemer, who is appointed, promised and given to men, to sinful men. From the beginning, the Redeemer has been incorporated into sinful humanity. No sooner had sin entered the world than the Redeemer was also placed in the midst of the sinful world, precisely in the word of promise. Let us now consider this:

That with sin the Savior also entered the world.

This is now doubly certain to us, for we know:

1. The blessed seed of the woman has appeared,
2. and he crushed the serpent's head.

I.

We see the first sinners in our text chapter standing before their God and judge. They await their judgment. God had said: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. For the day you eat of it you shall surely die." This had to be fulfilled. But before this judgment is confirmed and punishment, death and damnation are inflicted on sinners, they hear the great, wonderful word of the woman's seed. It comes between sin and judgment. This bright light dispels the darkness of sin and death.

A seed is promised to sinful men, the seed of the woman. So the woman shall have seed. The created life is to be preserved, is to be reproduced, despite sin. Does this not contradict the divine threat: "In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die"? No, the threat has been fulfilled. Adam and Eve had to die. And death has penetrated all human beings with sin. That which is born of Adam and has Adam's nature now goes the way of all flesh. The day Eve and Adam sinned, death began. That is when the great army of earthly sorrows, plagues and suffering made its entrance on earth. That is when weakness, infirmity, pain and illness began. Then began the sour day's work in the cursed field in which man was to consume his strength. Since then, human life has been a walk to death, a consumption of the forces of life, as it were a continual wasting away and dying. But behold, the promise of life was immediately implanted in the dying, fading human race. The woman shall nevertheless have seed. Death shall not completely suffocate life. Life will assert its right in spite of death. There will be life in the midst of death, yes, life out of death. This is promised to all mortal men, promised by God from the very beginning. With sin, the seed of death is planted in human blood and lineage. But immediately, through God's promise, a seed of life was also planted in the dying generation. No sooner had the poison of death

began to work in man, an antidote was offered to him by God. This has been the way of all flesh, of all created life, since the fall of man: all flesh is hay and its beauty is like the flower of the grass. The grass withers. The flower falls off. But yet from this earth, which has become a tomb for all living things, a seed blossoms that does not die, that does not fall away. **We know it now: Jesus Christ is the seed, the tree of life.** The tree of life in paradise was denied to people, access was closed. But another tree of life was immediately offered to sinful, mortal men, which was to serve the recovery of the Gentiles. Christ says: "He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Christ is the second Adam. Just as in the first Adam all die, so in the second Adam all come to life. And this second Adam was already set before the eyes of the first Adam after he had fallen, in the word of promise. Before the sinners were expelled from paradise and cast out into the cursed field, into misery and destruction, God gave them the assurance that they would only make a pilgrimage in a foreign land for a while, but would eventually return to God's paradise. Certainly, if we sinners, we children of death, knock at the closed gate of paradise with the promise of God, it must open again for us. The cherub, who stands guard in front of it with his drawn sword, asks: What are you doing here? Here is the word of threat: "You shall die." But we answer him: Here is the word of promise, which is life. It is precisely to sinful, mortal men that life is promised, guaranteed. And the cherub must sheathe his sword and no longer refuse us entry into God's garden. Adam and Eve had the first promise of the seed of the woman. From this they drew comfort, the hope of life. **Now, through the later promises, through the gospel of Christ, that first gospel from paradise has become much clearer and more evident to us.** We have even greater certainty of life, of eternal life. We know: Christ, the chosen seed, was planted in the earth as a grain of wheat, and this seed has sprouted again and borne much fruit. Whoever believes in Christ has life and will rise again from death. We

now understand the great word of promise in its full sense, we know what it means: seed, life in spite of death, life in death, life out of death. When people, the children of Adam, die and are buried, we call out to them: Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes. Man must return to the earth from which he was taken. But now that the blessed seed has appeared, because Christ has come, died and risen, we lay our dead in the earth as grains of wheat, as noble seeds, in the certain hope of the resurrection of the flesh, of eternal life.

But we have not yet exhausted the whole meaning of the promise of the seed of the woman. We are not only speaking here of seed in general, of the seed of man, but in particular of the seed of woman, not of the seed of man, but only of the seed of woman. This is not the usual way in which human life is reproduced. Otherwise children take life, flesh and blood from their parents, from husband and wife. Oh, and with life the children take sin from their parents. All who are born of man and woman must sigh: "Behold, I was conceived of sinful seed, and my mother conceived me in sin." The seed that God promises must come from the woman. Yes, only the woman is remembered, the man is deliberately kept silent. It will be a true birth, flesh and blood of man. But a unique, wonderful birth. Here the rule, the natural order is broken: "Adam begot a son in his own image." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." This woman's seed, who is not conceived by the will of man, will have nothing to do with Adam's sin and guilt. It will be a blessed, holy seed! Adam and Eve could already recognize this to some extent when they thought about your word of promise, when they thought about this word again later, after they had given birth to children in their image, after they had given birth to sinful children. Admittedly, this word was still surrounded by a certain darkness. The descendants of Adam certainly studied and pondered this wonderful word diligently. And in time God gave even brighter light. Through Isaiah the prophet he spoke of the virgin's son, through Micah the prophet of the woman who is to

give birth. Isa. 7:14; Mic. 5:2; but the veil was completely torn when the word of promise came to the virgin Mary, the daughter of David, which brought the fulfillment: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35: Christ was not born by the will of man, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus the virgin son, the blessed seed, was holy from the womb. And now the Holy One intercedes for sinners and cleanses them from the stains of their sinful birth. Before sinners were born of sinners, the Holy One of God, the immaculate Virgin Son, was already set before the eyes of sinful men in the word of promise. Before sin penetrated the human race, God had already provided for the cleansing and sanctification of mankind. Imagine the situation and mood of the first sinners! They were caught red-handed by God. Their own conscience judged them. They were ashamed before God and before one another. All the excuses they offered only confirmed and increased their guilt. This is how people who have fallen from innocence stand before God, condemned, ashamed, without excuse, without covering or atonement. But as sinners stand before the judge and await their sentence, what happens? The Judge is transformed into the Redeemer. God, the judge, changes his voice and speaks kindly to the sinners, the guilty. The blessed seed of the woman stands before the sinners and comforts them, soothes their conscience and says: "You lament your lost innocence? Here you have it again! Here you have my innocence and righteousness! And even if your sins were blood-red, they shall become snow-white! Certainly, the innocence of paradise has been restored to sinners. This is guaranteed by the word of promise. And through the promise of God, through the promise of the holy seed, through the gospel of Christ, the new nature for which man was created is now also restored in sinners. Now there is rebirth alongside the sinful birth. To those who believe in the name of Jesus Christ, God gives power to become children of God, who are not born of the will of the flesh and of man, but of God.

Let us once again consider the great, significant word about the seed of the woman. God said: "I will put enmity between you and the woman" and so on. And then it says that he, the seed of the woman, should crush the serpent's head. On one occasion the Lord God says of Himself that He will put enmity and strengthen enmity. The other time, battle and victory are attributed to the woman's seed. What the woman's seed does is God's work. The woman's seed is on the same level as God. The woman's seed is God, the LORD! Eve already recognized this. For at the birth of her first son she exclaimed: "I have the man, the LORD." Genesis 4:1 The first sinners were already waiting for him, the man, the Lord. This secret is further revealed in the later promises. The virgin son of whom Isaiah speaks is called Immanuel, that is: God with us, God in our flesh and blood. And in the New Testament it is now credibly revealed: "The Holy One who will be born of you will be called the Son of God." "The Word became flesh." "God is manifest in the flesh." God is united with humanity. And so God is reconciled to mankind, to sinners. With this promise, God released people from paradise, from his presence: You shall see my all-face again. I will not cast you off forever. The blessed woman's seed was to bring back life and innocence, and he did. And with it he also brings back the bliss of paradise. That was the blessed state of paradise: God dealt with mankind as with his dear children. Through Christ, people have regained access to God. In Christ, true God and man, people have fellowship with God. Before men were cast out of the paradise of God, from the presence of God, the Lord God gave them the assurance that he would visit them in their place, on the cursed earth, in his own time. And he has kept his word. In Christ he turned to mankind, to sinners. Yes, he has now made his home among men, among sinners. In Christ, God is closer and more closely connected to sinful people than Adam and Eve were when they were still holy. In the heavenly paradise this bliss will be completed. There we will see the blessed seed and in him God as he is.

II.

This is what God has promised and given to sinful people through the blessed seed: Innocence, righteousness, life, salvation. Whoever in the Old Covenant believed in the One who was to come, whoever in the New Covenant believes in the One who has come, the Son of God and of man, has forgiveness, life and salvation. But to recapture these heavenly goods for people, to open the closed paradise to them again, was no easy task. It cost the woman's seed a struggle. An enemy, a mighty prince, stood in her way. The first promise holds out the prospect of a difficult battle. Only through battle, blood and death could the lost paradise, the lost inheritance be regained. This has also happened. The woman's seed appeared, fought, won, and crushed the head of the serpent.

God said to the serpent, the ancient evil enemy, who spoke through the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed." So these are two hostile parties that God Himself has separated: the old serpent, the devil and the devil's seed, the devil's kingdom and scales, the evil spirits, as well as the incarnate devils, the children of wickedness on the one side, and Christ the Lord, the seed of the woman, and the woman, the generation of Eve, who holds and stands by Christ, on the other side. These two armies are at war with each other, and the feud has no end as long as this world stands. The Lord God Himself has established and strengthened this enmity. This enmity, this feud fills the entire history of the world. The old serpent, Satanas, who brought mankind down, would not allow his prey to be snatched from him. That is why this enemy of God now also became the arch-enemy of Christ, the Redeemer. He sought to corrupt the people from whom Christ was to come, wanted to suffocate the people of Israel at birth through the severe tribulations in the land of Egypt. He stirred up the Gentiles against Jerusalem. He seduced the people of God into idolatry and even wanted to make them like the Gentiles. Then, when Christ had nevertheless risen from Israel, he stirred up the Jews against Christ. The devil continues to snort and rage against Christ and his church. On one occasion he tried to wipe the Christian church off the face of the earth with fire and sword.

Another time, he sows his lies and abominations in the church field. Those who hold with the woman's seed have only fear in this world and must suffer persecution. But, praise God, the enmity is mutual. The other party fights back and resists. Christ resisted the evil one from the beginning to the end. And he protects and strengthens the people of his right hand. From Christ, the blessed seed, believers take courage, strength and power without ceasing to fight against the world and the devil. It was a hopeful continuation of the history of the first human beings that after the fall and expulsion from paradise they resisted evil in faith in the promise. They allowed themselves to be robbed of their first innocence. They did not allow their faith in the Redeemer, who was to bring back what had been lost, to be taken away. In defiance of Satan, Eve named her firstborn Cain, saying: "I have the man, the Lord." And when Satan had put this hope to shame and had slain Abel and labeled Cain a murderer, Eve was not intimidated and named her third son Seth, the substitute, and now tied the hope of redemption to him. And, thank God! God has also given us a purpose that is contrary to the old serpent and his wickedness. First we gave ear to Satan and consented to sin. But now that we have heard and believed the promise, the gospel of Christ, we have become hated and hostile to our deceiver and hate and detest the works of the devil and the ungodly nature of this world. We are one with Christ and divided with the devil and his seed. So one day our part and inheritance will not be with the ungodly with the devil and his angels, but with Christ with God.

But the old serpent's enmity culminated in the heel prick he inflicts on the woman's seed: "And you will prick him on the heel." This happened when Christ, the Son of the Virgin, the Holy One of God, the Son of God, suffered and died on the cross. Yes, Christ's cross is already implanted in paradise. The sinners took it out of paradise. This prophecy of the suffering and death of the Redeemer also passed from generation to generation and took on an ever clearer form. On Golgotha it then became clear in his time what the word from paradise meant. Oh, it was a sensitive

heel prick, the pain and torture of Christ on the cross. The Lord felt it when he cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He, the Holy One, has tasted the bitter woe of sin, of death, of eternal death, as no other sinful, mortal man has. And those who believe in the blessed seed also feel the sting of the old serpent at times, the deadly serpent's venom. They still feel the fiery darts of the evil one. Yes, the path leads back to paradise through fear and terror, through the fear of hell and severe distress of conscience.

But the woman's seed kept the victory. He crushed the serpent's head. "He will crush your head." That was the promise. The victory flag of the Risen One is also planted in paradise. All the prophets prophesied of Christ's suffering and the glory that would follow. And the prophecy has been fulfilled. It was precisely through death that Christ took away the devil's power. Just as the old serpent stung him in the heel, he crushed its head. Thus the serpent writhes under the cross of the Redeemer. The strong overcame the strong. The weak seed of the woman was the strong god. The old evil enemy was powerless against him. Christ became obedient to the point of death on the cross and atoned for the disobedience and sin of mankind through his obedience, his bitter suffering and death. He truly died, and if one died, they all died. The devil, death and sin now lie overcome at the feet of the Redeemer, at the feet of redeemed people. In his resurrection, Christ's victory has been revealed. So now we can confidently, in faith in Christ, the crucified and risen One, trample the old serpent underfoot, walk on scorpions, vipers and dragons, trample down temptation and sin, mock death and hell and enter into glory with Christ through suffering and death. The curse is transformed into blessing. Thus redeemed humanity glories from the day when the first paradise was lost until it enters the heavenly paradise and sings with joy: "Thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

Second Sermon. [^]—

Gen. 12:1-3.

And the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your fatherland, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make you a great name, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Immediately after the fall into sin, the Redeemer of mankind was placed before the eyes of the first sinners. Adam, Eve and their descendants believed the promise of the woman's seed and the snake-stepper. But not all of Adam's seed accepted this word. The line of Cain increased sin and wickedness, defied the commandment, mocked the promise of God. And when the iniquity of men had taken over, yes, when even the children of God turned their backs on God and his word and mingled with the God-hostile children of men, God judged the old world and destroyed it by the waters of the flood. Not for the sake of sin, but for the sake of unbelief, because men despised divine grace, patience and longsuffering and the coming Christ, for whose sake God waited and waited, the Lord God destroyed all flesh. But the few who had kept the faith were saved through the water by faith. And in and with Noah and his family, the promise of the woman's seed, the redeemer of the human race, was also preserved through the flood. Noah planted this precious word of God on the new earth that had emerged from the water. For the new generation was sinful and evil, like the first, and was in need of a redeemer.

Yes, Noah, as a prophet of God, enlightened by the Spirit of God, drew a tighter circle around the promise. Christ was to be born not only from the seed of the woman, from the human race in general, but also from Shem's seed and lineage.

That is why Noah praised the God of Shem, who was to take on the flesh and blood of Shem's seed. But not only the sons of Shem, but all the children of Noah, all the children of Adam, all people were to rejoice and be comforted by the God of Shem. Japheth was to spread far and wide, but an even greater blessing was intended for him: he was to dwell in Shem's tents. And Canaan, the cursed one, was made a servant to Shem and Japheth. Thus through Shem and Japheth, the masters, the news of the Redeemer could also be conveyed to the enslaved people. And that is what happened. The sons of Japheth, the European peoples, have spread far and wide, but they owe their expansion, their power and their prosperity to Christianity, which they received from the sons of Shem, from Israel, from the apostles of Jesus Christ. And it was from the converted Semites and Japhetites that the slave peoples of Africa heard the gospel of Christ.

Initially, of course, after Noah's death, the word of Christ remained limited to the One, Shem. And from Shem's families and peoples, one family was again singled out, the family of Abraham. Abraham's seed and people were to become the bearers of the divine promise for thousands of years. However, the goal was set from the outset: all the seed of Adam, all the families of the earth were to share in the blessing of Abraham.

The first promise made to Abraham is now before us. This was the gospel on which the fathers of Israel, the ancient patriarchs, relied during their pilgrimage. This promise, which was given to Abraham when he moved from Mesopotamia to Canaan, was confirmed to Abraham on many occasions and was also repeatedly confirmed to Isaac and Jacob. At the important turning points in the history of the patriarchs, when Abraham entered the land of Canaan, when he had long waited in vain for the beginning of the fulfillment, when he offered his son Isaac to the Lord in faith, when Isaac was driven from one place to another, when Jacob had to flee from Canaan to Mesopotamia, when he returned, when he went with his family to a foreign land, to Egypt, this comforting message of the future seed and son of Abraham was renewed and confirmed by God. And even if the first promise was later clarified and expanded by all kinds of additions,

the word contained in our text was and remained the foundation and the actual theme of all God's revelation which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob received, the theme of all the preaching of the patriarchs. This friendly light of promise also later illuminated the darkness into which Abraham's people were often introduced. This gospel of the patriarchs was a precious legacy for the generations to come. And not only Israel, but all of us, including the children of the new covenant, rejoice and are refreshed by this word of salvation. Because we are all of Adam's flesh and blood and sinners, the first promise from paradise certainly applies to us. And because we are also Abraham's children, walking in the footsteps of Abraham's faith, we still take this promise of Abraham's blessing today. Both belong to us: promise and fulfillment. The fullness of the comfort that lies in these words is revealed to us. This is how we speak now:

Of the blessing of Abraham, which is promised to the children of Abraham,
and answer the double question:

1. What is this blessing of Abraham?
2. Who are the children of Abraham?

I.

Abraham was promised a blessing. First of all, the promise was of temporal blessing. The LORD said to Abraham: "Go from your fatherland, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you." This is the keynote of the promise: "I will bless you." The blessing of Abraham rested on Abraham and his children. Admittedly, these fathers of Israel did not have it any better on earth than other children of men, indeed, they had a more arduous walk and a more difficult position here than others. "The pious, holy souls went on and on and changed the first inhabited place with torment." Abraham, having come from Mesopotamia to Canaan, found no rest in the land of promise. He traveled through the land from

north to south, from Shechem to Bethel, and finally settled in Hebron. Soon he had to continue his pilgrimage to the land of the Gentiles, first to Egypt, then to the land of the Philistines. The same happened to Isaac, his son. No sooner had he dug a well in one place than the Philistines came, buried the well and drove him out. Jacob, in his youth, in his old age, had to spend a long time in a foreign land, in Mesopotamia, in Egypt. They were guests and strangers on earth. And during their pilgrimage they had to bear many a heavy burden. How many dangers did Abraham and his wife, Sarah, and Isaac and his wife, Rebekah, have to face among foreign peoples, among the princes of the Gentiles? How much trouble and labor was Jacob given? Isaac suffered heartache in his own flesh and blood, as did Jacob. God brought the chosen fathers into great and severe hardships and trials; they had to resist to the point of blood. For Abraham, the water went to his soul when he was to sacrifice his son Isaac. Jacob was deeply saddened because his beloved wife Rachel was torn from him by an untimely death. And yet they were the blessed of the LORD. The princes of the Gentiles had to recognize it: they were the anointed ones, the prophets of the Most High. The Lord God was with them. He led them from place to place, He protected and strengthened them, He promoted the work of their hands, He gave them riches, He gave them victory over their enemies, He granted them rest after heavy tribulations. He dealt with them according to the word: "I will bless you." He comforted them with the future of their seed: "I will make you a great nation." He allowed them to see the beginning of fulfillment. The people of Israel grew out of the family of Jacob. From the seed of the despised shepherd family, princes and kings arose, as was promised to Abraham. And the whole land, in which the fathers wandered as strangers, later became the possession and inheritance of their descendants.

Well, we keep up with the dear old ones and follow in their footsteps. We have surrendered to the same happiness and suffering. In their life pilgrimage we recognize our life's journey. We are also strangers, have no permanent place here, wander from place to place, go through many dangers. We live in a wicked world. Much toil, sweat and labor is our lot on earth, along with

much woe and heartache. We often have to descend into deep waters, into dark valleys of affliction and temptation, we must resist to the death. The dearest things are taken from us, torn away from our hearts. But all who fear the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the blessed of the Lord. God's blessing goes with us. God's hand furthers our walk, protects and shields us in fear and danger, puts sweet comfort in our hearts in the bitter hours, does not let us be tempted beyond our ability, turns the cross and suffering in his time, awakens a peaceful fruit of righteousness out of tribulation. God also makes the future light and bright before our eyes. Yes, the word of promise also applies to us: "I will bless you." And God keeps his promise.

But all this is just the beginning and a prelude. The actual blessing promised to Abraham and his children is on a higher level. The actual theme of the promise that Abraham received is: "I will bless you and make you a great name, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." This great promise applies to the seed of Abraham, the One Seed. This first promise is explained by a later promise: "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Gen 22:18 Abraham's seed is none other than the seed of the woman. From Abraham's seed and lineage that holy seed, the Redeemer of mankind, was to be born. The first promise from paradise already indicated that the seed of the woman and the Lord God would be one person. The Lord God said: "I will put enmity." And the seed of the woman was to crush the serpent's head. Eve believed, on the basis of the first promise, in "the man, the LORD". The same secret is hinted at in the second promise made to Abraham. Abraham is to be a blessing, that is Abraham's seed, Abraham's son. And yet God says: "I will bless." It is God's blessing that flows from the seed of Abraham. It is quite the same whether it says: "Abraham, his seed, shall be a blessing", or whether God says: "I will bless." From this the pious ancients could and should see: So, one and

the same person it will be: Abraham's seed and God, the LORD! Because Abraham's seed is none other than "the man, the LORD", therefore his name will also be great, greater than all other names, therefore his name will be called and praised among all the families of the earth. And in his name all blessings are determined.

We know that this promise has been fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Christ is the One Seed, the Seed of Abraham. Thus the Holy Spirit teaches through St. Paul: "Now the promise has been made to Abraham and his seed. He does not say: Through the seed, as through many, but as through one: Through your seed, which is Christ." Gal 3:16 The Son of God has taken the seed of Abraham to himself. Heb 2:16 And the incarnate Son of God is now the fountain of all God's blessing in time and eternity. He has a great name. God has given him a name that is above every name. The name Jesus Christ is known everywhere on earth. And it is precisely in this name, in the name of Jesus, that there is salvation. Whoever calls on the name of the "Lord", the Lord Jesus, will be saved. Christ, the Son of Abraham, testified of Himself when He punished the false children of Abraham: "Before Abraham was, I am." And: "Abraham, your father, was glad that he should see my day; and he saw it and rejoiced." And: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death." John 8:51, 56, 58.

And now let us look a little into the fullness of salvation and blessing, which is decided in this One, the Son of God and Abraham's Son, in His name, in His word. All the temporal blessings that comfort and refresh the pious pilgrims in this poor life are mediated through Christ. But even greater blessing is reserved for Abraham and his children in Christ, in his name. Why did Abraham rejoice when he saw in the Spirit, in the promise, the day of Jesus Christ? What did he long for? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob not only had to bear many a burden, many a cross and woe, but also an even heavier burden: sin. They were still sinners, like other children of men. Adam's poison, the serpent's venom, had also corrupted their nature. These "pious souls" still often put the fear of God out of

their eyes, deviated from obedience, thought what was human, not what was divine. Abraham temporarily forgot the word that referred to Isaac and preferred Ishmael, the son of the maidservant. Isaac overlooked the promise made to Jacob and wanted to give Esau the blessing of the firstborn. Jacob loved Rachel and despised Leah, from whom Judah and the hero of Judah were to come. Alas, these pious fathers were well aware that they were sinners. That is why Abraham believed in the God who justifies the ungodly. Romans 4:5 But God, in spite of their sin, counted them righteous, justified them from their sins, and forgave them their sins and iniquities for the sake of the seed that was promised. Abraham believed God, that is, believed the promise of Christ, and this was counted to him for righteousness. Gen 15:6, Rom 4:3, Gal 3:6 This is what Abraham, our father, found and obtained, this was the joy, the real comfort of his pilgrimage. But the Scriptures have already shown that God justifies the Gentiles, even us poor sinners, through faith. Gal 3:8 This is the blessing of Abraham, which has also come to us in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:14): Righteousness, forgiveness of sins. The Son of God took upon Himself the seed of Abraham and thereby took upon Himself all the damage and misery of Abraham's nature, of Adam's nature, was tempted like us, and thus became a faithful high priest to atone for the sin of the people. He saves his people from their sins. This is now preached to all the people, that through the name of Jesus all who believe in him should receive forgiveness of sins. Acts 10:43 This is the consolation of our pilgrimage, as long as we walk in this sinful flesh: the righteousness which Christ has purchased for us.

This is Abraham's blessing, in which all of Abraham's children share, the blessing that is given to us through the One Seed, Christ: Righteousness - and life, eternal life. These are the great goods of the New Testament, but the believers of the Old Testament already took comfort in them, which were already guaranteed and sealed by the first promises: Forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Scripture testifies that God also freely gave Abraham the "inheritance" by promise. Gal 3:18. What is the inheritance for which Abraham waited and waited

in faith? The Scripture says: "By faith he (Abraham) was a stranger in the promised land, as in a foreign country, and dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the joint-heirs of the same promise. For he waited for a city which has a foundation, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11:9. 10. Not only the earthly Canaan, but above all the heavenly Canaan, the city of God above, the heavenly Jerusalem, was already the focus, the longing, the hope of the pious old fathers. Yes, Abraham thought and believed, when he sacrificed his son Isaac, that God could also raise the dead. Romans 4:17; Hebrews 11:19 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was not a God of the dead, but of the living. Matthew 22:32: This very inheritance, the fatherland above in the light, the resurrection of the dead, life, eternal life, was already freely given to Abraham by promise, in Christ, the One Seed. This is also our portion and inheritance that has come to us through Christ, which is offered to us through the gospel. This future blessing, the future blessedness and glory, the joy of eternal life is the goal and end and therefore, in hope, already now the consolation, staff and rod of our pilgrimage. In Christ, the Son of Abraham, the Son of God, we already have the certain hope of eternal life here and now, in this land of death.

"And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This comforting promise concludes the promise made to Abraham. All the families of the earth were to share in the blessing that would come from Abraham, from the seed of Abraham, the One Seed. And so Abraham was to gain a great nation from all peoples and tongues; his seed was to become like the dust of the earth, like the stars in the sky. Certainly, this assurance was also a comforting light on the lonely path of the old pious fathers. This promise is also confirmed to us. Christ said: "But I tell you that many will come from the morning and the evening and sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 8, 11 We believe in a holy, Christian church, which is gathered from all peoples, tongues and families of the earth, the communion of saints, who in one mind and with one mouth give glory to the name of Jesus and worship the

seed of Abraham. We are pilgrims on earth, like our fathers, scattered to and fro. The world is a stranger to us. But we have comrades of the same grace, who will also inherit the same glory with us there. A great and glorious people is on our side. May we also grasp this consolation and take it to heart!

II.

But who is the seed of Abraham, the people of Abraham? Who are the children of Abraham who are to inherit with him? We have appropriated the blessing promised to Abraham to ourselves, and rightly so. And rightly so. For all generations on earth are to be blessed in Abraham, in the One Seed. But there is a difference here. The LORD said to Abraham: "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you." Oh no, not all Adam's children are also Abraham's children. Not all children of Abraham according to the flesh are in truth Abraham's children either. In Isaac, in Jacob, Abraham was to be called his seed. Ishmael and Esau, who had also sprouted from Abraham's seed, were angry and hostile to Isaac and Jacob, their brothers, and hostile to them precisely for the sake of the promise. When Christ, the promised seed, appeared, he testified to the Jews, who insisted and defied their father Abraham: "You are of your father the devil." Yes, seduced and incited by the devil, they cursed Christ, the One Seed to whom the promise was made, and blasphemed him. And that is why they were cursed by God and inherited the curse instead of the blessing. Not all Israelites were descended from Israel. But not all Gentiles to whom the name of Jesus Christ is proclaimed are therefore Abraham's children and heirs of the promise. Many Gentiles have also taken offense at Christ, the Son of Abraham, and cursed his great and blessed name. Some blaspheme and mock him whom God has promised and sent. Others cry out "Lord, Lord!" but their hearts are far from him and they do not do the will of his Father in heaven. But he who does not believe will be condemned. He who does not believe has no part in the blessing of Abraham, but remains under the curse and falls into judgment. It goes to the end according to the word: "I will curse those who curse you."

But the other word also remains in force and validity: "I will bless those who bless you." All those who bless, praise and bless the seed of Abraham, the One Seed, Christ, and glorify his great name, are and remain blessed. These are the children of the promise, the true children of Abraham. Those who walk in the footsteps of Abraham's faith, Jews and Gentiles, are Abraham's children, those who are blessed with the faithful Abraham. Rom 4:12 Gal 3:9 Look to the father Abraham, the father of the faithful. He is our forerunner, our example. He believed the word, the mere word of promise. He saw nothing of the great things of which God had spoken. Nevertheless, he believed what God had promised him. "He believed in hope when there was nothing to hope for." "He was not weak in faith, nor did he look upon his own body, which had already died, because he was almost a hundred years old, nor upon the dead body of Sarah." "He did not doubt the promise of God through unbelief, but grew strong in faith and gave glory to God. And he knew of a surety that what God had promised, he was able to do." Romans 4:18-21 Even when the promised son was born to Sarah and God commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac, he did not turn away from the faith, "but by faith Abraham, when he was tempted, offered up Isaac, and gave there the only begotten, having already received the promise, of whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called, thinking that God is able also to raise up from the dead." Heb 11:17-19 And those who follow his faith are Abraham's children. Even at present we see nothing of the great things that are promised to us in Christ. What we see before our eyes, what we feel and sense in our hearts, is sin, weakness, misery, death and the fear of death. In the Word, in the Word alone, we are offered righteousness, life and salvation. So we must believe the word that God has spoken, and has also spoken to us. We must hope, hope for the sake of the Word, since there is nothing to hope for. We are also often tempted, as Abraham was tempted. God often disguises himself as cruel. God often demands the dearest things from us. We often feel and sense in our hearts the contradiction between grace and bliss, feeling nothing but fear, terror, wrath and hell. We cannot help but think that God

is angry with us, that God has cast us off. But even in the midst of the horrors of hell, in the fear of despair, faith holds fast to the word that God has promised, to the precious word of the forgiveness of sins and of future glory. So those who walk in the footsteps of Abraham's faith are Abraham's children, they are blessed with the faithful Abraham. These are Abraham's people and seed, who, despised by the world, disfigured by the larva of the cross, yet in faith keep all the precious, great words of promise which God has spoken.

Surely these are not the children of God who are children according to the flesh, but the children of the promise are counted for seed. Romans 9:8 Those who are born according to the flesh and walk according to the flesh reap from the flesh the curse of destruction. But those who believe the promise, yes, the children of the promise, who are born of the promise, of the word, by the grace of the caller, will inherit the blessing. Amen.

Third Sermon. [^]—

Genesis 49:8-12.

Judah, it is you; your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be out of your enemies' necks; your father's children will bow down to you. Judah is a young lion. You have come up, my son, through great victories. He has knelt down, he has lain down like a lion and like a lioness; who will lean against him? The scepter will not be taken from Judah, nor a champion from his feet, until the hero comes, and the nations will follow him. He will bind his fullness to the vine, and his donkey's son to the noble branches. He will wash his robe in wine, and his cloak in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be redder than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.

These are the words of the dying patriarch Jacob. With them he concluded his pilgrimage. The time of his life had been poor and evil. He died in a foreign land. It was his fervent wish that his bones would be buried in the land of promise, in the tomb of his fathers. But divine blessings also run through his life. God's hand had been miraculously active over his sons, especially over Joseph. Truly, this was the blessed generation, chosen from all nations. And the blessing of his father Abraham did not depart from Jacob even in his death. He died the death of a righteous man. But before he breathes his last, he rises once more and lays the blessing he inherited from his fathers on his sons. The blessing of Abraham was, after all, a precious legacy that was destined for all of Abraham's seed. Enlightened by the Spirit of God, Jacob looks into the distant future of his people. Driven by the Spirit of God, he speaks to each of his sons the blessing that God had intended for him. "He blessed the twelve tribes of Israel" - "each one with a blessing" (Genesis 49:28), with the blessing that God had previously bestowed on each of the twelve tribes. He distributes the blessings and riches of the Promised Land among the twelve tribes. The beloved Joseph receives the greatest and

best part of this. He promises victory over the enemies to other, warlike tribes. But the real blessing of Abraham, the promise of the One Seed, through which all the families of the earth are to be blessed, falls to the tribe of Judah. However, just as the woman's seed belongs to all people, the blessing of Abraham to all generations on earth, so the hero of Judah's lineage and the salvation he brings is promised to all peoples. This promise also belongs to us.

This promise has been fulfilled. We enjoy this spiritual blessing that has poured out from Judah over the whole earth. First of all, the tribe of Judah is also promised temporal blessings, namely dominion and preeminence among the brethren. It says: "Judah, it is you, your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the necks of your enemies; your father's children will bow down to you." This was fulfilled when Judah went ahead of the army of Israel on the way through the desert to Canaan, when Judah then waged war in the Promised Land at the head of his brothers, often instead of his brothers of the LORD, and wiped out the Canaanites. "Judah is a young lion. You have risen high, my son, through great victories. He has knelt down and lain down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rise up against him?" This was fulfilled when David, the king of the tribe of Judah, won victory over all his enemies, when Solomon, David's son, was enthroned in Jerusalem in proud victory, in secure peace, and unfolded the splendor of his reign there. But now the promise rises higher: "The scepter shall not be taken from Judah, nor a champion from his feet, until the coming of the hero." In Christ, the offspring of the tribe of Judah, the dominion, the honor, the prestige of the tribe of Judah was to come to perfection. He was also to give his people true peace, peace and salvation in abundance. What the aged patriarch Jacob prophesied has been fulfilled. The New Testament confirms it: "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome." Revelation 5:5 He overcame, won the final victory and after the battle and victory established the kingdom of peace, which is described at the end of this prophecy. So now we praise by placing the promise in the light of its fulfillment:

The lion of the tribe of Judah has overcome.

1. He has laid all our enemies at our feet.
2. And with the scepter of peace he now rules his people.

I.

Thus God's people, Christendom, now praise and triumph: "The Lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered. He has put down all enemies. The prophecy of the hero from the tribe of Judah has been fulfilled. The prophecy read: "The scepter of Judah will not be taken away, nor a champion from his feet, until the hero comes." The scepter, the ruler's staff, which the princes held between their feet, shall not depart from Judah until the hero comes. A prince from Judah's tribe will finally arise and bring the reign to completion and lead all battles to victory. That will be the final, complete victory. This hero is none other than the woman's seed already promised to Adam and Eve, who was to crush the serpent's head. This is Christ, the Prince, the Redeemer.

Only in Christ will war, strife and enmity be swallowed up in victory. Before Christ, until the hero comes, the feud will not subside, only rest for a time, only to break out anew. The aged patriarch Jacob did not look into the future of his sons without trepidation. His last words do not proclaim vain blessings. He sees one enemy after another rising up in his mind. His son Dan will be plagued and frightened by insidious persecutors. Benjamin will live from robbery. And so the whole history of the people of Israel is filled with battle and war. No sooner had Israel left Egypt than Amalek confronted them with hostility. Joshua did not actually bring peace to the people. For centuries Israel still had to fight with the Canaanites. The judges only freed the people from the hands of their enemies for a short time. David conquered and subdued all the heathen nations around him, and Solomon reigned in peace. But already towards the end of Solomon's reign

rebellion and outrage broke out. Then the people were divided within themselves, and became and remained a plaything in the hands of the heathen, finally becoming completely subservient to the heathen until the time when the hero came. But it was not only this severe suffering that awaited his seed that grieved the aged Jacob. He also sighed over the sin and wickedness of his sons. He remembered Reuben, his first son, with pain, "who had gone recklessly like water and defiled his father's bed". He lamented over the brothers Simeon and Levi, "whose swords were murderous weapons". Because of their sin, these three eldest sons had lost the right to the blessing of the firstborn. These were bad signs for the future. Yes, it was because of their sin, their wickedness, that Israel was so oppressed and afflicted and terrified by their enemies. All this misery of his people was on the dying patriarch's heart as he cried out from the depths: "Lord, I await your salvation." Gen 49:18 Until the hero came, there was trouble and anguish in Israel. And now we say: Apart from Christ there is no salvation. Sin continues to proliferate from generation to generation. And out of sin comes disaster, fear, affliction, and ultimately death and destruction. Sin locks us into the power of the old evil enemy, Satan. We will never find peace or rest here on earth. Man must be in conflict all his life. There is nothing left for us but to turn upwards and sigh with Jacob: "Lord, I wait for your salvation." There is no one who can save but the hero from the tribe of Judah.

This hero has now come. The Lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered. The New Testament says: "For it is evident that out of Judah our Lord has arisen." Heb 7:14 Christ was born of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of David. And he is our LORD, he is the hero who led the battle to victory. Admittedly not like the other heroes from the tribe of Judah, not like his father David did he fight and win. He did not fight the Lord's wars with the sword. Jesus Christ, the scion of Judah's lineage, the son of Mary, never made any pretense of freeing his people Israel from the yoke of pagan Roman rule, but rather gave the Roman emperor the interest and exhorted his

followers to obedience and forbade them to draw the sword. Indeed, judging by appearances, this hero was defeated. His brothers, the citizens of Judah-Jerusalem, seized him, bound him and hanged him on the wood and killed him at the hands of the pagans, the wicked. But just as he was defeated, he triumphed and overcame. When he was struck on the heel, he crushed the head of the serpent. As he suffered and died, he exclaimed triumphantly: "It is finished." His victory was soon revealed in his resurrection. He laid our enemies to the ground and delivered us from the hands of all our enemies. He has redeemed us from all sin, from death and from the power of the devil. After all, these are the worst enemies.

Christ, our Lord, came forth from the tribe of Judah. Christ is the true Judah. Judah had compassion for his brother Joseph. When the other brothers wanted to kill him, he said: "We will not hurt him with our hands, for he is our brother, our flesh and blood." Gen 37:27 Christ was a merciful high priest and had compassion on his brothers according to the flesh and could not bear that his brothers should die and perish. Christ is the true Judah. Judah was a faithful guarantor for his brother Benjamin. When the ruler of Egypt wanted to keep Benjamin, he interceded for him, saying, "I, your servant, have become surety for the boy against my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the guilt all my life. Gen 44:32 Christ became surety for his brothers. He bore our guilt throughout his life and finally atoned for it with his death. He bore the guilt, atoned for it, expiated it. For he was more than a brother of men. He was the strong hero, the strong God. The letter to the Hebrews points out emphatically that Christ, our Lord, did not come from the tribe of Levi, but from the tribe of Judah. Heb 7:14 He is therefore not a priest after the manner of the Levitical priests, who always had to sacrifice for their own sin first, and who therefore could not cleanse Israel from sin with their sacrifices. Rather, Christ is a priest after the manner of Melchizedek and has an eternal, imperishable priesthood and has invented an eternal redemption and perfected sinners for eternity. Christ is the true Judah. The

tribe of Judah went before the army of Israel and broke the way and led the people to victory. Christ is the forerunner and champion of his brothers. The redeemed church must also still suffer and fight here on earth. Sin, the world, death and the devil are once again challenging the victory that Christ has won for us. But just when the battle is at its hottest, we hear the voice from above: "Do not weep, for the Lion of the tribe of Judah has overcome." Revelation 5:5: When we are weary and want to succumb, it says: "The Lord will fight for you, and you shall be still." It is precisely when we are weak that we are strong. The power of the Lord is mighty in the weak. Christ, the hero, is everything in the battle. Certainly, He leads His own through suffering, fear, hardship and death to victory, to ultimate victory. He is the Duke of our salvation.

II.

He has overcome everything and now rules his people in peace. The Lion of the tribe of Judah has triumphed and has risen from the spoil and has now sat down to rest and reigns over his people with the sceptre of peace. The name that our prophecy ascribes to the scion of Judah's lineage actually means "peace", "the rich in peace". Certainly, he is a hero. For he established peace through battle and victory. But it was precisely the purpose of his strife and battle that he gave peace to his people. He is the true David, who waged the wars of the LORD and led them to victory. And he is the true Solomon who brought peace to Israel. The prince of Judah's tribe is called and is in truth "peace", "our peace". Eph. 2:14. In him, in his person, peace is present. Christ came out of Judah according to the flesh. But at the same time he is the hero of God, in whom the rule of the tribe of Judah culminates, he is stronger than David and Solomon, he is superior to all the enemies of God's people. He keeps the field. He is the strong God. He is man and God in one person. In him, divinity and humanity are united. Thus he, he himself, is our peace. He has made peace through his blood, Col. 1, 20. Through defeat and overcoming, through struggle and victory, through suffering, death and resurrection, he has established peace and removed enmity from the midst.

We now have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is now ascended and exalted and sits at the right hand of God and gives his people the peace that the world cannot give. He fights for his people and gives his people peace in the midst of the world's fear. The long-desired rest, into which neither Joshua nor Solomon introduced Israel, is now available to God's people. Christ calls the weary and burdened to Himself so that they may find rest for their souls with Him. And this rest will be complete and glorious when the last Sabbath, the Sabbath of eternity, dawns. Then we will rest, then we will be blessed in the bosom of the Mediator. Surely he, he alone, is our peace.

And he now also reigns in peace. He is the Prince of Peace. The word of salvation, the gospel of peace is his scepter, his ruler's staff. "The nations will follow him." That is the prophecy. It has been fulfilled. Christ has stretched out his scepter over all nations. The gospel has gone out into all lands. He has proclaimed peace in the gospel to those near and far. Eph 2:17 Through the gospel he wins the nations, the Gentiles. The gospel is preached to the Gentiles, to sinners, the battle and victory of Christ, the peace of Christ, the peace of God, that Christ, the Lord, has reconciled the sinful children of men with God and redeemed them from all enemies, sin, death and the devil. This message touches and moves people's hearts. Yes, the gospel is Christ's scepter. Christ, the Prince, He Himself touches the hearts of sinners with the rod of the Word and thus makes the nations subject to Him. And those who follow him, he guides and governs with the same scepter of peace. He makes his will known through the word. And those who believe in him hear his voice and follow his voice. They willingly obey him and carry out his commands on earth. They serve him here and now in holiness and righteousness that is pleasing to him. And one day they will serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence and bliss.

And noble gifts of peace, the fullness of salvation, the Prince of Peace pours out on his subjects. At the end of our text, the prophet Jacob speaks of the rich blessings of the Messiah's kingdom. In lovely colors and images he describes the goods of salvation that Christ will bestow on his people. "He will bind his fullness to the

vine, and his donkey's son to the noble branches. He will wash his robe in wine, and his cloak in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be redder than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk." The prince of Judah will ride on the colt of the donkey, the beast of peace, and make his procession among the nations. And when he dismounts, he will tie his donkey to the vine, to the noble branch. The whole land will be covered with vines and noble branches. The whole land will overflow with wine and milk. Therefore he will wash his clothes in the juice of the vine. He will drink wine and milk in abundance. That is why his eyes will be red with wine and his teeth white with milk. The prophet Joel describes the time of King Messiah in a similar way: "At that time the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the streams of Judah will be full of water." Joel 3:23 and the prophet Isaiah interprets this imagery when he writes: "You will draw water with joy from the well of salvation." We now enjoy these noble gifts in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. All kinds of spiritual blessings in heavenly goods have come to us through Christ. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. In Christ we have peace, joy and full satisfaction. We now boast: "Your mouth has praised me with milk and sweet food; your Spirit has gifted me with many a heavenly delight." Milk and wine, grace and sweet consolation flow from the gospel into the hungry, thirsty soul. "Your sweet gospel is all milk and honey." The gospel of Christ strengthens, delights and refreshes the heart. That we may only draw from the fountain of salvation with joy and desire! The King entices and tempts us: "Effet, my beloved, and drink, my friends, and be drunk!" Song of Solomon 5:1. Here we already have food, pasture, joy and sufficiency, and there only joy the fullness and lovely being at his right hand for ever.

We turn our eyes once more to the prince of the tribe of Judah. Yes, his eyes are red with wine and his teeth are white with milk. The bride says: "My friend is white and red, chosen among many thousands." Song of Solomon 5:10. The hero of Judah's tribe, this Prince of Peace, this Solomon is the Bridegroom, "the beautiful Bridegroom mine". "You son

of David from the tribe of Jacob, my king and my bridegroom, have possessed my heart, lovely, kind, beautiful and glorious, great and honorable, rich in gifts, high and very splendidly exalted." We rejoice in his gifts, his salvation, his grace. But our soul longs for him. Our soul clings to him. He has possessed my heart. "After you, *gratiosa coeli rosa*, my heart is sick and glowing, wounded by love." Now we rejoice in him when he looks at us so kindly with his eyes through the Word. There we will see the King in his beauty, in his heavenly glory and splendor, face to face, and praise him and exult and rejoice in him for all eternity. Amen.

Fourth sermon. ^

Num. 24:17.

I will see him, but not now; I will behold him, but not from near. A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a scepter shall come up out of Israel, and shall smite the princes of Moab, and shall destroy all the children of Seth.

Jacob, the patriarch, had prophesied to his sons at his death what would befall them in future times, and in particular pointed to the days of the King Messiah. Of course, after Jacob and Joseph had died, the history of Jacob's family was lost in darkness. The kings of Egypt placed unbearable burdens on the children of Israel. It seemed as if the seed of Abraham, who had such great promises, would die in a foreign land. Finally, however, God heard the cries of his children and sent them a savior, his servant Moses, who led them out of Egypt and gave them the law on Mount Sinai. This was the birth of the people of Israel, the people of God. And as soon as the people of Israel had begun their journey from Sinai, the prophecies of the forefather Jacob also began to be fulfilled. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were the most populous, and Joseph's blessing rested on his children's children. And Judah, the actual bearer of the promise, raised his head boldly, like a young lion, and went before the hosts of Israel and became the champion in the holy wars of the LORD, which had already begun at Sinai. This prophecy takes us to the end of the wilderness wanderings. We see Israel at the border of the Promised Land. The people were now preparing to take possession of the land that had already been promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as an inheritance. But before this promise could be fulfilled, a heathen nation once again placed obstacles in the way. Just as the Amalekites at Sinai wanted to keep Israel on the path God had shown them,

so now, at the end of the course, the Moabites prevented God's people from entering their inheritance, the land of Canaan. And Moab attacked Israel with an even swifter weapon than Amalek. It did not confront him openly with sword and bow, but sent to Mesopotamia and sent for the sorcerer Balaam to cast the devil's spell on Israel. But behold, Balaam blessed instead of cursing. Yes, up there on the mountains of Moab, where Balaam uttered his proverbs about Israel in the presence of Balak king of Moab and his princes, the fate of God's people and the fate of their enemies was decided. Balaam praised and exalted the future King and Messiah of Israel, who was to bring honor to his people, and cursed the enemies of Christ and his people.

The prophecy on which we now want to build ourselves has flowed from the mouth of a Gentile. The Gentile Balaam confirmed the words of the testament of the dying Jacob, confirmed the promises that the arch-fathers had received directly from God. God glorified his word by putting it into the mouth of a Gentile. Balaam was a true heathen, well practiced in the dark arts and vices of the heathen. He was an idolater, a servant of the flesh, a covetous man. 2 Peter 2:14-16 God wanted to demonstrate his power and strength precisely in this pagan. He had performed a miracle on Balaam's donkey. The unreasonable creature spoke with a human voice and punished Balaam's disobedience. And now the LORD made Balaam himself, who had first resisted the LORD's hand, his instrument and prophet. Balaam could not get past the word of the LORD, but had to speak what the LORD told him to speak. Num. 4:24, 13 The Spirit of God opened the eyes of this blind Gentile, the inner eye, so that he saw the great and beautiful future that awaited the people he was to curse. In his first proverbs, Balaam praised and benedicted the people he saw from afar, "the people whom God had chosen, the people who dwell apart, separated from the heathen, the people who like a young lion carry off their prey victoriously, whose streams spread out like the gardens by the waters, like the tents which the LORD plants". Numbers 23:9, 10, 24. Numbers 24:4-7, thus describing the future blessing and prosperity

of Israel. Finally, however, he is given a glimpse into the final future of this blessed people of God. "I will see him, but not now; I will behold him, but not from near." He finally saw a star rising from Jacob and a scepter rising from Israel. But this ruler will arise in the distant future. Certainly, this is the last and greatest king from Israel, this is the hero from the tribe of Judah, this is the Messiah of Israel. This is the prize and pride of Israel, but at the same time the terror of all Israel's enemies. He will crush the princes of Moab. What Balaam spoke here, indeed, this very last saying was "the revelation of the Almighty". Thus spoke "the hearer of divine speech, whose eyes were opened". 4 Moses 24:16 This was God's word, and this word has been fulfilled. "Now the time is fulfilled, the star of Jacob is shining." Christ has appeared and brought salvation to his people, but curse and destruction to the enemies of God and his people.

Let's take a closer look at this now:

How the star that rose from Jacob decided the fate of the nations.

- 1 He has brought grace and salvation to God's people,
2. the enemies of the same, on the other hand, curse and condemnation.

I.

"A star will rise out of Jacob, and a scepter will arise out of Israel." Christ is the scepter, the ruler who has risen out of Israel. Christ is the Bright and Morning Star. Revelation 22:16: This star signifies and brings happiness and blessing to Jacob, Israel, the people of God. From this star shines a bright light, salvation, grace, blessedness. Israel rejoiced in the bright light of this star, which they saw rising on the distant horizon. The word of promise, which referred to the King of the future, to Christ, was the pilgrim's staff of Israel, the strength of Israel in the difficult battles it had to endure, the comfort of Israel in all the tribulations it was afflicted with in the course of the centuries.

When the path of the pious ancients was once lost in darkness, they searched in the prophecies which they had received from their fathers and which were further elaborated by the later prophets, and when they immersed their souls in the prophecy and then looked up to the God of the fathers, the LORD Jehovah, who had given the promise, praying and sighing, then this bright, friendly star appeared again and again in their sky. And how the true Israel, the little band of the faithful in the land, rejoiced when that distant future came near, when the time was fulfilled, when the kindness and radiance of God shone on the face of Jesus, the Son of Mary!

But it is not only those of Israel who are born of Jacob's seed who are God's people. It was the pagan Balaam who uttered this prophecy. He had come from the East, the homeland of mankind, the cradle of the ancient pagan nations. He was, as it were, the representative of the distant pagans. In the name of the Gentiles, he welcomed the coming of that star. Balaam added a saying about the Kenites to his prophecy: "Your dwelling is firm, and you have made your nest in a rock." Num. 24:21 He contrasts the Kenites with the Amalekites, Israel's first enemy. The Kenites, the people of Jethro, Mosi's father-in-law, were friendly to God's people, had joined Israel's march at Sinai and also confessed the God of Israel from then on, and were then given a seat and inheritance in Canaan with the tribes of Israel. Balaam wishes the people of the Kenites luck, that they have chosen a good inheritance, a permanent seat. For he who puts his trust in the LORD Jehovah with the people of God has built his house on the rock. The Kenites shared in the inheritance and therefore also in the promise of Israel. They rejoiced with Israel in the star that was to rise from Jacob. These were the firstfruits of the Gentiles who were numbered among the seed of Abraham, the people of God. When the scepter came up from Israel, when the king of the Jews was born, the wise men from the east saw his star. These were Gentiles from the same region from which Balaam had come. And in the name of the Gentiles, the wise men brought their sacrifices to the child in Mary's womb. Yes, the Gentiles were also to share in the happiness and joy of Israel. The star that rose out of Jacob,

Christ and his Gospel circled the whole heaven in its course, shining from the rising of the sun to its setting upon all the peoples of the earth. And all the Gentiles who have become obedient to the gospel of Christ, from morning to evening, are now tribes and members of the people of God, the true Israel. This star also shines for us. This star has also brought us light, salvation, grace and blessedness.

This star has determined the destiny of the nations, of Israel and the Gentiles, has also determined our destiny, and indeed, our lot has fallen on us in a sweet way. Yes, salvation and grace emanate from this star. The kingdom of this king is a kingdom of grace. He leads the scepter of mercy. Christ reigns through the Word. And in the word, in the promise, in the gospel, healing grace shines and radiates. It is a wonderful light that radiates from Christ, the Bright and Morning Star, that shines in his Word. It is a mild, friendly light, the friendliness and luminosity of a true Son of Man, who calls his brothers to himself with his winning gaze. And again, it is a majestic, heavenly radiance. This star shines over to us from another world. It is the grace and truth of the only begotten Son of the Father. Christ is the sun of grace. It is the Redeemer of the world, the Lamb of God, on whom our longing eyes are fixed. This star makes our night light and bright. We still walk in a dark land. We live in a world full of injustice. There is still much sin and darkness within us. But when sin now weighs down our conscience, we lift up our heads and look up to heaven, where the star that rose from Jacob is. We look into the Gospel, whose mild, friendly light repeatedly breaks through the dark clouds, the darkness of sin. The grace of the King who arose from Israel is new every morning and his faithfulness is great. This star never sets. We are walking through a dark valley here, through much cross and tribulation. But just then, when tribulation bends the heart and mind down, we look up to heaven, to the star that has risen from Jacob. It beckons us comfort and peace. We fix our eyes on the promise, on the gospel. This gives us the assurance that in Christ we have a gracious God. Yes,

the light must always dawn for the righteous, and joy for pious hearts. Christ, the Bright and Morning Star, sheds his light into our souls and makes our inner being light and bright. God has given a bright light into our hearts through the Gospel. God has implanted his word in our souls, and so Christ, the morning star, has risen in our hearts. And the more diligently we pay attention to the solid prophetic word, the brighter it becomes in the soul. The believing soul rejoices in its King and Savior and says: "How beautifully the morning star shines, full of grace and truth from the Lord, the sweet root of Jesse!" And now we also walk in the light and proclaim with word and deed the virtues of the King who has called us from darkness to his marvelous light. Truly, we have been given a beautiful inheritance. Blessed are all who have recognized the star that has risen from Jacob! Blessed are all who kiss the scepter of the King who arose from Israel!

Grace and bliss are brought to us by Christ, our King. This star shows us the way to heaven, to eternal light. Balaam, the prophet, sees in the spirit one heathen nation after another sinking and perishing. But the people who are subject to the scepter of Christ will outlast all the kingdoms of the world. Of course, even Christians who serve Christ must still die and go the way of all flesh. But the star of Jacob also illuminates the night of death for them. That is why Balaam wishes for the death of the righteous. "Let my soul die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like their end." 4 Moses 23:10 Even at the hour of death, when the light of this life is extinguished, we still lift up our feeble heads and turn our breaking, pale eyes to the star which, from eternity, is lowering its gentle rays into this dark valley of death. Christ and his gospel still shine for us in death and shine for us through death into the land of the living, into the heavenly Canaan. Yes, when the tabernacle of the body collapses, when heaven and earth collapse, then that star unfolds its full glory. When the sun, moon and stars lose their shine and fall from heaven, then Christ, the Bright and Morning Star, rises in all his splendor, then Christ comes in the glory of his Father and brings his people eternal, perfect bliss, transfigured joy.

There will be inexpressible joy when we see him as he is, when we look with these eyes of ours into the mild, friendly and yet so pure, holy face of the Son of Man and Son of God, when we behold God's glory and bask in the splendor of the Lamb. "For the Lamb himself is the light that will adorn the city." Then we ourselves will also be full of light, clothed in heavenly clarity. The righteous will shine like the stars of heaven in the eternal kingdom of Christ. Then the alternation of day and night, of light and darkness will come to an end, then there will be no more suffering, crying and pain, no more death, no more sin. All is light and life before the face of Christ and God. It is a glory beyond all measure and an eternal glory to which we are called.

II.

But the eye of Balaam the seer now also falls on all the nations that oppose the people of God and the king of Israel. His words turn from Israel, to whom he could only pronounce blessing, back to the Moabites, who had sent for him, and announce curse and destruction to the Moabites and all the enemies of God's people. The sceptre that is to arise from Israel "will smite the princes of Moab and all the sons of Seth". At that time, when Israel was camped on the borders of Canaan, the Moabites were the adversaries. But Balaam's gaze broadens to encompass all the sons of Seth, that is, all the sons of tumult, all the hostile hosts who follow in Moab's footsteps and curse Israel and the king of Israel. The line of the Gentile nations passes by his spirit, from all of which some are won and become subject to the scepter of Christ, but which as a whole are hostile to the people of God, the kingdom of Christ. In the further course of his prophecy he mentions Amalek, the first among the Gentiles, who dared to attack God's people and property. He mentions Edom, the insidious brother nation, which at that very time had refused Israel passage through its land. He points to Assyria, the world power of the Orient, which first executed God's judgment on the apostate Israel-Judah, but then transgressed God's command and enslaved and oppressed the

true Israel. And finally he sees ships coming from Chittim, from the West, sees in the spirit the armies of the powers of the West, sees the last and worst enemy of the Church, which arises from the world power of the West, from Rome, and which disputes the sceptre, the dominion of Christ, the Lord. Thus Balaam sees the people of God surrounded by enemies, oppressed by the hostile world, and now, in the name of God, casts the lot of the enemies, pronounces judgment on them, prophesies the end, the downfall, to each individual, and curses and curses the whole world hostile to Christ, which it desires for Christ and His kingdom. Num. 4:24, 18-20. 22-24.

Balaam's prophecy has been fulfilled. All those who cursed Christ and his kingdom have cursed themselves. The anti-Christ, anti-church world is already under the curse and judgment. Because it has spurned and despised the salutary light of this star, it now walks even more in darkness and the shadow of death. What terrible judgment from God! The prophet Balaam was to confirm the truth of his prophecy by his own example. He had seen the star of salvation, the star of the Jews and the Gentiles, from afar. A glimmer had also fallen into his soul. He had wished for the death of the righteous. But soon after he had uttered the words that God's Spirit had given him, he forgot and despised this high revelation and became a twofold child of corruption, a twofold slave of avarice and lust. Devilish wickedness advised him that the Moabites and the Midianites, who were allied with them, should seduce the children of Israel into fornication and shame and thus destroy them. All who close their eyes and hearts to the star that rose out of Jacob and refuse to obey this scepter, this king, and then turn the disobedient into enemies and adversaries of Christ, are children of darkness, of destruction. They are chained with strong fetters to the works of darkness. Avarice, carnality, worldliness, gluttony, drunkenness: these are their pasture and their delight. And even those who walk honorably, but shun and flee the bright light of Christ and his word, have already pronounced judgment on themselves and feel the sting of judgment in their hearts. All unbelievers, righteous and unrighteous, who oppose the scepter of Christ, are disturbed,

inwardly already judged and condemned. They probably also have stars in the sky, from which they take comfort, from which they expect happiness and salvation, to which they entrust their fate. They also have a kind of religion, their gods and guardian angels. But these are will-o'-the-wisps that only lead them deeper into the swamp and mire. When the test is made, when fear and distress, the last fear and distress falls in, then the glow and splendor of these deceptive lights dissipate, then the self-made stars fall from the sky, and the wretched, the godless, sink without God and without consolation, without hope into the night of death, behind which no morning star, no dawn rises anymore.

And a day is coming in which the condemnation of ungodly people, the enemies of Christ, will be revealed. Balaam proclaimed his day to every one of the hostile Gentile nations. Thus concluded each of the sayings that applied to the enemies of Israel: "In the end he will perish." In the course of world history, these sayings of Balaam have been fulfilled. One nation after another perished, perished because they all wanted to bring about the downfall of God's people. However, these individual judgments on the enemy nations and people are finally summarized in the last general judgment, in the Last Judgment. We now sing and say of the king whom Balaam had seen coming: "He is coming, he is coming, a king to whom all the enemies on earth will be far too little to resist." "He is coming to the judgment of the world, to the curse of him who curses him." On that day, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the King of the Jews will crush and destroy all his enemies. How then will all who have not believed, the children of the world and of darkness, tremble and shake when they see the bright and morning star rising, when they see the Son of Man, to whom they have been hostile to the end, coming in the clouds of heaven in the glory of his Father! They will flee from his presence. But the bright light of this star will shine into all caves and hiding places. No one will escape. They must all be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ and hear their judgment from his mouth. Then they will be cast out into the uttermost darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, into eternal darkness, which will be followed by no day, no light for eternity.

These words of prophecy, which the pagan Balaam could not resist, are true and certain. It is the speech, the revelation of the Almighty. Certainly, on this star that has risen from Jacob depends curse and blessing. This star determines the destiny, the eternal destiny of men on earth. Woe to him who despises its light! Blessed are all who follow its light! Let us sigh and pray: "Oh come, oh come, O sun, and bring us all to eternal light and bliss in your hall of joy!" Amen.

Fifth Sermon. [^]—

Gen. 18:15.

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you and your brothers, and you will obey him.

The last prophecy we looked at presented us with the people of Israel in their youth. The people that Balaam saw and blessed were God's people. The exodus from Egypt, the making of the covenant at Sinai, proved that God had chosen this people as his own. And he carried his children on eagles' wings during the long wandering in the desert and revealed his strong arm to them in many ways. This people was the terror of his enemies and astonished and amazed the pagans in the surrounding countries. Balaam had to bless and bless the people. But the crown and pride of Israel, even of youthful Israel, was the promise of the future king, of the star that would rise from Jacob, the scepter that would arise from Israel. From the very beginning, the course and history of Israel was directed towards this goal.

But as we recall the beginnings of Israel's history, a man comes before our eyes, a chosen instrument, a prophet, through whom God accomplished all those great things, Moses, the man of God. Already in the child Moses, in the miraculous rescue of the infant, in the upbringing of the boy at the court of King Pharaoh, God had made it clear that he had destined him for something great. When he had grown to manhood, he was miraculously called, through a glorious revelation from God, to be a prophet to the chosen people. This man Moses then led Israel out of Egypt in the power of the LORD Jehovah and thus became the savior and redeemer of his people. He gave the people the law of God with great signs and wonders on Mount Sinai, he was the. Mediator

of the Old Covenant. Under the assistance of the Almighty, he led Israel safely through all the dangers of the desert. He was the leader of the army of Israel. Scripture itself bears powerful witness to this man of God. Thus it says at the end of the books of Moses: "And there arose no prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, to do all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants, and to all his land; and to all these mighty acts and great visions which Moses did in the sight of all Israel." Deut. 34:10-12 All later prophets referred back to this first prophet of God's people and admonished Israel to obey the law of Moses, the servant of God.

But before this great prophet died, as he departed from his people at the borders of the Promised Land, he left them a precious legacy, the prophecy of a prophet of the future. "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you and your brothers, and you shall obey him." A prophet was to come who would be like Moses. Indeed, by directing the eyes of Israel away from himself to this last prophet and urging the children of Israel to obey this future prophet above all others, Moses recognized the greater dignity of this second prophet. He was to be equal to Moses, indeed, even greater than Moses. Thus the hoping, waiting eye of Moses himself was directed towards this future prophet. Moses based his prophecy on a word of God that the LORD had already spoken to him on Mount Sinai during the giving of the law. "As you asked the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying: I will no more hear the voice of the LORD my God, neither will I see the great fire, lest I die. And the LORD said to me, "They have spoken well. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren, and put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not hear my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." Deut. 18, 16-19. This word of God had been the comfort of Moses in the great hardships and temptations of the forty-year wilderness wandering. And now

he comforted himself in the death of the greater prophet. And he prayed to his people that salvation was to be found in the coming prophet alone; whoever would not hear his word, God would demand it of him, and his soul would be cut off from the people of God. In his speech before the Jewish high council, the holy martyr Stephen enumerated the great deeds that God had done by the hand of Moses. But the best and greatest thing he attributed to Moses, the man of God, was this: "This is Moses, who said to the children of Israel: The LORD your God will raise you up a prophet from among your brethren, like unto me, whom ye shall hear." Acts 7:37. Truly, this was the greatest thing about this great man of God, Moses, that he assigned the children of Israel to this great prophet of the future.

This great, this greatest prophet has now appeared. When Jesus of Nazareth took up his prophetic office, his disciples, whom he called to follow him, recognized it immediately: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote." John 1:45: Jesus Christ presented himself freely and publicly to the Jewish people as the prophet of whom Moses had prophesied. "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father. It is One who accuses you, the Moses in whom you hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me." John 5:45, 46 The Father in heaven has confirmed the testimony that Jesus bore to Himself. On the Mount of Transfiguration a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; him you shall hear." Matt. 17:5 Yes: you shall hear him! This is the one of whom Moses already testified: You shall hear him! After Israel had killed this prophet, the only Son of God, but God had raised him up again, Peter set this crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth before the eyes of the Jewish people and referred to Moses: "For Moses said to the fathers: The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet from among your brethren, like me, whom you shall hear in all things that he shall say to you; and it shall come to pass, if any soul will not hear that same prophet, that soul shall be cut off from among the people." Acts 3:22-23. To the Jews first God raised up his child Jesus and appointed him Lord and Christ. But

this prophet also still speaks to us. This is our prophet, whom we are to hear. He speaks to us through the Word, through writing and preaching. This prophet of ours, Jesus Christ, is a prophet like Moses, yes, greater than Moses. Scripture bears witness to him: "He is worthy of greater honor than Moses." Heb. 3:3 The person of this prophet is higher than Moses, and the prophetic office of Christ has even greater dignity than Moses' office. Let us now take this truth to heart:

Christ a prophet, like Moses, and greater than Moses.

- 1 Christ, like Moses, is a prophet sent by God, but a prophet who speaks God's word from his own.
2. Christ's ministry has clarity, like Moses' ministry, but it shines with exuberant clarity.

I.

We first look at the person. Christ was, he is, a prophet like Moses, sent by God, but greater than Moses, a prophet who spoke God's word from his own self. Moses said to Israel: "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you and your brothers." So, like Moses, the prophet of the future was to arise from Israel, from Abraham's seed. Moses, the man of God, was from one of the tribes of Israel, from the tribe of Levi. From childhood he shared in the suffering and bondage of his people Israel. When he grew up in Pharaoh's court, he despised the temporal pleasures of sin and chose the reproach of Christ, the reproach of God's people. He had heartfelt compassion for his brothers. He could not bear to see that one Israelite oppressed by the Egyptian, so he slew the Egyptian. Even during the forty years he spent as a shepherd in the desert of Midian, he did not forget his captive people. When God then called him to be the savior and leader of his people, right from the beginning in Egypt, he bore the weaknesses and hardships of Israel for the rest of his life. And as often as Israel complained to him about their hardships, he brought the cries and cries of his brothers before God.

Truly, this is a true prophet who knows the needs and hardships of his people and carries their weal and woe on his heart. People listen to him. They put their trust in him. A prophet who does not respond to the situation, wishes and concerns of his brethren, but exalts himself above them, finds no favor, no obedience. Christ was and is a true prophet, like Moses. He came from Israel, from the tribe of Judah. He shared in the suffering of his people as a child and then, as a man, took upon himself the pain and sickness of his brothers. And today he is still a merciful prophet and high priest and has heartfelt compassion for his brothers according to the flesh. He speaks to us in the Word, so friendly and affable, as a brother to his brothers. Who should not gladly listen to this prophet? Who should not take heart and trust in him? He is a prophet like Moses, yes, greater than Moses. There is one thing about human prophets and preachers that listeners must always overlook and learn to tolerate, namely that they themselves often act contrary to what they preach, that they are weak, sinful children of men. We preachers teach our listeners with all diligence that they may separate and distinguish the peculiarities, weaknesses and vices of the one who preaches from the word he preaches to them, so that they may not hold the sins of the preacher against the word. Moses, the man of God, also shared in the sins of his people. He also became despondent and discontented at times, he quarrelled with God at the waters of Haad and was therefore not allowed to enter the Promised Land. But behold, Christ is greater than Moses and all the prophets. With him all offense, all vexation falls away. He became like his brothers in all things, yet without sin. With him heart, word, deed, life, everything agreed. He could stand before his enemies and say, "Which of you can accuse me of sin?" In this way he could demand unconditional faith and obedience from his people. Whoever does not listen to this prophet condemns himself.

Moses said to Israel: "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you and your brothers." The LORD God had raised up the man Moses, had called him directly to be a prophet, equipped him with the Spirit and gifts, and confirmed him with great, mighty signs and wonders. No prophet has ever since

arisen in Israel who has performed such signs and wonders as Moses. He executed the judgment of God on Pharaoh and his people. He gave the poor pilgrim people of Israel bread from heaven and water from the rock during their wandering in the desert. The thunder and lightning, the fire and the sound of the trumpet on Mount Sinai were also a confirmation of Moses, the prophet sent by God. Christ, the prophet of the New Testament, performed miracles similar to those of Moses, delivered the afflicted sons and daughters of Abraham from their plagues and diseases, and fed the starving people with miraculous bread. Yes, Christ is greater than Moses and has performed even more and greater signs. He broke down the temple of his own body and raised it up again in three days, gave his life into death and took it out of death again, and now lives for eternity. He still performs miracles every day. When Peter proclaimed Christ to the children of Israel, the prophet of whom Moses had testified, he had just healed the lame man at the beautiful door of the temple in the name of Jesus Christ, the Risen One. Even today Christ sees all the misery of his children, hears the groaning of the afflicted and sends comfort, strength and help from on high. Through the wonderful leadership and government of the Church, God, whom he has sent, Jesus Christ, has certified and confirmed before all the world. Whoever does not hear the words of this prophet closes his eyes to the great deeds of God.

The signs and wonders that Moses performed were only to confirm the words that he spoke to the people in the name of the Lord. He had just been called to be a prophet of Israel, to shepherd and guide the people with his word. And no prophet has spoken as powerfully as Moses. All the prophets of Israel preached God's word, which God put in their mouths. Those who preached their own thoughts and dreams were lying prophets. God revealed himself to all these prophets, the true prophets, through dreams or visions or direct inspiration of the spirit. But no prophet has the testimony that the Scriptures give to Most, the servant of God. "And there no prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord recognized face to face." Moses recognized the LORD face to face and spoke with him from mouth to mouth. On Mount Sinai he communed with God for forty

days and nights. From his communication with God he took the words he taught Israel. And Jesus of Nazareth was and is a prophet, raised up by God, like Moses. He also saw God face to face, spoke with God from mouth to mouth and proclaimed to people what he received from God's mouth. Yes, he is greater than Moses. The words have different meanings when it is said of Moses and when it is said of Christ that he recognized the Lord face to face. Moses only saw a form of God, saw God afterward as he passed by with his glory. Christ looked directly into the unveiled face of God. Moses only spoke with God at times, for days and weeks. Christ was and is with God from eternity to eternity. Moses was only a servant in the house of God, was God's servant and creature. Christ is the Lord who has prepared all things. Heb 3:3-5 He is not only a creature, but God himself, God from God, the image of his being, the reflection of his glory, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. Christ testified of Himself: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Matt. 11:27: "No one has ever seen God. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared it to us." John 1:18 What He Himself has seen and heard with the Father, He has revealed to men. He says: "We speak the things we know, and bear witness to the things we have seen." John 3:11 Yes, he spoke God's word from his own self. God's word was his own word. Moses gave the law to the people of Israel. That was God's word and will. But Moses himself was under the law. All human preachers are under the word they preach and are affected by it. All the prophets testified and said: "Thus says the LORD of hosts." Christ, however, said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you." What he speaks is his own word. He is above the Word. His word has power and validity because he says it. He speaks God's word, but from his own. We have, we hear the word of Christ, and that is God's word. We see in the Word the revealed heart and face of God. Truly, we should listen to this prophet! Whoever rejects the word of Christ despises God and corrupts himself.

II.

But what was it that Christ spoke from his own self? What words of God did this prophet make known to us? And what words did Moses speak? What is the content of the preaching of Moses and the preaching of Christ? Or in other words: What is the ministry of Moses and the ministry of Christ? Christ's ministry has clarity, like Moses' ministry, but Christ's ministry shines with exuberant! Clarity. Moses' ministry had clarity. Moses' face shone after God had spoken to him, "so that the children of Israel could not see the face of Moses because of the clarity of his face." 2 Cor. 3:7. The clearness of his countenance, as St. Paul shows, pointed to the clearness of his ministry. Moses carries out the ministry of the Old Testament. Moses is the mediator of the Old Covenant. The law is given through Moses. And the law has clarity. It is God's word and will. It is good, holy, perfect. It is unbreakable. It shall not pass away until heaven and earth pass away. But what does the law say? Thou shalt! Thou shalt! The law of Moses contains nothing but demands, demands of the holy, majestic God. And these demands are made of men who are dust and ashes, the weak, sinful children of men. They cannot possibly fulfill the demands of the holy God. Thus the law only reveals the weakness, the inability of man. Thus the law only reveals sin; indeed, it makes sin even more sinful and transgressive. Romans 7:7 It is no wonder that people shrink back from Moses' demands, which shame them so deeply, and do not want to hear Moses' voice. But that is precisely why Moses himself, the prophet of God, points the sinful people to another, greater prophet, to Christ. Christ's ministry is as clear as Moses' ministry. What Christ proclaimed is, like the law of Moses, God's word and revelation. But Christ's ministry shines with exuberant clarity. Christ speaks God's word from his own self. And Christ testifies of himself. Christ leads the ministry of the New Testament. Christ's ministry and word is the preaching of the gospel. And the gospel contains no demands, but only promises. Christ comforts poor sinners and says: "Behold, what was impossible for the law, what was impossible for you,

what you neglected and owed, I have fulfilled, I have paid. I have fulfilled all righteousness for your good. I promise you, here I give you my obedience, my justice. Only believe what I tell you, and you will be righteous. Whoever believes in him is righteous. Christ's ministry preaches righteousness. 2 Cor. 3:9 Who would not like to hear this voice?

Mosi's office has clarity. But this clarity is frightening. The fire of divine wrath shines through the law of Moses. Moses preaches to the transgressors: Whoever does not keep all the words of this law is cursed. Moses' ministry is the ministry that preaches condemnation. 2 Cor. 3:9. The law only causes wrath. No wonder the children of Israel could no longer hear the voice of God from Sinai, could no longer see the great fire. But now, in the midst of the thunder, lightning and fire from Sinai, God himself had spoken of another prophet, and what Moses heard from this prophet he proclaimed to his people. And this prophet appeared and turned the curse pronounced by the law into a blessing. Christ's ministry has clarity, like Moses' ministry, but a completely different clarity. Here, in the Gospel, the kindness and luminosity of God our Savior shines forth. The words that Christ speaks are words of life: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my word, he shall never see death." Joh. 8:51: "To whom Moses has already broken the rod and condemned them to hell, this place of freedom is opened: My Savior accepts sinners." Christ calls the sinners, frightened by Moses' threat and curse, to himself and says: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Moses wished to be banished and condemned for his people and asked God: "Blot me out of your book that you have written!" That was not possible. After all, a brother cannot redeem and reconcile anyone. Christ, on the other hand, God's only child, has become a curse for his brothers according to the flesh. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. Christ, this second and greatest prophet, speaks God's word from his own self. And he testifies of himself. What Christ, the Son of God, did and suffered, that Christ died for the transgressors and brought back life and salvation through his suffering, death and resurrection, is proclaimed to us in the Gospel.

Whoever believes in the name of Jesus Christ will be saved and have eternal life. Blessed are all who trust in him!

"You shall hear him!" — namely the second, greater prophet: this is the last command that Moses addressed to his people. This is now the will of God for all time, that people who hear Christ as sinners should believe in Christ. The preaching of Christ is gentle, mild, sweet and comforting. But let no one imagine that this prophet, Christ, will not be as strict and exact in his obedience as Moses! No, Christ's ministry has exuberant clarity. And precisely because Christ's ministry has even greater clarity than Moses' ministry, the one who despises the preaching of Christ also has greater guilt and responsibility. That is why the Lord God told Moses, when he promised him the prophet of the future, that whoever would not hear this prophet, he would demand it of him, and his soul would be cut off. And in the New Testament it says: "If the word spoken by angels has been established, and every transgression and disobedience has received its due reward, how shall we escape if we do not esteem such blessedness?" Heb. 2:2-3. Those whose rod was broken by Moses, the first prophet, will find refuge and grace in Christ, the second prophet. But after Christ there is no longer a prophet, no greater. Whom Christ has broken the rod, whom Christ has condemned because of unbelief, is eternally lost. Therefore, "take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." Heb 3:12 He who has ears to hear, let him hear this prophet, Christ. Hear and believe the gospel! God himself has testified of his Son: Hear him! Amen.

Sixth sermon. [^]—

2 Sam. 7:12-14.

When thy days are fulfilled, that thou shouldest sleep with thy fathers, I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall come from thy body, and I will confirm his kingdom unto him. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men and with the blows of the children of men.

The people of Israel that we have before us in our Advent reflections were a highly favored people. What a great honor this people received when God said to them at Sinai: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Ex 19:6 It was distinguished above all the peoples of the earth, so that Moses testified before his departure: "Where is there such a glorious people, to whom gods are so near as the LORD our God, as often as we call upon him?" Deut. 4:7 But it was precisely the grace of God that distinguished this people and made them great. Israel did not acquire this privileged position through its own worthiness and merits. God had chosen this people by grace, because they lay in his blood and wanted to die. The grace of the LORD was glorified in the history of Israel from the very beginning. Already at Sinai, the people stepped out of God's covenant and then proved to be a disobedient, rebellious people during the wilderness wanderings. Because of their unbelief, God struck down the old generation that had come out of Egypt in the desert. But he did not completely remove his grace and faithfulness from Israel. To the children of those fathers who perished in the wilderness, he fulfilled the promise made to the ancient fathers. After the death of Moses, the man of God, Joshua led the new generation into the Promised Land. Of course, this was not yet the final, perfect rest reserved for the people of God, to

which Joshua introduced Israel. The history of Israel was still striving towards a more distant, higher goal.

Of course, the following history of Israel is also tainted by transgression and iniquity. Soon after Joshua's death, the people forgot the vow of faithfulness they had made to their God under Joshua. The time of the judges was a bleak, dark period. Israel served the gods of the heathen, the neighboring nations, and even though it was humbled for a time by the chastening of the LORD and repented, it always fell away again when the trouble was over. It was a great mercy, patience and long-suffering of God that He did not allow Himself to be wearied by the continued disobedience of His children, but rescued them again and again from the hand of their enemies. And God not only sent his people saviors, judges, who freed them from the bondage of the heathen, but also great prophets, such as Samuel, who worked in the power of God and his Spirit towards a thorough conversion and rebirth. And when, through God's grace, the people had gained a new mind and a new way of life and once again served the God of their fathers with all their hearts, God increased his good deeds and acts of mercy. He led Israel under the kings David and Solomon to great power, honor, prestige, happiness and wealth. David's and Solomon's reigns were the climax and highlight of Israel's history. Then the border of the kingdom, as it had been promised, stretched from the waters of Phrath and the river of Egypt to the Mediterranean. There the land yielded its fruit, Canaan flowed with milk and honey. And also the spiritual blessings, the beautiful services of the LORD, in which Israel then took pleasure and delight, were a gift of grace from the faithful God. And behold, when David, the greatest king of Israel, the man after God's own heart, stood on the height of his power, when the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies, then a distant future grace was announced to him and his house and his people by the prophet Nathan in the name of God, which was to far surpass and outshine all the previous gifts of grace and deeds of God. David's reign culminated in the promise we read in our text, this great, glorious promise of grace from the future Son of David and Lord of David. This promise gave King David a position of honor in the kingdom of God

which eclipsed his royal victories, the royal prestige he enjoyed as king of Israel. The name of David now goes far beyond his lifetime, beyond his people, beyond the borders of his kingdom, because all believers of all lands and peoples, of all times until the end of days, yes, for all eternity, give honor to the son of David. All other grace that has been shown to the people of election, all the patience and long-suffering of God by which Israel has been guided and sustained, has flowed from this source; for the sake of the future King of promise, the Son of David, God has spared Israel, covered all its sin and iniquity and, despite its disobedience, blessed it and promoted its ways.

St. Peter says in his letter that all the prophets prophesied of the grace to come, of the grace of Jesus Christ, and the promise of our text, which Nathan proclaimed to King David in the name of God, is also about the future grace of Christ, the Son of David. When David had rest from all his enemies and stood at the summit of his power, he thought, as we read in our text chapter, 2 Sam. 7, to build a house for the name of the LORD of hosts, and discussed this intention with the man of God, the prophet Nathan, and he approved and confirmed his plan. But Nathan had spoken of his own opinion. That same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan and gave him and King David a different message, so the prophet immediately went back to King David at God's command and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'Shall you build me a house for me to live in? 2 Sam. 7:5 And now God reminded David through Nathan of all the undeserved favor that David and Israel had received from the hands of God from the beginning. From the day he brought Israel out of Egypt, God had never said that they should build him a house, a palace of cedar, but it was his will that Israel should only recognize God's grace and good deeds, and so God, as Nathan further testifies, took David away from the sheepfolds and made him prince over Israel and cut off all his enemies and made him a great name. And this was his will, his intention, not that David should build him a house and set him a monument of honor, not that David should do anything to please God,

but that he should recognize and praise the grace that God had shown him. David also recognized the will of God and, after Nathan had finished speaking, remained before the face of God, humbly giving glory to his grace and saying, "Who am I, Lord, Lord, and what is my house, that you have brought me this far?" 2 Sam 7:18. But Nathan spoke to David in the name of God of a greater grace yet to come. He said, "And the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. Now when thy days are fulfilled, that thou shouldest sleep with thy fathers, I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall come from thy body, and I will confirm his kingdom unto him. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. And I will be his father, and he shall be my son." This great word of promise bowed King David to the ground, so that he continued to speak to God, saying, "You have paid too little attention to this, O LORD, O LORD, but have spoken to your servant's house of things yet to come. This is the way of a man who is the LORD God. And what more shall David speak to you? You know your servant, O LORD, O LORD!" 2 Sam. 7:19-20. The whole of the following prayer is a praise of the great, undeserved grace of God.

The promise that David received also applies to us. The prophets, as St. Peter writes, have prophesied of the grace to come for us, have served us with their prophecy. This promise has been gloriously confirmed and fulfilled. The seed, the Son of David, has come. Christ has established his kingdom. We have, we now hear the gospel of the grace of God in Christ. And this is God's will for us, that we receive the promise of grace in the gospel, just as David received the message of Nathan. We are not to build houses for God, bring sacrifices, render services, but to humbly recognize and acknowledge what God has done for us poor sinners in Christ without all our merit and worthiness. If we now sing hosanna to the Son of David, give him the glory and also honor this king with our work and conduct, this is nothing other than praise and recognition of the grace that has been bestowed upon us. This is the only thing God asks of us, that we recognize and accept his grace, that we rejoice and take comfort in his great grace. So now we praise

The great grace that we owe to the Son of David.

1. the Son of God has condescended into our flesh and blood.
- 2 And so he has raised us children of men to divine dignity and honor.

I.

It is a great promise of grace that we find in our text. It praises the great grace of Christ, the Son of David. What is grace, the grace of a king? Grace is condescension. It is grace when a king condescends to his people, to the poor and lowly among them, and takes cognizance of their concerns and needs in order to provide relief. And such mercy is praised in our text after the King and Messiah of Israel. This word of prophecy culminates in the statement: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." This is said of the seed that will come forth from David's house and lineage when David lies asleep with his fathers, that is, in the distant future. This future offspring from David's lineage will be God's son. And vice versa: the Son of God will be David's son, will be raised from David's seed, will take on the seed of David, the flesh and blood of the children of men. The Son of God will descend into the flesh and blood of men. David praises this future grace when he says: "This is the way of a man who is the Lord God."

Through Nathan, the Holy Spirit gave a great revelation to King David, his house and his people in short but bright and clear words. This mystery of the future had already been hinted at in the previous prophecies. God said to the serpent in paradise: "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed." And then he said of the woman's seed that it should crush the serpent's head. In the promise made to Abraham and the holy patriarchs, it was said that Abraham's seed should be a blessing to all the families of the earth. On the other hand, God spoke

of himself: "I will bless those who bless you." The dying Jacob prophesied of the hero from Judah, to whom all nations would follow. This is honor due to God, the worship of the nations. Balaam saw the king of Jacob who would judge the enemy nations. This is God's business, to judge the nations of the earth with justice. Moses, the man of God, said of the second, greater prophet, who would proclaim God's words to his people as no man can proclaim God's word, who will speak God's word from his "own". But this revelation reached its climax in the great word that God gave to Nathan. Here the mystery of the person of Christ is clearly revealed. The future King and Savior, that seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the offspring of Judah, is to be raised up from David's house and lineage. And this Son of David will be the Son of God, the Son of God as no other is the Son of God, the only Son of the Father. God's only Son will take the seed of David, from David's lineage he will take the seed, the flesh and blood of the children of men.

This prophecy was fulfilled when the Son of God, born of the Father in eternity, was born as a true human being from Mary, the daughter of David. The Son of God did not take human nature around him like a foreign shell, but was born in the flesh, made human flesh and blood his own and is now and remains for eternity what he was then, the Son of David, the Son of Man. This is now his name, this is the name and title of the Son of God: the Son of David, the Son of Man. He is now both the one and the other: the Son of the heavenly Father and the Son and Seed of David. When a person wants to identify himself before his fellow human beings and show who he is, he indicates his lineage, the family from which he comes. Thus the person of the Redeemer is also authenticated with the most certain testimonies. His dual origin is reliably attested. The Father himself has testified: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And the Son of God can prove to me his human origin and birth. He comes from the house and lineage of David. The genealogy with which the Gospel begins is, as it were, the birth certificate

that proves his human descent. And we children of men now praise and bless this great grace, that the Son of the Father, God of nature, has entered into our race, into our flesh and blood.

Yes, a great grace, deep condescension! Between the promise that David received and its fulfillment lay a millennium in the middle. And in this millennium David's lineage descended, step by step, from its height and dignity. At the time that God had reserved for the fulfillment, the descendants of David, the heirs of the promise, Mary and Joseph, were poor, lowly people. And so the son of Mary, the son of David, was also poor and lowly. God's Son appeared on earth in poor circumstances. But he became poor for our sake. For the sake of his brothers, he humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a cross. The lofty revelation: "I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son" is followed by a strange statement. Nathan the prophet testifies of the Son of David and Son of God: "If he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men." How? The Son of God and iniquity? How does that rhyme? God wants to chastise his Son with human rods. He is to bear the punishments of men, the blows that were meant for the children of men. So he also bears the sin and iniquity of men. For this very reason the Son of God was to take on the seed of David, for this very reason the Son of God became man, a poor little man, in order to take upon himself the iniquity and punishment of the children of men, to bear it and to atone for it. We cannot draw Christ down deep enough into the flesh. Yes, this is how he stands before God, his Father: as a sinner and transgressor. The beloved Son is chastened by the Father with human rods. But God also confirmed the following promise to his Son: "But my mercy shall not be taken away from him" (2 Sam. 7:15). He chastened him for the sake of man's iniquity, but did not cast him off and reject him. God's mercy was and remained turned towards him. And God's grace and mercy is now also extended to sinful people in Christ. Thus we sinners praise the exuberant grace, the great, wonderful mystery of the humiliation of the Son of God.

II.

We praise the grace of the Lord, which has lifted up the sinful children of men to divine honor and dignity. This second follows from the first. Grace is condescension. The purpose of such condescension and self-abasement on the part of a great king is to help his subjects, especially the poor and wretched, to comfort and console them. It is the grace of a king when he lifts the lowly from the dust and raises them to honor. It was a mercy that the mighty King Ahasuerus raised poor Esther to the status of princess and queen. It was grace that God looked upon Mary, the lowly handmaid, and made her worthy to become the mother of the Son of God. We all praise the grace of the incarnate Son of God that he raised us sinful human beings to royal, divine honor and dignity.

In our text, Nathan says of the promised son of David: "He shall build a house for my name." Previously it said: "And the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house." 2 Sam. 7:11. Both expressions refer to the same thing. It is the same thing when the Son of David builds a house for the name of the LORD, and when the LORD builds a house for David, when God builds a house for man. Christ, the Son of David, the Son of God, has built a house for the name of the LORD, in honor of the LORD, and has prepared this very house for the children of men. God already had a house in the Old Covenant, which was the tabernacle of the congregation, and then the temple of Solomon. There God dwelt in the midst of his people. There he had established a memorial of his name. From there he testified to his people. That the LORD of hosts dwelt and sat enthroned in their midst was the glory and pride of Israel. From this it could be seen that Israel was truly God's people, a royal priesthood. But the tabernacle of the foundation, the temple of the Old Covenant, was only a shadow image of the future house which Christ, the Son of David, the Son of God, has erected. Christ, having humbled Himself and atoned for iniquity and extended God's grace and mercy to sinners, has been exalted again, and the exalted Son of Man is now gathering the holy Christian church, the whole of

Christianity, through His Word and His Holy Spirit. This is a dwelling place of God in the Spirit, this is the temple of the living God. All those who believe the gospel, who believe in Christ, true man and true God, are living building blocks in this spiritual edifice. To them belongs the honor of which St. Peter writes: "But you are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people of his own possession, that you may proclaim the virtues of him who called you from darkness to his marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9. Yes, those who believe in Christ are now priests of God and serve the living God. The great word of promise applies to us: "But you are the temple of the living God; for God says: I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "I will be your Father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6:16, 18. What an honor! We are now sons and daughters. He who said of Christ, the Son of David, and testified, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son," says to us, "You shall be my sons and daughters." Through Christ, the Son of David, the only Son of God, we have become children, children of God. That is why the Son of God took on the seed of David, the flesh and blood of the children of men, and atoned for the iniquity of the children of men, so that he might bring men to God his Father. Through his Spirit, through his Word, he now dwells in the hearts of believers. The Father and the Son have made their home with us. God, God himself wants to dwell in us and walk in us. God has given his Son, the seed of David, the promise: "And I will confirm the throne of his kingdom." This has been fulfilled. Christ now sits at the right hand of God and lives and reigns. And with his strong arm he protects the people at his right hand. Yes, he has made us priests and kings by God. Through Christ we are priests - and kings. We are lords through Christ, lords over the world, sin, death and the devil. Nothing, nothing, no power of earth or hell can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the high grace, dignity and honor that we owe to Christ, the Son of David, the Son of God.

The promise is: "And I will confirm the throne of his

kingdom for ever." The LORD has spoken to your David and also to us about the distant future. The grace that we owe to the Son of David reaches into the distant future, reaches into eternity. We stand before the throne of the Son of David, Jesus Christ, and worship, saying: "God, your throne is for ever and ever." Heb. 1:8 Yes, though heaven and earth pass away, this throne shall not be moved, but shall stand forever. And whoever takes refuge in this throne, whoever puts his trust in this King and God, will not be put to shame. Christ protects and upholds his own, and even in death, even beyond death, he remains gracious and faithful. One day, in eternity, the divine honor and dignity of which we have become partakers through Christ will be revealed. There we will behold the glory of Christ, the glory of the incarnate Son of God, the only begotten Son of the Father, and we will sit beside him on thrones and reign and triumph with him. Then the house which the Son of David has built for the name of the Lord will be completed. Then we will be fully partakers, body and soul, of the divine nature. Then it will truly be said: "Behold, a tabernacle of God with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and he himself, God with them, shall be their God." Revelation 21:3. And from this temple, from the congregation of the righteous made perfect, the incense of thanksgiving and worship will ascend forever to the Son of David, the Son of God, the Son and the Father, the Triune One. But even now we are joyful and praise the grace of the Lord all our lives, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Praise be to him who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" Amen.

Seventh Sermon. [^]—

Psalm 2.

Why do the nations rage, and the people speak in vain? The kings of the earth rebel, and the lords take counsel together against the LORD and his anointed: Let us break their bands, and cast away their cords from us. But he who dwells in heaven laughs at them, and the LORD mocks them. One day he will speak to them in his anger, and with his wrath he will terrify them. But I have appointed my King on my holy mountain Zion. I will preach of such a way that the LORD has said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee: ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thine inheritance: thou shalt smite them with an iron scepter, thou shalt dash them in pieces like pots. Now therefore, you kings, let yourselves be judged, and you judges of the earth, let yourselves be chastened. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way, for his wrath will soon be kindled. But good to all who trust in him.

When King David was at the height of his power and reign, he received from Nathan the great revelation of a king who would arise from his seed in the distant future and surpass him, the anointed of God, to whom God would confirm the throne of his kingdom forever. The promise of the coming Messiah, the woman's seed, the seed of Abraham, was now bound to the house of David. David immediately bowed before this king and son of David, whom Nathan had set before him, and thanked God for the great grace he had just bestowed on his house. What David had heard and believed, he now also preached to his people. The Holy Spirit, who had opened his eyes to the future, came upon him and made the king of Israel a prophet to his people. In his Psalms, David praised the Son of David, the greater king of the future, whose kingdom would have no end. So now we are edified by the Psalms of David, which are about Christ and his kingdom. However, two of them, in which the suffering and death of Christ is prophesied in particular, belong to the Passiontide.

Of the king, the son of David, who was promised to David, God had said through Nathan: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." It was precisely this word that King

David had taken to heart. And the Holy Spirit gave him even more information about the divine secret of the Son of David and Son of God. Full of the Holy Spirit, he describes in the second Psalm the supernatural, divine majesty of the Messiah, the Son of David. God had given him, David, victory over all his enemies, power and glory. Princes and kings paid homage to him. But the splendor of David's reign was only a pale shadow of the majesty of the king who was to sprout from Israel, from David's lineage, in the distant future. Before the Messiah of Israel, the King of Zion, who both dwells and is enthroned in heaven, all the nations of the earth were to bow, voluntarily or by force. David laid his crown at the feet of this God and King, on whom he directed the eyes of his people. Israel was not to imagine that in him, the first David, the promise of the fathers had already been fulfilled. The prophecy of the second Psalm describes in clear, distinct and powerful words the dignity and majesty, the reign and judgment of the Son of God. These words need no addition. But here too we compare prophecy and fulfillment. The Holy Spirit himself, who gave this prophecy to King David, has interpreted and expounded it in several places in the New Testament Scriptures. And in the light of the fulfillment, in the light of the interpretation given by God himself, the weighty words of our text only gain a brighter glow and luster. Thus we speak on the basis of this text

Of the majesty of the Son of God.

1. Jesus Christ, the Son of David, is truly the Son of God and the King of Israel.
2. He will judge the nations with justice.
3. Therefore let all honor the Son as they honor the Father.

I.

When the Lord Jesus, after being baptized and anointed with the Holy Spirit, first went about in Judea and gathered disciples, Philip also recognized in him the promised Messiah. And he went and called his friend Nathanael and said: "We have found the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote."

And Nathanael came and saw and said, "You are the Son of God and the King of Israel." In doing so, he also confessed him as the promised Christ. It is precisely in this psalm that David the prophet points to the "Son of God, the King of Israel".

The Messiah whom Israel awaited and who has now appeared in the person of Jesus is the Son of God. David testifies to him in our Psalm and says: "I will preach of such a way that the LORD has said to me: You are my Son, today I have begotten you." V. 7 David, the prophet, looks into the depths of eternity. Before the foundation of the world was laid, the eternal Father said to the eternal Son, "Today I have begotten you. It is the today of God, the today of eternity. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, born of the Father in eternity. He is truly the Son of God, begotten and born of the Father. To what man, to what angel has God ever said: "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Heb 1:5: Men and angels are also called children of God. But Christ is the only Son, the only begotten Son of God, begotten from the essence of the Father, not made or created, the only begotten Son, who is from eternity in the Father's bosom. The mystery is great and profound. We cannot say a syllable more about it than Scripture says. Every human interpretation only flattens this divine mystery. Christ is truly and certainly the Son of God. The Father has said to the Son: You are my Son. The Father, God, the Most High, has already borne witness to the Son in eternity. And it is precisely this testimony of the Father that the eternal Son has made known and revealed to us. He says: "I will preach in such a way that the Lord has said to me" and so on. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has proclaimed to us what took place between Him and the Father in blessed eternity. He proclaimed it with his own lips when he walked visibly on earth as man, and preached it to us through the mouth of the prophets and apostles. And based on this testimony of the Son and the Father, the Christian church now confesses: We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, God from God, light from light, true God from true God.

But it is precisely this Son of God, who dwells and is enthroned in eternity, in heaven, that David now sees in the midst of time, in the world,

sitting and reigning on the throne of David, on the holy mountain of Zion. The Father has also testified of the Son: "I have installed my King on my holy mountain Zion." V. 6 The Son of God is the King of Israel. From all eternity the Father has given the Gentiles, the nations, the end of the world to his eternal Son. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession." V. 8: Before the time of the world, the Father had already given the Son the world, humanity, even the lost world, sinful humanity, as a gift. As in heaven, so also on earth he was to be enthroned and reign. For this very purpose, in order to one day take possession of his inheritance, the Son of God, the Lord Jehovah, first chose a people out of all nations, the people of Israel. And when the time was fulfilled, he came into his possession. Then God sent his Son, born of a woman, the daughter of David. But his own did not receive him. Rather, the rulers of the Jews nailed the Lord of glory to the cross. Yet it was precisely through his own blood that the Son of God acquired and purchased Israel and the nations of the Gentiles as his own. And through his resurrection he is powerfully proven before men as the Son of God and Savior of the world. This same Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One, the King of the Jews, now sits at the right hand of God, and because he is exalted, he is present to every creature, to the ends of the earth, and dwells and sits enthroned on his holy mountain Zion, in his people, his church. He gathers from all nations and peoples, from the ends of the earth, a people of his own possession. We have also become his inheritance and property. And as many as receive him, he has given them power to become children of God who believe in his name. We are all God's children through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Through him we have become partakers of the divine nature. And he will one day give us his glory, which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid.

II.

Christ is the Son of God and the King of Israel, to whom all the nations of the world belong. And he will therefore one day judge the nations with righteousness. So says the Scripture. And

in our psalm this scriptural word is interpreted. Alas, most people do not want to acknowledge this God and King, their God and King, they rob him of his divine majesty, they raise strife and war against him. This is what the psalmist says: "Why do the nations rage and the people speak in vain? The kings of the land rebel, and the lords take counsel together against the LORD and his anointed. Let us break their bands, and cast away their cords." V. 1-3 The people of the earth, and especially the great men and princes among the nations, rage and rebel against God and his Christ. They conspire with one another to overthrow the anointed one, the eternal Son, from his throne. They tear the bands and ropes that the Son of God has wrapped around them, the bands and ropes of love with which he chained them to himself when he reconciled mankind to God and redeemed them from sin, death and the devil. They do not want to take on the gentle yoke, the light burden of Christ, or shake it off again when they have carried it for a while. The whole history of the world bears witness to this rebellion of men against God and his anointed. At the time of the Old Covenant, the kings of the Gentiles conspired to destroy the inheritance of Jehovah, the people of Israel, the throne of David. And when the rulers of the Jews had crucified Christ, the Son of God, their King, and now also laid hands on the apostles of Jesus Christ, who bore public witness to this Lord and King, the word of the psalmist was fulfilled again. Then the Christians came together and prayed to God with one accord, saying, "O Lord, you are the God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them, who said by the mouth of David your servant: Why do the nations rebel, and the peoples take up that which is in vain? The kings of the earth are gathered together, and the rulers are gathered together against the LORD, and against his Christ. Indeed, they have gathered together against your holy child Jesus, whom you anointed, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do what your hand and your counsel had previously determined should be done. And now, Lord, consider their threatening, and give your servants all the joy of speaking your word." Acts 4:24-29. For three centuries the pagan emperors endeavored to destroy the kingdom, the church of this Christ with

sword and fire and to eradicate this hated name. Later, the Antichrist arose and stole Christ's honor and majesty and took it upon himself, claiming to be the anointed of God and binding the nations with the iron bands of his commandments and statutes. Even today the people, the princes of the earth, rage, rage and take counsel against the Lord and his anointed. The nations, who at least outwardly have been subject to the scepter and name of Christ for centuries, have torn these bonds apart in the present day and do not want Christ to reign over them. The most venomous, vile blasphemies are uttered by the mockers of these last days against the King on God's throne. The world, both educated and uneducated, is angry and enraged at Christ, the Son of God, who has truly done it no harm. The world loves its lust and therefore spurns the glory of Christ, his grace and truth. The world loves its honor and therefore takes away the honor of the Son of God. The world loves its wisdom and arts and therefore spurns the heavenly, eternal wisdom. Certainly, the mind, the Soul of the world is enmity, resentment, hatred against Christ and his reign. And all it takes is a slight impulse for this furtive anger to burst forth in bright flames.

But the Son of God will calm this boiling, churning sea in his time, stop the raging and raging of his enemies and judge the nations with justice. Now he is still holding on for a while. But even now he laughs and mocks at the foolishness and madness of his enemies. "But he who dwells in heaven laughs at them, and the Lord mocks them." V. 4 And so we too may and should confidently laugh at, mock and defy the wisdom, greatness, power, pleasure and glory of this world. The Son of God sits on David's throne, and the enemies of his kingdom must not go a step further than he allows them to, must not and cannot completely destroy and annihilate his Israel. "And one day he will speak to them in his anger, and with his wrath he will terrify them." V. 5 When the King will come in his glory and his holy angels with him, when the last trumpet sounds, when the judge begins to deal with the lords and kings of the earth, with the insolent, frivolous sinners, then they will all turn pale and be terrified, and their raging and raging will turn into hings and gnashing of

teeth. The father has promised the son: "You shall smite them with an iron scepter, you shall break them like pots." V. 9. In the same way, St. John prophesies in Revelation: "And he shall sheathe them with a rod of iron, and shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Revelation 2:27: He sees in the Spirit a Son, a little child, who should "feed all the nations with a rod of iron". Revelation 12:5 Christ, the Son of God, will in that day, the day of his wrath and anger, smash the whole world like an earthen vessel and crush and cut in pieces all his enemies. Oh, that the people of the earth would turn from their foolish and foolish enterprise in time to come and make peace with the future Judge and give glory to the Son of the Most High!

III.

Yes, all should honor the Son as they honor the Father. The eternal Son himself has commanded this. And the Psalmist explains this instruction and admonition. "So be wise, you kings, and be disciplined, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way; for his wrath will soon be kindled." V. 10-12 Thus we admonish the sinners of the earth, the rebellious: Let yourselves be rebuked and disciplined! Refrain from your wicked ways! Consider whom you are opposing, the supreme King and Judge, who holds heaven and earth and all that is in them in his hand. Serve the Lord with fear, rejoice with trembling. Fear the Lord, who has the power to condemn body and soul to hell. Tremble before the Almighty, who will reward everyone according to his deeds. Serve him, submit to his word and will, his gospel. Yes, rejoice in him, in his salvation, in his grace. With him is much forgiveness. Kiss the Son, pay homage to him, kiss the Son of love, the beloved Son of the Father. God did not send his Son, the Beloved, into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. But he who does not believe will be condemned. The anger of the king is against those who do not believe, and they will remain under the wrath, and they will perish

in the way, and they will be eternally lost. Therefore kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way, for his wrath will soon be kindled.

"But good for all who trust in him." V. 12. This is the comfort of believers who have renounced the world, its lust and its pride and have pledged allegiance to the God and King of Israel. Blessed are all who trust in him, who put their confidence in the Lord God. They have it good. They already have help here in all their troubles, protection and shield against the devil and his rioters. They have peace and joy and righteousness in the God of their salvation. And when the wrath of the Son of God is kindled against the hostile world, when the King sends those on his left into eternal fire, then he will say to those on his right: "Come here, you blessed of my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world!" Then we will attain the heavenly, eternal inheritance and will behold the King in his beauty, the Son of God in his majesty, and will give glory and honor to the Lord and his anointed, to God and his Christ for all eternity. May Christ, the Son of God, help us to do this! Amen.

Eighth sermon. [^]—

Psalm 8.

A Psalm of David, to be sung from the Gith. O LORD our Sovereign, how glorious is your name in all the earth, where thanks are given to you in heaven! Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings you have prepared power for the sake of your enemies, to destroy the enemy and the avenger. For I will see the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have prepared. What is man that thou shouldest remember him, and the son of man that thou shouldest take care of him? You will let him be forsaken by God for a little while. But you will crown him with honor and adornment. You will make him lord over the work of your hands; you have put everything under his feet, sheep and oxen alike, as well as the wild animals, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and the creatures of the sea. O Lord our ruler, how glorious is your name in all the earth!

The second Psalm contains, as we have seen, a clear and distinct prophecy concerning Christ. Whoever reads this psalm will immediately understand what it means, provided that he knows how to read the Scriptures and that the eye of the Spirit is open to him. The King whom David sees enthroned on the throne of David, who will judge all the nations of the earth, is the Messiah of Israel. And of the King Christ it is said that the Father said to him: "You are my Son, today I have begotten you." He is the eternal Son of the Father. The interpretation given by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament only intensifies the light which that prophecy carries within itself. In the case of the eighth psalm, which we will now consider, one might rather doubt whether it speaks of Christ the Messiah. Anyone who only looks at the words of this psalm from above will get the impression that it only praises God, the Creator, in general, who has glorified himself in his creation, especially in man, the Lord and King of creation. This is how this psalm is understood and explained by the unbelieving and also by the so-called revelation-believing interpreters of recent times. God has created heaven and earth, sun, moon and stars, sheep and oxen and the wild animals, the birds under

the sky and the fish in the sea, and God has appointed tiny man, who is hardly worthy of notice, as Lord of all creation and has subjected everything to him. That should be the content of this praise of God. However, if one takes a closer look at the individual statements, the question soon arises as to whether the psalm does not mean something more. We read here the unique passage: "You will let him be forsaken by God for a little while." What is the meaning of this saying if it refers to man and man's fate in general? Does it not rather refer to the particular fate of a specific person? The psalmist goes on to say: "You will crown him with honor and glory." "You have put everything under his feet." How does this correspond to reality? We do not see everything under the feet of man. Yes, who is the prophet talking about? To whom does the Holy Spirit, who spoke through David, point? Does this psalm not also praise the one Son of Man, the one Son of Man, to whom the eyes of all believers have been directed from the beginning? He who destroys the enemy, the avenger, is this not the seed of the woman who is to crush the serpent's head? The fact that in truth Christ is also presented to us in this word of Scripture is clearly demonstrated by the interpretation of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. St. Paul describes the reign of the exalted Christ with the words of the Psalmist. 1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:22. The entire second chapter of Hebrews contains an interpretation of the eighth Psalm. And this is the summary of the interpretation: "But we see that it is Jesus, who has lacked the angels for a little while." Heb 2:9 Whoever compares prophecy and fulfillment has no doubt that Jesus Christ is the focus of this psalm. David is not talking about anyone else here. And just as he gave glory to Christ, the Son of God, in the second psalm, so he describes him in the eighth psalm as the Son of Man, who is to appear for the comfort of men.

The eighth psalm is a prophecy, an Advent psalm, the Christmas psalm that we tend to read on Christmas Eve. We examine and contemplate it in the light of its fulfillment, in the light of the New Testament. According to the Scriptures, especially according to the eighth Psalm, we also confess Christ, the Son of God, as a true

man. "Now that the children have flesh and blood, he has become partaker of it in the same measure." Heb 2:14: In the Gospel, Jesus consistently calls himself the Son of Man. But by giving Himself this title "Son of Man", Jesus wanted to say even more than that He is truly man. And the eighth Psalm also provides even more precise information about this Son of Man. When Jesus calls himself the Son of Man, he describes either his lowliness - "The Son of Man must suffer much, will be scourged, mocked, spit upon and crucified" – or his majesty – "But when the Son of Man comes in his glory" - and at the same time points to the service that he, the Son of Man, wanted to render to the children of men - "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Thus the eighth psalm also shows us first the humiliation, then the exaltation and dominion of the Son of Man and points to the ministry of Christ, the redemption of the human race. It is this Son of Man who restores fallen mankind, who communicates his power to the children of men, even to young children and infants, so that in his name they can overcome all enemies, even the worst enemy, the avenger. Thus we speak on the basis of this prophecy, comparing its fulfillment:

Of the lowliness and majesty of the Son of Man.

1. through his humiliation he has redeemed the children of men from destruction,
2. through his exaltation he has brought honor to the human race.

I.

There is no doubt that the eighth psalm contains praise to the Creator, who has imprinted traces of his glory on heaven and earth. The psalm begins and ends with this: "O Lord, our Sovereign, how glorious is your name in all the earth, where thanks are given to you in heaven." V. 2. 10. The psalmist looks with wonder at "the heavens, the work of his fingers, the moon and the stars, which God has prepared". V. 4. Of course, the crown, the Lord

and king of creation should be man, according to God's will and purpose. The psalmist says of the one man to whom his praise and song are basically addressed: "You will make him lord over the work of your hands; you have put everything under his feet, sheep and oxen alike, as well as the wild animals, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and the creatures of the sea." V. 7-9. These words clearly refer back to the creation account, to the word that God spoke to himself when he wanted to create man: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Gen 1:26 And after God had made Adam and Eve, he repeated the word and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that creeps on the earth." Genesis 1:28 God wants to give the one son of man, of whom the psalmist speaks, the very dominion and kingship that he had intended for the children of men from the beginning.

Man was to rule and reign over all God's creatures. That was God's will. And so it was in the beginning. It was precisely in and through man that God, the almighty Creator, wanted to glorify himself, his power, goodness and wisdom. That is why God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him. The first man, as he emerged from God's creative hand, was a bright mirror in which the eternal light played with its brilliance, reflecting the glory of the invisible God. God had placed man so high, had made him like his image, had lifted him above the angels, the angels were to serve man. But from this height, man has now fallen low, low. He sinned, he rebelled against his Lord and Creator, he insolently threw away his honor and dignity. Indeed, the fall into sin was a deep fall, through which man fell into the deepest shame and lowliness. With that one sinful act, man forfeited and lost the image of God and world dominion. Since then, the human race has been in the deepest ruin. We are all conceived and born in sin,

we all bear the image of fallen Adam, an ugly image, our bodies and souls stained and disfigured by sin. We dishonor God and his holy name instead of giving him glory. We love the creature more than the Creator. And so God has given man, the Lord and King of creation, over to the service of the creatures as punishment. The whole creature is subjected to vanity for the sake of man, for the sake of man's sin. And man is subject to the vain creature, to the service of the perishable being. Man, the weak, powerless man, is now, like a plaything, exposed to the elements of heaven and earth, storm and weather, water and fire, frost and heat. Man must laboriously force the earth to give him its fruit. The field bears him thorns and thistles. He must eat his bread by the sweat of his brow. And over such servant labor his strength is consumed. His life is a walk to death. We are subject to death. The children of men have fallen into the power of the evil spirit, the enemy and avenger, who reigns in sin and death, and who delights in corrupting and destroying the good work of God.

And now the psalmist points to a man, a son of man, who bears the marks of shame and lowliness before others. Of the one who later made himself known to the children of men as "the Son of Man", he says: "What is man that you should remember him, and the son of man that you should take care of him? You will let him be forsaken by God for a little while." V. 5-6 In the Son of Man, Jesus of Nazareth, man's distance from God is most clearly and glaringly evident. No other human being is so deeply humiliated. The last traces of human honor and dignity were, as it were, erased. This human child, the infant Jesus, was bedded on hay and straw, was poorer than the poorest child on earth. The infant Jesus was persecuted by people as soon as he was born. Otherwise a child who is not yet able to offend anyone is left alone. The Son of Man, Jesus of Nazareth, later wandered around his country homeless, like a stranger on earth. He confessed of himself: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but

the Son of Man has not where to lay his head." And in the end he was almost completely abandoned by God, lacked God's comfort and the comfort of God and the angels (Heb. 2:9), and descended into a depth into which no other mortal man could follow him. There in Gethsamene he writhed in the dust like a worm. Yes, he was a worm and not a man. He was the most despised and unworthy, so that all the children of men hid their faces from him in horror. "Behold, what a man!" Thus said the judge Pontius Pilate. The world has never seen such a man again. As he hung on the cross, between heaven and earth, he was forsaken by God and angels and men, he suffered torments of body and soul that no human mouth can utter, no human mind can grasp and comprehend.

But through such deep humiliation, he redeemed the children of men, his brothers, whose flesh and blood he took on, from destruction. He was the only holy, spotless man who ever lived on earth. In his life, suffering and death, he gave God the glory, gave God back the glory that Adam and Adam's generation had robbed from God. And "he has now tasted death for all". Heb 2:9 The Son of Man stood in the place of mankind. The Holy One interceded for sinners. And so he "made atonement for the sins of the people", the sins of all mankind. Heb 2:17 But now that the source of misery and misery, sin, has been stopped, death has also lost its power. "He redeemed those who through fear of death were in bondage all their days." Heb. 2:15 Now we sinful, mortal children of men no longer need to fear death and can endure all the hardships of this life with patience and courage. Through his death, the Son of Man "took away the power of death from him who had the power of death, that is, from the devil". Heb 2:14 The enemy, the avenger, can no longer harm us. The Son of Man, JESUS, was and is Himself the ruler of all the earth, the God and King of heaven and earth, and for this very purpose the Son of God took on the flesh and blood of the children of men and humbled Himself so deeply under God, under angels and men, so that He could save men from the depths, redeem them from destruction, free them from their chains, the bonds of sin, death and the devil.

II.

But he was only abandoned by God for a short time. God himself then crowned him with honor and adornment. V. 6 He perfected him through suffering. The Son of Man is now exalted. And through his exaltation he has brought honor to the human race. God has made him Lord over the work of his hands; he has put all things under his feet, sheep and oxen alike, as well as the wild animals, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and the creatures of the sea. V. 7-9 This poor, lowly man, the scorn of men and the contempt of the people, the spectacle of angels, now reigns over heaven and earth and all creatures. And he not only shines in the royal glory of the first Adam, whom God had also put all things under his feet. The second Adam has now also freely unfolded the supernatural, divine majesty that was inherent in his human nature from the beginning and which he kept hidden during his lowliness. Not only as Adam ruled over the earth and all animals before the Fall, not only as a perfected man in God's image and will, but as a man who is God, the Lord Himself, as ruler and creator of heaven and earth, He now rules in heaven and on earth and fills all things and governs all things. This man Jesus sits on God's throne and has now been given the scepter of omnipotence, the supreme rule over all created things.

And for the good of the children of men, his brothers according to the flesh, he administers his royal, divine reign over heaven and earth. For this very purpose, as the letter to the Hebrews testifies, God perfected the Duke of blessedness through suffering, so that he might lead many children to glory. Heb 2:10 It is the Son of Man who "sanctifies" us. Heb 2:11 He has opened our eyes so that we may rightly recognize him, his God-human majesty, our Lord and Saviour. He, the exalted Son of Man, has drawn us to himself, bound us to his throne, to his scepter. He has crowned us with adornment and honor. He has adorned and adorned us with his image, his blood and righteousness. Through him we are "pure and beautiful and perfect, formed in the best image". We are people of pleasure, to God's praise and honor. He, the perfected Son of Man, sanctifies, cleanses and purifies us continually through his Spirit. He draws us into his likeness,

into his following. Behold, the noble features of the divine image gradually become visible again in the sanctified people who believe in Jesus Christ. The image of the old Adam is fading, the image of the new Adam is emerging ever more clearly. He, the Son of Man on God's throne, protects His own, His Church, against all the raging of the enemies. "In that he has suffered and is confounded, he is able to help those who are tempted." Heb 2:18 He makes us mortal, powerless children of men partakers of his divine power and strength. Thus, even from the mouths of young children and infants who are baptized in his name, he has prepared for himself a power, a praise. V. 3 Christians, great and small, who sing hosanna to the Son of David (Matt. 21:16) and believe in his name, overcome all their enemies, even the worst enemy, "the avenger". The apostle John writes to his little children: "You have overcome the evil one." 1 John 2:14 The old evil enemy, who destroyed the first work of God, Adam and Adam's generation, can now and never overcome and destroy this second work of God, the creation of the Son of Man, the Church of Christ. The devil, who has brought men to ruin and made them sinners, cannot prevent sinful men from being saved and blessed and from honoring and praising the ruler of all the earth, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, for all eternity.

The exalted, perfected Son of Man leads many children to glory. Heb 2:10: There we will be fully honored. There the image of God in man will be completely restored. There the righteous will shine like the sun, moon and stars, and will be more beautiful than the first Adam in his state of innocence. Our mortal body will then also resemble the transfigured body of Christ. We will see the eternal light. We will rule and reign with Christ, the Son of Man, we will judge the world and the angels with him. And for eternity we will give glory to Him who sits on the throne and exalt His glorious name. This glory is certain for us. Our guarantor and head is already exalted and perfected. We are and remain united to him. That is why we already praise: "Lord, our ruler, how glorious is your name in all lands, where thanks are given to you in heaven!" Amen.

Ninth sermon. [^]—

Psalm 16.

A golden jewel of David. Keep me, O God, for I trust in you. I have said to the LORD, "You are the LORD; I must suffer for your sake, for the saints who are on earth and for the glorious ones, in whom I delight. But those who follow after another will have great sorrow. I will not sacrifice their drink offerings with the blood, nor take their name in my mouth. But the Lord is my good and my portion; you will receive my inheritance. The lot has fallen to me in the sweetest way; I have been given a beautiful inheritance. I praise the Lord, who has given me counsel; my kidneys also chasten me at night. I have the LORD always before my eyes, for he is at my right hand; therefore I shall remain well. Therefore my heart rejoices, and my honor is glad; my flesh also shall lie down safely. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to perish. You make known to me the way to life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and at your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

Luther says of this psalm: "It is one of the most beautiful and glorious psalms." And that is why he places the psalm so highly, because it prophesies of Christ, because the apostles led this psalm so powerfully. That is why it is a precious gem. The New Testament proves that this psalm speaks of Christ. Peter, in his speech at Pentecost, and Paul, in the sermon he preached at Antioch in Pisidia, testify that the words of the psalmist: "I have the Lord always before my eyes, for he is at my right hand; therefore I shall continue. Therefore my heart rejoices, and my honor is glad; my flesh also shall lie down safely. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to perish. You make known to me the way to life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and at your right hand there are pleasures forevermore" - that these words were fulfilled when Christ rose from the dead. Acts 2:25-31. 13:34-37. David died and was buried and remained in the grave, so he could not have said these words of himself, but as a prophet he foresaw and proclaimed

the resurrection of Christ, the fruit of his loins, the Son of David. But the psalm is not exclusively about the resurrection of Christ. It is the same I who speaks throughout the entire psalm. It is Christ who speaks here, and he says even more about himself than that he will penetrate through death to life. Here he reveals the attitude of his heart, he shows how he relates to God, that God is his good and his portion, that he always has the Lord before his eyes. And what he says here about himself is intended to benefit the saints and glorious ones on earth, in whom he delights. Everything that is written here about Christ serves to comfort and strengthen us. Luther comments on this psalm: "No one has given God such complete glory as Christ. Christ is the One who began to honor God rightly, and from Him we have it." David, the king and prophet, was honored with great visions and revelations from God. On several occasions, he clearly heard the future son of David, the Messiah, speak. Thus in the second psalm: "I will preach of such a way." The entire sixteenth psalm is Christ's speech. We understand this self-testimony of Christ, who has now appeared, even better in the light of the New Testament than David understood it for his own person. The prophets have served us with what they prophesied about Christ. 1 Pet 1:12 That we may therefore take such words of prophecy to heart.

We sing, especially at Advent and Christmas time: "What I lost in Adam and Eve through death, you have won for me, Jesus, through life and suffering." It is a very comforting thought that we have regained through Christ what we lost through Adam. What we lost through Adam was above all life, the true, divine life, God Himself and the life that is of God. And it is precisely this life that Christ has brought back. This is why we pray and ask: "Lead me at last, O Jesus, into eternal life, which you promised to give to those who believe, so that I may rejoice eternally with God without distress, sorrow or death." From the prophecy of the Psalms we have first recognized the majesty of the Son of God, then the lowliness and majesty of the Son of Man. This psalm names the great good that we owe to Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man. We recognize:

Christ is the way to life, to the life that is of God.

We consider the triple:

1. we are all alienated from God by nature and from the life that is of God.
- 2 Christ stood and remained in the fellowship of God and lives with God for eternity.
- 3 And now Christ helps us to live godly here temporally and there eternally.

I.

We are all alienated from God by nature and from the life that is of God. What is it that we have lost in Adam and Eve? Adam enjoyed the glory of paradise, the delicious fruits of God's garden, and made all animals his subjects. But in this alone, in the enjoyment and government of the creatures, he found no satisfaction. That is why God gave him the woman as his helpmate. Man and woman were to support and serve each other. People were to be united in love, fulfill their calling on earth with each other and enjoy the goodness of God. But that was not yet the highest. The most beautiful pearl, the most precious jewel in the crown that Adam and Eve wore was the fellowship of God. God was their highest, dearest and best possession, the noblest treasure of all. The bliss of paradise culminated in the fact that God himself had fatherly relations with mankind. And so the eyes and hearts of men were fixed on God. They feared, loved and trusted God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind and with all their strength. And in God they rejoiced in the fellowship among themselves and all creatures. God was the light of their lives.

And this very crown has now fallen from Adam's head. Adam turned his eyes to the forbidden fruit, turned his heart away from God. And so all who are born of Adam are now alienated from God and the life that is of God. There is no longer any fear or love of God in man. Man's heart and mind are alienated from God, the highest good, indeed they are hostile to God. It is attached to the

creature. Now, to use the words of our psalm, they hasten after another and speak the names of their idols. V. 4 They swear by the creature, by their own head, by their own honor. They trust in mammon. They feed their hearts on the ungodly lusts of the corrupt world. And because they have not honored and praised God as their God and Creator, God has given them over to their perverse minds and shameful lusts. God has now also severed his connection with mankind. People now live without God, without comfort and support and light in this world. Since the covenant with God has been severed, the other bond that bound people together, the bond of brotherly love, of love for one's neighbor, has also been dissolved. As the psalmist says, they mix their drink offering with blood. They are in a hurry to shed blood. Even all other happiness, the blissful enjoyment of paradise is turned into misery and misery. Those who chase after earthly treasures and pleasures cause themselves much pain and great heartache, as our text testifies. And the worst and most lamentable thing is that lost, sinful people do not even see and feel this lack, their poverty and nakedness, and do not show the slightest desire to regain what they have lost.

But behold, from the very beginning, God drew near again in a different, new way to man, who had become alien and hostile to him, who was afraid of him, who fled from him. With the word of promise, he approached sinful man. In the word of promise, he showed them what was lost and promised restitution. Through this word, he awakened a longing for the lost good. The ancient fathers, who believed the promise, now waited and hoped for perfect reunion with God. The pious fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, not only desired to possess the land, the earthly Canaan, but set their eyes on the city above, which God was building. The prophets of Israel, all pious Israelites longed for God, the eternal good, for fellowship with God. This was their longing, their daily sighing and pleading: "My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When will I come to see the face of God?" Even we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, still long with ourselves to see God, God's face,

nor the bonds of the flesh, the stupid flesh that flees from God and shrinks back. Our soul thirsts for God, the living God.

II.

This longing has been fulfilled. What we lost in Adam, we have regained through Christ. Christ stood and remained in the fellowship of God and lives with God for eternity. Christ's entire being and life was determined and hidden in God. He was "the Holy One of God" (v. 10), the eternal Son of the Father, who is in the Father's bosom. At no time, not for a moment, did the only begotten Son step out of the bosom of the Father. The Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son. The Son knows the Father, and the Father knows the Son. The Son loves the Father, and the Father loves the Son. The Son rejoiced from eternity in the light and splendor of God, for he was the image of his being and the reflection of his glory. And so the human life of Jesus was also completely directed towards God, resolved in God.

It is the Son of David, the incarnate Son of God, who speaks in our psalm. This man Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of Mary, has "fully given glory to God". He feared God, loved God, trusted God above all things, with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, with all his strength, at all times and without interruption. This was his motto from childhood: "I have said to the Lord: You are the Lord, apart from you I have no good." V. 2: "The Lord is my good and my portion." V. 5. He always had God before his eyes. V. 8. Therefore, as a twelve-year-old boy, he denied his father and mother and said, "Do you not know that I must be in my father's house?" When the devil offered him the glory of this world, he drove him away. He wanted to serve God, God alone. He hated and punished the adulterous generation of his time, which hurried after another who mixed his drink offering with blood. He had no joy on earth, only hardship, want and deprivation. Yet he rejoiced in spirit; the Lord was his good and his portion. He was the most miserable of all the children of men. His lot had truly fallen to him among thorns. He had to drink the bitter cup all his life. Yet he boasts:

"The lot has fallen to me in the sweetest way." V. 6 The Lord was his fine lot, his portion, the cup and fountain of his joys. He always had God before his eyes. In the midst of his fine work, for example, when he had the deaf-mute before him and wanted to lay his healing hand on him, he sighed out to God. When he gave bread to the hungry people, when he wanted to raise Lazarus from the dead, he thanked God. This was his song: "I praise the Lord, who has given me counsel; my kidneys also chasten me in the night" - that is, remind me of thanksgiving and prayer. V. 7 He talked to God all night long, prayed to God. And so he also prayed to God that he would preserve for him his inheritance, the glory that he had with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid. V. 5 He always had the Lord before his eyes. Therefore he was certain: "He is at my right hand, therefore I shall remain." V. 8 God was with him and did not remove his hand from him. God showed him all his works. The whole life and work of Jesus was uninterrupted communication and exchange with the Father. And even when he had to suffer in the end, he said to God: "Keep me, God, for I trust in you." V. 1 Even as he wrestled with death in Gethsemane and writhed on the cross, he had God before his eyes, and even then he said: "My lot has fallen on the sweet. I will drink the cup of salvation. My soul is at rest in God. He rested completely in God's counsel and will. He knew and did not doubt: The Lord is at my right hand, therefore I shall remain well, even in death I shall remain well and not be put to shame. And so it happened.

Christ died and lives for eternity. Death separated his body and soul. But the bond that united him with God was not severed by death. Even in death, he still boasts: "Therefore my heart rejoices, and my glory is glad; my flesh also shall rest secure. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to perish." V. 8-10: His soul was with God in paradise, his body rested in the grave, but even then it was still in God's hands. That is why he did not see decay. It was impossible for the Prince of Life, the Son of God, to be held by death and see corruption. Christ was resurrected and God lives forever. His hope has been fulfilled: "Thou hast made known unto me the way of life: in thy presence is

fulness of joy, and pleasantness at thy right hand for ever." V. 11. He now sits at the right hand of God and, as a man, beholds the glory that he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, beholds the fullness of joy and the lovely nature that is at the right hand of God, that is before the face of God.

III.

And Christ now helps us to live divinely here temporally and there eternally.

What Christ testifies and praises in this psalm is for the saints who are on earth and for the glorious ones in whom he delights. V. 3 He has fully given glory to God in our place. He is a perfect man of God. All God's pleasure rests on him. And we are included in this pleasure of God. Whoever of sinful mankind believes in the incarnate Son of God, who honored God in his life, suffering and death and now lives with God for eternity, is righteous and pleasing to God in the Beloved.

But Christ now actually shares this way and attitude with us. He helps us to live divinely, even here in time. It is from him that we honor God. He makes us like his image. He gives us a new meaning, his meaning. We are reborn and sanctified through his Word, through his Spirit. There are "saints" on earth, sanctified people in whom the mind of Christ lives, who in turn give glory to God, who fear, love and trust God with all their heart, whose life is hidden with Christ in God. These saints, in whom God is well pleased for Christ's sake, deny the world and everything else and do not take other people's names on their lips. They say: "I will not sacrifice their drink offering with the blood." They say to God: "You are the Lord. The Lord is my good and my portion." Yes, my lot has fallen to me in the sweetest way. God is my portion and my inheritance. "And if I have only you, I ask nothing for heaven and earth. Even if my body and soul languish, you, God, are always my heart's comfort and my portion." Whatever they do in word or deed, they do in the name of Jesus Christ and give thanks to God and the Father through him. They live God, talk to God even at night

on their bed. They always have the Lord before their eyes, even in the hour of fear and distress. Then they pray to God: "Keep me, God, for I trust in you." And they are certain that the Lord is at their right hand and that they will therefore remain well. The Lord preserves their inheritance. Yes, there is a congregation of saints on earth who serve God and give thanks through Jesus Christ their Lord.

And these saints are also the "glorious ones" of whom our psalm says. Christ will glorify his own. He helps us to live divinely, here temporally and there eternally. We will remain well, even in death. Death separates body and soul, but does not separate body and soul from God. The soul of the saints rejoices and is joyful in God, and their flesh will also lie secure. The bodies of the saints, though they see corruption, are not kept from death forever. They will be resurrected, and then body and soul will rejoice in the living God. Then we will see our inheritance, the glory of Christ. Then we will praise and say: "You make known to me the way to life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and at your right hand there are pleasures forevermore." And so we ask and implore even now: "Lead me at last, O Jesus, into eternal life, which you have promised to give to those who believe, so that I may rejoice with God forever without trouble, sorrow or death." Amen.

Tenth Sermon. [^]—

Psalm 40.

A Psalm of David, to be sung aloud. I waited upon the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry, and drew me out of the horrible pit, and out of the mire, and set my feet upon a rock, that I might tread with safety; and gave me a new song in my mouth, to praise our God. Many will see this and fear the Lord and hope in him. Blessed is the man who puts his hope in the Lord and does not turn to the arrogant and those who deal in lies. O Lord my God, great are your wonders and your thoughts, which you demonstrate in us. Nothing is like you. I will proclaim them, and tell of them, though they cannot be counted. Sacrifices and grain offerings do not please you, but you have opened my ears. You do not make burnt offerings or sin offerings null and void. Then I said, "Behold, I am coming; the book is written about me; I will gladly do your will, my God, and your law is in my heart. I will preach righteousness in the great congregation; I will not let my mouth be stopped, Lord, you know that. I will not hide your righteousness in my heart; I will speak of your truth and your salvation; I will not hide your goodness and faithfulness from the great congregation. But you, Lord, will not turn away your mercy from me; let your goodness and faithfulness keep me always. For suffering without number has surrounded me; my sins have seized me so that I cannot see; there are more of them than hairs on my head, and my heart has failed me. Be pleased, O Lord, to save me; make haste, O Lord, to help me. Let them be ashamed and put to shame who are after my soul, that they may kill it; let them fall back and be put to shame who do me evil. They must be terrified in their shame who cry out about me: There, there! All who seek you must rejoice and be glad; and those who love your salvation must say everywhere, "Praise be to the Lord! For I am poor and miserable, but the LORD cares for me. You are my helper and savior; my God, do not consume.

"Then I said, 'Behold, I am coming; in the book it is written of me. Your will, my God, I delight to do, and your law is in my heart.'" These words are at the heart of this psalm. Who is speaking here? Is it David? Is David talking about himself here? How can David say: "It is written of me in the book"? The fathers did not hope for David, they did not write about David. David is not the Messiah of Israel. No, these are the words of the Son of David, who speaks through David's mouth. Moses and the prophets testify to the Son of David, to Christ. Christ is the core and star of Scripture. From the words themselves we can recognize the one who speaks here. And the New Testament confirms this interpretation. The

Epistle to the Hebrews expressly puts these words of the psalmist into the mouth of Christ, the Son of David. In the tenth chapter of Hebrews it says: "Therefore, when he comes into the world, he says, 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but you have prepared the body for me. Burnt offerings and sin offerings do not please you. Then said I, Behold, I come; in the book it is written of me first of all, that I should do thy will, O God.'" Hebrews 10:5-7 speaks of the coming of Christ into the world, of the Advent of Christ. And it is the same person who speaks all the words of this psalm. The whole psalm is about Christ. Much of what is written here sounds so human, as if a distressed, afflicted human child were sighing to God and crying out for help. "I waited for the Lord, and he leaned down to me, and heard my cry, and drew me out of the cruel pit." V. 2-3 "I am poor and miserable." V. 18. But the Son of God, who came into the world, truly became man and made all the plagues and lamentations of the poor, miserable children of men his plague and lamentation. We cannot draw Christ down deep enough into the flesh. Yes, it seems as if a sinner and transgressor is speaking here. "My sins have taken hold of me, so that I cannot see; there are more of them than hairs on my head." V. 13 How does this fit into Christ's mouth? He is not a sinner like us and our children. But Christ took the sins of men upon himself, imputed our sins to himself.

"Then I said, 'Behold, I am coming; in the book it is written of me. Your will, my God, I delight to do, and your law is in my heart.'" These words form the center of this psalm. From here, light falls on all the other statements. In these words, Christ, the Son of David, testifies to his willingness and readiness to fulfill God's will, to carry out God's mission in the world. This willing obedience is the keynote of his life, suffering and death and gives his work and ministry, which is otherwise dealt with in this psalm, the right meaning, its great value. The psalmist also remembers the church of God, those who fear the Lord and hope in him, those who love his salvation and always say: "Praise be to the Lord. The King who is coming has the people at his side,

who receive him and serve him willingly. And it is he, the King himself, who awakens his people to willing service and obedience. This is how we speak now:

Of Christ's and Christians' willing service and obedience.

1. it was Christ's will, desire and joy to do God's will, to serve mankind.
- 2 And he gives Christians the willingness and joy to serve and obey him.

I.

"Then I said, 'Behold, I am coming; in the book it is written of me. Your will, my God, I delight to do, and your law is in my heart.' V. 8. 9 This was the solution with which the Son of David entered the world. As the letter to the Hebrews says, he came into the world, he entered the world. So he was already before he came. He came and said: "Your will, my God, I will gladly do." So he already knew the one whom he then calls his God. He was with God in the beginning. He came into this world from God, from heaven. He says: "It is written of me in the book." From the beginning, the holy people of God, driven by the Holy Spirit, have spoken and written about him. From the beginning, he has testified of himself to people through prophecy. He prepared his arrival in Israel. He longed, as it were, for his humiliation. He longed to redeem mankind. So he came and fulfilled the prophecy. He came and said: "Your will, my God, I will gladly do." He came, the Father had sent him. It was the Father's will that he should save the world, rescue the lost world, take upon himself the misery and misery of mankind. But it was also his own will. He said: "Yes, Father, yes, from the bottom of my heart, I will bear it for you. My will depends on your mouth, my work is your word." Yes, indeed: "He comes, he comes with will, he is full of love and desire to satisfy all the fear and need that he is aware of in us." That was and remained the solution of his life: "I love to do your will, my God, and I have your law in my heart." "Sacrifice and grain offering do not please you, but you have opened my ears. You will neither

Burnt offerings and sin offerings." V. 7 He had an open ear for God's voice and will, he carried God's word and law in his heart. He was obedient to God in all things and thus served mankind. We have not fulfilled any of God's commandments correctly. Nothing is more repugnant to man than obedience to God's commandment and law. Man would rather sacrifice and devise for himself all kinds of works that are not pleasing to God. But behold, now Christ has come and taken our place, and has fulfilled what we failed to do, gladly fulfilled what we were reluctant to do, and through his obedience has made the law of God sufficient.

"Behold, I come; your will, my God, I will gladly do." Thus spoke Christ, the Son of David, even as he lowered himself into the depths of suffering. He was and remained obedient until his death on the cross. He was lowered into "a cruel pit", into deep "mud" (v. 3), into shame and lowliness, pain and agony, such as no man has ever experienced. He had to lament: "I am surrounded by suffering without number." V. 13 A great and cruel army of torment invaded him. Enemies "were after his soul to kill him." V. 15. Enemies feasted on his agony and cried out gleefully: "There, there!" V. 16 And the most sensitive thing was that he felt the sting of sin. He cried out and said, "My sins have taken hold of me so that I cannot see; there are more of them than hairs on my head, and my heart has failed me." V. 13 His heart had lost strength and stability. He himself was without sin; he did not violate the law of God, which he carried in his heart, with a single word or wrong thought. But the sin of the world was upon him, and the sins of men on earth are more than the hairs of his head. Yet even when he tasted the bitterest cup, he was obedient to the Father and said: "Not my will, but yours be done!" He said: "I will suffer it gladly." "Your will, my God, I gladly do." With willingness, yes, with great patience and submission, with joy he gave himself as a burnt offering and sin offering for the sin of the whole world. He had come to serve and give his life for the redemption of many. Thus, in the midst of the suffering and torment of death and hell, he rested in his God's will and uttered nothing but supplication, prayer and thanksgiving. He said: "I am poor and miserable."

V. 18. "Let it please thee, O Lord, to deliver me: make haste, O Lord, to help me."
V. 14. "But you, Lord, will not turn away your mercy from me; let your goodness and faithfulness keep me always." V. 12. "I wait for the Lord." V. 2. Such pleading and supplication ended in praise and thanksgiving: "I waited for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry, and drew me out of the pit, and out of the mire, and set my feet upon a rock, that I might tread with safety, and gave me a new song in my mouth, to praise our God." V. 2-4: "Let them be ashamed and put to shame who are after my soul, that they may destroy it; let them fall back and be put to shame who do me evil. They must be terrified in their shame who cry out about me: There, there!" V. 15. 16 Because he learned and practiced obedience in suffering, because he was obedient to the point of death on the cross, because he so willingly gave his life into death, that is why this sacrifice was so sweet and so pleasing to God, that is why God then also redeemed him and set his feet on a rock and gave him a new song in his mouth. And so we are reconciled. Yes, through the willing obedience of Christ, through his suffering obedience, through his will, as the letter to the Hebrews says, through his will we are sanctified, redeemed, saved. Heb 10:10.

And now the psalmist sees the Son of David exalted after suffering and crowned with adornment and honor. He sees him sitting on the throne of his father David, enthroned in his kingdom and reigning as he feeds his congregation with his word. He says: "Lord my God, great are your wonders and your thoughts, which you demonstrate in us. Nothing is equal to you. I will proclaim them and tell of them, though they cannot be counted." V. 6 "I will preach righteousness in the great congregation; behold, I will not stop my mouth, Lord, you know that. I will not hide your righteousness in my heart; I will speak of your truth and your salvation; I will not hide your goodness and faithfulness from the great congregation." V. 10. 11 He wants to preach, to speak, and not remain silent. It is his delight to show and proclaim before the great congregation the wonderful thoughts of God, the wonderful counsel of God that has gone forth through him, God's righteousness and the salvation that has come to him and through him to men, God's goodness and faithfulness, which is now open to the whole world.

Through word and preaching Christ testifies to the church as its Lord and Savior. Through word and preaching he still fulfills the will of his God today and gathers a people of ownership who are now also willing to serve and obey God.

II.

The mind of Christ lives in Christians. They have the Spirit of Christ, a willing, joyful spirit. Christ, the Lord, says in our Psalm: "Many will see this, and fear the Lord, and hope in him." V. 4 Christ sets before them in the Word the wonderful thoughts and works of God, what God has done in him and through him. And many see it, they hear these new and great things which the Lord has preached to them, are amazed, give glory to the Lord and now believe and hope in the Lord who has redeemed and saved them. And it is precisely his word, the gospel of his grace, love and faithfulness, which moves hearts, which wins over the rebellious, which converts and corrects sinners. When the sinner realizes what the Lord has done and suffered for him, how willingly he has given himself for him, his hard heart melts and begins to love again the One who loved us even unto death. Many will see and fear the Lord and hope in him. Thus Christ gathers through the word, through the preaching of the gospel, "a great church", a people of his own who are devoted to him, who obey his word from the heart, who serve God with joy, who carry God's law in their hearts and are diligent in all good works.

And Christians who are Christ's own then remain faithful and obedient to their Lord and King even in suffering. The psalmist says: "Blessed is he who puts his hope in the Lord and does not turn to the proud and to those who deal in lies." V. 5: Those who serve Christ the King certainly have a hard time in this world. The arrogant, the liars, who defy and hate this gracious King, also seek the souls of Christians in order to kill them, and when Christians have given themselves away and denied obedience, they cry out in glee: "There, there! And there are also other sufferings without number, to which especially Christians who fear the Lord and hope in the

Lord are exposed. Christians in particular are often seized and frightened by their sins as if by force. And the evil enemy throws them into the pit, into the mud, into embarrassing fear and temptation. But blessed are those who even then put their trust in the LORD, the LORD of hosts, the Son of David, who suffered for his sake and has now overcome all fear and torment. Blessed are those who willingly submit to all humiliations, who place their will in the will of their God and say even under the heaviest blows: "Praise be to the Lord!" V. 17. Blessed are those who cry out and pray from the depths, who do not grumble and contradict, but sigh and cry with a childlike mind and spirit: "I am poor and wretched. But the Lord cares for me. You are my helper and savior; my God, do not forgive." "Let it please you, Lord, to save me; make haste, Lord, to help me." "But you, Lord, will not turn away your mercy from me; let your goodness and faithfulness keep me always." Blessed are those who suffer, sigh, cry and pray with Christ. They will finally be able to boast with him: "I waited for the Lord, and he leaned upon me, and heard my cry, and drew me out of the cruel pit and out of the mud, and set my feet upon a rock, that I might tread safely." Those who suffer with Christ are saved with Christ, by Christ. It is Christ, their Savior and King, who sustains their heart, their courage and their faith in suffering and anguish, and who in His time will also lift them up and refresh them.

Those who are Christ's own say in joy and sorrow all their lives: "Praise be to the Lord! Christ himself, the Lord, calls them to praise and thanksgiving: "All who seek you must rejoice and be glad, and those who love your salvation must always say, 'Blessed be the Lord! V. 17 He himself puts a new song in their mouths. V. 4 Through his gospel, through the word of grace and salvation, he fills our hearts with joy, delight, pleasure and love. So we sing a joyful hosanna to the King, the Son of David, for the rest of our lives. We sing and play to the Lord in our hearts. And one day, when he comes the other time and redeems us from the last evil and takes us into his heavenly kingdom, we will serve him and sing praises to him in eternal righteousness, innocence and bliss. Amen.

Eleventh Sermon. [^]—

Psalm 45.

A bridal song and instruction for the children of Korah, to sing of the roses. My heart writes a song of his; I will sing of a king; my tongue is the pen of a good scribe. You are the most beautiful of all the children of men, your lips are fair; therefore God blesses you forever. Gird your sword at your side, O hero, and adorn yourself beautifully. May you succeed in your adornment. Show thyself good to the truth, and keep the wicked in the right: so shall thy right hand do wonders. Sharp are your arrows, so that the nations fall down before you, in the midst of the king's enemies. O God, your throne will remain forever and ever; the scepter of your kingdom is a straight scepter. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions. Your garments are myrrh, aloes and kezia, when you step out of the ivory palaces in your beautiful splendor. The daughters of kings walk in your jewelry; the bride stands at your right hand in precious gold. Listen, daughter, look upon it and incline your ears, forget your people and your father's house; then the king will delight in your beauty, for he is your Lord, and you shall worship him. The daughter of Zor will be there with a gift; the rich of the people will plead before you. The king's daughter is all glorious within; she is clothed in pieces of gold. She is brought to the king in embroidered garments, and her playmates, the virgins who follow her, are brought to you. She is brought with joy and gladness and given to the king's palace. Instead of your fathers you will have children; you will make them princes in all the earth. I will remember your name from child to child; therefore the nations will give you thanks forever and ever.

The holy prophets, and especially the psalmists in their prophecy, depict the future of the Messiah, Christ and his kingdom with the sweetest colors. In the psalm now before us, the kingdom of the Son of David is praised. The king, the bridegroom, of whom the bride is his own, is not a prince from Israel, not Solomon celebrating his wedding with the Egyptian king's daughter, as the blind scribes of the present day dream. Even the synagogue of the Jews has not been able to completely close its dim eye to the light that shines from this psalm. In interpreting this psalm, it remarks: "Your beauty, O King Messiah, is more excellent than the children of men." The New Testament, the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, gives us the key to the interpretation. The words of this psalm: "God, your throne remains forever and ever;

the scepter of your kingdom is a straight scepter. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest ungodliness: therefore God, thine anointed with the oil of gladness, hath thee more than thy fellows", are expressly referred to Christ, the Son of God.

We also find Christ, our King and Bridegroom, in this part of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament promises breathe hope, ardent longing. The daughter of Zion, the chosen church, longed for the one who was to come. The prophecy of this psalm also expresses bridal love. It is a bridal song of the children of Korah, who in David's time, together with David, were praying for the future kingdom of the Anointed One. And this bridal song is also placed in the mouth of the New Testament church by the Spirit. In the light of the fulfilment, we now recognize the individual features of this glorious picture of the bridegroom and his bride. And whose heart should not be inflamed with love for Christ, the King and Bridegroom, by the noble, exquisite words of this song? It is a song of roses. The hosanna that the bride sings to the bridegroom smells like a fragrant flower. We know him, the bridegroom who grazes among lilies. We are bound to him by the bonds of the holiest, most tender love. But while we do not yet see his face, we long for his visible future, for the appearance of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Let us now visualize the content of this prophecy, the abundance of delicious thoughts expressed in this bridal song. Let us therefore consider:

The Bridal Song of the Church of Christ.

1 The bride sings and plays to the Lord, Christ, the King and Bridegroom.

(2) And the bride also rejoices in the jewels she has received from her bridegroom.

I.

The bride sings and plays to the Lord, Christ, the King and Bridegroom. The psalmist begins, and every believing soul joins in his speech: "My heart sings a sweet song."

V. 2: The bride's heart is full and beats high. And when the heart is full, the mouth overflows. The bride, every believing soul sings and plays to the Lord. "I will sing of a king." V. 2. This king is the bridegroom who has done it to the bride. Because the heart is in motion, "the tongue" of the psalmist, the tongue of the bride, which the psalmist lets speak here, is "the pen of a good scribe" (v. 2), who quickly and nimbly throws his thoughts onto the paper, to which the words flow under the writing. It is the king, the bridegroom, who writes these words to the bride. The bride, the church sings of the grace of the Lord forever. "My heart shall be green with constant praise and glory."

Now the psalmist brings to mind the one of whom the bride ponders and sings and says: "You are the most beautiful among the children of men." V. 3 We confess with the bride in the Song of Songs: "Behold, my friend, you are beautiful and lovely." Song of Songs 1:16 Abraham already desired, the fathers of the Old Covenant desired to see his day. And the bridegroom emerged from his chamber, when the Son of Mary, the virgin son, showed his friendly face to the people, the bride rejoiced and his disciples praised: "We saw his glory - full of grace and truth." "Grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ." This is the true beauty of the most beautiful among the children of men, which St. Paul describes with the words: "The saving grace of God has appeared to all men." "But then the kindness and radiance of God our Savior appeared." We do not yet see his friendly, gracious face. But we say: "Blessed are your lips." V. 3 When Jesus, the son of Mary, preached the gospel in his hometown of Nazareth, the Nazarenes marveled at the gracious words that came out of his mouth. We still hear this blessed gospel today. The preaching of the gospel is his voice, flowing from his lips. That is why it is sweeter than milk, sweeter than honey and honeycomb. The voice of the Bridegroom, which we hear in the Word, refreshes, delights and comforts the soul. And it is not a fleeting intoxication, not a fleeting enthusiasm that Christ's voice, the preaching of the gospel, awakens. It is lasting, true joy that is brought about by the word.

It says: "Therefore God blesses you forever." He is blessed by God, a blessed one of the Lord, and so God's blessing, God's comfort, God's grace flows from his lips. God's grace, an eternal, everlasting comfort and blessing is poured into his heart through the preaching of the gospel. Truly, he is the most beautiful of the children of men. The bride cannot forget him. She looks upon him in the Word, in this bright mirror she sees his friendly, gracious face. Of course, Scripture, the word of prophecy, says of this very human child, of the one from Jesse's tribe: "He had no form or beauty." Isaiah 53:2 This is the judgment of the people: "We saw him, but there was no form that pleased us. He was so despised that they hid their faces from him; therefore we esteemed him nothing." Isaiah 53:2-3 But this is the judgment of the blind world. The bride, the church, the believing soul has her heartfelt, intimate pleasure precisely in this most despised and unworthy of all, the man of sorrows, precisely in the martyr beauty of Jesus. The bride sings: "My friend is white and red, chosen among many thousands." Song of Solomon 5:10: "Lord Jesus Christ, my trust, your word, your spirit, your body and blood refresh me inwardly." The blood of the Lamb is the refreshment of afflicted souls. To those who perish, Christ crucified is foolishness and vexation, but to those who are saved, it is divine power and divine wisdom. It is precisely from the cross of Christ, from the word of the cross, that grace, comfort and blessing flow.

Yet the Crucified One has risen again, and his disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. And even if we are not yet allowed to see and touch him, we still feel that he lives and reigns. The psalmist now goes on to describe the reign of the exalted Son of Man. This friend and bridegroom of ours is a great king. "Gird your sword at your side, O hero, and adorn yourself beautifully." V. 4 This means: Gird yourself with strength and majesty. "Your right hand will do wonders." V. 5. The sword, the strength with which this hero now girds himself, is his word. His word is a thunder, a trumpet voice that resounds through the earth. With it he performs miracles and accomplishes great things. "May you succeed in your adornment." V. 5 He succeeds. "He draws along with the truth for good." V. 5. Alas,

this world, this wicked world loves vanity, lies, sin, and hates the truth, the divine truth. The degenerate children of men suppress and persecute the truth. But the hero, the exalted Son of Man, goes along with the truth too well. He draws the truth out of the darkness again and again and gives his word strength and emphasis, one victory after another. He helps "the wretched to do right". V. 5 He helps the poor, the wretched, who love his truth and are oppressed by the world, again and again so that they do not perish. Yes, his right hand performs miracles. But he knows how to strike those who stubbornly resist the truth. "Sharp are your arrows, so that the nations fall down before you, in the midst of the king's enemies." V. 6 The enemies of God, the enemies of truth, are struck by the word of Christ. It is like an arrow in their heart. They have a wounded heart and conscience because they contradict this great King.

The bride is jealous, she cannot bear that there are people who are averse to this one King and Bridegroom. Therefore she calls down vengeance on the rebellious. But with a favorable gaze she dwells on the work and reign of the King in his kingdom of grace and peace. He has set up a throne, and it is an eternal throne. The song that sings of the power and majesty of the King becomes worship. "God, your throne remains forever and ever." V. 7 The most beautiful among the children of men is God, the eternal God. He is God and lives and reigns for ever and ever. Thus his kingdom is an eternal, immovable kingdom. The gates of hell will not prevail against it. Because the King of Zion is God, his enemies will not succeed. On the other hand, the wretched find refuge with him in all their troubles. "God, your throne remains forever and ever; the scepter of your kingdom is a straight scepter." V. 7 Righteousness and holiness are the ornament of his house, the fortress of his throne. Christ's kingdom is a kingdom in which righteousness dwells. He is God, the holy God. We say to him: "You love righteousness and hate wickedness." V. 8: Alas, men on earth are the antitype. They have cast away their honor and their adornment. They love sin and ungodliness and hate light and righteousness. But stand still, the eternal God, the holy God has now become man and

has given his innocent, divine life for men, the sinners, into death, and has thus established an eternal righteousness. With this righteousness he now rules and reigns in his kingdom. His scepter is justice. The scepter of his kingdom is a straight, righteous scepter. He, the righteous, now makes many righteous through his knowledge. He rules with his word and in his word, in his gospel, he offers sinners the righteousness that is valid before God. "So God, his God, has anointed him with the oil of gladness more than his fellows." V. 8 He is Christ and anointed with the Spirit without measure. And the Spirit of God, soothing oil, delicious ointment flows from his head, from his face, from his lips. "Your garments are myrrh, aloes and kezia, when you come out of the ivory palaces in your beautiful splendor." V. 9 His garments are fragrant. His name, his gospel, is an ointment poured out. In his word eternal righteousness is offered, and from his word flows comfort, peace, grace and mercy. Truly, he is the most beautiful of the sons of men. The bride rejoices in his beauty, his salvation, his grace. In the ivory palaces one hears only, as the psalmist actually says, the playing of strings. In the kingdom of Christ we sing of the grace of the Lord forever, we praise his grace and truth without ceasing.

This is the King and Bridegroom to whom the bride pays homage, sings and plays, the Son of God and Son of Man. Admittedly, he is still hiding his heavenly beauty and glory from the eyes of the world, including the faithful. But one day he will cast off his cover and come with great power and glory, to the horror of his enemies, but with grace and sweet light to those who love and seek him. And his throne, his kingdom will remain forever and ever.

II.

The bride now also rejoices in the jewelry she has received from her bridegroom. This bridal song commemorates the bride in the second half, after having glorified the bridegroom in its first part. But what is said of

the honor and dignity of the bride serves to honor the bridegroom. To him the bride owes all that she is and has. At the king's side are "the daughters of kings", "the virgins". V. 10. 15. These are the peoples from the surrounding countries, the chosen multitudes from all nations. The Church, gathered from all the peoples of the lands, is the bride who "stands at the right hand of the King". V. 10. This is the One of whom the Bridegroom says in the Song of Songs: "But One is my dove, my pious one, One is her mother's beloved, and her mother's chosen one." Song of Songs 6, 8.

He himself, the King, the eternal Son of God, chose this one. Alas, when he first saw her, she was disfigured and ugly. He saw her lying in her blood. She was full of stains. Her mother was of the Canaanites, of the Hittites. Ezek. 16, 3. 6. All those who now worship Christ the King were conceived and born in sin and by nature bear the image of fallen Adam. The bride had neither form nor beauty. But now the King, the Bridegroom, has taken pity on the unworthy and said to her: "Listen, daughter, listen, and incline your ears, forget your people and your father's house." V. 11: Oh, recognize your shame and disgrace. You really must be ashamed of your origins. Oh, you are unclean from your mother's womb. Oh, so forget your origins, forget, deny father, mother, brother, sister. Yes, deny yourselves, leave the world! Come to me, with me you will find rest for your souls, joy and full satisfaction. The bridegroom has won the bride through such insistent speech and enticement. He chose the bride, his church, from the world and then called her through the gospel and drew her to himself out of vain kindness. Even today we hear his enticing voice: Leave, forget what is behind, seek Jesus and his light, everything else will not help you. Let us not look back on what we have left and lost when we became Christ's own, but rather consider what we have gained in Christ.

The king now sees his delight in his bride. "The king will delight in your beauty, for he is your Lord, and you shall worship him." V. 12: "The daughters of kings walk in your adornment; the bride stands at your right hand in precious gold."

V. 10: "The king's daughter is all glorious within; she is clothed in pieces of gold. She is brought to the king in embroidered garments, and her playmates, the virgins who follow her, are brought to you. They lead her with joy and gladness, and they go to the king's palace." V. 14-16 The Lord Himself, the Bridegroom, has adorned the bride so beautifully. "I bathed thee with water, and washed thee with thy blood, and anointed thee with balm, and clothed thee with embroidered garments . . . and adorned thee with jewels, and put jewels upon thine arms, and chains upon thy neck.... summa, thou wert adorned with vain gold and silver." Ezek. 16, 9-13. Outwardly, the church probably has no form or beauty. It still bears, outwardly, the image of the earthly, and is disfigured by the larva of the cross. Christians "seem to be the worst people on the outside". "But inwardly they are the most lovely brides, the adornment, the crown that pleases Jesus." The bride of the King is glorious on the inside. She is inwardly cleansed by Christ's blood, sanctified by the Spirit and wears the garment of Christ's innocence and righteousness. The image of the most beautiful of the children of men, the image of the Crucified One, is imprinted on her. Only Christ's cross and name sparkle at the bottom of her heart. Before God's eyes, she is "pure and beautiful and completely perfect". The bride is "like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, chosen as the sun". She is also anointed with oil and balm, with the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit. She tastes the sweetness of the love and grace of Jesus. It sparkles with the gold of faith that has been tried and tested through the heat of tribulation. She is clothed in golden pieces, adorned with the virtues of Christ. As the chosen one of God, holy and beloved, she has put on heartfelt mercy, kindness, goodness, patience, gentleness and chastity. "Her plant is like a pleasure garden." Song of Solomon 4:13: The bride shines in the bridegroom's adornment, and so the king takes pleasure in her beauty.

But this joy in the heart overflows. The bride, the church, boasts of her happiness to the whole world. "I will remember your name from child to child." V. 18 And the consequence of this is: "Therefore the nations will give thanks to you forever and ever." V. 18: "In place of your fathers you will have children; you will make them rulers of all the earth." V. 17: "The daughter

of Zor will also be there with a gift; the rich among the people will plead before you." V. 12 The church wins children. What she sings and says about Christ, the King, the Bridegroom, attracts and entices others to worship the Lord.

The remembrance of the Lord, the thanksgiving, the joy of the bride lasts forever. One day, when the bridegroom appears, she will be led to meet him and enter the heavenly palace of the king. Then heavenly, eternal joy and delight will be on her head. Then "joy will be felt publicly". Then the happiness of Jerusalem will be complete. May God help us to achieve this! Amen.

Twelfth Sermon. [△]—

Psalm 72.

Solomon. God, give your judgment to the king, and your righteousness to the king's son, that he may bring your people to righteousness and save your poor. Let the mountains bring peace to the people, and the hills righteousness. He will uphold the wretched people in righteousness, he will help the poor, he will crush the blasphemers. You will be feared as long as the sun and moon endure, from child to child. He shall descend as the rain upon the fleece, as the drops that wet the land. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and great peace, till the moon be no more. He shall reign from sea to sea, and from the waters to the ends of the earth. Those in the desert will bow down before him, and his enemies will lick the dust. The kings of the sea and of the islands will bring gifts; the kings of the kingdom of Arabia and Seba will bring gifts. All kings will worship him, all nations will serve him. For he will save the poor who cry, and the needy who have no helper. He will be merciful to the poor and needy, and he will help the souls of the poor. He will deliver their souls from deceit and iniquity, and their blood will be counted precious in his sight. He will live, and people will give him gold from the kingdom of Arabia. And they will pray before him forever; they will praise him daily. On the earth, on the top of the mountains, the grain will be thick; its fruit will quake like Lebanon, and it will be green in the cities, like grass on the earth. His name will endure forever; as long as the sun lasts, his name will extend to his descendants, and they will be blessed through him; all nations will praise him. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone performs miracles; and blessed be his glorious name forever; and let all the earth be filled with his glory. Amen, amen.

We sing and say, especially during Advent, about Christ and his kingdom. We honor Christ, the King of all kingdoms, the Savior of all the world at the same time. We thank him that we may live under him in his kingdom and serve him. That was the hope of the fathers, that is the content of the Old Testament promises: Christ and his kingdom. The promise that Abraham and the pious patriarchs received was of the future seed, the One Seed, Christ, from whom the blessing would come upon all the families of the earth. A great people, as numerous as the sands of the sea, as the stars of heaven, were to serve him. The pious kings of Israel, David, and in our Psalm Solomon praise the great King of the future and his glorious kingdom and reign. In the prophecy, the kingdom of the King Messiah is painted in the most beautiful and varied colors.

And with the same words we describe and praise the grace we have received.

But the prophecy also honors the future King of Israel as the God of Israel. It had also been revealed to David that the King Messiah would be as exalted above him as God is exalted above the princes of the earth. Through the prophet Nathan it had been proclaimed to him in clear, unambiguous words that his seed would be the Son of God. Therefore he said, as in the second psalm, of the Son of the Father, whom the Father has begotten. In the psalm we looked at last, the most beautiful of the children of men is addressed thus: "God, your throne remains forever and ever." And in this psalm, Solomon gives divine honor to King Messiah. After giving his name, he proclaims: "Praise be to God, the LORD, the God of Israel." And so the kingdom of this king is also a spiritual, divine, eternal kingdom. It shines in a completely different light and splendor than the kingdom of David and Solomon. And so we speak now

**Of the King and God of Israel and the honest splendor
of his kingdom,**

namely:

1. of the delicious goods and gifts with which the God and King of Israel feeds and refreshes the poor and wretched,
2. of the great expansion and eternal duration of Christ's kingdom.

I.

The psalmist says and sings of the delicious goods and gifts with which the God and King of Israel refreshes and refreshes the poor and wretched. He begins with a wish and a prayer: "God, give your judgment to the king and your justice to the king's son, that he may bring your people to justice and save your poor!" V. 1. 2 Who is this king, the king's son? It is not Solomon, the son of David, as the blind scribes of the present day suppose. Even the synagogue of the Jews has recognized that here the King Messiah

is being praised. The King of Israel is called "the God of Israel" at the end of the psalm. V. 18 Christ is meant, the Son of David and Son of God. And Solomon, who rejoices in the King and God of Israel, now wishes and prays for salvation for this King: Hosanna, LORD, hail to the King! Give the king judgment and righteousness, that he may judge your people rightly and order and direct everything in his kingdom according to justice and righteousness. This wish, this request is fulfilled. The Father has given all judgment, all authority in heaven and on earth to the Son, the Son of Man from David's tribe. Christ has given the divine law, which the children of men have denied, prestige and validity on earth. The kingdom of God has ever come to us. Yet we continue to pray with Solomon that God's kingdom, the kingdom of righteousness, may come to us, may remain with us, that it may also come to those who as yet know nothing of it.

The King and Son of God has done right by the poor and wretched. This is how Solomon describes the people of this king: they are "poor", "wretched", "a miserable people", "lowly", "children of the poor", born in poverty and nakedness. V. 2. 4. 12. 13. They have no standing before God, are poor, lowly, nothing at all before God. We are all by nature poor, naked, blind, wretched, miserable and have no righteousness to bring before God. These poor and wretched are born in bondage and slavery. It says in v. 14: "He will deliver their souls from deceit and iniquity", which actually means: from pressure and violence. We are all servants by nature and wear shackles. Our soul languishes in a dungeon. We are enslaved under sin and Satan. We have forfeited "our blood" and life. V. 14 And there is no one on earth who can help us. The psalmist remembers "the wretched who has no helper". V. 12: We cannot help ourselves, we cannot cast off our bonds. We really are a miserable, helpless, forsaken people and would have to languish in eternal chains of darkness if help had not come to us from above.

But the King on God's throne, the King and God of Israel, has now shown mercy to the poor and wretched. It says: "He will be merciful to the poor and needy." V. 13: He has heard "the cry and the cry" of the wretched, the captives. V. 12 He has loved

their "souls" and "esteemed their blood precious." V. 14: The King's Son descended from the throne of honor and "helped" the poor and wretched, "saved and redeemed" them. V. 12-14. He became poor for our sake, took upon himself pressure and violence, and thus "crushed the blasphemer", or actually "the violent one" (v. 4.), crushed the head of sin, Satan, took away his power, broke the dungeon, tore the bonds and thus liberated and redeemed the souls of the wretched. Truly, our souls are precious in his sight; he has bought, purchased, won them with his own blood. And through suffering, death and resurrection he has now established a righteousness that is valid before God. He has "helped the wretched people to righteousness". V. 4 The wretched people are now a righteous people. "The righteous will flourish." V. 7 Our poverty, nakedness and shame are now covered. The royal, holy blood of the Son of God cleanses us from all sin. We are pure and righteous before God, the Most High, through the help, the merit, the righteousness of this Son of God and King. Through him, the Beloved, we are pleasing to God and children of his good pleasure.

The king lives. "He will live." V. 15 He lives and now rules his people in righteousness. He lives and refreshes the poor and wretched with royal, heavenly goods and gifts. He fills the wretched with his goods. Solomon describes the gifts of peace of this king, the rich spiritual blessing in heavenly goods that we have in Christ. Solomon asks and pleads: "Let the mountains bring peace to the people, and the hills righteousness." V. 3 In all the land, on mountains and hills, peace and righteousness flow like milk and honey. Joel 3:23 Christ is the true Solomon, the Prince of Peace. He gives the poor, the wretched and the afflicted a peace that the world does not know. "Now that we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God." In the world we are afraid, fighting on the outside, fearing on the inside. The enemy pursues our souls. But here in the kingdom of our Solomon, in the kingdom of Christ, there is peace. The gospel of peace is his scepter and ruler's staff. Yes, mountains and hills flow and overflow with peace. "In his days there will be great peace." V. 7 There is peace in abundance. We can

confidently and with all assurance the Most High God and pray. The door is wide open. Peace and grace flow from the throne of our Solomon. Solomon says of the Messiah: "He will descend like the rain on the fleece, like the drops that wet the land." V. 6 As rain and dew moisten and refresh the thirsty land, so the grace of Jesus Christ descends upon the miserable people and refreshes and soothes the languishing souls. Alas, our hearts are dry as sand. We cannot comfort ourselves. And what the world offers us, all the goods, pleasures and honors of this world, is a hand full of sand, the sorrow of our hearts. But here in the kingdom of our Solomon, in the kingdom of Christ, we find comfort, grace, mercy. He himself descends, the gracious and merciful Lord. He himself descends like dew and rain, even today, through the Word, and lets us see and taste his mild grace, his goodness and kindness. Yes, his grace is fresh dew and rain that makes the land fertile. "In his days the righteous shall flourish." The righteous who believe in him now bear fruit of righteousness. The people who serve this king are diligent in all good works. Solomon says: "You will be feared." V. 5 The land is full of the knowledge and fear of the LORD. The righteous flourish in the service of the Lord, blossom and green their Lord in constant praise and glory. They thank him and pray that his kingdom may come and that his scepter may extend further and further over all the peoples and lands of the earth.

II.

We are now also talking about the great expansion and eternal duration of Christ's kingdom. The King and God of Israel has a great kingdom. From generation to generation it grows in extent. His grace and truth reach as far as the clouds go. The whole earth is the Lord's. The gospel of Christ is a downpour that sweeps over the lands and falls here and there. And wherever it falls, it sprouts and germinates on this poor, barren earth. The desert and wasteland becomes a lovely place and garden of God. "On the earth, on the top of the mountains, the grain will be thick, its fruit will quiver like Lebanon, and it will green in the cities like grass on the earth." V. 16 The kingdom of Christ is

like a mustard seed, which has become a great tree, in whose branches the birds now dwell. The gospel is scattered over the earth like good seed, and wherever it is preached it bears fruit, here thirtyfold, there sixtyfold, there a hundredfold. Yes, the grain is thick on the ground, the ears of corn are like the cedars of Lebanon. Much good wheat has already been gathered from the sinful earth into the heavenly barns.

The kingdom of our Christ, our Solomon, is a great and vast kingdom. "The Gentiles bless themselves in his name and praise his name." V. 17 All tongues on earth must confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. "His enemies" who defy his name "will lick the dust." V. 9 But "many nations and peoples, kings and princes, worship him" and give him glory. V. 11. Those who live in "the desert", in arid steppes, in forests and mountains, wild barbarians have come out of their hiding places and come daily and "bow down before him". V. 9: "The kings of Sheba, the kings of Arabia, bring gifts and give gold." V. 10, 15. In the lands toward the east, toward the south, in the kingdom of Arabia, in the land of Sheba, Ethiopia, the Christian church has stood for centuries in prosperity and honor. "The kings of the sea and of the islands will bring gifts." V. 10 This was gloriously fulfilled. The pagans of the islands, the isles of Europe, the peoples beyond the sea, from the distant West, bring their gifts. "He reigns from sea to sea, and from the waters to the ends of the earth." V. 8 The kingdom of grace and peace of Jesus Christ goes from sea to sea, from the going forth of the sun to the going down. This is also the joy and consolation of the wretched on earth: they are members of a great people. We believe in a holy, Christian church, the assembly of all believers on earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Everywhere on earth priests of God stand in the sanctuary and "pray before God and praise him daily". V. 15.

And there will be no end to his kingdom. This is the confession of the Church from the beginning. As long as the world stands, this kingdom will endure. The gates of hell will not prevail against it. "You will be feared as long as the sun and moon endure, from children to children's children." V. 5. "As long as the sun lasts,

his name will extend to his descendants." V. 17. The blessing, the name of this King Christ will be inherited to the thousandth generation. Children and children's children will bow the knee to the same God we worship now. The kingdoms of this world have their appointed time under the sun. They grow up, stride along in might and power, then their star declines. Then they sink back into oblivion and make way for others. The kingdom of Christ remains as long as the sun and the moon last. All the greatness, beauty and wisdom of this world fades and withers when the children of men have enjoyed its glow for a little while. In contrast, what grows and blossoms in the kingdom of Christ never withers. Even David and Solomon, even the pious patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob belonged to this holy seed, the people of God. After thousands of years we still fear, honor and praise the God of the fathers, the God and King of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the son of David. As long as the sun and the moon last and this earth is shining, the righteous will fear and worship the God of Israel, the Father of Jesus Christ, Christ, the Son of David, the Son of God.

Yes, this righteous people, the Israel of God, the church of Christ, "will flourish until the moon is no more". V. 7 The sun and the moon will one day lose their light. The stars will fall from heaven. Heaven and earth will pass away. But the kingdom of Christ will remain forever. "His name will remain forever." V. 17 When the sun and moon cease to shine, when heaven and earth and sea and all their host will be no more, then the kingdom of Christ will unfold its splendor, its hidden glory. Then Christ himself will be the light that will adorn the city. The miserable people will then shine in his light, in the splendor of transfiguration, and stand before the throne of the great King and God, praying before him forever and praising him from eternity to eternity. We ask for this beautiful, blessed, glorious end every day when we pray: "Thy kingdom come!" We pray, praise and say from now until eternity: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does wonders; and blessed be his glorious name forever; and let all the earth be filled with his glory. Amen. Amen." V. 18-19.

Thirteenth Sermon. [^]—

Psalm 110.

A Psalm of David. The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. The LORD will send the scepter of your kingdom out of Zion. Rule among your enemies. After your victory, your people will willingly sacrifice to you in holy adornment. Your children will be born to you like dew from the dawn. The LORD has sworn, and he will not repent: You are a priest forever, after the manner of Melchizedek. The LORD at your right hand will smite kings in the time of his wrath; he will judge among the nations, he will make great slaughter; he will crush the head over great lands. He shall drink of the brook by the way; therefore shall he lift up his head.

This psalm is, as Luther says, the noblest main psalm of our Lord Christ, which is well worth setting in gold and precious stones. David sees the Messiah from the throne of God, at the right hand of the Majesty. All the glory of his kingdom pales before this majesty. His eyes of faith were fixed on the King at the right hand of God. This faith was the soul of his life, the support and strength of his reign. He kept and professed this faith to the end. He died on this faith. Admittedly, his faith was often put to the test. When, robbed of his royal crown, he fled from his son Absalom and stayed in a foreign land, he may well have lost faith in the promise that had been given to him and his house. And his path went not only through dark, deep valleys of temptation, but also through the night of grievous sin. The great King David, who was honored with such great revelations, fell deeply and became an adulterer and murderer. Since he had consented to these sins, the light of faith and hope had gone out, the light in him had become darkness. But God sent his gracious word and raised the fallen king up again. David repented with all his heart, and when he prayed his psalms of repentance, he also experienced the grace of God in his heart.

He comforted himself in the gracious God who had forgiven him such grievous iniquity, and now reached out with renewed desire and longing for the salvation of the King Messiah. The bright morning star, full of grace and truth from the LORD, rose in new splendor before his eyes. Especially in the last days of his reign, he saw the day of salvation with bright eyes. He saw the future ruler, as he expresses it in his last song (2 Sam. 23.), as the bright sun, as the beautiful dawn that breaks forth in the unclouded sky, saw the salvation of the Messiah like fresh greenery that sprouts from the earth after nightly rain in the rays of the morning sun. This psalm, which praises the cloudless, undefiled, heavenly glory of the Son of David and his kingdom, probably also dates from the last days of David's reign.

In this psalm, David sees the Son of David clothed not only with royal majesty, but also with another dignity. He calls him a priest after the manner of Melchizedek. He was to unite both offices, the royal and the priestly, in his person. In the Old Covenant, these two offices and dignities were strictly separated from each other. The priests were not rulers. And kings were not allowed to sacrifice. When King Uzziah once dared to approach the altar and burn incense, he became a leper. But the Spirit of God lifted David, the prophet, above the Old Testament barriers and showed him the future king adorned with the twofold dignity of king and priest. At the same time, he directs his gaze to the glorious people of this king. This appears as a holy, priestly people, but also as a royal people who share in the power and reign of the King Messiah. What David saw and prophesied has been fulfilled. We are now living in the New Covenant and know how to appreciate the exquisite promises contained in this psalm. From the point of view of fulfillment, therefore, we now speak

On the royal priesthood of the New Testament.

1. Christ is Priest and King for ever after the manner of Melchizedek.
2. And he has made us priests and kings in the sight of God.

I.

Christ is priest and king forever after the manner of Melchizedek. The one of whom David speaks here is the Son of David, whom he praises in all his prophecies, the seed that was to arise from his house. But David calls this son of David the LORD, his Lord. "The LORD said to my Lord." V. 1 With these words Christ proved His true deity to the scribes. Matt. 22:44: The Messiah is therefore David's Son, true man, born of the daughter of David, Mary, and David's Lord, the Lord next to the Lord, God from God, true God from true God. And this very Son and Lord of David is now called "a priest for ever, after the manner of Melchizedek". V. 4 He is a priest. The priesthood is the first, then comes the other dignity, the royal one. He is a priest of God, the Most High, like Melchizedek. The priesthood of the Old Testament prophesied of this priest of the New Testament. He is higher than all the priests of the Old Testament. He belongs to a different line and order than the priestly line of Aaron. He is a priest after the manner, after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a priest long before the Israelite priesthood was established, and as the greater, he blessed Abraham, the progenitor of Israel and Levi. Christ's priestly ministry extends far beyond the service of the Levitical priests. The letter to the Hebrews interprets the passage: "The LORD has sworn and will not repent: You are a priest forever, after the manner of Melchizedek." V. 4. Heb. 7. 8. The Old Testament priests sacrificed the blood of goats and calves. Christ, the priest of the New Testament, offered a better sacrifice. He sacrificed Himself. After partaking of the flesh and blood of the children of men, he offered his flesh and blood to God on the altar of the cross. He entered into the holy place through the perfect tabernacle of his body. He laid down his life, his own blood, and appeared before God with his own blood. And he is not only the Son of David, but also the Lord of David, the Lord himself, the true God. This is the blood of the New Testament: the blood of the Son of God. The priests of the Old Covenant had to sacrifice from year to year, from one feast to

another, indeed from day to day, always anew for their own and for the people's sins. Christ, the High Priest of the New Testament, completed sacrifices that are sanctified with one sacrifice. He died once for our sins, the righteous for the unrighteous. He atoned for sin once and for all. Henceforth we need no other sacrifice. He invented eternal redemption through his blood. The Levitical sacrifices only had a physical cleansing effect. The sacrifice, the blood of the Son of God cleanses our conscience from all dead works. The blood of Christ is the propitiation for the sin of the whole world. The holy psalmist lets his gaze wander over the wide world of the Gentiles. The whole world is reconciled to God. Christ is called and is a priest forever, after the manner of Melchizedek. Melchizedek had neither beginning nor end of days. The Scriptures report nothing of this. Christ, the true Melchizedek, in truth has neither beginning nor end of days. Thus he also retains his priesthood for eternity. Once he has died to sin, he lives to God. He lives, he stands as a priest of the Most High before the Most High God and represents sinners before God with his bloody merit. And from above he spreads his hands over us in protection and blessing. Salvation and blessing flow down upon us from him. He blesses us as Melchizedek blessed Abraham. He blesses and comforts us with his word. His gospel is milk and honey, like fresh morning dew. He is and remains a priest for eternity. One day, when this time has passed, when this world has passed away, he will bring those who have been sanctified by him to the highest God and say to him: "Behold, here I am, and the children you have given me." And in eternity he will accept incense, praise and songs from the redeemed, perfected children. The LORD has sworn it and will not repent. The priesthood of Christ is confirmed with a holy oath and the salvation that this priest has acquired for sinners is sealed.

Christ is a priest after the manner of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a priest of God, the Most High, and at the same time king, king of Salem. In Christ, royal dignity and majesty are united with priestly dignity. He sits as king on David's throne, on God's throne. He is David's Son and David's Lord. "The LORD said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand." V. 1 The Son of David, our flesh and blood, our Savior and

priest sits at the right hand of God. Thus our salvation is well kept and assured. He who sits at the right hand of God will lead out our cause well. No power of the world or of hell can snatch from us the salvation that Christ has earned for us through his priestly sacrifice, because this priest sits as King at the right hand of God. He shares in the divine majesty, power and dominion. And he needs this power and majesty for the salvation of the pious, the redeemed children. He rules and reigns in "Zion" (v. 2), in the kingdom of grace, in his church, and from there he stretches out his scepter to the ends of the earth. "The LORD will send the sceptre of your kingdom out of Zion." V. 2 From Zion the scepter and reign of Christ goes out over all the countries of the earth. Christ gathers his church from all nations, peoples and countries. The scepter which he stretches out is his word, as Luther says, the ministry of preaching. With it he touches the hearts of the people whom he has redeemed through his blood. Through the Gospel he makes people subject to him. The Lord will send, stretch out the sceptre of Christ's kingdom over the earth. Christ sends his word, and God's power and strength work in this word. God promotes the course of the Gospel. God makes the preaching of Christ effective for the conversion of men, of sinners, so that all tongues must confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. Through this scepter, through his word, Christ rules and sustains his church. Through it he guides the hearts of the believers. It is a mild, gentle scepter. From the throne of this king oozes grace. Christ is king after the manner of Melchizedek. Melchizedek means king of righteousness. Melchizedek was king of Salem. Salem means peace. Righteousness and peace are the gifts of Christ, which he scatters in his kingdom. Christ feeds and refreshes the wretched as the true Melchizedek. Melchizedek strengthened Abraham by giving him bread and wine. Christ strengthens and delights his members through word and sacrament. Through word and sacrament he gives them his royal goods, peace and righteousness. Christ, the King at the right hand of God, protects his people against their enemies. The psalmist also remembers "the enemies" of this King. V. 2 There are people on earth who stubbornly resist the scepter of Christ, his gospel. The kings, the great, the mighty and the wise of the earth take counsel against God and his anointed, despise, mock

and persecute the gospel of Christ, the church of Jesus Christ. But the King at the right hand of God has received power from God: "Reign among your enemies." V. 2 Christ reigns in the midst of the adversaries. In the midst of this evil world he gathers and sustains his church. In the midst of the liars, the riots and sects, he still has a seed that serves him. Yes, the king goes along with the truth for good. His right hand performs miracles. Of course, the word has also been fulfilled: "He will drink from the brook by the way." V. 7 He drank from the brook that crossed his path, from the streams of Belial, from the cup of suffering and wrath. For a time he gave way to his enemies and appeared to be defeated. But very soon, as prophesied, he "lifted up his head" (v. 7) and rose again in power and glory. "For this reason", because he was obedient to the point of death on the cross, God also exalted him. Through his suffering and death he conquered the worst enemies, sin, death, the devil, and now he sits at the right hand of God and resists the arrogant, the servants and instruments of Satan, who want to hinder and destroy his work and kingdom. He lifts his head high, he goes on from victory to victory. He has already "fought great battles and judged among the nations", he has already "destroyed great kings" in the name of the Lord. V. 5. 6 He has already cast down many mighty men and exposed the deceit of liars. As David looks over the victorious course of Christ the King, an enemy, "the head over the great and broad land" (v. 6), comes before his eyes, and he sees how the King at the right hand of God also measures himself against this enemy and throws him to the ground and "crushes" him, yes, how God, the LORD, at the right hand of Christ overthrows this mighty one. Now, after thousands of years, after the prophecy has been fulfilled, we know who this enemy is. It is the adversary, the Roman Antichrist. He has disputed the rank and kingdom of Christ the Lord. He has ensnared the earth far and wide, the whole of Christendom on earth with his lies, bewitched it with satanic powers and miracles. But he has been overthrown, this wicked enemy, by the power of God, by the man who sits at the right hand of God, by the breath of his mouth, by the word of Christ. And even if the antichristian lies and cords are still spread everywhere today, even if the old lie in a new form

raises its head again and again, Christ and his word will retain the victory. And over a small thing the King will come with great power and glory. And the Lord God, "in the time of his wrath" (v. 5), will crush the mighty and rebellious on earth and destroy them forever, will "make all enemies the footstool of Christ's feet". V. 1 Then the Son will hand over the kingdom to the Father and will be honored and praised together with the Father in the kingdom of glory for ever and ever.

II.

Christ is Priest and King forever, after the manner of Melchizedek. And he has made us priests and kings before God. In remembering the dignity, power and honor of the priest and king at the right hand of God, our gaze fell at the same time on the people whom this priest acquired through his sacrifice, over whom this king rules and reigns. But let us now especially consider the priestly and royal dignity with which the Priest-King has clothed and adorned us. The psalmist precisely describes the people of God, the true Israel. This is a wonderful people. "Your children will be born to you like dew from the dawn." V. 3. The origin, the birth of this people is wonderful. It is born like dew from the dawn. No one knows or sees how the dew is made or where it comes from. One hears no sound from the sky, one sees no masses of clouds pouring down. When the beautiful dawn rises, the fresh dew lies on the grass and shimmers in the rays of the rising sun. The dew is born, as it were, from the womb of the dawn. And so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. This is how Christ gives birth to his children. We do not know how this happens. It is a mysterious work of grace. We only hear the sound of the Word from the mouths of men, we only see how men pour water and baptize the little ones in the name of Jesus. Unnoticed, the Spirit of Christ comes down through the Word, through baptism, like light from on high, from the womb of God, and gives life to dry, dead hearts. This miracle is repeated daily. It is taught, preached, baptized, and ever new children are born

to God, like dew from the dawn. It is a miraculous work of the heavenly Priest and King. By his power and grace we too are born anew, of water and the Spirit, and are now Christ's own, his people, and serve him in holy adornment.

It is a priestly people, clothed with "holy", priestly "jewelry". V. 3 We are priests before God. The actual priestly adornment of Christians is hidden from the world and revealed only to God. Our soul is clothed in the garment of innocence, the blood and merit of Christ. Thus we are pure and beautiful and completely perfect before God. And so we can confidently come before God as priests and pray and be heard. Faith is the hidden adornment of the heart. But from faith flow virtues that please God. As priests of the Most High, we now also proclaim the virtues of Christ before the world: heartfelt mercy, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and chastity. We show the world the divine way. We may still sin abundantly every day, but we wash our robes daily in the blood of the Lamb. And one day we will be completely pure and without sin, and with a pure heart, in a glorified body, we will stand before God in holy adornment and thus give thanks, praise and honor to God and the Lamb in holy adornment. And the priestly people are a royal people. They "willingly" follow the king "on the feast day". That is how the words actually read. V. 3 We reign with Christ over sin, death and the devil. Looking up to the King at the right hand of God, we defy all the power of the enemies, the evil, wicked world. Of course, the limbs are like the head. We must also drink from the brook by the wayside, suffer with Christ and enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations. But in the power of Christ and His Word we lift up our heads and are certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We will willingly follow the Lord from battle to battle, from victory to victory, through the cross to the crown, and then, in the kingdom of honor, we will triumph with him and sit on chairs, behold the King in his beauty, rejoice in him and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence and blessedness. Amen.

Fourteenth Sermon. [^]—

Hosea 2:19. 20.

I will betroth myself to you forever; I will trust with you in righteousness and judgment, in grace and mercy; yes, in faith I will betroth myself to you; and you will know the Lord.

The Advent season directs our thoughts backwards to the first great Advent period that the Church of God lived through, the time when the pious fathers waited for the One who was to come. We take the word of prophecy to hand, place the prophecy in the light of fulfillment and recognize from prophecy and fulfillment the One to whom all Scripture bears witness, Christ the King and his glorious kingdom and reign.

The people to whom the prophecy was first given and into whose history it was woven, the people of Israel, had reached the highest peak of power and earthly happiness under the reign of David and Solomon. It had peace from all its enemies, ruled over the neighboring peoples, enjoyed the blessings of peace, each one dwelt under his fig tree. It was a just and mild reign, peace and justice kissed each other. And the best was not lacking. God's word went out powerfully in those days. In the temple people watched the beautiful services of the Lord. And the prophecy flowed abundantly. David himself set before his people the Son of David, whom he called his Lord, Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of Man, the Son of the Eternal Father, who through suffering and deep humiliation was to rise to royal, heavenly glory and through his word gather a congregation from all nations, Christ, the Priest and King, surrounded by the priestly people. These are the main features of the image of the Messiah drawn in the Psalms of David and Solomon.

But the tide was already turning under Solomon. Israel turned for the worse. Solomon himself, as he grew old, turned his heart to strange wives and strange gods. Under his son Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided. Ten tribes fell away from the house of David, the kingdom of promise. And this very kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, separated itself from the temple in Jerusalem, where God had established the memorial of his name. The kings of Israel erected two images, one in the north and one in the south of the kingdom, erecting altars on the high places. And even though the people worshipped the name of the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, at these altars and in front of these images, it was a vain, false worship that was contrary to the will and order of God. And this false worship soon turned into open idolatry. The kings of Israel took Baal worship over from the neighboring countries of the Gentiles. Israel served the Baalim and thus indulged in pagan lust and shame. It forgot its God, the law of the LORD, the prophecy of Christ and ran after vanity.

But the Lord God did not immediately remove his hand from the apostate people. He was patient for a long time. He sent prophets who called the people to repentance, who punished the people's sin, reminded them of the law of the LORD and enticed and tempted them with the promise. After the apostasy had begun in Israel, God's arm became all the stronger. The time of apostasy was the actual time of prophecy. The great, mighty witnesses of God, whose prophetic writings are still before our eyes, raised their voices, one after the other. They testified of the holiness, of the power, of the wrath of the LORD of hosts, but just as powerfully, clearly and distinctly of the grace of the King Messiah who was to come. Against the dark background of Israel's sin and apostasy, the image of the Messiah of Israel, which is inscribed in the prophetic writings, shines all the brighter and more comforting.

Such a man of God and witness to the truth was the prophet Hosea, from whose prophecy this Advent text is taken. This prophet was sent to the house of Israel, the apostate kingdom of the ten tribes. The kingdom of Israel was powerful and prestigious at the time. King Jeroboam II had restored the

ancient borders of Israel as far as the Euphrates. The people had gold and silver and plenty of food and pleasure. But they served the Baalim, the idols of the pagans. Israel attributed its victory, blessing and wealth to idols. That is why Hosea punished in God's name above all the adulterous generation, which had broken its covenant and loyalty to its God, punished precisely this sin of Israel, apostasy, spiritual fornication, with which carnal fornication, shame of all kinds, was also connected. At the same time, however, he prophesied of the return of apostate Israel, that God would lead the unfaithful ones who followed their lovers into the wilderness and there speak to their hearts, that is, bring them to their senses through severe judgments. Cap. 2, 16 He spoke of a seed, a holy seed, which God would keep for himself in Israel, and of a great nation to which this seed would grow, of the conversion of the Gentiles, the people who were not a nation at first, but to whom it would be said: "O children of the living God!" Cap. 2, 1-3. To this people, the true Israel, the Israel of God, the prophet now gives the great, comforting promise that we read in our text: "I will betroth myself to you for ever and ever." He is talking here about the new covenant, the covenant of grace, which God wants to establish with his people in the last days through his servant David (Cap. 3:5). Thus the prophet has also served us with this prophecy. We now compare prophecy and fulfillment and speak accordingly of this covenant of God:

Of the great, godly mystery, Christ and his church.

1. The Lord wants to betroth himself to us, has betrothed himself to us for eternity.
2. And we shall know the Lord, yea, we now know the Lord.

I.

"I will betroth myself to you." Through the prophet, the LORD is here addressing apostate Israel, who will then return, all those who were once not a people, but who will then be called God's people. Here the LORD speaks kindly to his bride, his church.

But how was this bride originally formed before the LORD chose her? She had become a harlot, as Hosea proved. She ran after her lovers, the idols. We are all like Israel by nature, to whom Hosea held up the image of her shame. We are all, by nature and birth, according to our natural mind and heart, to use the prophet's words, children of fornication. Our hearts are estranged from God, enemies of God. Our hearts are attached to vanity, to the vile, vile world and its idols.

But what does the Lord say to apostate Israel? I will betroth myself to you, trust. We have forgotten the LORD our God. But the LORD could not forget us so soon. He was zealous for his people, for the disobedient children. It would have served the unfaithful one right if God had written her a letter of divorce and had sought and chosen another, a pure, chaste bride. The sinners, the apostates, should not complain if God had removed his hand from them and created a new, righteous generation. But no, God's love did not suffer this. He could not forget the apostates. The prophet Hosea tells how he was instructed by God to marry a harlot woman and father harlot children with her. But God only wanted to illustrate what he himself had in mind. He chose a harlot wife. God went after this adulterous generation, which followed and clung to the idols. The LORD Jehovah has left the throne of his glory and has condescended to fallen man. He has joined himself closely to the sinful race, has taken the seed of fallen man as his nature, as his own flesh and blood.

And now the Son of God incarnate went over the earth seeking what was lost. John bore witness and said that this was the bridegroom to whom the bride belonged. Christ made himself known to his people as the Promised One, as the long-awaited and longed-for One, and said: "Return, you apostate Israel. He went after the individual souls, like that Samaritan woman, and said: "It is I."

It cost him effort and struggle to win the bride. He wanted to betroth us and betrothed himself to us "in judgment

and righteousness". We were bound to the idols of this world. In his prophecy, the prophet Hosea describes the reward that the Baalim pay out to those who serve them. They will eventually become a desert, a barren land, they will die of thirst. It brings pain and heartache to forget and forsake the LORD his God. But Christ has now taken the wages of sin and injustice upon himself. He has not spurned shame and dishonor. He was eager to die for his bride. He died for the unrighteous. He underwent the judgment that was destined for those who break the covenant. He used this treasury for his bride: his own blood. So he purchased his church with his own blood. We no longer belong to the world, we have been torn from the bonds of sin and worldly service, we are now his own, who died and rose again for us.

For the judgment has now gone forth in victory in Christ. It was the Lord Jehovah who suffered and died on the wood of the curse. He could not remain in death. He now lives for eternity. And he is now wooing the bride, to whom he has a right, with the gospel of his cross, blood and wounds. The gospel reveals the righteousness that is valid before God. Through the gospel the Lord testifies to his grace and mercy. He confides in us "in grace and mercy". He pleads and admonishes sinners in his word that they may be reconciled, that they may turn away from vanity, say goodbye to the world and turn to him, their Savior. He assures sinners in the gospel that he wants to forget and forgive their disobedience, their unfaithfulness, indeed, that he has long since forgiven them. The Gospel is the voice of the Lord, the Shepherd, the Bridegroom, which has power, which captures the heart and conscience, which shames the unfaithful and awakens faith and trust, confidence in the gracious and merciful Lord. The bridegroom speaks to the heart of the apostate and persuades her to return. The LORD Himself gives her the word of consent in her heart, on her lips. And the bridegroom now showers his bride with love and grace. He gives himself to her and makes his home with her and gives her everything he has.

And he is also faithful to his bride. He trusts with us "in faith", that is, in faithfulness. The congregation of believers is

still a frail vessel. The bride is still full of wrinkles and stains. Only Christ, our Bridegroom, is faithful to forgive us daily and abundantly for all sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He has patience with our weakness. He always lifts up those who stumble. He cleanses and sanctifies the bride through word and spirit. He adorns her with his gifts and virtues. He protects His own against all temptations of the devil and the world. He sustains them with his strong arm, he preserves them in his word and faith until the end. He betroths himself to us "for ever and ever". One more little thing and the bridegroom will appear and take his bride home to eternal joy and bliss in his heavenly hall. One more little thing, then it says: "Let us rejoice and be glad, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready." Then the bride shares and enjoys the glory and splendor of her bridegroom.

II.

And we are to recognize the Lord, yes, we recognize the Lord. This covenant of love and faithfulness between Christ and His church is unique. It is the Lord who establishes the covenant, who does everything Himself. He chose the bride before she was, redeemed her when she was in sin and shame, wooed her, drew her to himself out of pure goodness. He made himself known to her, gave her his word of consent in her heart. He has wrapped the bond around us and tied it tightly. He has planted repentance and faith in our hearts and purified our hearts through faith. But it is by his grace that we now believe. The word is fulfilled: "You will recognize the Lord." We recognize the Lord. We know in whom we believe. Our hearts and wills are renewed and devoted to the Lord.

We recognize the Lord. Thus says the bride. Blessed is he who can say: "I know him." We have recognized and believed that this Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. We measure who he is and what he means. Thus says a believing soul: "I know him, my Savior, my King and Bridegroom. He knows my misery and misery, he knows all my sin. He knows how far I have fallen, how far I have strayed from him.

But he has forgiven all my sins. He is my Lord, I did not choose him, but he chose me. He wooed me, sought me and found me. And how graciously he has kept me ever since, carried me on eagle's wings, guarded me like the apple of his eye. Often there was only one step between me and sin and apostasy. But his hand has held me. Certainly, he will not leave me for eternity. Yes, this is my God and my Lord, I know him.

We recognize, we know the Lord. And this knowledge does not only rest in the mind; our heart and will are also directed towards the Lord. We know the Lord and we love him. He first loved us and our hearts are warmed by his love. This is our heart's opinion: "Treasure above all treasures, O Jesus, dearest treasure." We say to the Lord: "You know that I love you." And: "This is my pain, this grieves me, that I cannot love you enough, as I should love you." Therefore we pray: Lord, strengthen our faith and love! And he hears us and does what we ask. It goes back and forth. He knows us and we know him, and from his fullness we receive grace for grace, wisdom, strength, power, love and trust. Love grows in communion with the Bridegroom. And the love of Jesus is not a weak, soft feeling, but a deed and a life. For his sake we deny everything that is repugnant to him and seek only what pleases him. For the sake of the great, glorious Bridegroom we love the brethren, even the lesser brethren. And we remain faithful to the Lord for all eternity.

We recognize the Lord. Now, of course, we are still looking through a mirror in a dark word. We recognize him through the word. But then we will recognize him, just as we are recognized, and we will see him face to face. And there will be inexpressible, transfigured joy when we see him in whom we now believe, whom we now love without seeing him. May the Lord help us in grace! Amen.

Fifteenth Sermon. [^]—

Amos 9:11-12.

At that time I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and will fence up the breaches thereof, and will build it again, as it was in the days of old. That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and the remnant of all nations, upon whom my name shall be preached, saith the LORD that doeth these things.

The prophet Amos, from whom the above prophecy comes, was a native of the kingdom of Judah, a shepherd and the son of a shepherd from Thekoa in the tribe of Judah. He was not the son of a prophet, not a trained prophet. The LORD had taken him away from the flock and said to him: "Go and prophesy to my people Israel." Like Hosea, he was to bring God's word to the sinful, apostate house of Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes. He also prophesied at the same time as Hosea, under the reign of the mighty King Jeroboam II. God was patient and merciful and did not immediately withdraw his hand from the covenant-breaking people, did not immediately take back his word.

Amos, like Hosea, punished the sin, the disobedience, the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel. He punished their ruthlessness, their oppression and oppression of the poor, and their pleasure, their lust. He punished Israel for despising God's law. He punished the people for their false worship, the altars at Dan and Bethel. He said, "I am offended by the pride of Israel." He chastised Israel for not heeding the punishments and plagues that the LORD had sent them, for mocking the future punishment, the day of the LORD. He quarreled with the king of Israel and his chief priest Amaziah because they rejected his testimony, the prophetic word, and commanded him: "You shall not dribble."

And now he prophesied to the stubborn, stubborn people the final destruction, that the king would die by the sword

and Israel would be taken away from their land. He said, "You shall not dwell in the houses that you have built of workmanship, nor drink the wine that you have planted in the fine vineyards." "I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation." Cap. 5, 11. 8,10. He prophesied darkness in broad daylight, that the light of prophecy, that God's word would perish and disappear, "that they would wander to and fro, from sea to sea, from midnight to morning, seeking the word of the Lord and yet not finding it". Cap. 8, 12.

But there were still some left in Israel who had not bowed their knees to Baal. The prophetic word had not come back empty here either. There was a holy seed here too. And it was precisely this seed that the prophet was looking forward to a brighter, better future, when the Lord would turn the prison of his people. He directed the eyes of the believers in Israel to the kingdom of Judah and to the great work which the Lord God would accomplish in the last days for the house of David. "At that time I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and fill up the breaches thereof." The kingdom and reign of David will be restored to its former glory.

The New Testament shows the fulfillment of the prophetic word. After the church of Christ had been established in Jerusalem, in the land of Judah, after many Gentiles had also entered the kingdom of God through the gospel preached by Paul, and when some Pharisee-minded Christians then wanted to make it difficult for the Gentiles to enter the Christian church and to impose circumcision on them, Peter stood up first at a meeting of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem and showed that God had given the Gentiles the Holy Spirit in the same way as those from Israel and had therefore made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, that God had given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles in the same way as to those from Israel, and had therefore made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and then Jacobus stood up and referred to the sayings of the prophets, who had already prophesied of a people that God would accept from the Gentiles, and now above all recalled the prophecy of the prophet Amos of the rebuilding of the ruined tabernacle of David. Acts 15:16. 17. Yes, the prophecy of

Amos is fulfilled according to the testimony of Scripture precisely by God taking a people from Jews and Gentiles and continuing to gather them. We are still living in the midst of the time of fulfillment. What Amos prophesied is happening before our very eyes. So we also trust in this prophecy and speak now

**Of the comforting promise of the rebuilding of the ruined
tabernacle of David.**

We consider:

1. The prophecy has been fulfilled and continues to be fulfilled: the gaps are fenced off and what was broken off is raised up again.
2. The prophecy shall be fulfilled, the building shall be finished gloriously: for it is the LORD that pitcheth and maketh ready the tabernacle of David.

I.

The prophecy has been fulfilled and continues to be fulfilled: the gaps are fenced off and what has been broken off is raised up again. The prophet's word applies to the house of David. The reign of David was the kingdom which the Lord God had established, to which he had tied his word, his promise. David's house and kingdom was and is nothing other than God's kingdom on earth. But this very house had become a tabernacle at the time the prophet prophesied, and this tabernacle began to crumble, already had cracks and gaps, one part had been broken off. Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, had separated itself from the house of David and thus from God's kingdom and reign, from the temple in Jerusalem, from the true worship of God, and lived and sinned after the manner of the Gentiles and no longer wanted to say anything. But even the kingdom of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which was subject to the scepter of David, had already been invaded by corruption from Israel. There, too, the apostasy had already begun. The true Israel, God's people, was melting away more and more. It was only a small fraction of Abraham's people on both sides who still listened to the voice of the prophets and rejoiced and took comfort in the promise.

But Amos, the prophet, says beforehand that things will not be any better in Israel at the time of which he speaks at the end of his prophecy, in our

text. The Son of David, the Messiah of Israel from David's tribe, was to find a ruined tabernacle. History has confirmed this. At the time of Christ, Israel was degenerate, as it was at the time of the prophets. The apostasy had only progressed further. The heads and leaders of Israel, high priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, had followed in the footsteps of the fathers who had persecuted the prophets. They trampled the law of God underfoot. They knew and did not respect what was written: "I delight in mercy, not in sacrifice." They devoured the houses of widows. They walked after the lusts of the heathen. And though they had not set up altars to the idols of the Gentiles, yet the statutes of men, of the elders, had become cords to catch and bind the consciences of men. Indeed, the children of the fathers, who had killed the prophets, finally attacked the greatest prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, and nailed him to the cross. And because the people of Israel, the great multitude together with the princes and priests, also despised and blasphemed the gospel of Christ, the Crucified and Risen One, all the calamities that the prophets had foretold finally came to pass. The people of the Jews were cast out into darkness, given over to blindness and stubbornness, and finally completely dissolved and scattered among the Gentiles. So Israel, which had the name that it was God's people, the largest part of the people, missed the promise. That was a great failure, a great break. Paul, the Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin, remembered this great gap with weeping and sorrow. It was a small remnant that was left, which, when the time of fulfillment came, was still waiting for the redemption of Israel, it was a small, poor army that gathered around Jesus, the son of Mary from David's tribe. And the request and summons of the apostles, who called all Israel to repentance and testified to them: "God has raised up his child Jesus to you first", was only heeded by a few. Those invited first did not come. So there was still a lot of empty space.

But the prophecy was fulfilled at the very time when David's tabernacle was about to crumble and fall apart. God sent his Son, born of a woman, to sit on the throne of his father David. God has laid in Zion this precious stone, Jesus Christ.

And this stone, which the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone. The Church of God is built on this cornerstone. The apostles preached about Christ, the Son of God, the Son of David. And through this preaching the remnant of Israel were converted to the Lord. Admittedly, the believers from the circumcision did not fill the house of God. There was still room. But little by little the gaps and reefs were fenced in and filled. The words of our text were fulfilled: "That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and the remnant of all nations, upon whom my name shall be preached, saith the LORD." When the Jews rejected the kingdom of God, the apostles turned to the Gentiles. They went out into the highways and brought in the lame, the crippled and the blind. A large people was won from the Gentiles. The name of the LORD was preached to the ends of the earth. First the East, then the West was filled with the gospel of Christ. Thus a substitute was won for those who had fallen away, the apostates, Israel had broken away, the natural branches were broken off, but then the wild olive branches, the Gentiles, were planted in the good olive tree. Thus the church, the tabernacle of David, grew into a stately building, a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. It was a great people from all nations, who now confessed that Jesus Christ was the Lord, and who served the Lord in holiness and righteousness pleasing to him.

Of course, new obstacles soon stood in the way. The Christian church was not built and completed in one fell swoop. The church of the New Testament also experienced reefs. There were new gaps, failures and apostasy. Finally, an enemy arose, a godless one, who deliberately tore down what God had built up. The pope corrupted and perverted the whole of Christendom, filling the house of God with his abominations, lies and blasphemies and turning millions of souls away from Christ, the Son of David, the rightful King. Alas, the tabernacle of David was once again like a hut in a pumpkin patch, like a watchman's cottage in a vineyard, desolate and deserted, lying on the ground and lamenting like a mother bereft of her children. But God's word and promise had not failed. The gospel of Christ broke forth anew. The name of the Lord, which had almost been

forgotten, was preached again, with evidence of the Spirit and power. A great multitude of people fell for Luther's teaching. And for centuries this holy building, which Luther had begun again, was continued. In these very days the name of the Lord is being preached to the most distant and foreign heathen peoples. And even here, in this new world, the tabernacle of David is being erected. The reefs are being repaired, the gaps are being fenced in, many souls are being brought to Christ the Lord, many apostates are being led back.

However, what we have before our eyes is still a small figure, a puny hut. The believers are scattered to and fro throughout the world. They are the remnant of the nations. Those who have outwardly entered the church of Christ are not all wholeheartedly devoted to Christ and subject to his scepter. Many only shout with their lips in pretense: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Alas, the church before our eyes is filled with lies, false doctrine and worship, and ungodliness. The church of the pure Word and Sacrament, the congregation that truly bows to and obeys God's Word, is a dwindling multitude. Alas, and we must see that our own house is gaining reefs. Painful gaps are appearing. So many who first came in and out of the house of God with us have gone behind us again and have deceived our hopes. Many a stone has fallen out of the wall again. The evil enemy has already destroyed many a building that was erected by God's word. Nevertheless, God's word and promise do not fall away. Our work on the house of God is not in vain in the Lord. New stones are continually being added to the building of the church. There are always replacements for the apostates. The tabernacle of David, the kingdom of God, is not in decline, but in ascent and growth. The name of the LORD is preached, and this is never without fruit.

The Tabernacle of David has been built for thousands of years. Many reefs and gaps have already been filled in. And the work will certainly be completed. When it is finished, we will recognize: it is a perfect building, all the individual parts are well executed, not one stone is missing. Yes, it is a building that will remain and never crumble, for it is founded on an eternal rock.

The church is growing into the perfect measure of the age of Christ. When one day the remnant, the elect of all places, of all times, stand united before the throne of the Son of David, then we will recognize that it is a great multitude, a glorious people, like the sand of the sea, like the stars of heaven. Then the hosanna and hallelujah will resound from a thousand and a thousand tongues. That is the ultimate goal of our hope. And it is a certain hope. It will surely be fulfilled.

II.

The prophecy will be completed, the building will be gloriously finished, for it is the LORD who raises up and builds the tabernacle of David. At the end of our text it says: "says the LORD, who does these things." Yes, the zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. The LORD has promised: "I will raise up the ruined tabernacle of David." He will do everything himself and bring it out. Therefore we should not doubt the completion.

The entire construction of the Tabernacle of David to date was his work. He has done it. It is a miracle before our eyes. In a miraculous way, in the times of apostasy and judgment, God has preserved a seed in Israel through the word and testimony of the prophets. He miraculously planted a tender, holy seed in the house of David, raised up a righteous plant for David, and raised up the son of David, his son, whom Israel hung on the tree, and made him Lord and head. Through Christ, his Son, he has established his kingdom, Christendom. He opened the eyes of the remnant of Israel, that they might recognize him in whom they were stung. He gave the Gentiles repentance unto life. He confirmed the preaching of the gospel. He protected the church of Christ against all enemies and attacks from the right and the left, so that it was not completely broken off and destroyed from the earth. He has kept a remnant in evil days, in low days. He has sent days of refreshment after tribulation, after dry times, fruitful times, when God's word ran and grew and bore much fruit, when many sheaves were gathered.

And so he will continue and complete his work. We should not doubt and hesitate. Alas, when we look at ourselves, at our work, at our strength, we would despair. We will not carry it out. We cannot guarantee that the empty space will be filled. When we look at the people, the condition, the state of mind of the people among whom we work, when we consider how much it costs. To win a soul, how hard the ground is, the heart of the people, then we want to despair. But it is the Lord's work. He does it, he has promised it. From eternity he has drawn up the plan for his holy temple and he is carrying it out. He has chosen his people from eternity, and those he has chosen, the remnant of all nations, he will bring them here. Certainly, even the last gap will be filled, the number of the elect will be fulfilled. Therefore glory to the Lord alone! Amen.

Sixteenth Sermon. [^]—

Micah 5:1-3.

And thou Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art small among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall come unto me he that is to be ruler in Israel, which is the beginning and from everlasting. However, he will cause them to be plagued until the time when the one who is to give birth is born; then the rest of his brothers will return to the children of Israel. But he shall arise and feed in the power of the LORD, and in the victory of the name of his God. And they will dwell, for he will become glorious at that time, as far as the earth is.

Hosea and Amos were the prophets whom the LORD had sent to the sinful people of Israel, the people of the ten tribes. Still other men of God arose there in the power of the LORD and called the idolatrous people to repentance. Elijah and Elisha raised their voices in the time of deepest decay, under Ahab and Jezebel. The kings of Israel had failed in their calling and led Israel down the path of destruction. The priests who served the high altars had forsaken the law of the LORD. So the prophets came on the scene and proclaimed God's word and truth and showed the right way. Of course, apostate Israel refused to repent and obey and therefore fell under God's judgment. Nevertheless, the work of the prophets had not been entirely in vain in the Lord. Even under the godless reign of Ahab and Jezebel, God had preserved a seed, those seven thousand who had not bowed their knees to Baal.

In the kingdom of Judah, too, prophethood now entered the fray. For even the kings of Judah from David's tribe soon deviated from the straight and right path and sinned after the manner of the kings of Israel. And the priests in Jerusalem did not keep the right teaching either. So the prophets took over the spiritual leadership of the people. Not on their own initiative, the LORD had sent them. And what they proclaimed to the people, they said in the name of the LORD Almighty. The first prophet who prophesied to the kingdom of Judah-Jerusalem and whose prophecy has been preserved for us

was the prophet Joel. He lived and preached at the time of the pious King Joash. Things were still better in Judah at that time. So the citizens of Judah-Jerusalem allowed themselves to be punished and repented at Joel's preaching. And the prophet now showed the repentant people the great, beautiful future, the image of the New Covenant, the New Testament Church, the future grace and glory. He prophesied and said in the name of the Lord: "And after these things I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your elders shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. At that time I will also pour out my Spirit on both menservants and maidservants." Joel 3:1. 2 Joel also referred to the last end, the end of the church and the godless world. He said: "The day of the LORD is near in the valley of judgment. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars will dim their shining. And the LORD will roar from Zion, and his voice will be heard from Jerusalem, so that heaven and earth will shake. The LORD will judge all the nations. Strike the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come down, for the winepress is full. But Judah shall be preserved for ever, and Jerusalem for ever. In that day the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streams of Judah shall be full of water." Joel 3:17-23.

But apostasy and unbelief soon took over the kingdom of Judah as well. The time in which the prophet Micah raised his voice, the time of the kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, was a decisive turning point. Under Jotham, David's regiment still stood in honor and prestige. Jotham had extended his rule to the banks of Egypt and subdued Edom and the land of the Philistines. But the core and the marrow had already fallen into decay. The temple service was still in full swing. Thousands of bulls, goats and lambs were brought to the altar of the LORD. But it was a dead service. Judah feigned fear of God and piety while pursuing vain gain and pleasure. Soon the mask fell off. King Ahaz completely denied the ways of his fathers, erected altars to Baalim and other idols of the Gentiles in Jerusalem, even in the courtyard of the temple, and defiled himself and his people with all the abominations and

vices of the Gentiles. The priests of Aaron's family and false prophets said yes and amen to this. Thus began the judgment of God on Judah. Judah-Jerusalem was hard pressed by its neighbors, Israelites and Syrians. The world power of the East, Assyria, which Ahaz had called to his aid, rewarded him with ingratitude and also put the House of David in chains. With his repentance and prayer, the pious King Hezekiah obtained a final reprieve for his people. While Assyria led the kingdom of Israel captive, God spared Judah-Jerusalem. But the people's recovery did not last long. The apostasy could no longer be controlled. The seeds of destruction ripened here too.

In this disastrous time, under the reign of the kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, the word of the LORD came to Micah the prophet. In the name of the LORD, this man of God punished the idolatry of the house of David, the people of Judah, calling woe on those who dealt in evil treachery, seizing houses and fields and practicing violence, and saying to the prophets, "You shall not treachery." He especially punished the princes and heads of the people of Judah and the unfaithful priests and the false prophets who prophesied for reward and lied to and deceived the erring people: "Is not the Lord with us? No evil can come upon us." His word fell on the ears of the great, the leaders, the masses of the people without effect. But right here, in the kingdom of Judah, the LORD still had a remnant, his remnant. They gathered around the preaching of the prophets. And for the comfort of the small army, the people of God, the true Israel, Micah now also unfolded the promise of the Messiah and of the glorious kingdom of the King Messiah. He prophesied that in the last days the LORD would gather Jacob, the remnant of Israel, and bring them together, and that a breaker would go before them, that from Zion-Jerusalem the word of God would go forth into the Gentile world and bring many nations to the house of God, to the worship of the living God. Cap. 2, 12. 13. chap. 4, 1-5. But with clear and distinct words he also pointed to the man who was to turn the prison of Judah, the LORD, the Redeemer, the Son of David. The foregoing prophecy is a precious gospel which glorifies Christ. On the basis of this text, comparing prophecy and fulfillment, we now speak:

Of the prince of Judea, who came from Bethlehem Ephratha;

1. from his low birth and origin,
2. of the divine majesty that is hidden behind lowliness,
3. of the wonderful, glorious kingdom and reign of this prince.

I.

The prophet begins by describing the lowly birth and origin of the King Messiah. "And you Bethlehem Ephratha" - this is how the prophecy of our text begins. In the history of the world and the Church, we find many examples of great princes and heroes, famous men who rose from deep poverty and lowliness. They may have come from small, unknown places, but such small villages and towns have achieved fame through the great men who were born there. Little Eisleben in Thuringia is now on everyone's lips because it was the birthplace of Luther. In the tribe of Judah, three hours from Jerusalem, there was a small town of Bethlehem, surnamed Ephratha, "small among the thousands of Judah", among the families of Judah, so small that the inhabitants did not even form a single family, a separate clan in Judah. A shepherd's son, David son of Jesse, had once been born there and had tended the flock in the fields and valleys of Bethlehem. God had then taken this man from the sheepfolds and made him prince in Israel. David's regiment in Zion-Jerusalem had a name in the ancient world. And David's fame was now also transferred to the city of his birth, which had only witnessed his poverty and lowliness. But little Bethlehem Ephrathah was yet to become the birthplace of another prince. God said through the prophet Micah: "Out of you shall come to me the one who is to be Lord of Israel." So the LORD, the Messiah, whom God had intended for his people, the offspring of David, was also to be born in the city of David, in little Bethlehem. God had chosen this place, which had remained very small despite David's greatness,

for his Messiah. By this God meant that the Messiah, the Son of David, was to be born in lowliness like David, his father. Not Jerusalem, the proud royal city, but lowly Bethlehem was to be the starting point of Christ's scepter and reign. What was prophesied was fulfilled. Christ was born in Bethlehem in the Jewish land. The whole of Christendom now knows and praises this. Bethlehem Ephratha is the beginning of Christ's kingdom. Little Bethlehem should not be forgotten. Bethlehem Ephratha is a symbol of Christ and his kingdom. The beginning is small and lowly. That the splendor and magnificence of all princes, "that all the power, honor and good of the world" with this prince, with Christ, "counts for nothing, helps nothing and does nothing", is already indicated by the name Bethlehem.

Our text also commemorates the lowly origin of the Messiah with the words: "Yet he will afflict them until the time that she who is to give birth is born." The prophet holds out the prospect of plagues and tribulation for his people in the future. Judah-Jerusalem will be severely afflicted because of its sin, and the punishment will continue until the time of Christ's birth. And the fact that the lineage of David will be brought back to its humble beginnings in Bethlehem is also the result of God's judgments. This is how it came to be. The people of Judah were led to Babylon, as Micah expressly prophesied, and even after they had returned from the Babylonian captivity, they were still under pressure from the Gentiles. Eventually the Romans became masters of the land. The house of David was ousted from the regency. Mary and Joseph, her fiancé, the descendants of King David, were poor, despised people. But it was precisely at the time of the deepest disgrace and humiliation of the people of Israel that Christ was born. A woman was to give birth, a poor, lowly woman whom God had chosen for himself. This is what happened in Bethlehem: an unsightly story. Mary, the daughter of David, gave birth to a son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. The continuation corresponded to the beginning. The baby boy was persecuted by the prince of the land. He grew up in lowliness, in Nazareth, a city of Galilee, which was even more despised than Bethlehem. This Son of Man then had to lament: "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has

not where to lay his head." Finally, the people of the Jews nailed him to the cross. Whoever lays claim to the Messiah of God, to Christ the Prince, and desires salvation from him, must put up with his shame and lowliness.

II.

But the prophet now goes on to show the divine majesty that is hidden behind the lowliness. There is a secret in the words "until the time that she who is to give birth has given birth". The prophet only remembers the woman who is to give birth, the mother of the Messiah, and is silent about the father. Thus the first promise which Eve received was also only of the seed of the woman, not of the man. What is hinted at here from afar is clearly set out in the New Testament. The angel Gabriel said to the Virgin Mary, who was to give birth: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore also the holy thing that will be born of you will be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35: In Bethlehem Ephratha the son of the virgin is born. The name means something. Bethlehem means house of bread. There in Bethlehem Judah, the world was to find the bread of life that came from heaven. Ephratha, which means fruit fields. There in Bethlehem Ephrathah was to sprout salvation for Judah, for the whole world. The scribes of Israel rightly give the prophet's words: "And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are small among the thousands in Judah" the phrase: "And you, Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are by no means the smallest among the princes of Judah". Matt. 2, 6. The prophet's saying about the little Bethlehem Ephratha, about the woman who is to give birth there, point to something great, through which the little Bethlehem gains significance.

The incomparable greatness and glory of the Prince, who comes from Bethlehem Ephrathah, is now expressed in the words "which was from the beginning and from eternity". The LORD, the Messiah of Israel, who is to be born in little Bethlehem of the woman who gave birth to him, the daughter of David, has his origin and beginning from all eternity. A great, powerful word, a strong testimony to the eternal divinity of Christ! The wit

and intellect of men are annoyed by such high revelation. The enlightened scribes of our day do not believe the prophet to have known such things. They attribute to the prophet's speech the idea that Christ was to take his origin from the ancient, venerable house of David, that his beginning reached back to the primeval times of the world, or that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem in his time, already appeared in the beginnings of the history of Israel and mankind, that he was already to be found in the prophecy that pointed to him. The clear, simple word of Scripture condemns all such distortions. No, what the prophet says and means, what the Holy Spirit revealed through the prophet Micah, is precisely this: The prince, the Messiah of Israel, who is to emerge from David's lineage and from David's city, has a beginning and an end from eternity, before the time of the world. He is the eternal God, whose days have no beginning. This secret of the divinity, of Christ's divine sonship, had already been revealed to King David. God testified through Nathan of the future son of David: "He shall be my son, and I will be his father." And David, enlightened by the Spirit, lets the Messiah speak thus in the Psalm: "I will preach of such a way that the LORD has said to me: You are my son, today I have begotten you." David calls the future son of David the LORD and addresses him thus: "God, your throne will remain forever." Indeed, a thousand years before the birth of Christ, the pious fathers already had a clearer understanding of Christ, the Son of the Highly Praised One, than the teachers and leaders of Christianity today. The New Testament puts its seal of approval on the noble testimony of the Old Testament. John, the evangelist, testifies and says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word." Christ himself appears and confesses: "Before Abraham was, I am." The apostle Paul writes of Christ that he was before all. Thus all the children of God praise him as the great Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. And this is precisely the great mystery that has been announced, that he whose beginning and end was from eternity should have and has had a beginning in time, that he who was born of the Father in unity should be and has been born of that mother in Bethlehem Ephratha, that the

eternal Word became flesh, that the Son of the Father, God of nature, became a guest in the world here, that the eternal, great, glorious God took part in the shame and lowliness of his people. The prophet indicates in the last words of our text why this was to happen and did happen, what was served for the people of Judah and all mankind by the humiliation of the great, eternal God and the exaltation and majesty of the lowly Son of David, what is served for us by this.

III.

There he speaks of the wonderful, glorious kingdom and reign of the prince who comes from Bethlehem. Our text describes the blessed time that begins with the birth of the child in Bethlehem with the words: "Then the rest of his brothers will return, together with the children of Israel." The remnant of Judah-Jerusalem, of Israel, will then turn to the God of Jacob. This is what happened. After all, thousands from Israel, a people who have seen God from the beginning, turned to the Son of David at the time of Christ and the apostles. And over the centuries, other remnant of Abraham's seed have joined them and have given glory to their God and King, Christ the Lord. In his prophecy, however, the prophet remembers the whole wide world, that the Messiah of God "will become glorious as far as the world is". The rest of the nations of the Gentiles have also come, are coming and returning, repenting, believing and worshipping the child born in Bethlehem. And why this turn of events, this change of heart among Jews and Gentiles? What is it that instills such confidence in Jews and Gentiles, in sinners, in apostates, that they repent and seek refuge in the God who has afflicted them for their sin, who has given them over to distress, shame, death and wrath? Micah closes the book of his prophecy, interpreting his own name, with the words: "Where is such a God as you are, who forgives sin and pardons iniquity for the rest of his inheritance? Who does not keep his wrath forever, for he is merciful. He will have mercy on us again, will restrain our iniquity, and will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Cap. 7, 18. 19 God is gracious and merciful to sinners, to

apostates in Christ his Son. Thus access to God is now open to sinners. Therefore sinners, the remnant of Israel and from the ends of the earth, come and fill the kingdom of God. The people who serve Christ, the Prince, are increasing day by day.

And it is he himself, Christ the Lord, who brings and gathers the rest, who converts sinners and wins himself and God. The last thing that Micah prophesied has also been fulfilled. "But he shall arise and feed in the power of the LORD and in the victory of the name of his God, and they shall dwell." After he himself, this Son of David, a native of Bethlehem, had borne shame and lowliness from birth to death and the grave, he arose, rose again in the power of God, was gloriously proved by the resurrection to be the Son of God, whose beginning and end was from eternity, and through his word, through his arm which is active in the preaching of the gospel, has brought the remnant from all nations and made them subservient to his scepter, and now feeds his sheep, whom he has won, with his gifts of peace, salvation, grace and mercy, and his own dwell safely under his scepter; God, the eternal God, holds and protects them; they will never perish. And Christ, the name of Christ, will be glorified to the end of the world and praised for all eternity by all the angels and the elect. God help us that we may enjoy the blessings of Christ's kingdom, the salvation which the birth of the Son of David has brought to the world, and remain his own for ever and ever! Amen.

Seventeenth Sermon. [^]—

Isa. 11:1-10.

And a rod shall come up from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall bear fruit from its root"; on which shall rest the Spirit of the LORD, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. And his smell will be in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what his eyes see, nor punish by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he will judge the poor, and with judgment he will punish the wretched of the earth; and with the rod of his mouth he will strike the earth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be the girdle of his loins, and faith the girdle of his kidneys. The wolves will dwell with the lambs, and the goats with the rams. A little boy will drive calves and young lions and fattened cattle together. Cows and bears shall go to pasture, and their young shall lie down together; and lions shall eat straw like oxen. And an infant shall have his delight in the hole of the adder, and a weaned man shall put his hand into the den of the basilisk. No one will be left to die or perish on my holy mountain, for the land is full of the knowledge of the LORD, as if covered with the waters of the sea. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, which is for a standard for the nations, shall be inquired of by the Gentiles; and his rest shall be glory.

The prophet Isaiah is the greatest of the Old Testament prophets who have left us their writings. His prophecy rightly stands at the head of the second part of the Old Testament canon, the prophetic books. Isaiah is rightly called the evangelist among the prophets. Admittedly, he also proclaimed the law. He punished the apostate Judah-Jerusalem for its iniquity, especially at the time of the godless King Ahaz. His prophecy begins with the accusation against his people: "Listen, you heavens and earth, listen, for the LORD is speaking! I have raised up and exalted children, and they have fallen away from me. An ox knows its master, and a donkey knows its master's manger, but Israel does not know, and my people do not hear. Oh woe to the sinful people, to the people of great iniquity, to the wicked seed, to the wicked children who forsake the Lord, who blaspheme the Holy One of Israel, who draw back." Cap. 1:2-4: "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint. From the sole of his foot even unto his head there is no soundness in him, but wounds and sores and boils, <which are not healed,

neither bound up, nor healed with oil." Cap. 1:5. 6 Yes, those of Judah blaspheme the Holy One in Israel. And so they also act unfaithfully against their brethren. "How is it that the holy city has become a harlot? It was full of justice; righteousness dwelt in it; but now murderers. Your silver has become foam, and your drink is mixed with water. Your princes are renegades and thieves; they are all lovers of gifts and seekers of riches; they do not do justice to the fatherless, nor does the widow's cause come before them." Cap. 1:21-23: The prophet laments in deep sorrow over the vineyard that God planted, on which God did everything he could do, but which produced gleams instead of grapes. Cap. 5 And he now threatens God's impenitent people with punishment and revenge. Already at the time of his appointment he had received the commission from the Lord to harden the disobedient people and to preach judgment to them. Thus he describes in detail the great, glorious, terrible day of the LORD. Cap. 2.

But by preaching the law, Isaiah also only wants to prepare the way for the gospel. He is the evangelist among the prophets. His prophecy is first and foremost gospel. He proclaimed the salvation of God to the faithful in Israel who gathered around his preaching, to the repentant sinners who humbled themselves before God with King Hezekiah and mourned the iniquity of their people. He prophesied of the Redeemer who would come from Zion, of the Virgin Son Immanuel, the Son of David, the Son of God, the Child who was born to us, the Son who was given to us, whose dominion is on his shoulder. He prophesies of the Comforter and Savior of sinners, who is sent to preach to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and opening to those who are bound; of the Servant of the Lord, whose cry is not heard in the streets, who does not break the bruised reed or snuff out the smoldering wick, of the suffering and death of the Servant of God, who is wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our sins, of the exaltation of the humiliated, whose length of life no mouth can utter. All the main articles of our most holy faith already find their place in this Old Testament Gospel. Isaiah speaks of justification by faith. "Though your sin be as scarlet, it shall

be as white as snow; and though it be as the color of scarlet, it shall be as wool." Cap. 1:18: He shows the righteous the way of God, the way of love and mercy: "Break bread for the hungry, and bring into the house those who are in misery; if you see anyone naked, clothe him, and do not part with your flesh." Cap. 58:7: He describes the glory of the church of Christ, which is gathered from all nations; he sees the sons and daughters of Zion coming from afar. Cap. 60: He speaks of the power of the divine word, by which the church is preserved, which shall not return empty. Cap. 55:10-11. He comforts the small, afflicted flock: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name, you are mine. For when you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and the rivers shall not drown you; and when you enter the fire, you shall not burn, and the flame shall not kindle you." Cap. 43:1. 2. The prophet Isaiah prophesies of the future glory of God's people, of the comfort of eternity, when the LORD comforts His own "as a mother comforts her mother." Cap. 65. 66. He prophesies of the resurrection of the dead. "Thy dead shall live, and rise again with the body." Cap. 26:19. He prophesies of the splendor and glory of the new city of Jerusalem. He concludes his prophecy with a reference to the new heaven and the new earth.

The above prophecy, which we will now consider, concerns the main subject of all prophecy, Christ and his kingdom. It deals with

Of the peace regiment of the Son of David.

She shows us:

1. the king of peace,
2. the kingdom of peace of the Anointed One.

I.

Here we first see the King of Peace. The prophet introduces us to the King Messiah. He describes his humble origin and birth. He begins: "And a rod will spring up from the tribe of Jesse, and a branch will bear fruit from its root." V. 1 Isaiah sees the house of David in its lowliness and contempt. The famous family of Jesse, which at the time of David's and Solomon's reign overshadowed the land of Israel like a mighty tree

and under whose shade the Gentiles also sought shelter, will in the future resemble a bare, barren stump. The trunk with its branches and leaves is cut down and withered, rotten. Only a rootstock remains. All the hope that Israel placed in the house of David seems dead and lost. And yet, behold, a little shoot sprouts from this rootstock, a tender, small shoot that few notice and heed. We know that this prophecy has been fulfilled. The house and lineage of Jesse, the famous house of David, has disintegrated, has lost its dominion and honor in the course of time. At the time that God reserved for his counsel, the descendants of the great King David were poor, lowly people, Joseph, a carpenter who lived in Nazareth, and his fiancée Mary, the lowly handmaid of the Lord. They belonged to the poorest class. When Mary went to the temple, she could only offer a poor offering. They were unappreciated, despised people. Since they had been ordered by Emperor Augustus to be appraised in Bethlehem, the city of David, they had to take shelter in a stable. But behold, at that very hour the tender, holy little rice of which Isaiah spoke came to light. We still praise today after thousands of years and will bless this blessed hour for all eternity. We sing:

"A rice has sprung up
Tender from a root,
As the ancients sang to us,
From Jesse came the way,
And has brought a little flower
In the middle of a cold winter
Probably halfway through the night.

The little rice I mean,
Of which Isaiah says,
Brought us alone
Mary, the pure handmaid.
From God's eternal counsel
Has she given birth to a child?
Probably that same night."

"A little child so lovely
Was born to us today.
From a virgin clean,
To comfort us poor people."

This little child, born of Mary, the daughter of David, this fair child has given peace to the world, that is the joy and delight of the children of men. Our hearts beat towards it.

But this little shoot, this root branch, of which Isaiah says, grows up and bears fruit. The prophet describes the increasing power, activity and work of the Son of David. He says: "On him shall rest the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, and his smell shall be in the fear of the Lord."

V. 2. 3 The success, the story corresponded to the prophecy. Jesus, the Son of David, was anointed with the Holy Spirit without measure and now arose in the power of the Lord and was manifested before all Israel. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding rested on him. In him were hidden all the gifts of wisdom. He bore witness to a wisdom that had been hidden from the time of the world. He spoke and testified of heavenly things that he had seen and heard from the Father above. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has proclaimed it to us. He testified of himself, of the mystery of his person. In this holy body, which came from the Virgin Mary, dwelt the fullness of the Godhead. Here God and humanity were united in one. The spirit of counsel and strength rested upon him. The Son of David gave counsel to his people, who lay in the bonds of death, to the world, which was dead in sins and hopelessly lost. Humanity was in a desperate state. It had sinned to death and there was no Savior. Then He knew what to do. The world was lost, Christ was born. The tender child from David's tribe, God's only child, helped the lost world. Through him we are helped. In the power of God and His Spirit, He led the work of salvation and redemption to victory. Through his suffering, death and bleeding, through his great and wonderful patience, Christ, the Son of David, the King of Israel, broke the bonds that held his people captive and overcame the enemies of mankind, sin, death and the devil. He then rose again in power and through his resurrection proved himself strong and glorious as the Son of God, the Savior of the world. The Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord rested upon him. The Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father. The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father. Christ was obedient to his Father even unto death on the cross. In this way he reconciled sinners and led lost children back to God. There is now peace on earth,

peace between God and man. And the Lord has then implanted the knowledge of God, fear and love into the hearts men through his Spirit. And his smell is now in the fear of the Lord. He is well pleased with the sacrifices of men. There is now peace on earth and pleasure in people again.

Having accomplished his work on earth, the Son of David now sits on the throne of his father David, on the throne of God, and leads the scepter of peace. The prophet says further of the Anointed One's reign of peace: "He will not judge according to what his eyes see, nor punish according to what his ears hear, but will judge the poor with righteousness and punish the wretched of the earth with judgment. . . Righteousness will be the girdle of his loins, and faith the girdle of his kidneys." V. 3-5: He will not judge and punish according to the reputation of the person punish, that is, make his decision. Rather, justice and judgment, that is, righteousness and equity, faith and faithfulness will be the girdle of his loins and kidneys. He will administer justice and righteousness He will administer justice and righteousness in his reign, he will keep faith and faithfulness and confirm his promise. This has happened. Christ reigns and administers justice and keeps faith and faithfulness to those who believe his word. He judges, he justifies the poor, the wretched of the earth. He helps the poor, the wretched, the afflicted sinners to right. He justifies the poor sinners who seek help from him. He makes them righteous before God. He justifies the poor who have God for their own, and makes them righteous before their enemies and adversaries. So now all feuding has come to an end. Of course, the wicked have no peace. Those who resist the scepter of this king, who reject his peace, his grace, he glorifies himself in punishment, judgment and justice. "He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked." V. 5 With the rod of his mouth, with the breath of his lips, that is, with his word, he strikes, judges, condemns the earth, the world of the wicked, his enemies, especially the one wicked man who rises up against him, the Antichrist, the man of sin. Thus the prophet traces the course of the Son of David from his lowly birth to the throne of honor. This is the Christ, the King, to whom we pay homage, in whom we believe, whom we serve.

II.

In the second half of his prophecy, the prophet then sketches a picture of the kingdom, the kingdom of peace of the anointed one. This is the kingdom in which we live, in which we have citizenship. That king of David's lineage, who brought peace to the world and who now reigns in righteousness, has established a kingdom on earth, a kingdom of peace. This people is gathered from all nations and languages. The prophet prophesies and says: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, which shall stand for a standard for the nations, shall be inquired of by the Gentiles, and his rest shall be glory." V. 10. A time will come when the little nephew who sprouted from the tribe of Jesse, this tender root of Jesse, the son of David, will stand as an ensign for which the nations will ask and around which the nations will gather. This blessed time has come. Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, David's offspring, this King of the Jews, his name, his cross is erected as an ensign on earth. This is visible everywhere. The gospel of Christ, the Son of David, the Son of God, the Crucified and Risen One, has gone out into all lands. Salvation and peace are proclaimed to those near and far. And the Gentiles, the sinners on earth, recognize that there is salvation in no other, that there is no other name given to men in which they shall be saved, and come and bow their knees before this tender rice, before the little child in Mary's womb, before the crucified Christ. Of course, this very Christ is set as a sign, which is contradicted from all sides. He is set as a fall for many. But multitudes come from all sides, from all peoples and countries, ever new multitudes, and set their course towards the standard that stands on the mountains, go to Bethlehem, to Golgotha, and seek and find rest and peace for their souls there. They recognize the Lord who has redeemed them, their Lord and King and Saviour. "The whole land", the earth "is full of the knowledge of the Lord, as if covered with the waters of the sea". V. 9 They recognize the Lord and serve him in holiness and righteousness that is pleasing to him. "No one will be left nor perish on my holy mountain." V. 9 In the kingdom of this Christ

is no iniquity. Those who have recognized the Lord depart from all unrighteousness. And though we still sin, yet in this kingdom we have an open fountain against all sin. We receive from Christ our Lord and King grace, peace, righteousness, power and strength for every good thing from day to day.

The prophet describes the kingdom of peace of the anointed one with lovely colors and parables. "The wolves shall dwell with the lambs, and the pardels shall lie down with the rams; a little lad shall drive calves and young lions and fatlings one with another. Cows and bears shall go to pasture, and their young shall lie down together; and lions shall eat straw like oxen; and a suckling shall have his delight in the hole of an adder, and a weanling shall put his hand into the den of a basilisk." V. 6-8. It is a lovely picture of peace, a true state of paradise that the prophet paints before our eyes here. What the prophet says is this: Wolves, lions, bears dwell and lie down beside lambs, rams and calves. Those wild animals no longer rob and choke, no longer feed on the flesh and blood of other animals. They go to pasture, eat straw like oxen. They have shed their unruly nature and have become tame. An infant sits calmly and securely at the otter's hole, stretches out its hand towards the smooth, shiny basilisk, plays with the colored snakes and enjoys them. Otters and basilisks no longer sting or hurt. They have lost their venom. This is the picture that is presented to us here. And what is the prophet's opinion? What does the Holy Spirit, who spoke through the prophet, mean and want? Are we being presented here with a picture of eternal life, the life of transfiguration, a scene from the new heaven and the new earth that God will create? Will there really be lions, wolves, bears grazing with lambs, goats and oxen and young children playing with snakes in that world? That is what some have thought. But nowhere else does God's promise of eternal life tell us anything about wolves, lions, lambs and oxen. We Christians do not wait and hope for a Turkish heaven filled with sensual attractions, with earthly glory. Everything in that world will be quite different from what it is here, a new heaven, a new earth. Or will such a state of things occur on this earth, perhaps at the end of the

days, as is described here, a general world peace, that even the wild beasts will forget robbery and war and live peaceably with the beasts of the field and with the children of men? The most famous writers of our day have put this new wisdom on the market. They dream of an earthly, worldly Messiah's kingdom, a thousand-year kingdom that will conclude this world age, when the sin and wickedness of men, including animals, will no longer have free rein. A Christian child who has only a little spiritual understanding laughs at these childish ideas of the great scholars who have become fools in their wisdom. No, the prophet speaks in this whole prophecy, as it is in the day, of the kingdom of grace in which we now live, of the Church of Christ gathered from all the nations of the Gentiles. What he says of the animals is image and likeness. With lovely images from the natural world, the prophet symbolizes and illustrates the peace that fills the church. There is discord, strife and war in the world. Everyone thinks of harming his neighbor. The children of men are in haste to shed blood. Viper's venom is under their lips. In the church of Christ, in our kingdom, it is different. There is peace. Admittedly, the church, Christ's bride, still has its spots and wrinkles. But she washes herself daily in the blood of the Lamb and is sanctified and cleansed by the Spirit of Jesus. Converted sinners live in the kingdom of Christ. The gospel of Christ transforms sinners and creates a new creature. People who are won by the gospel, who believe in Christ and serve Christ, deny their raw lusts, put aside their impetuous nature and behavior and avoid anger, bitterness and enmity as much as is in them. They are diligent to maintain unity of spirit through the bond of peace. They are bound together by bonds of love. They do each other no harm, but good. They are a holy brotherly people. Here there is no longer Jew and Greek, master and slave, husband and wife, but they are all one in Christ. Of course, only in that world will peace be complete. "His rest will be glory." There, Christ's kingdom and reign will be full of honor and glory. May God help us in grace! Amen.

Eighteenth Sermon. [^]—

Jerem. 23:5. 6.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise up unto David a righteous seed, and he shall be a king that shall reign well, and establish judgment and justice in the earth. In that day shall Judah be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely. And this shall be his name, that they shall call him LORD, who is our righteousness.

Jeremiah, the prophet who spoke this word, prophesied in an evil and dark time, when the judgments of God had begun against the house of God. Already in the days of King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, the kingdom of Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, had been destroyed by the king of Assyria, Salmanassar, after the measure of its sins had become full. Judah-Jerusalem was spared at that time. The pious King Hezekiah, who humbled himself before God and led his people back to the fear of the Lord, turned the sword of Assyria away from Jerusalem. But the repentance did not last long. The people of Judah turned back to the crooked paths they had chosen before. The apostasy only spread further. Even the godly King Josiah could no longer endure the corruption. The voice of the last prophets, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, no longer resonated. So God's sword of vengeance, which had long been threatened, also fell on Judah. God gave his people, Jerusalem, the holy city, the mountain of Zion which he had chosen, the temple which he had founded in remembrance of his name, into the hand of the Gentiles. The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, approached, conquered the city, destroyed the temple and led the inhabitants of Judah into Babylonian captivity. Around this time, the prophet Jeremiah proclaimed the word of the LORD to the apostate people. He prophesied the imminent fall of Jerusalem, and when the prophecy came true, he sang his lamentations on the ruins of the city. He preached to those who were left behind,

he comforted the faithful who humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God with the better future, he confirmed the prophecy of the earlier prophets and prayed that the promise of God was not yet over.

Thus the word of Jeremiah was also a sermon of repentance and at the same time a comforting gospel. Jeremiah chastised the people for their sin. "My people have sinned twofold: They forsake me, the living fountain, and make them wells here and there, which are full of holes and give no water." Cap. 2:13: "It is because of your wickedness that you are thus stumbled, and because of your disobedience that you are thus punished; so you must come to your senses and know what sorrow and heartache it brings to forsake the LORD your God and not fear him, says the LORD Almighty." Cap. 2, 19 He prophesies of the new covenant that God will make with the house of Israel after this time: "I will put my law in their hearts and write it in their minds, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Cap. 31, 31-33, and he now also points to the mediator of the New Covenant, the King of David's house, the Messiah of God. The above text is such an Old Testament Gospel of Christ. We are now speaking on the basis of it by combining prophecy and fulfillment:

From the Son of David, the righteous ruler, the LORD, who is our righteousness.

1. of the Son of David, the LORD, the righteous ruler.
2. from the Lord, who is our righteousness.

I.

The prophet in our text prophesies about the son of David, the LORD, the righteous ruler. He says: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise up unto David a righteous seed, and he shall be a king that shall reign well, and establish judgment and justice in the earth." He promises a king to the severely chastened house of Judah, a

king from the house of David who will act and reign differently than the previous kings of the house of David, who forsook the LORD their God, who sacrificed to idols, who were rightly called murderers, robbers and thieves by the prophets, a righteous king who will reign well. He will administer justice and righteousness. That time has come, Christ has appeared, the Son of David. This was a righteous plant, a righteous king; a righteous one of a kind. Many princes on earth who have ruled well have been called "the righteous" by their people. The world also has its righteous, its wise men, whom it holds in honor. But these righteous and virtuous men, who are praised in the world, were proud Pharisees. Their pride in virtue, their pride in wisdom, made their virtue an adverse grimace. Otherwise there were righteous men in the kingdom of God, holy, godly men, whose examples we should observe. But these saints of God, when measured against God's word, still showed many shortcomings and infirmities. Indeed, they always presented themselves before God as sinners and unrighteous. This son of David, Jesus of Nazareth, was a righteous man without blemish or reproach. His person, his conduct is the picture of unadulterated purity and righteousness. He was the only perfectly righteous man who ever walked the earth.

A righteous plant had sprouted from the house of David, a tender holy sapling. He was pure and holy from his mother's womb, from his birth and conception. Born of Mary, the virgin, in the power of the Holy Spirit, he was a holy man, a pure, spotless man, a man as God wanted him to be. Thus all his actions and conduct were holy and righteous. This Jesus, David's son, already showed irreproachable obedience as a child, feared and loved God above all things, more than his parents, he had to be in that which was his father's, but was also subject to his parents. And when he then went out and came in among his people, walked among men, sinners on earth, he remained untouched by sin, separated from sinners. He preserved his innocence until death. He never did anything wrong. Nor was any deceit invented in his mouth. He knew of no sin. No sinful thought ever rose from his heart. He could stand before his

enemies, who sought a cause against him, and ask them, "Which of you can accuse me of sin?" He was tempted everywhere, as we are, and tasted the adversity and misery of this life like no man, but no complaint ever came from his lips. Men provoked him. The rulers of Israel envied him, hated him, blasphemed and reviled him, handed him over to death. But he did not reproach when he was reproached, nor threaten when he suffered. The devil tempted him in the wilderness, wanted to turn him away from the straight and right path of God through the horrors of death and hell, but was unable to do so. God treated this righteous man like an unrighteous man and gave him into the hands of his enemies. But he never grumbled against God, not even in his heart. He stood firm in the truth and never consented to sin. Instead, he showed the world an example of perfect righteousness. He went about doing good. He acted, spoke and had only good in mind. This was his food, that he did the will of him who sent him. It was his joy to preach God's word, to proclaim God's glory. All night long he prayed to his God. He loved his brothers according to the flesh as dearly as a brother ever loved his brother. He was a friend to his disciples, a good master, a father. He comforted poor sinners. He called the weary and burdened to himself to refresh them. He loved his enemies and warned them earnestly against the way of destruction, lest they die in their sins. He took care of all the needs of suffering humanity, took their sicknesses and pains upon himself. He healed the sick and possessed of his people. Whoever came to him and sought his help found what he was looking for. He himself went out into the towns and markets and sought out the poor and wretched and brought his help to them. Until his death, until his death on the cross, he was obedient to God and loved his friends and enemies. Truly, a righteous plant, an irreproachable, perfect righteousness!

But what we see in him is not only human justice, but also divine justice. The prophet says: "And this will be his name, that he will be called LORD, who is our righteousness." This Son of David is called and is the LORD, the LORD

Jehovah. The Holy One born of Mary, the daughter of David, is the Son of God. The Son of God took on human nature in order to reveal His divine glory, His divine holiness and righteousness to the children of men through His humanity. He also had and demonstrated divine righteousness. There is a difference between human and divine righteousness, between created and uncreated holiness. The seraphim, the holy angels, cover their faces with their wings when they stand before the face of the thrice Holy One. God's holiness far, far outshines the holiness of the creature. God dwells in a light that no one can approach. But it was precisely these rays of his divine holiness and righteousness that the Son of God allowed to shine through his humanity, through his human life, suffering and death. He hated and punished human sin with divine seriousness. The sinful children of men could not tolerate his holiness. So the Gadarenes once begged him to leave their borders. The devils trembled before the Holy One of God. His heart was full of divine mercy. He had mercy on his wretched brethren as the Creator has mercy on his works. He loved sinners with a divine love for sinners. That was his will, to save sinners. He, like God, was not pleased with the death of the sinner, but that he might be converted and live. With divine patience and long-suffering he bore the weaknesses and infirmities of his disciples, the wickedness of men. It was a proof of the eternal, divine love of which only God is capable that Christ, the Son of God, died for the ungodly. This is the image of the Messiah, the King we worship: A righteous, undefiled man, a man according to God's good pleasure, in whom the image of God shines, even more pure and beautiful than in Adam and Eve, and the LORD, the Holy One of God, full of divine holiness and righteousness, full of grace and truth, the radiance of God's glory, the very image of his being.

II.

And this Lord, the Righteous One, is our righteousness. The prophet says: "In that day shall Judah be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely." The Son of David, the

Righteous One, now sits on the throne of his father David and "reigns well and establishes justice and righteousness on earth". He judges rightly. He establishes justice for all who seek protection from him. He gives them his righteousness. Through his word he offers us what is his own, his righteousness. He did not perform this irreproachable obedience for his own person. He did not need to first please God through obedience in order to earn God's good pleasure. He was the Son of pleasure from eternity. He himself is "the Lord". No, that is why He, the Lord, the eternal Son, took on human nature and fulfilled all the righteousness of men, so that we might be helped. He has paid our debt. He is "our righteousness".

We are in need of this righteousness. For we are all sinners and lack the glory we should have in God. We were once unrighteous, unwise, disobedient, serving lusts and various pleasures, walking in malice and envy and hating one another. God does not save us because of the works of righteousness that we have done. That is precisely what we lack. We have no righteousness to show before God. All the righteousness of man, of the natural man, is a vile garment before God. The evil, corrupt heart, which is hostile to God and man, poisons and corrupts all seemingly good works, all outward righteousness and honorableness of men. That which the world imputes to a man as wisdom, virtue, nobleness, magnanimity, love of country, love of mankind in general, is only a shining vice before God; before God it is foolishness, sin, selfishness, self-interest, pride, and pridefulness. We are unrighteous. And even after we have been born again by God's grace and are now struggling to live chastely, righteously and godly in this world, we can never bring about a righteousness that is sufficient before God. This is the sorrow of believers, that their tree of life bears such meager fruit, that they are still so poor in works of justice, love and mercy, that worship, prayer and devotion are so cold and sleepy that patience is immediately lacking in adversity and affliction. What we do still tastes of the flesh, of sinful birth. And as soon as a Christian wanted to claim the good he has, the good he has done, the good he has received, as righteousness,

right and merit before God, this very good would become evil and corrupt to him, this good, of which he is proud, would be counted as sin before God. Yes, we must confess before God: You are righteous, but we must be ashamed. We are unrighteous and cannot help ourselves.

Behold, God has helped us. The LORD has come to our aid. He himself is our righteousness. Since this righteous plant has sprouted from the earth, we now know where we can find salvation and recovery for our soul, for our wounded conscience. We now cover our poverty, our nakedness, our shame, our unrighteousness with Christ's righteousness. We have no righteousness of our own, so we take comfort in the righteousness of another, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Lord. He has fulfilled all righteousness, he has demonstrated an irreproachable, perfect righteousness, a righteousness that is valid before God, and his righteousness is our righteousness. What Christ lived and did is imputed to us, is given to those who have no righteousness. God sees it as if we had an immaculate childhood, youth, an immaculate life behind us. God sees it as if we had always honored and thanked him as our God, as if we had feared and loved him with all our heart, with all our soul, as if we had fulfilled and gladly fulfilled all his commandments, as if we had shown our neighbor all due love and loyalty. God sees it as if we had preserved the childlike innocence, the innocence of paradise. God sees it as if we were Christ. Whoever believes in this one righteous man is righteous. There is no difference before God between us and Christ. Christ stands in our place. We stand in Christ's place. Christ, the Lord, is our righteousness. It is often difficult for us to believe this. It goes against reason, feeling and experience. We still find so much wickedness and injustice in ourselves. But we should believe the word that God himself has spoken. The prophet writes: "This will be his name that they will call him: LORD, who is our righteousness." That is the word of the LORD. This is the title that God Himself wrote on the forehead of His Son: "Lord, who is our righteousness." Anyone who still doubts that he has righteousness and life in Christ is taking away Christ's name and honor and is giving the lie to God's word. Whoever

believes with all his heart that he is pure and righteous before God through Christ honors God, honors the Father and the Son. So let us believe and trust what the Lord has testified of the Lord, the Father of the Son: "The Lord, who is our righteousness." Yes, the LORD our righteousness. His eternal, divine righteousness is our adornment, our honor, our protection and defense. His eternal, divine mercy has swallowed up all our sin and injustice, the sin of the whole world. Let this be our anchor of faith, our comfort in life and death: The LORD himself our righteousness. Amen.

Nineteenth Sermon. [^]—

Ezek. 34:11-17, 23-24.

For thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will take care of my own flock and seek them. As a shepherd seeks his sheep when they have strayed from his fold, so will I seek my sheep; and I will deliver them from every place where they were scattered in the time of darkness and gloom. I will bring them out from all nations and gather them from all countries, and I will lead them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel and in all the pastures and on all the hills of the land. I will lead them to the best pasture, and their folds will be on the high mountains of Israel: there they will lie in gentle folds, and have fat pasture on the high mountains of Israel. I myself will feed my sheep, and I myself will feed them, says the LORD GOD. I will seek again that which was lost, and bring again that which went astray, and bind up that which was wounded, and wait for that which was feeble; and I will keep that which is fat and strong, and will tend it as it ought to be tended. But to you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will judge between sheep and sheep, and between rams and goats. And I will raise up for them one shepherd to feed them, my servant David. He will feed them and be their shepherd, and I, the LORD, will be their God, but my servant David will be the prince among them; this is what I, the LORD, say.

The prophet Ezekiel, from whom the above word of prophecy is taken, prophesied around the same time as the prophet Jeremiah, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Even in this fateful time, when all that Moses and the prophets had threatened the apostates was fulfilled, the word of prophecy did not fall silent. It was not yet the last. On the ruins of the holy city, in the disturbed land, Jeremiah raised his voice. But the voice of the LORD also went forth among the exiles in Babylon. The prophet Ezekiel preached there. Even before the destruction of Jerusalem, about two decades earlier, he and other citizens of the kingdom of Judah had been led captive to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar and now preached the word of the Lord to the captives. His powerful preaching was also brought to those in Judah-Jerusalem. Ezekiel was sent, as he himself often emphasized, to the apostate people, to the disobedient, rebellious house of Israel. He prophesied in the name of the LORD the impending

siege, conquest and destruction of the city, the sword, famine, pestilence, death, exile, and the casting out of Israel. But to those who accepted the chastening of the Lord and humbled themselves before the Lord their God, he affirmed the comfort of the promise, to whom he proclaimed the grace and mercy of the Lord. He testified that God was not pleased with the death of the sinner, but that he should repent and live. He prophesied of the conversion of Israel and the Gentiles, that God would turn the captivity of his people, that a nest would be converted to the LORD, and that the Gentiles would then also come and worship the God of Israel. He testified in the name of the LORD: "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your uncleanness and from all your idols. And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit within you, and I will take away the stony heart from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you, and I will make you men who will walk in my commandments and keep my statutes and do them." Cap. 36:25-27. At the end of his prophecy he sketches a magnificent picture of the church of the New Testament, of the glorious temple of the future, of the consummation of the kingdom of God.

It is precisely these things, the conversion of the apostates, the Church of the New Testament, the One Flock and the One Shepherd, that this word of prophecy is about. The prophet says that in future times the LORD himself will take care of his flock, search for and bring back the lost, gather the scattered, feed his sheep and make them safe on high mountains, that he will especially take care of the lowly, miserable sheep, bind up the wounded, wait for the sick and weak and finally separate and judge between his sheep and the rebellious. At the end he also clearly states when and through whom this will happen, through the one shepherd, the servant of God, David, who will be prince among them and feed them. It is therefore a prophecy of Christ, the Son of David. But this Son of David, according to the testimony of all the prophets, is the LORD Himself. The Son of David is precisely the Lord and Shepherd who testifies of himself in our text: "I will take care of my flock myself." The New Testament shows the

fulfillment of this prophecy. Christ, the Son of David, said: "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Matt. 18:11. Luke 19:10. Christ, the Son of God, said it freely: "I am a good shepherd." "I know those who are mine and am known to those who are mine." John 10:12, 14 We now combine prophecy and fulfillment and speak on the basis of our text:

Of Christ, the Son of David, the Lord, the Shepherd of the sheep.

1. he seeks the lost and gathers the scattered.
- 2 He feeds his sheep in green pastures and lets them dwell in safety.
- 3 And he takes care of the weak and infirm sheep.
4. And one day he will judge and separate the sheep from the goats.

I.

He seeks the lost and gathers the scattered. Christ, the Son of David, the Lord, is the Shepherd, the only Shepherd, the Shepherd whom God has appointed. He speaks here through the prophet of his flock, of his sheep. Who are they? First of all the sheep of the house of Israel, the true Israel that God has chosen for himself. But this flock also includes the rest of the Gentiles who, according to the word of the prophets, will come and worship the King of David's house, the God of Israel. These are also the ones of whom the Lord says in the New Testament: "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold." John 10:16 The Lord is speaking here of his flock, of the whole flock, of all those who are his own, whom he has chosen for himself from the beginning.

But the prophet sees this flock in a pitiful state at first. The sheep are scattered. The chosen children are scattered to and fro among all nations and countries. And they find themselves orphaned. They also all go astray like sheep. They are sinners like the others. They are also flesh of the flesh.

They are entangled in thorns and hedges, in the thickets of the desert, in worldly lusts, earthly cares. They are God-forsaken people by nature. They are as guilty as the rest. They are also children of wrath by nature. The prophet speaks of the time "when it was dark and gloomy". The sheep of the flock share in the misery and woe of the human race.

But the Lord has now seen their misery, their misery. And he had mercy on them. He said: "I will take care of my people myself." The LORD of heaven came down from heaven and condescended to his people. He took upon Himself the seed of David, the seed of the children of men, and took upon Himself the wretchedness and misery of all the children of men, bearing and atoning for their sin. He laid down his life for the sheep. And because he was the Lord, he took his life again and lives and reigns, walking in the Spirit and seeking the lost and straying. He follows them in their wanderings, pursues them into their hiding places, pursues them with his voice. He speaks into their hearts and consciences. He says to them: "Why do you want to die, you of the house of Israel?" "Return, you rebellious Israel!" Yes, return, come to me, come and see: behold, it is I. I am the Shepherd, your Shepherd and Redeemer. He recognizes his own and makes himself known to them. He seeks and finds his sheep. His sheep hear his voice and rejoice in his voice. So he brings them back and gathers those scattered from all their lands. He brings them all together into one fold, that they may become one flock under one shepherd. He gathers his church, the whole of Christendom from all the nations of the Gentiles. This is his work, and he will continue this work until the end of days. Praise God! The Shepherd has also had mercy on us, has brought us back from our error. We are now converted to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. We know him, the Shepherd, and hear his voice. We pay homage to and serve this King David. We are gathered to the One Host, we were once strangers, but are now citizens with all the saints and members of God's household. We are members of the one, holy, Christian church. Certainly, the Lord has also fulfilled his word in us, and does and works in our place what he has promised: he seeks the lost and gathers the scattered.

II.

But now he also feeds his sheep in green pastures and lets them dwell safely. The sheep that are now with their shepherd are well off. The shepherd says: "I myself will feed my sheep. I will feed them on the mountains of Israel and in all the pastures and on all the hills of the land. I will lead them to the best pasture. They will have rich pasture on the mountains of Israel." The pasture is all the good, the abundant grace, the comfort, the blessing, the blessedness that Christ has prepared for his own. The pasture of Christ's sheep is not food and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. In the Word, in the Gospel, the Lord gives us this pasture, this food. Whoever eats of this food and drinks of this water will never hunger or thirst again. This is pasture, pleasure and refreshment for souls. The gospel of Christ is milk and honey, pure sweet food. Here is our Canaan, truly a good, fat land. What the world offers its children is deception, it is poison. Here with Christ alone, in his word we find pasture and joy and full satisfaction.

But the shepherd now also lets his sheep live safely. He has brought them to a safe place, to the mountains, "on high mountains" and "camped" them there and has fenced them in, surrounded them with "hurdles". No one, no wolf, no thief, no robber may or can frighten or harm them. Christ protects and guards his own. He shields them against all their enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh. Through his word he supports and strengthens his own, strengthens their faith, even in the hour of temptation. He does not allow them to perish. He has given them the assurance: "No one will snatch my sheep out of my hand, and they will never perish." We are preserved to salvation by his power through faith. What he promises he will surely keep.

III.

And it is precisely the weak, frail sheep that he takes care of. Believers still walk in the flesh. So they can easily stumble and fall. Alas, many a member of Christ's flock goes astray again in the wilderness and leaves the right

road. We are then inclined to give up such lost ones forever. But Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep, has other thoughts, has greater love. That is his office and work, that he seeks and saves what is lost. When a little sheep has torn itself away from his hand, he sets out anew to seek what is lost. He has said it, and he is very serious about it: "I will seek again what was lost and bring back what went astray." He does not abandon his own. The Lord speaks through the prophet Isaiah and testifies of Himself: "His power and might are so great that there can be no lack of one." Isaiah 40:26.

But even the others who remain uninterruptedly in the community of the shepherd are still quite weak and miserable. They are by no means innocent and undefiled lambs. They still have their spots, defects and infirmities. They still have their sore spots. They keep bumping into things, to the right and to the left. They often lack the strength to run and fight, to follow Christ. They despair and despair of their own strength. But that is precisely why the shepherd goes ahead, goes to their side. He wants to "bind up the wounded and wait on the weak". He repeatedly binds up the wounds inflicted by sin. He heals the wounded conscience with the comfort of grace. He is very forgiving. He is of great patience and long-suffering. We live from day to day from his goodness and faithfulness. And he strengthens the weak who are weary on the way. Through his word, through his spirit, he instills courage and confidence in them and strengthens their steps. And he does not exaggerate the weak. He does not demand too much. He leads his own on a level path and teaches them to do as he pleases. But he leads them forward gently and gently. He takes the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom. And he leads the mothers of the sheep slowly and carefully. He is the true shepherd of the sheep, a good shepherd.

IV.

And one day he will separate the sheep from the goats and judge them. The prophet comforts the small, weak flock: "But to you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD:

Behold, I will judge between sheep and sheep, and between rams and goats." He then expands on this promise. Wicked, mangy sheep, rams and goats have also crept into the flock of Christ, into the church. Among those who call on the name of the Son of David, the Lord, there are also hypocrites who are like sheep on the outside but ravening wolves on the inside, disobedient, rebellious, who resist the shepherd's rod of Christ, his word and will. To them the Lord has also offered grace. He is not pleased with the death of the sinner, but that he should repent and live. But they were not willing. Rather, as the prophet says below, they trample the good pasture underfoot. They despise the counsel of God concerning their salvation. Therefore, in truth, they do not belong to the flock of Christ. The LORD has never recognized them. They are not His own. And these evil sheep that do not belong to the flock, these rams and goats that oppose the shepherd, are now also a hindrance to the true sheep. They spoil the good pasture for them and make their beautiful flocks dull. Cap. 34, 18. 19. They make the word of grace contemptible to the simple. They seek to tear the weak away from the shepherd. They deceive the obedient sheep and oppress and afflict those who will not be deceived and who faithfully follow the Shepherd. But the Lord preserves his own, does not allow them to be tempted beyond their ability and soon puts an end to the temptation.

Yes, he will fulfill what he has promised. He will separate the sheep from the sheep, the good sheep from the bad sheep, the sheep from the goats. When King David, when Christ returns in his glory and all his holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. And all nations will be gathered before him. And he will separate them from one another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. It shall not always be as it is now, that wicked beasts feed with the lambs, going in and out. On that day the hypocrites, the disobedient, the rebellious will be separated, placed in a special place and then receive their judgment from the shepherd of the sheep. He will rebuke and punish them for all that they have done to offend him and his flock. He will destroy them. They will go to eternal torment.

But the righteous into eternal life. The LORD, the good shepherd, will finally deliver his sheep from all evil, from all their temptations, from all their troubles, from their adversaries. Up there, in the heavenly Canaan, they will no longer become a prey. There, all weakness will be removed. There the work of the shepherd, the healing of the sick, will be completed. Then he himself, the shepherd, the lamb, will lead his own to the living fountains of weapons, to the green pastures of heaven. In his presence there is fullness of joy, and at his right hand there is everlasting delight. The whole host is gathered together, so that there is no lack of one, and shines in the splendor of the glory of their Shepherd and King, their God and Lord, and triumphs and rejoices and praises the goodness and grace of the good Shepherd for all eternity. Amen.

Twentieth Sermon. [^]—

Daniel 7:13. 14.

I saw in this vision at night, and behold, one came in the clouds of heaven, like the son of man, up to the old man, and was brought before him. He gave him power, honor and kingdom, so that all firecrackers, people and tongues should serve him. His power is eternal and will not fade away, and his kingdom has no end.

We have recently looked at the words of the prophets who spoke at the time of the deepest humiliation of the people of Israel, around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and then during the Babylonian captivity. Daniel, the prophet whose word is now before us, prophesied at the same time, prophesied, like the prophet Ezekiel, in the land of the Gentiles, in Babylon. The prophetic activity and thus also the book of Daniel covers a long period of more than 70 years. Daniel and his friends were among the first captives that King Nebuchadnezzar led from Jerusalem to Babylon. Daniel told the mighty king Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed the kingdom of Judah, the word of God. He prophesied the downfall of the Babylonian empire to his successor. Daniel saw the second world power, the empire of the Medes and Persians, coming to power. He prophesied under the king of the Medes, Darius, and under Cyrus, king of the Persians. He lived to see the end of the 70-year captivity of his people. Cyrus, the Persian king, obeying the command of the God of Israel, released the people of Israel from their captivity and allowed them to return to their land. Under Joshua and Zerubbabel, the first group of captive Jews returned home, rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and restored worship. Daniel's prophecy has this new state of affairs in mind.

Daniel was not only a prophet, but also a worldly ruler and regent. As Joseph once did in the land of the Egyptians,

Daniel rose from deep poverty and lowliness to high honor and royal prestige in the land of the Chaldeans. Under Nebuchadnezzar he held the office of governor of the empire. He was the second in the empire. He also held this office under the new dynasty, under the Mede king Darius and the Persian king Cyrus. The most powerful nations of the Gentiles, who played the leading role in world history at that time, were ruled and held in check by Daniel. Daniel was and remained an Israelite, an Israelite without falsity. He did not serve the gods of the Gentiles. Even when he was in power and prestige, he held fast to the faith of his fathers. He would pray to no other God than the LORD Jehovah. This loyalty to his faith often put him in danger. For his faith, he was thrown into the lions' den by the Mede king Darius. And his faith was victorious, even over the kings of the pagans whom he served. The proud king Nebuchadnezzar was humbled by his preaching. Darius, king of the Medes, and Cyrus, king of the Persians, also honored the God of Israel.

And the revelation that God gave to his servant Daniel corresponded to his position as ruler. Daniel not only had his people Israel on his heart and was concerned about their final fate. He also had a heart for the Gentiles whom he ruled. Thus God revealed to him the great secret of the future, that the Gentiles would also share in the salvation promised to the Jews. Daniel, like all the prophets, prophesied of Christ and his kingdom. And God showed him that the kingdom of Christ would also conquer the lands of the Gentiles. King Nebuchadnezzar once had a terrible dream. In his dream he saw a great figure with a golden head, a silver breast, loins of brass, thighs of iron, and feet and toes of iron and clay. Cap. 2 And he saw a stone cut out without hands, which crushed the great image and became a great mountain that filled the whole world. Daniel, enlightened by the Spirit of God, interpreted this dream to the king of Babylon. That structure overshadowed the colossus of world power. The stone that fell from on high pointed to the kingdom that God wanted to establish from heaven, and which will never be destroyed, while all the kingdoms of the earth

will perish. Daniel himself once saw in his vision four great and terrible beasts rising out of the sea, likewise an image and likeness of the kingdoms of this world. But he also saw the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, to whom was then given power and glory and the kingdom, that all nations and people and tongues should serve him.

Let us now visualize what Daniel the prophet writes in the above text, what he generally writes in his prophecy about the Son of Man and the kingdom of the Son of Man, which stands opposite the kingdoms of the world and overcomes them. Let us therefore consider:

The twofold future of the Son of Man,

1. his future in the time of the world,
2. his future at the end of the world.

I.

We first want to understand how Daniel, the prophet, describes the first future and appearance of Christ in the world, the present form and history of the kingdom of the Son of Man.

When the prophet in our text says: "Behold, One came in the clouds of heaven, like the Son of Man", he is of course referring to the future of the Son of Man at the end of the world. For we are told here how the Son of Man is brought to the Ancient of Days and receives from him power, honor and kingdom, including the power to judge. In the whole of the night vision, which concludes with the appearance of the Son of Man, chapter 7, the fate of the world, the kingdoms of this world and especially the future world judgment are described. The Son of Man appears here as the Judge of the world. But it is precisely the Son of Man who judges men. This Judge of the world has therefore already come into contact with the children of men on earth. And he has already established his kingdom on earth beforehand. What Daniel presupposes in the words of our text, the first future of the Son of Man, the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth, he describes clearly and distinctly in other prophetic discourses.

We first ask: Who is the Son of Man of whom the prophet speaks? A human being is meant, a true son of man. But this Son of Man outshines, far outshines the other children of men. He is brought to the Ancient of Days, that is, brought before God and receives from God, the Most High, what is God's own, power, honor, kingdom. He is God's neighbor, equal to God, yes, the Son of the Father. This Son of Man ascends on the clouds of heaven, just as the God of Israel ascends on the clouds. He himself is God, the God of Israel. The Son of Man whom Daniel sees in the vision is, of course, the very Man whom David, the holy seer, had already seen and recognized in spirit, since he worships "the way of a man who is the Lord God", since he praises the Son of Man who is forsaken by God for a little while, but to whom all things, heaven and earth, are put under his feet. 2 Sam. 7. Ps. 8. the Son of man is Christ, the Prince, who is to come at the time appointed by God. Cap. 9, 25: It is Christ, the Son of David, the Lord Jehovah, of whom all the prophets have written.

He who was to come has come. The hero, who probably had two parents, faithfully presented himself at the time appointed by God, in the fullness of time. It was precisely under this name and title that Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, made himself known to his disciples, to his people. He called himself the Son of Man. When he began his ministry in Israel, he said to his disciples: "Truly, truly, I say to you, from now on you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." John 1:51 The glory of God radiated from the Son of Man in word and deed. In him dwells the fullness of the Godhead in the flesh.

The Son of Man, Christ, has a kingdom on earth. All nations, people and tongues are to serve him. But this kingdom, according to Daniel's prophecy, is a completely different kingdom from the kingdoms of this world. The kingdoms of the world are like a great and mighty colossus. There is gold, silver, riches, power, might, wisdom, honor, in short, all the glory of the world on display. In contrast, the kingdom of God on earth, the kingdom of the Son of Man, has an inconspicuous form. But it is the kingdom of heaven on earth, as Daniel writes: "But in the time of such kingdoms God will set up a kingdom from

heaven." Cap. 2, 44. Heavenly, divine, spiritual goods and gifts will be distributed. Daniel calls such goods of the kingdom of heaven: "Sin shall be sealed up, and iniquity reconciled, and eternal righteousness brought in." Cap. 9, 24: The kingdoms of the world are like the beast. Men have degenerated, have forgotten and denied their divine origin, their divine honor and dignity. The Son of Man restores human dignity and adorns the degenerate human beings with the image of God. The kingdom of Christ is a holy kingdom. The citizens of this kingdom are saints. "The saints of the Most High will occupy the kingdom." Cap. 7, 18: The kingdoms of this world have their appointed time. One will put an end to the other. The kingdom which God sets up from heaven "will never be destroyed, and its kingdom will come to no other people." Cap. 2, 44.

The prophecy has been fulfilled. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. The Son of Man had to suffer and die much and thus enter into his glory. But it was precisely through suffering, death and resurrection that Christ established his kingdom on earth. Christ, the Lord, the exalted one, is now gathering his church, the whole of Christendom, from all nations, peoples and tongues throughout the whole age of the world. And the kingdom of Christ is not food and drink, does not come with outward gifts, but is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The church of Christ is the church of the saints. And there will be no end to his kingdom. The gates of hell will not prevail against the church of Christ.

Christ's kingdom is not of this world. And therefore the kingdoms of the world are of the kingdom of Christ. The church of Christ is gathered from all nations, people and tongues. But not all people give glory to the Son of Man. The world is and remains the world and may know nothing of the kingdom of heaven. The prophet Daniel describes in detail the battle between the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God, which fills the whole time of the world, and especially the last, great tribulation that is given to the saints. At the time of the fourth world empire, the Roman Empire, God wants to establish his kingdom on earth from heaven. But from this very kingdom ten horns, ten kings will arise. This kingdom

will be divided into a multitude of peoples and states. And also a little horn will grow out of the fourth beast, out of the fourth kingdom. "This same horn had eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth that spoke great things." Cap. 2, 8. This prince "shall blaspheme the Most High, and shall confound the saints of the Most High, and shall presume to change times and laws; but they shall be given into his hand for a time, and times, and half a time." Cap. 2, 25: "He will be enraged against the holy covenant, and will execute it; and he will surround and draw to himself those who forsake the holy covenant. And his arms shall stand there, and they shall profane the sanctuary of the feast, and destroy the daily sacrifice, and set up an abomination of desolation: and he shall hypocritically speak good words unto the wicked that break the covenant." "And the king shall do what he will, and shall rise up and rebel against all that is God; and against the God of gods shall he speak abominably, and shall prosper until the wrath be stayed: for it is determined how long it shall be. And he will not respect the God of his fathers; he will not respect the love of women or some of God, for he will rise up against everything. But in their place he will honor his god Moussim, for he will honor a god of whom his fathers knew nothing with gold, silver, precious stones and jewels. And he will do great honor to those who help him strengthen Moussim, with the foreign god he has chosen, and will make them lords over great possessions and give them the land as a reward." Cap. 11, 30-32. 36-39.

This prince and enemy is the wicked one, of whom Isaiah already spoke, chap. 11:4, the head over great lands, to whom David already referred, Ps. 110:6. Paul wrote: "He (Christ) shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, and the child of perdition, who is a reprobate, and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or the worship of God, to sit in the temple of God, as a god, professing himself to be God." 2 Thess. 2:3, 4 This is the beast which the holy seer John saw, "which opened his mouth against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven; and was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." Revelation 13:1-10.

We are living in the last days. The secret of wickedness is now revealed. We know this enemy of Christ and his church. Our Lutheran confession points a lifted finger at the arch-evil. "Wherefore the pope is an earthly god, a supreme majesty, and alone the most powerful lord in all the world, over all kingdoms, over all lands and people, over all goods, spiritual and temporal, and thus has all things in his hand, both temporal and spiritual sword. This definition, which does not rhyme with the true churches at all, but with the Roman pope's nature, is not only found in the canonist books, but Daniel the Prophet paints Antichrist in this way." Apology of the Augsb. Conf. art. 7. and 8., 23. 24. "Daniel in the 11th chapter paints the kingdom of Christ in such a way that he indicates that such new worship, invented by men, will be the politia and the true nature of the antichristian kingdom. He will honor the god Maosim, and he will serve the god whom his fathers did not recognize with gold, silver and precious stones. There he describes such new worship. For he speaks of such a God, of whom the fathers knew nothing." "We cannot be sufficiently surprised that the adversaries are allowed to teach, contrary to all the writings of the apostles, contrary to the Old and New Testaments, that we are to obtain eternal salvation and forgiveness of sins through such worship. For what is this but, as Daniel says, to honor God with gold, silver, and precious stones, that is, to hold that God will be gracious to us through various church decorations, banners, and candles, as is the case with such human statutes." Apology of the Augsb. Conf. art. 15, 19-21: "Therefore the law by which the marriage of priests is forbidden is a right papal law of the Roman tyranny. For the prophet Daniel foretold the antichrist kingdom, that it should teach to despise matrimony and wives, yea, the female sex." Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. 23, 25: "The adversaries draw on Daniel, who says: There will be abominations of desolation in the churches, and point this to our churches, because the altars will not be covered, lights will not burn, and the like. Although it is not true that we do away with all such outward ornaments, yet, if it were so, Daniel does not speak of such things, which are quite outward and do not belong to the Christian churches, but means much another, more abominable desolation, which is strong in the papacy,

namely the desolation of the most necessary, greatest worship, the ministry of preaching and the suppression of the gospel." "In addition, the adversaries have a terrible, atrocious abuse of the Mass, the like of which has hardly ever been seen on earth, and countless other unchristian, foolish services. This is the real desolation of which Daniel speaks." Apology of the Augsb. Conf. art. 24, 44-17.

However, even if this enemy of Christ and the church disturbs the sanctuary and draws many to himself, the kingdom and people of the Most High will not perish altogether. "The people who know their God will be exalted and will bring them to justice, and the wise among the people will teach many others: but they will fall by sword, fire, imprisonment and robbery for a time; and if they fall in this way, they will still receive a little help." Cap. 11, 32-34. This is what happened. The strangling and murder of Rome, the Roman emperors, the Roman popes did not kill the people of the saints, did not completely destroy Christ from the earth. The Lord helps his little flock to endure the last great tribulation. It is precisely in these last times that wise men have arisen and taught many. And surely, God's word and the right teaching will never perish. And the church of Christ, a holy seed, will remain until the last day. But in the end the saints of the Most High will take the kingdom and will possess it forever and ever.

II.

So we also look to the last end, to the second future of the Son of Man at the end of the world.

In the context of our text, the prophet Daniel gives a precise description of the Last Judgment at the end of days. "These things I saw until chairs were set, and the old man sat down. His robe was white as snow, and the hair on his head was like pure wool; his seat was like flames of fire, and his wheels were burning with fire. And out of him went a long fiery stream; a thousand times a thousand ministered to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The judgment was held, and the books were opened. I watched

because of the great speech that the horn spoke; I watched until the beast was killed and its body perished and was thrown into the fire, and the violence of the other beasts was ended, for the time and hour were determined for them, how long each one should last." Cap. 7, 9-12 But in this very vision the prophet saw the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, and saw how he was brought to the old man and received power from God, how God gave judgment to this Son of Man.

It was precisely this prophecy that Christ repeated and confirmed in the days of his flesh. He testified and said: "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son." "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." John 5:22, 27 And before He left the world and went to the Father, He emphatically pointed to His return: "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory, and all nations will be gathered before Him." Matt. 25:31. 32. St. Paul proclaimed to the Gentiles that "God has appointed a day on which he will judge the world with righteousness, by a man in whom he has appointed it." Acts 17:31. 17, 31. In all their letters, the apostles remind Christians of that day of the revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ. The holy seer John saw the Judge of the world in the vision, in exactly the same form as Daniel saw him. He saw "the Son of Man, clothed in a robe and girded about the chest with a golden belt. His head and his hair were white like white wool, like snow, and his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet like brass glowing in a furnace, and his voice like a great sound of rushing water." Revelation 1:13-15 And he saw another time "a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them: and he saw the books opened, and all men judged according to the scriptures in the books, according to their works." Revelation 20:11, 12. And he saw how the beast, the Antichrist, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone together with the devil, to be tormented there day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:10.

The power, the glory, the kingdom will then be God's and his Christ's alone, and the elect from all nations, peoples and tongues will reign and triumph with the Son of Man. "The kingdom, authority and power under the whole heaven will be given to the holy people of the Most High." Cap. 7:27: "A voice came from the throne: Praise our God, all his servants, and those who fear him, both small and great. And I heard a voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of great waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying: Hallelujah! For Almighty God has taken the kingdom." Revelation 19:5, 6.

Even the dead who have ever lived on earth and then died in their time will not remain behind. Before the throne of the Judge, before God, stand the dead, both great and small. The sea, death and hell will return their dead when the Son of Man appears and lets his voice be heard. But all who are not found written in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15: Daniel already received the revelation from God: "Many who lie under the earth will awake, some to eternal life, some to eternal shame and disgrace." Cap. 12, 2: Those who give glory to Christ, the Son of Man, the Son of the Most High, will rise to eternal life, they will have eternal joy and bliss. "His power is everlasting and will not fade away, and his kingdom has no end." So let us make this Lord our own and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence and blessedness! Amen.

Twenty-first Sermon. [^]—

Hagg. 2:7-10.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, There is yet a little while, that I will move heaven and earth, and the sea and the dry land. Yes, I will move all nations. Then shall come the consolation of all nations: and I will make this house full of glory, saith the LORD of hosts. For mine are both silver and gold, says the LORD of hosts. The glory of this last house will be greater than the first, declares the LORD Almighty, and I will give peace in this place, declares the LORD Almighty.

Ezekiel and Daniel, whom we heard speak last, prophesied at the time of Israel's exile, in the land of exile, in the land of Babylon. The following prophets, the last three, whose prophecy concludes the Holy Scriptures of the Old Covenant, preached again in Jerusalem, to the people who had returned from exile. The last prophets resumed the prophecy of the earlier prophets. The prophecy remained true to itself. It pointed unwaveringly to the salvation of the world, which was to come from the Jews. The end of the prophecy, the fulfillment, had come ever closer. Now it was said, as we hear in our text: "There is yet a little while to go." Or as Malachi says: "Soon the LORD will come to his temple."

Under Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the prince of David's tribe, the first group of exiled Jews returned to the land of their fathers. The returnees rebuilt the streets of Jerusalem and laid the foundations for a new temple. The neighboring people, the Samaritans, coveted a share in this building and then also in the worship of the Jews. They were a mixed people, having grown out of the rest of the ten tribes and the pagans who had settled in the land of Samaria. Thus the religion of Israel was also mixed with pagan leaven. Joshua and Zerubbabel therefore did well to reject these allies. For they and their people wanted to serve God again in the way of the fathers and keep the doctrine pure. Then the

Samaritans sought revenge and sued the Jews before Darm, king of the Persians. He gave the order to stop building the temple. And the people of Jerusalem submitted all too quickly to the unjust commandment of the prince of the Gentiles. Their hands and hearts had become lax. They preferred to build their own houses and did not care that the building of God's house was left undone. Therefore the LORD God visited the land with a great drought. The prophet Haggai stood up and interpreted God's judgment to the people, saying, "Is this your time to dwell in paneled houses, and this house to stand desolate?" Cap. 1:3 And he encouraged the people to continue and complete the building they had begun. So Zerubbabel and Joshua and all the rest of the people obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the word of the prophet and worked on the house of the LORD Almighty their God.

But when the elders of the people, who had seen the glory of the old house, Solomon's temple, saw this new house, which was so small, they lifted up their voices and wept. They were indeed small beginnings. It was a small time. And the days of David and Solomon never returned. But then the word of the LORD came again through the prophet Haggai and comforted the afflicted people. God spoke to his people through the prophet of a future glory of the house of God, indeed, he gave the people the great promise that this later glory of the temple would be greater than the former. This word did not apply to the temple of Zerubabel. No, this word pointed to the temple of the New Testament, to the house of God, into which the Gentiles were also to enter. This is confirmed by the apostle of the New Covenant. This prophecy of Haggai is introduced in the twelfth chapter of the book of Hebrews. There it says: "But now he promises, saying, 'Once more I will move, not the earth only, but also heaven. But this 'once more' indicates that what is movable will be changed from what is made, so that what is immovable may remain. Therefore, since we have received an immovable kingdom, we have grace, by which we are to serve God, to please him with discipline and fear." Heb. 12:26-28. Haggai's words here refer to the immovable kingdom which we have received. This is what we want to talk about now, yes

The glory of the New Testament temple.

1. the Gentiles enter this temple.
2. And God wants to give peace in this place.

I.

This prophecy begins with the words: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet a little while, and I will move heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land: yea, I will move all nations." What the prophet holds out for the near future is a great shaking of heaven and earth, that is, the whole world, a great movement of the nations on earth. Thus the prophet Zechariah, who prophesied at the same time, saw blood-red horses moving over the earth, spreading war and terror everywhere. When this happened, the prophecy was to be fulfilled, the consolation of all nations was to come. What God, the LORD of hosts, proclaimed through his prophets has come to pass. The centuries that preceded the birth of Christ were characterized by war and cries of war, turmoil and great terror. One world empire ousted the other from power. One nation rose above the other. Peace was taken from the earth. The bloodiest civil wars were waged at this time. In the end, the Romans subdued the whole world with sword and violence. And at the very time when the nations of the earth were united under the scepter of the Roman emperor, the salvation of the nations came from the Jews, when the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, was born.

The prophet's promise goes on to say that at that time, that is, at the time of Christ, God will make his house, the temple, full of glory. All the Gentiles shall enter the gates of the house of God, the elect of all nations, and bring their treasures as an offering to the God of Israel. "For both silver and gold are mine, says the LORD." This is precisely why the later glory of the temple will be greater than the former. The greater glory of the future, New Testament temple will consist precisely in the fact that not only the tribes of Israel but all the Gentiles will worship there. This has been fulfilled. The gospel of

Christ, the salvation of the world, has gone forth from Jerusalem, to Samaria, to the surrounding countries, to all parts, even to the remotest provinces of the vast Roman Empire. This great stirring and movement of the nations had to prepare the way for your gospel. All the known peoples of the earth were united under one regiment, the scepter of the Roman emperor. Thus all the peoples of the East and the West, who had at first been separated or opposed to each other, were now in active communication. From country to country, from city to city, the roads were paved. The whole world spoke or understood the one language that the Romans had brought to bear, which the apostles also spoke. The world of the nations waited and waited, as it were, for the good news that was to come from the Jews. And so the apostles proclaimed the gospel of Christ from nation to nation, from country to country, and were understood everywhere. The gospel spread throughout the Roman world as if in flight. St. Paul in particular, the apostle to the Gentiles, filled first the East and then the West with the preaching of the Gospel in just a few years. The others from all nations entered the gates of Jerusalem and accepted the teaching that those Jewish men brought them. Thus the church of Christ arose and flourished everywhere on earth, near and far. This was the temple of the new covenant and its glory.

The fulfillment of this prophecy, the building of this holy temple, is still underway. The Roman Empire soon fell into ruins. But the kingdom which the Lord God had planted on earth remained standing. New, unknown nations became obedient to the gospel and paid tribute to the God of Israel. Over the centuries, over the millennia, this building has grown and expanded. And we, too, have received this immovable kingdom. By God's grace, we too have been inserted into this holy building. Our feet also stand in the gates of Jerusalem. Admittedly, what we have before our eyes often seems very small to us. We are probably often in the same mood as the Jewish people at the time when Zerubbabel's temple was built. We want to sigh and lament over the small work, over our small days. The elect of all nations are entering. But the great masses, this proud, arrogant world wants nothing to do with the kingdom of Jesus Christ. That is annoying to it. The world hinders this holy building as much as it

can, as far as God allows it. But we should open our eyes of faith wide. We should look beyond our borders, beyond our days, and consider how many thousands from all nations and tongues have already entered the fold of the holy Christian Church. Truly, if you look at them all together in the Spirit, it is a great, stately, glorious people.

We are now citizens with the saints and members of God's household, living building blocks in your house of God, building blocks and at the same time master builders. We are now also all called to work on this house, so that it may be enlarged and finally completed. We are to attract the foreign children who are still far from the testaments of the promise, to encourage the Gentiles, the unbelievers, by word and deed, so that they may direct their course straight to Jerusalem and also apply for citizenship in the city of God. The word also applies to us: "Mine are both silver and gold, says the LORD of hosts." What we have, silver and gold, we should offer to the LORD so that his kingdom may grow and increase on earth. Alas, we often let our hands fall, as Israel once did, and prefer to build our own houses rather than God's house. But those who belong to the people of God allow themselves to be punished, admonished, petitioned and obey the voice of the Lord and put their hands to the work that God has commanded them to do. Indeed, it is worth the effort, labor and sacrifice. It is a great, magnificent, glorious work.

Yes, this is the greatest work of God on earth: the building of the New Testament temple, the preservation and expansion of the holy Christian church. God, the LORD of hosts, is himself building the walls of Jerusalem. He brings in the foreign children through the Word, through the ministry of those who already belong to Him. All other works of God on earth serve this greatest work. God is still doing things in the same way today as in the beginning, when he laid the foundation, when he placed the precious cornerstone, Jesus Christ, in Zion. He sustains, he governs the world, the peoples of the earth for the sake of the church, so that the church of Christ may be increased and spread. He moves and shakes the nations, he sends war and great terrors to make room for the gospel. The so-called Christian nations subdue the earth, the distant lands of the heathen. And when a conqueror has opened a new heathen land to traffic,

the messengers of peace, the preachers of the Gospel, go behind it, so that even there, in that heathen land, some may be won for Christ and his kingdom. Just one example that concerns us closely. The nation and kingdom to which we belong has come to exist through heavy, bloody battles. It is a land of freedom. And what was God's intention in this, what was the result? In this free land and people the Church of Christ, and especially the Church of the pure Word, has found a place and enjoys peace, security and freedom and can extend its borders far and wide and gather multitudes of foreign, alienated children into its fold.

It is, as the Scriptures say, an immovable kingdom which we have received, which we are working on, which God has established on earth. The building of this glorious temple, the New Testament church, is eternal. It grows and will grow through time, through the centuries, until the end of days. Now we cannot yet measure its breadth, width, height and depth. But one day, at the end, this great, glorious building will stand before our eyes in its completion. Then we will see this great people with our eyes, which the Lord has gathered at all times, from all peoples, families and tongues of the earth. Then we will also recognize and praise the miraculous ways in which God has brought forth his work. Then we will look back with praise and thanksgiving on these few days in which such great things have happened. Then we will marvel at how the Lord has made this house full of glory, how great the glory of this other house is.

II.

In his prophecy, however, the prophet not only remembers the size, breadth and width of this magnificent building, but also its inner glory. God wants to give peace in this place. In this place, in this temple of the New Covenant, the LORD wants to give salvation and peace to all who enter the gates of the sanctuary. And the fulfillment corresponds to the prophecy. The Christian church is the place of peace. There springs an inexhaustible fountain of blessing.

In this place the Lord wants to give peace. The temple in Jerusalem was the place where God had established the memorial of his name. Nowhere else but in this place did God want to reveal his holy great name. Therefore, during the time of the Old Covenant, Mount Zion was the place where God was worshipped. But the second temple, the temple of the new covenant, the church of Christ, is far more glorious than the old temple. It is in this place that God has truly memorialized his name, revealed his name. Here in this place, where the gospel is preached, God has made his fatherly heart known, he has revealed his grace and truth. And this is eternal life, that men may know God, the true God, and Him whom He has sent, Jesus Christ.

God wants to give salvation in this place. The temple of the Old Covenant was the place of salvation, the place of peace, the place of atonement for sin. Here stood the altar on which sacrifices were made for the sin of the people. Here stood the mercy seat on which the blood of atonement was sprinkled. But what happened in the Old Testament sanctuary only served the purpose of outward purity and holiness and was only a model for New Testament atonement and reconciliation. The sanctuary of the New Testament is far greater and more glorious. Here, in this place of ours, in the Church of Jesus Christ, the crucified Christ is set before the eyes of sinners. This is the right altar, the right throne of grace. Here we have redemption through his blood, namely the forgiveness of sins. Here with Christ, in Word and Sacrament, we find comfort, help and mercy at the time when we need help, when sin hurts and troubles us. Here is salvation, healing and peace for all anguished souls.

God wants to give peace in this place. The temple on Zion was God's house. God dwelt there in the midst of his people, albeit still in the darkness of the cloud. The temple of the new covenant is larger, more glorious. It is in truth a tabernacle of God among men. Here God dwells and is enthroned, here Christ dwells in the midst of his people. We are now his people, God's people, reconciled to God through Christ. All and every barrier that separated God from man has now fallen away. The curtain of the old covenant has been torn. Through Christ we have free

access to your Father in heaven. The great word of promise has been fulfilled: "You are the temple of the living God. I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The apostle emphatically reminds the believers of the new covenant of their honor and dignity. He wants them never to forget it: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

This is the glory, the intrinsic glory of the New Testament temple. Admittedly, it is still a hidden honor and glory at present. We still carry our treasure in earthen vessels. The traces of sin and suffering have not yet been completely erased from our faces. We still have the first fruits. But we know that this hidden glory will one day be revealed, our salvation will one day be completed. The people of the perfected righteous will stand before the throne of God, before the throne of the Lamb, and behold with transfigured eyes the glory of Christ, the glory of God. And the splendor of God's holiness and glory will shine on them again. Then there will be great peace without ceasing, and no more sin or suffering will disturb the happiness and bliss of God's children. Then the triumphant church will shout and praise: "Now is the salvation of God and his Christ." May God grant and keep us his peace in this place of ours! God grant us his spiritual, heavenly and eternal peace! God help us all to behold his salvation and his glory, here temporally and there eternally! Amen.

Twenty-second Sermon. [^]—

Zech. 9:9-11.

But you daughter of Zion, rejoice greatly, and you daughter of Jerusalem, shout for joy; behold, your king is coming to you, a righteous man and a helper, poor and riding on a donkey and on a young colt of the donkey. For I will cut off the chariots from Ephraim, and the horses from Jerusalem, and the bow of war shall be broken. For he will teach peace among the nations, and his dominion will be from sea to sea and from the waters to the ends of the earth. You will also release your captives from the pit by the blood of your covenant, for there is no water in it.

Zechariah the prophet prophesied around the same time as Haggai. At the beginning of his prophecy, he warned the people who had returned from captivity about sin, the disobedience of the fathers. The fathers had not heard the voice of the earlier prophets. That is why all the disaster had come upon them. Now the children were to be wise and willingly receive the words of the later prophets. Cap. 1:1-6: Zechariah, the later prophet, refers to the words of the earlier prophets and now repeats the words and even the promises of the earlier prophets in his prophecy. Through his prophet, God gave the people the assurance that none of the good words he had spoken to Israel from the beginning would fall away. Everything was to be fulfilled in its own time.

Zechariah, like the earlier prophets, prophesied of Christ, of the servant Zemach, the offspring who would arise from David's tribe, chap. 3:8, of the LORD of hosts, who would come to his Zion and dwell with him, chap. 2:11. He said of Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep, who is betrayed and sold by his own people for the glorious reward of thirty pieces of silver, of the Shepherd who is struck by the sword of the Lord, who lays down his life for his sheep. Cap. 11. 13:7.

Zechariah proclaimed to his people the redemption that was to come through Christ. He saw in the spirit the high priest Joshua, the

representative of Israel, standing before the throne of God clothed in unclean garments. But then the command came from above: "Remove the unclean garments from him!" "Put a clean hat on his head!" And the LORD Himself explains what this means: "Behold, I have taken away your sin and clothed you with ceremonial garments." Cap. 3 The house of David and the citizens of Jerusalem will at that time have a free and open fountain against sin and uncleanness. Cap. 13:1.

In the book of Zechariah's prophecy, we read about Christ, the Anointed One, and the Spirit of the Anointed One. At that time God will pour out the Spirit of grace and prayer on the house of David and on the citizens of Jerusalem. By the grace of the Spirit, many in Israel will recognize the one whom they have pierced, will give glory to Christ as their King and God, and will turn to him. Cap. 12, 1()-14 And at that time also many Gentiles shall be brought to the Lord, and shall be his people. Cap. 2:11.

Like the earlier prophets, the prophet Zechariah describes the kingdom of Christ, the Anointed One. He sees in the spirit the new Jerusalem, the church of the new covenant, a great city that cannot be measured with a yardstick. "Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls, for great multitudes of men and cattle will be in it." Cap. 2:4.

Zechariah, like the older prophets, points to the great day of the LORD, the day of wrath and judgment. Then the LORD of hosts, who reigns in Israel, will smite the kingdoms of the world. He will gather the nations who have fought against God's people into the Valley of Jehoshaphat and pronounce judgment on them there. But God's people, all the rest who are gathered from the Gentiles, will then worship their King, Christ the King, the LORD of hosts, and will keep the Feast of Tabernacles, the joyful feast of eternity. Cap. 2:1-4, chap. 14.

These great and precious promises, which the Lord has given and confirmed to his people even in the last days, are summarized in the well-known word of the prophet, which we will now consider as a short summary. On the basis of this prophecy, as well as its fulfillment, which is before our eyes, we now speak:

Of the Lord's Advent of grace.

1. The king comes to redeem his captive people,
2. and to establish his kingdom of peace on earth.

I.

The king comes to redeem his captive people. The prophet begins and says: "But you daughter of Zion, rejoice greatly, and you daughter of Jerusalem, shout for joy; behold, your king is coming to you." He speaks here of the coming, the Advent of the King, the King of Zion, the King of Jerusalem. This is the king who was promised to Israel from the beginning. This is the king, the hero, who was to come from Judah, but to whom the nations of the Gentiles also adhere. This is the king, the scepter, which Balaam saw coming out of Jacob, the bright star, whose bright light also spreads over the Gentile world. This is the king who was to sprout from David's tribe and sit on David's throne. This is the King Messiah. The children of the Old Covenant had been waiting for him for centuries. Zechariah now testifies to later Israel that the promise of the fathers is not over. The blessed time of fulfillment is drawing ever closer. The prophet Zechariah presents this king to his people and says: "Behold, your king is coming to you." We know that the promise has long since been fulfilled. Christ, the King, has come. The son who was promised to Mary, the daughter of David, and who was then born of Mary, the virgin, was to be king over the house of Jacob forever, to whom God wanted to give the throne of his father David. That Jesus of Nazareth, who was then wandering in the land of Israel, whose name is still well known to us, it was he, it is he, who was to come. The disciples who followed him recognized and confessed: You are the King of Israel.

"Behold, your king is coming to you," says the prophet, "a righteous one." It will be a righteous man. Jeremiah had already prophesied that God would raise up a righteous plant for the house of David. It will be a ruler in the fear of the Lord,

a king without blemish and without reproach, in the midst of the sinful people, among the unrighteous and wicked of the earth. A righteous one, the only righteous one, a perfect righteous one! His royal crown is holiness. And it is not only human purity and righteousness, but divine holiness and righteousness that shines on the face of this king. It is the Holy One of God. The disciples recognized and confessed, and we have also recognized and believed: You are the King of Israel, the Son of God.

But this righteous one does not frighten and repel sinners with the splendor of his holiness. It is otherwise true that sinners, the impure, cannot stand before the throne of God's holiness. The heavenly splendor blinds them and knocks them to the ground. But it is not a blinding, crushing holiness that radiates from this King of Israel. It is a pure but gentle, mild light. His royal crown is holiness, his scepter is mercy. This king, this righteous one, does not come to judge and condemn the sinful people. No, it says: "Behold, your king is coming to you, a righteous one and a helper." Yes, a helper. He wants to bring help to the poor, the wretched of his people, the poor sinners. That is why he should come, that is why he came, to save sinners, to save his people from their sins. We sing of this King: A King of all kingdoms, a Savior of all the world at once, who brings with him salvation and life.

And it is precisely because he wants to help the poor and wretched that he appears poor and lowly. Thus the prophet says: "Behold, your king comes to you, a righteous man and a helper, poor." Yes, he walks along in poor, lowly circumstances. "Behold, your King is coming to you, meek": this is how the evangelist renders the prophet's speech. He seeks no scepter, no crown in this world. He did not consider it robbery to be like God. He sought nothing for himself here on earth. What he sought was the salvation of men, the salvation of sinners. That is why he kept his power, his royal, divine majesty and glory secret. That is why he took on the form of a servant, put on beggar's clothes. He wanted to become like his brothers in all things, precisely in order to help his brothers. God's Son has come to us all here on this earth in poverty. Thus the prophet also sees him "riding on

a donkey and on a young colt of the donkey." This prophetic word was literally fulfilled when Christ, the King of Zion, entered his city of Jerusalem for the last time. He rode on a donkey's colt that was walking behind the donkey. But it was precisely then that he came to provide the longed-for help for his people, to whom he had presented himself in word and deed as the promised King and Messiah, in order to acquire eternal salvation for his people through suffering and death. He became poor, lowly, lower and lower. He humbled himself to the point of death on the cross, to the death of criminals, he, the holy and righteous one, precisely because he was a helper and wanted to help his people.

The king comes to redeem his captive people. The prophet, enlightened by the Spirit of God, writes: "You will also let your captives out of the pit by the blood of your covenant, for there is no water in it." The King comes to free his captive people from all bonds, to redeem them from the dungeon, to save them from the deep pit. Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, who hangs there on the cross, is the Redeemer of Israel, the Redeemer of the world. We are well aware of the chains and bonds of which the prophet speaks here. We are all bound by them from our youth, from birth. All people who are born into the world are born into captivity, into bondage. We are all servants of sin, sold under sin. And we are therefore servants of the devil, under the authority of darkness. And we are slaves of death, must be slaves all our lives through fear of death. We are all by nature in the pit, in damnation. But now the Savior has appeared and has released the prisoners, set them free, broken the dungeon, burst the shackles. We are now loose, free, released from the bonds of sin, sin is forgiven, redeemed from our vain walk after the manner of our fathers, freed from the dominion of sin, released from the bonds of death, the devil and hell, we no longer need to fear death and the devil. We boast: I was in heavy bonds, you come and set me free. The King has come and redeemed the captives, torn from the depths.

Through the blood of his covenant he has loosed the captives and set them free. He humbled himself to the point of

death on the cross in order to redeem us. The Righteous One suffered and died for the unrighteous. He shed his blood on the trunk of the cross. His blood, the noble sap, the blood of the King, the blood of the Holy One, the innocent blood, the blood of the Son of God, yes, God's own blood, that is the ransom. This ransom the king has appointed. Truly, the transgression is atoned for. We now have a free, open fountain against all sin and impurity. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sin. It is the blood of his covenant, the blood of the New Testament. Through his blood, Christ has established the covenant, a new covenant, an eternal covenant. Sinners, the unrighteous are reconciled with God, the highest God. We are no longer servants, but vain children. And if God is for us, who can be against us? So the devil, death and hell have no right or power over us. No one, no power of earth, heaven or hell can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

II.

The King comes to redeem his captive people and then to establish a kingdom of peace on earth. He comes, he came in poverty and lowliness. But he was, he is nevertheless a king. This King also has a kingdom. He gave his life to death out of love for the people he wanted to win, and then took his life back from death. He is exalted and has now received a name that is above every name. He is exalted in the midst of the princes of fine people. He has established a kingdom on earth that far surpasses and outshines the kingdom of his father David, the kingdom of Solomon. Our text says of the kingdom and reign of King Messiah: "His dominion will be from sea to sea and from the waters to the ends of the earth." David's and Solomon's kingdom stretched from sea to sea, from the sea of Egypt to the Mediterranean, from the waters of Phrat in the east to the waters of the west. The kingdom of the Son of David extends much further, from the waters of the east, from the farthest east to the sea of the west, to the ends of the earth. This king has stretched out his scepter over all the lands and peoples of the Gentiles. His kingdom has no borders.

He has not gathered his people from Israel alone, but from all the nations of the earth. It is said of him: "He will speak peace among the Gentiles." This is his scepter, the gospel of peace. Thus says the prophet: "He will speak peace to the Gentiles." And the apostle of the new covenant writes that Christ, having made peace through his blood, came and proclaimed peace to those near and far. Eph. 2 By his word he has won both Jews and Gentiles. Not with sword and violence does he make conquests among the nations. No, he speaks peace to the Gentiles. The gospel is preached to the Gentiles, the poor sinners on earth, that Christ has come, the Son of God, and has redeemed sinners far and wide and reconciled them to God through his own blood. It is he himself, the King, who speaks peace, who speaks this word to sinners, who speaks it into their hearts. He says: So be reconciled to God. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. He speaks kindly to sinners, he speaks to the heart of the apostate. He says: I have redeemed you, you are mine. This is how he places his mild scepter on the hearts of men and takes possession of them. This is how he wins the Gentiles, the sinners. This is how he has won us too. We have recognized him, our King and God, our Lord and Redeemer, and now sing with the whole redeemed multitude: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!"

And those whom he has won, he now rules in peace. He speaks peace to the Gentiles. His word, his gospel, that is his ruler's rod. With it he guides and governs his people. He does not put constraints and fetters on his subjects so that they obey him with fear and trembling. He has a people who willingly serve him. We have, we hear the gospel of Christ and his salvation. That has won our hearts. And so we now also serve this our King and Redeemer, the Righteous One, in innocence and righteousness. For the love of our King, we deny sin, ungodliness and worldly lusts and are diligent in all good works. With the scepter of peace, with his word, he guides and directs our hearts according to his good pleasure. With this scepter, with his word, he protects and preserves our

souls so that they do not fall from grace, from obedience. We are preserved to salvation by the power, by the grace of this King. Yes, the peace of God, which is higher than all reason, governs and preserves our hearts, minds and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

We have peace with God, but also peace among ourselves. It is a kingdom of peace that Christ, the King, has established on earth. The peace of Christ also unites the servants of this King. Our text says of the kingdom of Christ, the Anointed One: "I will cut off the chariots from Ephraim, and the horses from Jerusalem, and the bow of war shall be broken." Chariots, horses, bows, all implements of war are now broken and taken away. There is no more war in the kingdom of this King Christ. It is a kingdom of peace and love. Those who were once enemies and at odds with one another now shake hands in the name of this King. Those who serve Christ the Lord with all their hearts also serve one another in love.

Yes, now there is great peace without ceasing. There will be no end to peace on the throne of David. There will be no end to his kingdom. Now the king rules his people by the word. One day the king will give his people, his faithful ones, his royal, divine splendor and glory to behold without covering or covering. Then the peace of his kingdom, then the happiness of Jerusalem will be complete.

Now we understand what the prophet says at the beginning of his prophecy, now we understand the call to joy with which our text begins: "But you daughter of Zion, rejoice greatly, and you daughter of Jerusalem, shout for joy!" Zion, Jerusalem, the church of God has reason and cause for joy, for rejoicing. We rejoice in our King and his grace, even under the cross and suffering of this time. And one day we will rejoice and be glad in transfigured joy when we see him in whom we now believe, whom we now love, Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of God, our King, our Savior and Redeemer. Amen.

Twenty-third Sermon. [^]—

(Christmas.)

Isa 9:2-7.

The people who walk in darkness see a great light, and on those who dwell in the land of darkness it shines brightly. Thou makest much for the heathen, but thou makest not much for them that rejoice. But they will rejoice before you, as they rejoice in the harvest; as they rejoice when they divide the spoil. For you have broken the yoke of their burden, and the rod of their shoulder, and the rod of their driver, as in the days of Midian. For all war with impetuosity and bloody garments will be burned up and consumed with fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, whose government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty, Mighty, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace; that his government may be great, and peace 'an end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom; that he may establish it, and strengthen it with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. This is what the zeal of the LORD Almighty will do.

O merry, O blessed, grace-bringing Christmas season! The world was lost, Christ is born, rejoice, rejoice, Christianity! With this short, simple nursery rhyme, we profess our Christmas joy before God and man. Yes, the world was lost, Christ is born. We understand the joyful message from heaven: "Christ is born", "To you the Saviour is born today", even more so when we have previously recognized: "World was lost." What does this mean: "The world was lost"? When Adam fell away from God and lost God's image and paradise, he not only descended from a higher to a lower level, his dignity and worth not only diminished, but he also plunged himself and the entire human race, which descended from him, into ruin, into eternal ruin, forfeiting body, soul, life and everything. Fallen, apostate humanity fell deep, deep, into an unfathomable abyss, into utter darkness. The world was now lost. That God still preserved and still preserves the sinful world, that fire did not immediately spring up from the earth or come down from heaven and

consume it, was precisely because Christ, the Redeemer, immediately intervened and upheld the sinking world with his grace. For Christ's sake alone, by grace, God preserved and sustains the world of the ungodly. Yes, the world was lost. The history of fallen humanity was rushing towards destruction, towards the abyss. From generation to generation, the heathen were moving further and further away from the living God and Creator and were only heaping up wrath for the day of God's wrath and righteous judgment through horrible works of darkness. Around the time Christ was born, the world resembled a wrecked ship that was about to sink. The Greeks had made bankruptcy with their wisdom, the Romans with their strength and their victories. The cultivated world had become rotten, rotten to the core and resembled stinking carrion. And at the time when Isaiah lived and uttered the prophecy of our text, the great, final, decisive apostasy of the people of choice, the people of Israel, also began. Isaiah saw dense, impenetrable darkness descending on the Promised Land. And at the time Christ was born, the Jews had become even worse enemies of God than the Gentiles. Yes, the world was lost. And all individual people and sinners share in the fate of the whole world. Every soul that has sinned and remains in sin must die, is lost. Original sin, hereditary sin, is innate in all of us. And that is a desperate damage. Human nature is not only sprinkled with individual stains, but is poisoned and corrupted through and through. We are all by nature children of wrath. All of us who are born of women are like dishonest, faulty vessels that are good for nothing except that the potter throws them away and smashes them into shards. And we have all actually sinned and transgressed God's commandments, and have not only grieved and offended God and man once in a while, but have sinned unto death. There are criminals whose misdeed cries out to heaven and also provokes the vengeance of men, criminals to whom popular justice pronounces judgment, whose misdeed can only be atoned for by death, to whom human mercy has absolutely no application. We are all such criminals before God's eyes and judgment, damned evildoers, not only worthy of no reward, but of no mercy,

of no pity. Certainly, sinners are lost, damned people. The world was lost, and we all belong to the judgment pronounced on the world, which it has pronounced on itself: Lost, lost! Yes, hopelessly lost! The world cannot save itself, nor does it want to, because it loves its own destruction. And God, the righteous, cannot revoke his judgment. Nor does the world make any effort to appease the wrath of the great God. Many a dying, drowning man has been saved from death by crying out for help before his breath was suffocated, crying aloud: "Woe, woe, I am lost", and the cry for help probably still reached a compassionate ear. But the world has also thrown this last lifeline, this last emergency anchor out of its hands. It does not cry out to God: "Lord, help, we are perishing!" - No, in despair or laughter, joking, blaspheming, it throws itself into the waves, into the abyss. O poor, lost world, which can hardly be pitied and pitied for its self-chosen disaster!

Yet Christianity sings: "The world was lost, Christ is born." "World was lost." A gruesome, unfathomable abyss! And behold, this abyss is filled. Even deeper, more unfathomable is the abyss of divine love: "Christ is born." Our children sing from a joyful heart: "Christ is born." And we adults join in their song and praise and can only babble and stammer like the children; we cannot fathom the depth, height, breadth and vastness of God's love: "Christ is born." "Jesus, the Savior, is here." We come closest to the truth here if we separate all our human concepts and thoughts of love and compassion from this miracle of God's love. The lost world saved! This is the noblest work that people admire and marvel at when someone saves the life of his fellow human being. That is something great: to help a soul from death! But what does it mean that God has saved the world? When someone saves his fellow human being from death, there was still a step between the dying person and death. The unfortunate person is torn away from the edge of destruction, the abyss. God, on the other hand, saved people, sinners, who were already dead, completely dead in sin, saved a world that was completely lost. He made the impossible possible. He nevertheless saved a world that

was hopelessly lost, according to His own verdict and judgment. The world, the lost world, had succumbed to the justice, the punishing justice of God; it had also exhausted all the goodness, patience and patience of God, despised and forfeited the love and mercy of the Creator. A way out seemed impossible, not only for people, but also for God. God had to go beyond his justice, beyond his love, faithfulness and mercy guaranteed to the creature, to do something completely new, something special, a work without equal, in order to bring back what had been lost. God, after his great love and blessedness, had taken counsel: "Let us make man, an image like unto us!" He, the only blessed One, wanted to have human beings, creatures, as companions of His blessedness. This love already surpasses our thoughts. But this counsel of God did not prevent men from thwarting God's intention of love and throwing away God's image and the blessedness intended for them. This was a completely new counsel and decision of God, separate from the counsel of creation, which completely transcends our thoughts and our forebodings, that God decided to save the sinful, lost world. And the means and way by which he wanted to achieve this goal is also wonderful, unique. God made human beings and drew a sharp line between Himself, the Creator, and the creature. People should praise God as their Creator. This thought never entered into the mind of a man, never into the mind of an angel, that God should become man, that a man should be called God and be God. This thought does not come from the created, creaturely world. The fallen, lost world had fallen too far, had strayed too far from God, nothing else helped, God himself had to jump into the depths, into the abyss, had to take humanity on his own shoulders and lift up the fallen ones to himself again. So, like children, we sing these Christmas carols: "Christ is born", "the Savior is born", and do not know or understand what abyss of divine love is hidden in these simple words. So, this is how God loved the world! We cannot get beyond this "therefore". But because it is we, we lost sinners, whom God has targeted with his wonderful counsel, because God wanted to save us precisely through the incarnation of his Son, he has revealed and made known to us this great, incomprehensible mystery to the extent that it is useful and necessary for our salvation and blessedness.

And it is precisely the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah, which has now long been fulfilled, that gives us an insight into the wonderful counsel of God. By basing ourselves on this word of divine revelation, let us now consider it in more detail:

How the lost world was saved and helped by the birth of Christ.

We say:

1. now the darkness is dispersed.
2. now the plug of the driver is broken.
3. now there is great peace without ceasing.

I.

A child is born to us, a son is given to us. Now the darkness is dispersed. In our text, the prophet speaks of a people walking in darkness. He is referring to the people of Galilee, who were afflicted by severe judgments at that time and were despised until the time of Christ, because Gentiles were mixed in with the Jews. It was and was called the Galilee of the Gentiles. It is heathen darkness, ignorance, foolishness, which the prophet laments, as it was established in the borders of Israel from the days of Isaiah. The whole of humanity, the lost world, lies in ruin, in darkness. All light of the knowledge of God is extinguished. The natural man hears nothing of the Spirit of God. In earthly things and dealings the world is clever, intelligent, cunning and crafty. But what good is this wisdom? It only knows about vain, transitory things, and so all its knowledge is a lost thing, its cognition, its education a wasted effort. She knows and understands nothing of spiritual, divine, eternal things, and when she hears about them, she thinks it is a little tale, foolishness. Even Christians, who are still flesh and blood, are repeatedly confronted with this darkness. The goal, the eternal goal, the way, the right path often escapes our view. We still often confuse flesh and spirit, God's commandment and the devil's deception, the way of the world and the way of God. We still often go astray and deviate to the right and to the left. Our wisdom, our counsel is soon exhausted. We often do not know how to advise

or help ourselves, neither in bad nor in good days. When we live in happiness and peace, we fall into folly. And in misfortune, in dark days, the right path is easily lost beneath our feet. How great is the darkness of those who are completely dark, for whom only the deceptive light of their reason shines. The natural, sinful man looks at everything crookedly and wrongly, takes day for night, night for day, calls black white and white black, calls evil good and good evil, takes the abyss over which he hovers, towards which he is rushing, for heaven, and his path for the way to heaven, to happiness and bliss. And once he becomes aware of the deception, he is even more deceived and lost and does not know which way is up, he must despair. Oh, the poor, lost, deceived world!

But look, now a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us, who has dominion on his shoulder, to whom the reign belongs, for he is called Wonderful, Counselor. He knows how to advise and help the lost world in its desperate situation. That is his name, his office, he is called Rath, a counselor, a teacher of men. He is the light of the world. He is the great light that Isaiah saw from afar, which first went out to those who lived in the dark land, in the Gentile Galilee, but which then cast its light far and wide over the dark earth and was revealed to the Gentiles near and far. Jesus was the prophet of Galilee. But this prophet, who walked and preached in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, by the way of the sea, was the prophet who was to come into the world, the prophet of the whole world. He brought light into the impenetrable darkness that covered the earth. At the right time he still knew advice and provided counsel. Now the darkness has been dispelled, now our darkness has become light and brightness. This is the true light that should come into the world. For he is marvelous: a child born after the manner of the children of men, a child wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, and a son whom God has placed in the womb of the world from above, the child of virgins and the Son of the Most High. Wonderful, true man and God! If we look sharply into the eyes of this person, we recognize in him our image, our nature. He has become like his brethren in all things, in all things found as a man. And if we look deeper, this child, this Son shines in a

completely different light. Divine clarity shines from his eyes. He is holy and pure, like none of us, indeed God of a kind. Wonderful! We cannot grasp it. We don't know what to make of him. Is he human? Is he God? But that is the wonderful thing: he is both at the same time, true man, born of the Virgin Mary, and true God, born of the Father in eternity. And it is precisely in this way that he has given counsel. Thus we are advised and helped. Behold, in this little child, who, like other children, looks at his mother in childlike simplicity, lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom. This little breast holds the fullness of divine secrets. Later, when this boy, this man Jesus Christ, opened his mouth and taught his people, he spoke of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and spoke what he himself had seen and heard. Thus he taught the world the wisdom that is from above. And yet at the same time he spoke to people in a friendly, affable manner, as a brother to brothers, presenting the mysteries of God in the language of men, in simple images and parables. This is the true teacher and master, sent by God. He has revealed the eternal truth to mankind. He himself is the way, the truth and the life. Whoever has recognized Jesus correctly is on the right path, has reached the goal, knows God, is recognized by God. We know enough when we know and recognize Jesus, true God and man. We see his image in the Gospel. And his word is true and clear and shows us God, shows us the straight and simple path of God in the midst of the darkness of this life. Whoever follows Jesus will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

II.

The darkness is dispersed. Day has come. And the rod of the driver is broken. The world lies in chains and bonds of darkness, of sin, of Satan. The world is in trouble, it cannot help but sin. It has no power for good, only power for evil. In external, earthly things and arts, the world is certainly able to accomplish something. But everything is built on sand. All the works of men are lost. We Christians can still perceive the

power of evil in ourselves, in our nature. How powerfully sin stirs in our limbs! The world is chained to sin. It is accustomed to evil. It leads its children to sin. It is bound in the yoke of sin. It cannot help but sin. But it also wants to sin. It loves darkness. The world loves bondage, loves its chains. Alas, it is a desperate situation. The world has lost its will, its freedom, it is subject to the will, the scepter of a great, mighty prince, the prince of the world, Satan. The devil has a right to the lost world. Sin is his own. Every soul that sins belongs to him. He drives his captives, the sinners, along the path, deeper and deeper into sin, into the works of darkness. And he does not reward them when they follow him. He pricks and tortures their conscience because they have obeyed him. We Christians still often feel the sharp point of this prick. And sinners have no weapons in their hands to protect themselves against this fierce, cruel enemy. The apostate world is helpless, hopelessly exposed to the coercion and violence of sin and Satan.

But pray, a child has now been born to us, a son has been given to us, whose reign is on his shoulder. To him belongs the reign, he can help, save and redeem. For his name is Power, Hero. That is his name: strong God. He is and is called Wonderful. He is weak and yet strong. It is a weak little child lying in the manger, and this is the strong God. This weak child is the almighty God who rules heaven and earth, who knocks down the mighty and lifts up the lowly. This weak child was able to do it. He has broken the yoke of their burden, the rod of their shoulder, the rod of the driver. He redeemed sinners from the power and tyranny of sin and the devil. Of course, it was a miraculous battle and victory. God did not break the prison with the terrors of his omnipotence. People were caught in Satan's snare through cunning and persuasion. Their heart, their will was captive. They had willingly surrendered themselves to Satan's service. Only through willing renunciation could man again escape the service of sin, of Satan. This is how the strong God became man, a weak child. This child willingly bowed under the yoke under which the lost world

languished. This innocent child took the burden of sin and debt of all mankind on his shoulders. The Holy One of God became a sinner and a transgressor instead of his brothers. From childhood on, Jesus Christ allowed himself to be martyred and tormented by the stalk of the driver. And by remaining holy under sin, by resisting all temptation, by innocently enduring all the torture and torment of the lost human race, yes, by this child becoming weaker and weaker and finally writhing like a worm in the dust, and yet finally taking back his flesh and blood, his life from death as the strong God: this is how we are redeemed. Thus sin and Satan are overcome. The yoke, the rod, the staff and the rod are broken. All traces of tyranny are destroyed. All war with impetuosity and bloody garments has been burned up and consumed with fire. The lost world, enslaved by Satan, has been redeemed. We sinners did nothing for it, could do nothing for it. It was a battle and victory, as in the time of Midian, a victory without human hands. We owe our salvation, our freedom to this child, to the strong God alone. His alone is the dominion, the victory, the prize and the honor. The Gospel now proclaims the victory of the Redeemer. And when a poor sinner, a slave to sin and Satan, hears and accepts this gospel, the gospel of the strong God who lies in the manger, hanging on the cross, the chains break, the yoke falls from his neck, and the saved sinner thanks this child, his God, for his miraculous help.

III.

The rod of the driver is broken. And now there is great peace without ceasing. God is well pleased with us, now there is great peace without ceasing, all feud has now come to an end. There was a great feud between God and man. The lost world was God's bitter, irreconcilable enemy and God was the bitter enemy of wicked sinners. An impassable gulf separated God and man. But the child who was born to us has nevertheless filled this gulf and put away the enmity. This child is our peace. He is the Virgin's child, the Son of the Most High, man and God in one person. This God-man is the bond

that now links God and man, the holy God and the lost world. As little as this person, divinity and humanity in Christ can be torn apart, so little can the bond of peace that embraces God and man ever be torn apart again. Peace has a firm, unshakeable foundation. As Isaiah writes, the Son of David was to strengthen and support his kingdom with judgment and justice. The child from David's tribe stood in the judgment of God. On this child, the delight of men and angels, the only begotten son, the son of good pleasure, God vented all his wrath and displeasure that the sin of the world had aroused. He imputed to him all the unrighteousness of ungodly men. And this child, the Son of God, stood the test of God's judgment. Now all wrath has been consumed. Now there is a righteousness that is valid before God. God is truly reconciled to sinners. The child in the manger prevents God from continuing to be angry with sinners, from punishing sinners. This child has fought with God and has triumphed and now extends the Father's grace and mercy to lost sinners. His name is Eternal Father. This child looks at the lost world with kindness. And this kindness and kindness is the eternal, fatherly, divine mercy, God's grace, the Father's pleasure. Through the eyes of this blissful boy, the Father looks at the lost children of the earth and beckons them grace and peace. Yes, now there is great peace without ceasing. The Prince of Peace sits in the regiment.

He is called the Prince of Peace - that his reign may be great and that peace may have no end on the throne of David and his kingdom. The child of Mary sits on David's throne, is prince and king in the kingdom. And his kingdom and reign are over all the earth. There is peace on earth. Through his gospel, Christ offers peace on earth to sinners and apostates. Oh, that all poor, lost sinners would consider what serves for their peace! And his people, who have entered into his peace, he now rules in peace, to whom he distributes the blessings of peace, the goods of salvation, so that they may rejoice as one rejoices in the harvest, as one rejoices when one distributes spoils. There is great peace without ceasing! Eternal peace! The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this from now until eternity. The LORD, the Redeemer, who is jealous for his bride, whom he has so dearly bought and

murdered, will carry out his work, the work of salvation, his work of peace on his children, on all of us, to the last goal, to the last victory. And for all eternity we will then worship the great mystery that we now see in the dark mirror of the Word. From now until eternity, lost and saved sinners will praise their Savior, and in eternity they will praise him all the more loudly and gloriously, because they will then see with their eyes the child who was born to them, the Son who was given to them. Then it will be said: Saved forever, saved eternally! In eternity there is no longer any danger of being lost. This is what the zeal of the LORD of hosts will do! Amen.

Twenty-fourth Sermon. [^]—

(Epiphanies.)

Isa. 60.

Arise, become light; for your light is coming, and the glory of the Lord is rising upon you. For stand, darkness covers the earth, and darkness the nations; but the Lord rises upon you, and his glory shines upon you. And the nations shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness that shineth upon thee. Lift up your eyes and look around you: all these gathered together will come to you. Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be brought up to your side. Then you will see your desire and burst out, and your heart will be amazed and expand when the multitude by the sea turns to you and the power of the nations comes to you. For the multitude of camels will cover you, the runners from Midian and Ephah. They will all come from Sheba, bringing gold and incense and proclaiming the praises of the LORD. All the armies of Kedar will be gathered to you, and the goats of Nebajoth will serve you. They shall be sacrificed on my pleasing altar, for I will adorn the house of my glory. Who are they that go as the clouds, and as the doves to their windows? The isles wait for me, and the ships of the sea before me, to bring thy children from afar, with their silver and their gold, to the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, who made thee glorious. Foreigners will build your walls, and their kings will serve you. For in my wrath I have smitten you, and in my mercy I will have compassion on you. And your gates will always be open; they will not be shut day or night, so that the herds may be brought to you, and their kings may be brought to you. For the nations or kingdoms that will not serve you shall perish, and the nations shall be laid waste. The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, fir trees, beech trees and boxwoods, to adorn the place of my sanctuary, for I will make the place of my feet glorious. Those who oppressed you will come to you bowed down, and all who blasphemed you will fall down at your feet and call you a city of the LORD, a Zion of the holy ones in Israel. For because thou hast been forsaken and hated, when no man went, I will make thee a glory for ever, and a joy for ever: thou shalt suck milk of the Gentiles, and the breasts of kings shall suckle thee: that thou mayest know that I the LORD am thy Savior, and I the mighty One of Jacob am thy Redeemer. I will bring gold instead of brass, and silver instead of iron, and brass instead of wood, and iron instead of stone; and I will make your rulers to teach peace, and your ministers to preach righteousness. No more shall iniquity be heard in thy land, nor hurt nor destruction within thy borders; but thy walls shall be called Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall no more shine upon thee by day, neither shall the brightness of the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God shall be thy praise. Your sun will no longer go down, nor will your moon lose its light, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and the days of your suffering will come to an end. And thy people shall be righteous, and shall inherit the earth for ever; as the branch of my planting, and the work of my hands, unto praise. From the least shall be a thousand, and from the least a mighty nation. I, the LORD, will hasten to accomplish this in his time.

The Feast of the Epiphany is the keystone of the Christmas celebration. Today we are told once again that the Messiah, the King of the Jews, has been born, that Christ Jesus, the eternal light, has come into the world. And this light, which shines in the darkness, is increasing. The grace and truth, the kindness and luminosity of the only begotten Son, which in that quiet night only the happy couple, Mary and Joseph, beheld, the clarity of the Lord, which first illuminated the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, sends its rays into the distance. The Gentiles, the wise men in the East, saw his star and came and worshipped the little child and gave him their treasures, gold, frankincense and myrrh. The wise men are the firstlings, the representatives of the Gentile world. The whole world of the Gentiles, the whole world, will one day lie at the feet of the newborn King of the Jews. The prophecy of the prophet Isaiah, from which today's epistle is taken, describes the entrance of the Gentiles into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. All the prophets of the Old Covenant prophesy of Christ and of the kingdom of the Anointed One. The child in Mary's womb, the Son of David, has a great kingdom that spans the earth and all times and periods of world history. This kingdom, the Church of Jesus Christ, surpasses and outlives all the kingdoms of this world. What Daniel saw in the spirit has been fulfilled. At the time of the fourth world monarchy, at the time of the Roman Emperor Augustus, whose scepter extended over the whole known world at that time, that stone was torn from the mountain, that stone fell from heaven which was to shatter the empires of this world, and which then became a great mountain on which all the nations of the earth seek refuge. God placed this precious stone, Jesus Christum, in Zion, and it became the cornerstone and supports the great building, the church of the New Testament, the dwelling place of God in the Spirit, the temple of the living God. Our text paints a precise picture of this holy building. It praises the glory of the Church of Jesus Christ, which is gathered from all nations and Gentiles. Let us feast our eyes on this beautiful painting today.

This is also the joy of Christmas, the joy of the Epiphany, the joy of the city of God, the New Testament Zion. Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, reminds us

of the sad, lamentable fact and truth: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not understood it. He came into His own, and His own did not receive Him. He is the Savior, the Savior of the whole world. But, alas, the world at large rejects the saving hand of God and despises the child, the King in the manger. It is a small army that serves him and rejoices in his light and salvation. The proud city of Jerusalem, the king of Israel and the scribes showed no desire to make a pilgrimage to Bethlehem with the wise men and worship the Son of David there in the city of David. But the prophet Isaiah now directs our gaze into the distance and expanse. When we survey the whole earth and the changing times and periods, then we realize that there is a great and mighty people who bow their knees with us before the child Jesus, who confess with us that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father. On the basis of the Scriptures we believe in a holy, Christian church, the congregation and assembly of all saints, of all believers. In the child Jesus, in his manger, we see at first sight nothing but poverty, weakness and lowliness. And his people, the Church of Jesus Christ, still wear the form of servants and walk the earth as strangers, in beggar's garments. But the poor is rich beyond measure and can make all the poor and wretched on earth rich and happy. Our text shows the noble, exquisite treasures, the heavenly goods that we find here, in the Church of Jesus Christ, whose splendor eclipses all the glory of the world. Here, in the Church, in the Zion of the New Testament, we find everything we need, everything our hearts long for. Our soul thirsts and longs for God, for the living God. This is the ultimate, highest goal of all our wishes and desires. In him we have everything. If we only have him, we can do without everything else. And God Himself, the Lord, has taken up residence in the Christian church. The church is truly a city of the living God, a tabernacle of God among men. The LORD Himself, the eternal light, is the sun in whose light Christians walk happily here as in the daytime. Let us now take a closer look at the prophet's great, glorious prophecy of the glory of the Christian church. We say with our text:

**The church of Jesus Christ a city of the LORD, a Zion
of the Holy One in Israel.**

1. a great people enter through the gates of this city and offer their gifts there.
2. Salvation, peace and righteousness are within its walls.
3. And the Lord himself is the light that adorns the city.

I.

A great people enter through the gates of this city and offer their gifts there.

In this prophecy, the prophet transports our thoughts to the threshold of the New Testament, to the time when the light of Zion comes, when the glory of the LORD rises as the coming forth from on high, like the beautiful dawn. At that time, at the time of the birth of Christ, Zion, Israel, God's people, was under the wrath, it lay on the ground, it was beaten, hated, abandoned, lonely. For the sake of its sins, as punishment, it had become subservient to the Gentiles, the Romans. And the true Israel had dwindled down to a tiny remnant. There were very few souls who waited and waited for the redemption of Israel and then, like the shepherds, like Simeon and Hannah, recognized in the infant Mary the prize of Israel and the salvation of the Gentiles. It was a small group of poor, despised people who followed the Son of Man and who persevered with him even in trial and suffering. But now the prophet begins to comfort the forsaken, despised daughter of Zion and calls out loudly: "Arise!" Arise from the ground, you afflicted one! "In my wrath I have smitten you, and in my mercy I have had compassion on you." "Because you were forsaken and afflicted when no one walked, I will make you glorious forever." He tells the daughter of Zion, the little flock, to lift up her eyes and look around: "All these are gathered to you." "The Gentiles will walk in your light." These same afflicted and forsaken ones still saw this great transformation with their eyes. The apostles of Jesus Christ

not only won thousands from Israel with the gospel of Christ, the whole Gentile world was stirred and moved by Paul's preaching. A great people from all countries and provinces of the vast Roman Empire entered the Church of Jesus Christ and believed in Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified and Risen One, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. But the prophet's wake-up call and consolation is also meant for us. If the poor, small figure of the Church grieves and afflicts us, we should now rise up, lift up our eyes and look around us in the history of past times, look around us in the present and let our gaze wander into the distance. Behold, there is a great people, a great multitude, which has already entered the gates of Jerusalem, the Church of Christ, and is still entering today. The entire New Testament period shows and proves the fulfillment of the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah. A Christian should embrace in spirit and faith the whole time of salvation and grace that Isaiah describes in this text. Yes, the gates of Jerusalem, the church of Christ, are always open, as our text says, and will not be closed day or night. The city of God has open gates on all four sides. People shall come from all quarters of heaven and enter the city. Christ was born and died for all the people of the wide world. So it is his will, his opinion, that they should all enter his kingdom, his church. Alas, many, many do not want to come, do not want to serve him, do not want to be his own. Of them it is written: "The nations and kingdoms that will not serve you shall perish, and the nations shall be laid waste." But there is still a great multitude from all nations and tongues who come to the church and hasten to convert to Christ. They come from the east and the west. They come from Midian, Ephah, Sheba, Kedar, Nebaioth, from the blessed kingdom of Arabia. What a great, rich harvest the Church has reaped in the East! They come from the West, from the islands, the distant island countries, on their ships. We, too, are from the Gentiles. We belong to these multitudes that the prophet sees hastening from the West. And it is precisely in the West, here in the distant West, that the gates of the city of God are currently wide open. Multitudes enter the gates of our church every year. And in this procession, great men, kings, princes, wise men also walk along. Yes,

at all times, even today, some who have first oppressed and despised the church, who have first blasphemed, come to the church bent over and fall down before the God of Zion in repentance. The Gentiles come, they hurry, "they fly like clouds" and "like doves to their windows". Here, in the church, is the home of the Gentiles, of the nations. Nowhere else in the world does the soul find a resting place. And so, like Noah's dove, which also did not find where to set its foot, it hurries to its ark, to the church of Jesus Christ, and then praises and sings joyfully: "The bird has found a house and the swallow her nest, where she has found young hedges, namely your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God." It is sons and daughters who make a pilgrimage to Zion. Oh, prodigal sons, prodigal daughters, who have carelessly left their father's house, their home, and then fallen into misery. Darkness covers the earth and darkness the nations. Mankind languishes in the bonds of darkness and death. But behold, the prodigal children return from darkness to light. The Church is the home, the paradise restored. The people who were cast out of paradise turn their eyes backwards and see the gates of paradise standing open again and hurry back and fly like doves to their windows. It is a great people who come from afar. Strangers enter through the gates. But children are also born in the city itself. The church is always growing, out of itself. The word continues to be fulfilled: "From the least shall be a thousand, and from the least a mighty nation." Every true Christian sees his delight in the church and rejoices in its growth. And how our hearts will wonder and expand and burst out one day when this great people, all of them gathered together, stand before our eyes, when we stand united with all the blessed and elect before God's throne!

A great people enters through the gates of the city of God and now dwells within. The church is a Zion of the Holy One in Israel. It is the city of a great king. And the converted Gentiles now serve the king, as our text says. They do not stand idle. No, the citizens of Jerusalem are active and busy. They are building the walls of Jerusalem. They are eager to extend this kingdom on earth. Those who have come themselves, sought, found

and seen, now entice others. Next to the castle of the Son of David stands the temple. Yes, the city of God, the church, is a temple, a sanctuary. Its king is God, the LORD of hosts. And the converted Gentiles therefore also sacrifice in holy adornment. They do not come alone, not with empty hands. They come with joy and bring their sheaves. The shepherd peoples of Arabia bring their flocks to sacrifice on the altar of the LORD. They bring all the best they have, gold, silver, incense, and offer it to their king and their God, and adorn his holy temple with it. Zion sucks the milk of the Gentiles and the breasts of kings. All sinners who enter the Christian church and convert to Christ may well leave the world, forsake and deny the old night and darkness. But they do not thereby leave this earth. They still walk on earth and now take the fruits of the earth, the best and noblest that the earth offers, take the fruit of their labor, gold, silver, their gifts and strength, whatever they have, and lay it all on the altar of the Lord as a sacrifice of joy, place it all at the service of God and his kingdom, and thus serve the Lord, the King, with joy and gladness. Beloved, we have also come to the city of God, to the mountain of Zion. So let us also serve and sacrifice to him with joy. Already on earth we walk in the light and splendor of Zion. So arise and let your light shine brightly! Let us come before God daily as his priests and offer the incense of prayer. Let us daily consecrate and sanctify our work on earth, the work of our hands, and let us do everything we do, with words or works, in the name of Jesus, to praise and honor God and then also serve the Lord, the kingdom of God, with the fruit of our labor and build and expand the walls of Jerusalem. We want to prove that we are citizens of Jerusalem, members of the Christian Church, by our deeds, with energetic thanksgiving and rich sacrifices of thanksgiving. We also know that our service, our labor, is not in vain in the Lord. Those who walk in darkness, serve sin, sacrifice to the idols of this world, have their reward there. But Christians who live and serve the Lord bear fruit that endures. Their works follow them into eternity. Their sacrifice and worship are complete.

II.

We rejoice that our feet are now within the gates of Jerusalem; with joy we serve the God of Zion. But of course, our obedience, our gifts and sacrifices are not the source of our joy. Rather, we feast our eyes and see our delight in the treasures and goods that are offered to us by grace here in the city of God. Vain salvation, peace and righteousness are within its walls. That is why we are so glad that we have come here, that is why we serve and thank God.

In our text, the prophet goes on to describe the splendor, adornment and glory of the church of the New Testament, which the believers see and enjoy every day. The glory of Lebanon adorns the place of sanctuary, fir trees, beech trees and box trees together. The church is a blooming Eden, a fragrant garden of God, in truth a paradise. Here we pick flowers that never wither, fruits that refresh and refresh the soul. All the flowers, blossoms and fruit of the world, on the other hand, wither and fade in an instant and those who eat of them must die. The wood of life that grows in the city of God is for the recovery of the Gentiles. Here, in the Church of Jesus Christ, we find, as Isaiah says, gold instead of brass, and silver instead of iron, and brass instead of wood, and iron instead of stones. The splendor of the world flashes and shines, but it is all glitter and foam, without substance, no true happiness, no true joy. The Church of Christ shows and offers us noble, solid gold and silver, true goods and treasures that delight and delight the heart. What is in the world is rotten and decaying. In the kingdom of God we have solid, certain goods. It is all brass and iron.

And what is this our food and pasture, what is this our wealth? "Firs, beeches, boxwood, gold, silver, ore, iron" - these are images. And the prophet himself interprets these images. He says: the walls of Jerusalem shall be salvation. Yes, salvation is within its walls. The poor, the wretched, the indebted, the poor sinners have been given a haven here. Nowhere in the world is there a doctor who could heal the deadly disease that is sin. Here in the church is salvation and grace. Here, as Isaiah says in another prophecy, we draw

water from the well of salvation with joy. Here is peace. "Your rulers shall teach peace." Here peace is proclaimed to those near and far, peace to the terrified consciences. The poor souls, who in the darkness of the world were hunted like a shy deer and chased from sin to sin, from pleasure to pleasure, from torment to torment, find peace here, a peace that the world does not know. "The caretakers, the superiors shall preach righteousness." Here, through the Gospel, a righteousness is revealed and offered that is valid before God. "No more iniquity shall be heard in your land, nor harm or destruction in your borders." Sin is no more. Sin is atoned for, forever forgiven and forgotten. There is no more remembrance of the former iniquity. "The people of Jerusalem shall be vain righteousness" - yes, they are vain righteousness, adorned with a strange, perfect, divine righteousness. The image of God shines again on the lost, fallen children. The innocence of paradise has returned. And therefore, because salvation, peace and righteousness are within its walls, therefore the city of God is full of joy for and for, therefore its gates are called Praise and Glory, therefore we rejoice and praise and glorify the Lord and thank and serve him with a willing heart. Yes, it is joy for and for. The joy of Jerusalem will last forever. The righteous will possess the earth forever, the branch of its planting, the work of his hands, and after these earthly days they will attain the heavenly eternal inheritance. Then the days of suffering will come to an end. Then there will be no more suffering, crying and pain. Then the last traces of sin and death will have been eradicated. Then the light of grace will have passed into the even more beautiful radiance of glory.

III.

And the Lord Himself is the light which adorns and decorates the city of God, the Christian church, here and there. What we say in praise of the church, of its growth, of the entrance of the Gentiles, of the sacrifices of the converts, of the goods and treasures that are distributed through the preaching, we praise the Lord. It is all his work, his gift.

The light has come, Christ, the Son of God, the Lord of glory has appeared. He is, as our text calls him, the Lord, the Savior, the Mighty One in Jacob, the Redeemer. It is He, the Lord, who accomplishes all these things, who gathers His church and adorns and decorates it with His gifts. He has come into the world as the Light. He has offered grace to the lost children, he has redeemed them all. Unfortunately, people love the darkness more than the light. But all people who come out of darkness and turn to the light of Zion are enlightened by him. He has given a bright light into our hearts, he has called us from darkness to his marvelous light. That the power of the Gentiles should enter through the gates of Jerusalem, that the multitudes by the sea should be converted, that is his work. They are children who come from afar. Before they come, they are already called children, sons and daughters of the daughter of Zion. They are children from the beginning, in the sight of the LORD. He chose them before the foundation of the world. And therefore he now calls and draws them to come. It says: "Your daughters will be carried here by your side, in your arms." "The kings will be brought." It is the LORD who leads them, draws them, carries them, who converts them and transfers them from the kingdom of darkness, of Satan, into his kingdom of light. It is He who "makes Zion glorious", that is, adorns it with the silver and gold of the Gentiles. It is he who makes the Gentiles, the converts, the believers willing to serve and sacrifice to him. It is he who adorns and decorates the city of Jerusalem, the citizens of the city, with his gifts. He has brought salvation and help. He has made peace. He has acquired the righteousness that is valid before God. He distributes these gifts through the preaching of the rulers, pastors and teachers. He will give us the eternal inheritance. What we are, what we have, we thank him for.

And he has not only acquired salvation, light and life, he has not only made us children of light, no, he himself is the light that adorns the city, that delights our eyes, our spirit, in whose radiance we are blessed. He is the sun in the sky of the church. Of him the prophet says: "The sun shall no more shine upon thee by day, neither shall the brightness of the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be thine everlasting light." Yes, he is the light in which we live, we are and are. When he hides his face, we perish. Like the delicate flowers of the sun, we turn

our eyes to the friendly, gracious face of Jesus Christ. He is the source of our life, our food, our joy, he himself is our salvation, our peace, our righteousness. He is the light of our path. He leads the way and shows us the way. He is our sun, and of this sun it is written: "Your sun will never set, nor will your moon lose its light." Christ is our sun, and this sun shines day and night. There" is a sun that never sets. Day and night, whether we wake or sleep, whether we walk, stand, sit or lie down, he is around us, and even darkness is not dark before him. Because we have him before our eyes, the night shines like the day. Yes, when the Christian, when the church is afflicted with suffering, the cross and tribulation, when evening comes, when we see only darkness before our eyes, the sun, on which the eye of faith is fixed, does not go down. Christ is our light and comfort even in the dark valley of suffering. Yes, when the light of this life fades completely, when death overtakes us, when this sun sets forever, when sun, moon and stars fall from heaven, when heaven and earth pass away, that sun will stand firm and bright in the sky, the Lord is our eternal light and will be the prize of Israel there in glory. His people will then shine brightly in his light, like the stars in the light of the sun. Oh, how terrible a life, an eternity without Jesus! Therefore, seek Jesus and his light where he can be found, in his Zion, in his church! May he bless his people, his inheritance, and feed and uplift them forever! Amen.

Twenty-fifth Sermon. [^]—

(Purification of the Virgin Mary)

Mal. 8, 1-6.

Behold, I will send my angel to prepare the way before me. And soon the LORD, whom you seek, and the angel of the covenant, whom you desire, will come to his temple. Behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who will be able to endure the day of his coming? And who will stand when he appears? For he is like the fire of a goldsmith, and like the soap of a washerman. He will sit and melt and purify silver; he will purify and refine the children of Levi like gold and silver. Then they will bring grain offerings to the LORD in righteousness, and the grain offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as before and as many years ago. And I will come to you and punish you, and will be a swift witness against sorcerers, adulterers, and perjurers, and against those who do violence and injustice to hirelings, widows, and orphans, and oppress the stranger, and will not fear me, says the LORD Almighty. For I am the LORD who does not lie. And it shall not be all over with you children of Jacob.

Today, forty days after Christmas, we commemorate the holy story that took place forty days after the birth of Christ, the first time Mary went to the temple after the birth of her son, the purification of Mary and the presentation of Jesus in the temple. The infant Jesus was carried into the temple by his parents. This is reported in today's Gospel. This event reminded the ancient church, which organized the holy feast days, of the words of the prophet Malachi: "Soon the Lord will come to his temple." When the infant Jesus came to the temple for the first time, to the sanctuary of Israel, the Lord certainly came to his temple. Of course, the prophet Malachi was not referring specifically to this first appearance of Christ in the temple in his prophecy. No, he was talking about the future of the Lord in general, of which all the prophets have spoken. And the temple he is referring to is Israel, the true Israel, the people of God, the church of the Lord. They sought the Lord, they desired him.

And we know how this longing, this hope of Israel is fulfilled. The LORD has visited his people in the fullness of time and has made his dwelling there and will dwell and sit enthroned there forever. The old Simeon, who had found the infant Jesus with his parents in the temple, also speaks of this visitation of grace, the Lord's advent of grace. He praised this child as the light that was to enlighten all the Gentiles, as the prize of his people Israel. So the epistle of today's feast day, the word of Malachi, is about the time of the New Covenant, about the grace that has also been granted to us, for which we hope. This is what we want to talk about now.

The prophet Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Covenant. His prophecy marks the end of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament. He prophesied a century later, after Israel had returned from exile. The Jewish people had become naturalized again in their own land. They had regained possession of the inheritance of their fathers. But the faith of the fathers no longer lived in the children. Israel did not serve idols again, as it had done before it was taken captive to Babylon. But it desecrated the holiness of the LORD, as it says in Malachi's prophecy. The congregation of the LORD had again defiled itself in many ways. The gold and silver were contaminated with dross. So Malachi preached repentance to the people and exhorted them to repent. Alas, many despised the punishment, despised the word of the prophets. In his prophecy, the prophet complains about the wicked, the despisers who were mixed in with the holy people. Indeed, the majority of the people had once again turned apostate and hardened themselves against God and his word. However, even in this last period of Israel's history there was still a holy seed, true children of Jacob. They bowed to the word of judgment, repented, and put away the harms and offenses that the prophet had revealed to them. And it was to these obedient and faithful children of Jacob that the comfort of the prophetic word was directed. The little flock was despondent and distressed that the promise had still not materialized. But the prophet lifted up the fainthearted and proclaimed to them in the name of the LORD of hosts: "The LORD will soon come to his temple." This is the basic tone of this prophecy. Let us also consider this now:

The LORD comes to his temple,

1. to establish a covenant of peace,
2. to purify his people,
3. to cut off the wicked from his church.

I.

The LORD is coming to establish the covenant of peace. Thus says the LORD through the prophet: "Behold, I will send my angel to prepare the way before me. And soon the LORD, whom you seek, and the angel of the covenant, whom you desire, will come to his temple. Behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts." The LORD will send his angel to prepare the way before him. The prophet speaks of this very messenger and forerunner at the end of his prophecy: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Cap. 4:5, 6 Then the LORD himself will come to his temple, to his people. The prophecy is fulfilled. John was the messenger, the prophet, the Elijah who went before the Lord and prepared the way for him. There was a man sent from God called John. He said, "Prepare the way of the Lord." "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And he pointed to the stronger one who was to come after him. He testified and said: "He who comes from above is above all." And now Christ appeared on the scene. This was the true light that enlightens all people who come into this world. This was the Lord from heaven. The Lord came to his temple, came into his own possession. The Word, the eternal Word, became flesh and dwelt among us. This Jesus Christ was the angel of the covenant, of whom the prophet says. He was also an angel, a messenger of God. He was sent by God. God sent his Son into the world, born of a woman. But it was precisely the Son to whom the Father gave everything. It was the angel of the Lord who had already appeared to the fathers,

who had accompanied Israel on their journey through the desert to Canaan, who had protected his people against their enemies and against the wrath of God. This angel of the Lord, the Son of God, has now in the fullness of time taken the seed of men from Israel, has appeared in the flesh, has suffered in the flesh and has thus established a covenant between men, the sinners, and God in heaven, a covenant that will never be broken.

Christ is the angel of the covenant, the mediator of the new covenant. God had established his covenant with mankind from the very beginning. He wanted to be their God and bless and protect them throughout their lives, and they were to honor and praise him as their God. But people soon stepped out of the covenant and did not honor God, but honored the creature more than God. All flesh had corrupted his way. Therefore God had destroyed all living things from the earth. And after the great flood, God renewed and confirmed the covenant of creation with Noah's family, who had been saved by the water, and with all creation. But even now, the thoughts and desires of the human heart were still evil from his youth. God had then chosen the seed of Abraham and had established his covenant with Israel. He had taught Israel his customs, commandments and rights. And Israel was to keep all the words of the law. But the prophet Jeremiah writes of this covenant, that they did not keep it, and now speaks of a new covenant that God would make with the house of Israel. This is the covenant to which Malachi refers. Christ, the Lord, has established this new covenant. He has taken over all the obligations and duties of mankind and fulfilled all the righteousness of mankind. He took upon Himself all the transgressions that had occurred under the first covenant, all the sins and misdeeds of men, wrath and condemnation, and atoned for everything with His blood, the blood of the covenant. He himself is, as Isaiah calls him, the covenant of the people. He is our peace. Now God is weighed and disposed towards sinners. And it is an everlasting covenant that will never be broken. For he, the angel of the covenant, is himself the Lord. He has found an eternal righteousness, an eternal redemption. We are all children of the covenant, of the new covenant, as many of us as believe in Christ Jesus. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Christ we have God as our friend,

God as our Father. And if we only remember the name of Jesus Christ, we also know that mountains may be removed and hills fall away, but God's grace shall not depart from us, nor shall the covenant of his peace be removed. Isaiah 54:10.

II.

The LORD comes to purify his people. He comes to redeem his captive people, to redeem Israel from all their sins and to reconcile them to God, but also to purify and sanctify the redeemed and reconciled children, the children of Jacob. He comes to his temple to cleanse it. This is the prophecy: "But who will suffer the day of his coming? And who will stand when he appears? For he is like the fire of a goldsmith, and like the soap of a washerman. He will sit and melt and purify silver; he will purify and refine the children of Levi like gold and silver. Then they will bring grain offerings to the LORD in righteousness. And the grain offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as before and as many years ago." Here the prophet remembers the vices and harms of his people. In particular, he remembers the sin of the children of Levi, the priests. They sacrificed unclean things. They brought blind, lame and sick things to the altar. This was the sin of the people in general. The children of Israel chose the infirm, unfit animals of the herd to sacrifice to the LORD and kept the best for themselves. They deceived and cheated God about the tithes and offerings. And they also denied love and faithfulness to one another. Many Israelite men had divorced their wives and taken daughters of the Gentiles as wives. The prophet punishes these offenses and at the same time points to the future, points to a better time when pleasing sacrifices, sacrifices of righteousness, will again be offered to the LORD. The LORD who is coming to his temple, the angel of the covenant, the coming Redeemer will cleanse the children of Levi, the children of Jacob from their stains and vices, will wash them as with the soap of the launderer, will purify them as with the fire of the smelter. This has happened. Christ has come. He loved the church and gave himself for it. And he has also

cleansed and sanctified the church, that it should not have spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and blameless.

In the first part of our pericope, the prophet Malachi describes the first Advent of the Lord, his visible appearance in the flesh, through which that eternal covenant is established, and then in the second part the lasting presence of the Lord in his temple, his church on earth. It says: "He will sit and melt." So he is present, he dwells in his sanctuary, among his people, and that is his constant work: he sits and melts, cleanses and purifies his own, the children of Jacob. God has visited and redeemed his people. That was the first thing. But after the Lord has made purification for our sins through himself, after he has inaugurated the new covenant through his blood, he has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, he has taken the reigns and now protects and governs his people, and dwells in the midst of his people, through word and spirit, and sanctifies the church through word and spirit. Certainly, even the believers, the children of the new covenant, still need continual cleansing and purification. Sin has not yet been swept away. Their sacrifice, prayer and worship is often quite lame and frail. Faith and love often want to grow cold. The flesh still stirs with its lusts and desires. But the Lord does not remove his hand from us. He has given us his word, his Holy Spirit. And his word is a judge of our senses and thoughts. His word purifies the heart and kidneys. The Spirit of Christ, which manifests itself effectively through the Word, is a holy fire that consumes all impurity, that ignites faith and love, so that the children of the covenant sacrifice and serve the Lord from the heart, from a pure heart. It is the Lord himself who melts and washes his church through word and spirit, cleansing his bride from stains and wrinkles. And if there is no other way, then the Lord also introduces His own into the heat of affliction so that, like gold and silver through the fire, their faith is purified, tested and cleansed of dross through the fire of suffering. He who suffers in the flesh ceases from sin. Suffering subdues the lust of the flesh. When there is tribulation, they cry out in fear. They long for the Lord and seek his face. We also thank the Lord for this service of love, that he purifies us, sanctifies us, strengthens us, prepares us for the great day of the revelation of his glory.

For the LORD finally comes in judgment to cut off the wicked from his church. In the time of the prophet Malachi there were wicked in Israel who resisted all discipline and punishment, who despised everything, even the comfort of the promise. Those who served God righteously often became disobedient, saying, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we keep his commandments and live hard lives before the Lord of hosts? Therefore we praise the despisers, for the wicked increase, they tempt God, and all things go well with them." Cap. 3:14-15. So it was in those last days of Israel's history. The wicked, the despisers, were on the increase. Only a small group of righteous people remained. These were the children of Jacob. That is how it is now, at the end of the New Testament era. This is the sorrow of the true children of God, that the wicked, the despisers, gain space in the sanctuary. Today's Christianity, the great masses, is nothing other than a bunch of loose despisers. And even in the truly Christian congregations, which control the ungodly with seriousness and discipline, the ungodly, the despisers, the hypocrites have a place. But it will not always stay that way. The prophet comforts the godly and says: "And you shall see again what a difference there is between the righteous and the wicked, and between him who serves God and him who does not serve him. For behold, a day is coming that will burn like an oven, when all the reprobate and the wicked will be straw, and the coming day will set them on fire, declares the LORD Almighty, and will leave them neither root nor branch." Cap. 3:18. 4:1 And in our text it says: "And I will come to you and punish you, and will be a swift witness against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, and against those who do violence and injustice to hirelings, widows and orphans, and oppress the stranger, and will not fear me, says the LORD of hosts. For I am the LORD who does not lie."

The Lord will come, will return, visible, in the clouds of heaven, in the splendor of his holiness and glory. And how then will the sinner, the wicked, the despiser stand on the day of his future? It is a great and terrible day, a day

of judgment and condemnation of ungodly men. In particular, the Lord will stand as a witness against those who have profaned his holy name and defiled it through the service of unrighteousness, and will punish them according to their due. All the wicked and despisers, all hypocrites, will then be straw and burnt. And it will not be a fire of purification, no, it will be a fire of wrath and judgment. The LORD will sweep his threshing floor and burn up the chaff with everlasting fire. But he will gather the wheat into his scourges. "It shall not be all over with you children of Jacob." The house of Jacob, the true Israel, the holy seed that remains, the chosen seed will stand in judgment and may suffer the day of its future. The godly have the promise: "But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise, and salvation in the wings thereof." Cap. 4:2 He will come in judgment, cursing those who curse him, and giving grace and sweet light to those who love and seek him. "Ye shall tread down the wicked." Cap. 4:3. Yes, the righteous will rejoice when the wicked are destroyed and wiped out, when no one is found in the temple of the Lord who profanes the name of God. And the congregation of the righteous will then remain for ever and ever. For this we hope and pray every day: Oh come, oh come, O sun, and bring us all to eternal joy and bliss in your heavenly hall. Amen.

Twenty-sixth Sermon. [^]—

(Annunciation.)

Isa. 7, 10-15.

And the LORD spake again to Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign from the LORD thy God, whether it be in hell below, or on high above. But Ahaz said: I will not ask it, lest I tempt the LORD. Then he said, "Listen, then, you of the house of David: Is it not enough for you to offend the people that you must also offend my God? Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin is with child, and shall bear a son, and she shall call his name Immanuel. He will eat butter and honey, that he may know how to refuse evil and choose good.

Today, on the day of the Annunciation of Mary, we commemorate one of God's great deeds to which the festivities and joy of Christianity are dedicated. The great story that we praise and glorify at Christmas began on this day. The beginning happened in secret. The angel Gabriel was sent to the daughter of David, the Virgin Mary, and announced to her: "Behold, you shall conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name JESUS." And in answer to her astonished question: "How will this happen? for I know of no man," he gave her further information: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, so that the Holy One who is born of you will also be called the Son of God." At that very moment, what the angel proclaimed happened. What we confess in our faith happened: "Conceived by the Holy Spirit." The Son of God took on the seed of Abraham from the Virgin Mary and became partaker of the flesh and blood of man. The Word became flesh. This was a mysterious work, a miracle without equal. That is why Mary then gave God the glory in her song of praise and said: "He has done great things for me, who is mighty and whose name is holy." But what happened to Mary concerns all people. He who was conceived and born of Mary is called Jesus, that is, the Savior, the Redeemer of the world, who, as the angel foretold, is

King over the house of Jacob forever, and there is no end to his kingdom. It is all because we believe in this Jesus, the Son of God and Mary. Elizabeth called her friend Mary blessed and said: "Blessed are you who have believed." Blessed are all who believe the word that the Lord has made known to men about the child of Mary. Whoever does not believe this will be condemned. Apart from Christ, the Word made flesh, there is no salvation. Thus, in her hymn of praise, Mary mentions not only the lowly, the hungry, who boast and comfort themselves of God their Savior, but also the arrogant, the powerful, the rich, who despise her Son and therefore remain empty, humiliated and eternally cast out.

What has happened and been accomplished in the fullness of time was revealed by God to his holy prophets long before. As our text testifies, the prophet Isaiah offered the king of Judah, Ahaz and his people a sign. He was to ask for a sign from the Lord, whether in hell below or on high. And when King Ahaz refused, the prophet replied: "The Lord himself will give you a sign." And this shall be the sign: "Behold, a virgin is with child, and shall bear a son, and she shall call his name Immanuel." The virgin son, Immanuel, is the greatest of all signs given by the LORD. It is a sign of salvation. This is shown by the name: Immanuel, which means: "God with us." A sign of salvation for all who believe. The prophet Isaiah placed this sign before the eyes of the king and people of Jerusalem in the name of God. They were to look at this sign, believe this word and trust it. Of course, the king and his people despised the prophet's words. So the promise turned into a threat. In the name of God, the prophet now announces future judgment to the unbelieving king and the hardened people. We now turn our attention to this great promise, which is also supposed to us, and speak on the basis of this prophecy

Of the greatest sign and wonder of all time.

1. this is the virgin son, Immanuel.
- 2 This is a sign of salvation for all believers, but a sign of judgment for unbelievers.

I.

This is the greatest sign and wonder of all time: the virgin son, Immanuel.

With these words the prophet undoubtedly points to Christ, of whom all the prophets have written. And he speaks in particular of the mother of the Messiah. Even in the first promise that Adam and Eve received, the woman from whom the blessed seed was to come was mentioned. The prophet Micah writes of the woman who is to give birth. The woman, the mother of the Messiah, is mentioned in the prophecy; the man, the father, is kept silent. And Isaiah now says in dry, clear words that a virgin should conceive and give birth. Of course, this contradicts all laws, all order of nature, that a virgin conceives, gives birth, becomes a mother, and yet does not cease to be a virgin. This is a sign and wonder of a unique kind. The New Testament sheds even more light on this mystery. The angel of God announces to the Virgin Mary that the Holy Spirit will come upon her, that she will conceive and give birth in the power of the Holy Spirit. But this makes the miracle seem all the greater and more incomprehensible. That the Holy Spirit of God, the power of the Most High, should do such a work on a poor virgin is a foolish, foolish thing before our reason. That which is conceived of the Holy Spirit, conceived and born of the Virgin Mary in the power of the Holy Spirit, is now of the Holy Spirit, holy and pure. Thus the angel Gabriel speaks of the holy thing that is born of Mary. That which is conceived, conceived and born in the ordinary way of men, of man and woman, by the will of man, of the flesh, is flesh, flesh born of flesh. Adam, as the Scriptures say, begot a son in his own image. All children, all descendants of Adam bear the image of sinful Adam. Through conception and birth, Adam's sin is passed on to all human beings. Through Adam's fall, human nature and being is completely corrupted. We are all conceived and born in sin. But here God's hand has intervened in the course of nature, has broken the law of sin, of original sin, has conceived and created something new. He who is conceived and born of the Virgin, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is without sin

pure and undefiled from the womb. Truly a miracle of the ages, a miracle of the world! From the sinful lineage and family tree of mankind a tender, holy little rice has come forth. From Mary, the sinner, a saint was born. Among the sinful, corrupt children of Adam there now lives a righteous one, a new Adam, adorned with God's image, adorned with innocence and spotless holiness. And this new Adam is not newly created by God, not placed in this world from above. No, Christ, the Holy and Righteous One, has become partaker of the flesh and blood of the children of men, has taken on the seed of David, the seed of Abraham, has been born of the fallen race of Adam. He is the Son of the Virgin, flesh and blood like us, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, and yet without sin! This is the great sign that God has given to mankind.

But we have not yet exhausted the depth of the divine mystery. The prophet Isaiah says of the Virgin that she will call her son Immanuel. This name fully reveals to us the nature, the mystery of this person. Immanuel means: God with us! And what does this mean? The evangelist of the New Testament interprets this name. After Matthew has narrated the miraculous birth of Christ in his Gospel and also introduced the words of the angel Gabriel, which Joseph heard: "That which is born in her, Mary, is of the Holy Spirit", he concludes this story with the remark: "Now all this has happened so that what the Lord said through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call his name Immanuel, that is, God with us'." What this name signifies, what is prophesied in and with this name, was thus fulfilled when Christ was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary, of the Holy Spirit. This name indicates the mystery of the conception and birth of Christ. Immanuel, God with us, that is, God in our flesh and blood. God, God himself has taken on the seed, flesh and blood of the children of men. The Word, the eternal Word became flesh. And if God, God Himself, were to become man, flesh, He could of course not make fellowship with the sin of men, not become partaker of sin, of

original sin. So, according to his divine wisdom, which transcends all human thoughts, he devised this way. Through the Holy Spirit he prepared a pure, immaculate human nature from the Virgin Mary. And in this spotless body, in this holy temple, dwells the fullness of the Godhead. This is a sign and wonder that has never entered the mind of man or angel: Immanuel, God in the flesh, God One of us. God, the LORD, our brother. This is the greatest miracle of God. What God has done in the fullness of time is greater and more wonderful than what he did in the beginning. Great and marvelous are the works of the Creator. But this work, with which the New Testament began, far, far surpasses the power and wisdom that God made known to man in creation. Man, created in God's image, was the crown of creation. The holiness of God was reflected in the first man, who feared and loved God with all his heart, who lived and was blessed in the fellowship of God, his Creator. And God, the Creator, rested with pleasure in the work of his hands. God and man were closely connected - but just as the creature can be connected to the Creator. God loved his creature, and the creature rested in the Creator. God saw in man his creature, the work of his hands, and man saw in God his Lord and Creator. This is something completely new that goes beyond the boundaries of creation: God and man One Person! A creature that is God the LORD. God, the LORD, our flesh and blood. And wonderfully, just when man had sinned, had fallen from the state of innocence, this thought, which had remained completely distant and alien to man in paradise, became known and revealed to man for the first time. Not Adam and Eve in the state of innocence, no, the first sinners were told about the seed of woman, the Lord. When sin and apostasy had become powerful in Israel, the prophets arose and prophesied about the woman who would give birth, the virgin who would give birth, about the virgin son, Immanuel. And in the middle of time, when the corruption of mankind had reached its climax, the prophecy was fulfilled, Christ, Immanuel, was born. God, the Lord, came so close to mankind, especially sinful mankind, who had turned their backs on God, their Creator, and

entered into their nature and manner, into their flesh and blood, into their earthly life and existence. Now that they are sinners, God is closer, more closely united to men than when they were holy, with the bonds of the same flesh and blood. God is and remained and remains who he was, and yet is at the same time what we are, man, creature, flesh and blood. He is God above all, and yet equal to us. One of us.

This is the greatest miracle and sign of the ages: the mystery of this person, Jesus Christ, true God, born of the Father in eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary. Christ then, while walking visibly on earth, performed many great signs and wonders. But in doing so he only proved who he was. He thereby revealed his divine power and glory. When the Jews did not believe his signs and wonders, he pointed them to the last and greatest miracle with which his earthly life was to end, to the sign of Jonah, his suffering, death and resurrection. But even this only revealed who he was. He died after the manner of men. Yet, because he was the living God, he could not be kept from death, but came to life from the dead. Great and wonderful things will happen at the end of the world. Then the Son of Man will return in great power and glory. Then this great miracle will be revealed before the whole world. Then all flesh will see the Son of the Virgin, Christ, Immanuel, the God who appeared in the flesh. Yes, for all eternity men and angels will praise and worship this miracle of the ages: Jesus, the Son of David, the great Alpha and Omega.

II.

And this sign means something good. It is a sign of salvation. The prophet Isaiah offered King Ahaz God's help. The city of Jerusalem was threatened by enemy armies. In this affliction, God sent his prophet to the king and told him: "Fear not and let your heart be steadfast!" And God wanted to confirm his promise with a sign. And the very sign that the prophet proclaimed, of the Son of the Virgin, Immanuel, was a pledge of divine help and grace. In another prophetic speech, the prophet

explains how this very son, Immanuel, the strong God, will redeem his people and establish an eternal kingdom of peace. The prophet threatens the enemies of God and his people: "Decide a council and do nothing with it! Confer and it will not stand! For here is Immanuel." Cap. 8, 10: Immanuel guarantees God's protection and assistance to His people. Yes, the sign that the LORD Himself wanted to give and has given, Christ Immanuel, is a sign of salvation. Through his suffering, death and resurrection, Christ redeemed the sinful people and acquired salvation for them. When he returns on that day, he will redeem us from all evil and help us to his heavenly kingdom. But salvation already rests in this person, the Son of the Virgin, Immanuel. The virgin son, the holy, righteous one, stands up for the sinful, damned generation. He is our righteousness before God. In Christ, Immanuel, the God-man, God and humanity are reunited. We now know how God relates to us. God is with us. God is for us. Who may now be against us? Whether sin tempts us, death terrifies us, the devil and hell threaten us: here is Immanuel. In Christ, the Son of Mary, we have God. What more do we need? Where God and humanity are united in one, where all perfect fullness appears, there is the best necessary part, my one and my all, my most blessed salvation.

The Son of the Virgin, Immanuel, is a sign of salvation for all who believe. The prophet Isaiah first presented this sign to the people of Judah. But before he proclaimed this great promise, he sent the urgent admonition and warning: "If you do not believe, you will not remain." If Israel believed this sign given by God, then it would remain and endure. This sign of salvation has now been set up as a standard on a high mountain. The gospel of Christ Immanuel, the God who became man, has now gone out into all lands. Whoever believes this word, whoever looks at this sign, whoever calls on the name of Jesus, the name of Immanuel, will be saved. We do not need to descend to the depths or ascend to the heights to find God. God is very close to us. God can be found here, in the flesh and blood of human beings. Whoever believes in this Jesus, the Son of God and Mary, is helped, has fellowship with the Son and with the Father, has eternal life.

But whoever does not believe will be condemned. King Ahaz did not listen to the word of the prophet. And when the prophet offered him a sign, he said, "I will not ask for it, lest I tempt the Lord." This was a contemptuous disregard for God's gracious offer. And so he paid no attention to the great sign of the future that the prophet announced. And the people of Judah had the same mindset. They became entrenched and hardened in unbelief. That is why the prophet's voice changed. He reproached the house of David: "Is it not enough for you to offend the people, you must also offend my God?" And now the sign of salvation, the virgin son, Immanuel, also becomes a sign of judgment to the unbelieving, hardened people. It is a threat of judgment that the prophet proclaims at the end of our text, that Immanuel will eat butter and honey, even in his old age, when he can distinguish between good and evil. The prophet goes on to explain how the land of Israel will be devastated and laid waste, so that only cattle droppings and briars will remain and everyone will have to live only on milk and honey. This is the punishment of unbelief. This evil, unbelieving species has not yet died out. It lives at all times. Alas, this Jesus Immanuel is set as a sign, which is contradicted from all sides, is set for the fall and ruin of many. Unfortunately, most people do not want to know anything about the God who appeared in the flesh. They have turned away from God. Now God has done the last, the outermost thing and has gone after those who have gone astray, has himself taken on flesh and blood in order to win people back to himself. And people are now also turning their backs on this God who has become their equal. Thus they are and remain excluded from God and from salvation. Thus they remain under wrath and are now twofold children of wrath. May God open our eyes so that we may recognize the sign, the sign of salvation that God has given, so that we may rightly recognize Jesus, true God and man, and persevere in such knowledge to the end and thus enter into life! Amen.

Twenty-seventh Sermon. [^]—

(Pentecost.)

Joel 8. 15.

And after these things I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your elders shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. At the same time I will pour out my Spirit on my servants and on my handmaidens, and I will perform miracles in heaven and on earth with blood, fire and vapor. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved. For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be salvation, as the Lord has promised; also for the rest of those whom the Lord will call.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which we commemorate today, is one of the great deeds of God to which the world owes salvation. It is on a par with the other works of God which we have again commemorated in this church year, the birth of the Son of God, the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. That is why the prophets have already testified and written about it. The people of the Old Covenant were given the promise that at the time of the reign of the Son of David, when the Lord would turn the captivity of his people, the Spirit of God would also be poured out from heaven. "Thorns and hedges will grow in the field of my people, the palaces will be deserted, and the crowds in the city will be lonely until the Spirit from on high is poured out on us." "I will pour water on the thirsty, and rivers on the dry; I will pour my Spirit on your seed, and my blessing on your offspring." Thus testifies Isaiah 32: 1, 13-15. 44: 3. Ezekiel says: "And I will sprinkle clean water on you; I will put my Spirit within you." 36, 25. 27. And Zechariah: "But on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem I will pour out the Spirit of grace and prayer." 12, 10.

But Joel describes the miracle of Pentecost most fully in the well-known Pentecost text, which begins: "After this I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." This was to happen at the time of Christ, at the time of the Messiah. Christ himself appears in the Scriptures of the Old Covenant as the anointed one on whom the Spirit of the Lord rests and who also makes his people Israel partakers of the anointing of the Spirit. The believers of the "Old Covenant" were also driven and moved by the Holy Spirit of God. After all, they hoped in Christ. And it was the Spirit of God who testified of Christ and awakened and strengthened their hope until it was fulfilled. But just as Christ was still hidden in the old covenant, so the Spirit of Jesus Christ was not yet revealed. When the day of Pentecost was fulfilled, when the Spirit of God settled on the heads of the apostles with a rush of wind and fiery tongues, Peter stood up and testified to all the people that what had previously been spoken through the prophet Joel had now been fulfilled, that Jesus, whom Israel had slain and whom God had raised from the dead, had now been exalted by the right hand of God, had received the promise of the Holy Spirit and had poured out the very thing that all had then seen and heard. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is part of the fulfillment of prophecy; the gift of the Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the exalted Christ and testifies of Christ that God has made him Lord and Christ, is the sign of the New Covenant.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." This is how Peter reproduces Joel's prophecy. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a sign of the last days. It should take place before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. The time that began with Christ's appearing, the time of the New Testament, is the last time before the end. And this is precisely what characterizes the last days in which we live: The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ is poured out on all flesh. Streams of the Spirit go over the earth, over all flesh and fill the land with the knowledge of the Lord. The Spirit of God blows through the land, here and there, as he wills. The floodgates of heaven are opened, and all kinds of spiritual blessings in heavenly goods come down from above, from the Father of Light. This is the last thing that should happen on earth before the end. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the effects of which will

continue until the end of days, is the last of the great deeds of God which this sinful, corrupt earth has seen, through which the sinful world is saved. Now that the Son of God has come from heaven and, with his one sacrifice, has made perfect all who are being sanctified, has closed up sin, the abyss and opened up heaven, there is only one thing left to do, that Christ and his work, his redemption, be made known to all flesh on earth. And this is precisely the office and work of the Spirit of God on earth. He testifies to all creatures that God has made Jesus, the Crucified One, to be Lord and Christ. He who believes this is righteous, he is saved, he will be saved when the world is judged. After we have received the promise, the gift of the Spirit, we need no further revelation from God. What follows is the end of all things.

This is what today's Pentecost text teaches us and what we now want to consider in more detail:

**The outpouring of the Holy Spirit the last great act of God
before the end of the world.**

1. a new creature has already been created through this act of God.
2. This holy work of God continues as long as the earth stands.
3. this miracle of God serves to save the people of God when the world comes to an end.

I.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the last great act of God before the end of the world. Through this act of God a new creature has already been called into being. Through the Spirit of God, the foundation stone of a new world has already been laid in this visible, transitory world. Joel prophesied: "And after this, in the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your elders shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. And I will pour out my Spirit on both male and female servants at the same time." The fulfillment of this prophecy began on the first Pentecost.

The Spirit of God, which came down from heaven, filled the house where the disciples of the Lord were sitting, supplicating and praying, and they all, men and women, were filled with the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of God broke through the barriers of nature. The apostles, unlearned men, spoke with new tongues after the Spirit gave them utterance. This small crowd, inspired and enraptured by the Spirit from on high, caused the world to marvel. Thousands came and saw and heard. This was a new, wonderful creation. This was the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ. Yes, the Spirit of God was poured out on all flesh. The kingdom of God has taken root in humanity through the Holy Spirit. There is now a people on earth, gathered from all peoples and tongues, a holy people of a different kind than all other flesh, than natural humanity. In this realm of the spirit, the barriers, the differences of creation are abolished. Our text names the differences among men: sons, daughters, young men, old men, servants, handmaids. Humanity is divided and divided by differences of age, sex, class and education. The gifts, goods and powers of creation are distributed differently, and all the virtue, strength and beauty of the creature only slowly unfolds into flower and blossoms for a short time, then withers and fades faster than it has grown. Children, sons and daughters are taught and brought up by their parents. And when the young have reached maturity, the old die away, the powers of the old dry up and the light of life fades. Here, in the earthly kingdom, there are high and low, rich and poor, wise and unwise, masters and servants, wives and maidservants. But the Spirit from on high has given the flesh a different form. In the kingdom of the Spirit, in the Church of God, these distinctions have disappeared. There they are all one: sons, daughters, young men, old men, masters, servants, maidservants, there they are all one. They are all the same. There is One Spirit that lives in them all. Sons and daughters, even infants in the cradle, already have the Holy Spirit. Young men, virgins, men and women are animated by the Spirit of God. The elderly, in whom the light and strength of life is fading, are sustained and carried by the Spirit of God. Servants and maidservants, the poor, the wretched and the afflicted are honored and ennobled, they are temples of the Holy Spirit. Yes, a new and

wonderful building has been erected on this earth, a dwelling of God in the Spirit, and this building of the Spirit, like the Spirit of God, is of eternal duration and does not collapse when all flesh goes the way of the flesh and the world breaks in pieces.

Of course, this kingdom of the spirit, the new creation, is still hidden. The kingdom of God does not come with outward gifts, but is within us. The hearts, the sinful, corrupt hearts of men are reborn through the Spirit of God. Our text describes the inner effects of that great act of God, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Sons and daughters have the spirit of prophecy. Our children who have received the Holy Spirit are taught by God. Servants and handmaidens, babes and simpletons, to whom the Holy Spirit has opened the inner eye, harbor treasures of wisdom in their breasts, against which all the wisdom of the worldly wise is vain night and shadow. The Holy Spirit of God sanctifies the whole inner life of the soul, renews us in the spirit of our mind. The young men have visions. The heart, the human heart, whose thoughts and desires are evil from youth, is cleansed, purified and feasts and delights in divine, heavenly things. The elders have dreams. They already dream of what is in heaven, they already live and weave in the great things for which they are waiting. And when their hearts are full, their mouths are overflowing. They all prophesy and speak and testify of what the Spirit has revealed to them and placed in their hearts. Yes, sons and daughters, Christian children already prophesy and sing of what is the delight and joy of their hearts. And what is it that the Spirit from on high has revealed to us and placed in our hearts? What is the heavenly, hidden wisdom? What is the pasture and joy of the Christian heart? What do they speak, preach and testify about? Our text says: "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." They call on the name of the Lord, it is revealed to them. Luther says: "Prophecy, visions, dreams, it is all one thing, namely the knowledge of God through Christ, which the Holy Spirit kindles and makes burning through the word of the Gospel." At the first Pentecost, the Christians spoke of the great deeds of God, of what God had done in Christ. Peter preached about Jesus, crucified and risen, exalted, whom God made Lord and Christ. We have

believed and recognized that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the rulers of the world crucified, whom the world despises and blasphemes, is the Son of God, and that through his cross and blood God's Son has redeemed us from this evil world and time, and has brought us back to God and prepared a place for us above with God, where he himself now dwells. This is the blessed light of knowledge that the Spirit of Jesus Christ has kindled in our hearts. The Spirit of God testifies and speaks of this without ceasing. And through Christ he has revealed and unlocked the Father's heart to us. The Holy Spirit cries out in us: Abba, dear Father! And the fact that through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit we have recognized the Father, the only true God, and whom he has sent, Jesus Christ, is already eternal life. This is light and life from this world. Through the Holy Spirit, our spirit has already been caught up from this time, this world, and immersed in eternity. So we are only waiting for the last, the end of all things, for this illusory and shadowy life, the earthly life, to pass away and for the eternal to appear and be revealed, which we already possess and enjoy in spirit and faith.

I.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the last great act of God before the end of the world. This holy work of God, which began on the first Pentecost, continues and will continue as long as the earth stands. Everything that is happening now in the kingdom of God on earth is the after-effect and impact of the miracle of Pentecost. We have the Holy Spirit. We need no further revelation from God. We are taught by God. We know the Father and the Son. We know everything that is necessary for our salvation. But the Spirit of God is to be poured out on all flesh. The whole earth is to be filled with the glory of God, with the knowledge of the Lord. That is why God continues the work of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit carries out his ministry on earth as long as the earth stands, as long as flesh lives on earth that has a living breath and awaits the new birth. The entire period of the New Testament, from the first Pentecost to the Last Day, is set aside to fulfill the prophecy: "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." When this gracious rain and blessing from above completes its

cycle, when the Spirit of God has finished his work, then comes the end. In our text, the prophet Joel remembers Mount Zion, the city of Jerusalem and the others whom the Lord will call. Peter interpreted this prophetic word in his Pentecost sermon by calling out to the men of Israel: "This promise is for you and your children, and for all who are afar off, whom the Lord our God will call." Those from Israel first received the promise of the Father, the Spirit that the exalted Christ sent from the Father. The gospel then went out from Jerusalem into all the lands. But the spread of the gospel, the church of Christ, is nothing other than the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a continuing Pentecost. Wherever the gospel has taken root in all kinds of people and flesh, those who were separated from one another have become one. became one and now praised God, the Father of Jesus Christ, in one spirit. The great deeds of God, of which church history bears witness, are Pentecostal works and have made way for the Spirit of God on earth. When, after the night of pabstism, the bright light of divine truth shone again, when Luther put the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ, of saving faith, back on the lampstand, it was a Pentecostal time, when God rained down streams of the Spirit on the desolate garden. We now rejoice in Luther's pure teaching here in the West. We know the straight and right path of God. We plant the pure catechism teaching in our children. And that means: we celebrate Pentecost. Yes, this promise is also for us and our children. We have received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

But now it is God's will and purpose that from Mount Zion, from the city of Jerusalem, from the Church, the Word and the Spirit should go out to those who are still far off. Our text names the remnant whom the Lord will call, that is, all who are still far off, whom the Lord God will call. Alas, there are still many places where the fields lie desolate, where thorns and thistles grow - until the Spirit from on high is poured out on them too. The Lord still has other sheep, but they are not yet in this fold. There are still scattered children of God living everywhere among the Gentiles, among the unbelievers, others who are still far from God and the testaments of promise. They must and should

also come here. It is the Lord who calls them, calls them through the gospel. The gospel is breaking through into the wilderness and deserts. And even if many despise it, those who are to come will come, those who are to hear will hear. But it is the Lord's will and order that we, who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, should call those who are far away, that they too may share in the promise of God. God calls through us. Beloved, there are still thousands left, thousands of our flesh and blood, our relatives, our fellow countrymen, who do not know the Father, who do not know the Son, who do not know the Spirit of God, or who have forgotten and lost what they have learned. Even if they otherwise have everything in full, because they do not have the gift of Pentecost, they lack everything. We have the Spirit from on high. So we have everything and are rich in God. And it is just that the rich should fill the poor and needy with their goods, that those who have everything should do good to those who have nothing and share with them. Pentecost reminds us of our holy, blessed missionary duty. The Spirit of God, who is in us, impels and urges us to reveal the visions and revelations of the Lord, of which we are worthy, to others whose eyes and hearts are still closed, that we may prophesy, speak and testify to those near and far of the great things the Lord has done for us. When then, through the arm of the Lord, through the ministry of the Church, the last of the rest are brought in and, enlightened by the Spirit of God, confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father, then the Pentecostal star will be complete, then the end of the world will come.

III.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the last great act of God before the end of the world. What still follows is the end, the last glorious revelation of God, which closes the time of the world and the Church, the great and terrible day of the Lord. And the miracle of Pentecost serves precisely to ensure our survival on that day, serves to save God's people in judgment. The prophet Joel immediately follows the description of the miracle of Pentecost with a description of the last day, the last judgment. He first mentions the signs that will precede the great day of the

LORD: And I will give wonders in heaven and on earth, first on earth: Blood, fire and vapor of smoke. The Last Judgement has its prelude on earth, in time. God's judgments run through the history of the world and the Church. And those people are affected who reject the gift from heaven, who do not want to be punished by the Spirit of God. The LORD judged ancient Jerusalem with blood, fire and smoke. For Israel had continued to resist the Holy Spirit to the end. The old church, having withered and died spiritually, was crushed by the wild hordes of Muhammad. Then again we saw blood, fire and smoke. The medieval, the occidental church fell into the Babylonian darkness of papstom. And the Antichrist, who blasphemes the Holy Spirit of God and asserts the prophecy of the lying spirit with cunning and violence, awaits his final punishment, the fiery furnace that burns with brimstone. But even in the church of the very last days, in Protestant Christianity, there are signs of judgment. Much has become rotten, rotten and stinking. "But there will be salvation on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem", there will be those who escape. The Spirit of God protects and sustains the church he has founded against the gates of hell. At all times, even in times of severe judgment, even in these very last days, God has preserved a people, a remnant. These remnant are sealed by the Spirit of God and are preserved by the Spirit of God in the great tribulations of the last days. Driven by the Spirit of God, they cry out: Lord, Lord, have mercy! And whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Yes, his chosen ones cry out to him day and night, and he will save them in a short time.

Whoever calls on the name of the LORD, whoever has the anointing, the seal of the Spirit, will also be saved from the last wrath. Finally, the great and terrible day of the LORD will come. Signs in the heavens are the immediate harbingers. Miraculous signs will occur in the sun, moon and stars. And finally the sun will be turned into darkness, the moon into blood, and the stars will fall from the sky. Then the sign of the Son of Man will be seen. And under the feet of the world judge the heavens will be rolled up like a book, and the earth will

disappear. Yes, heaven and earth will burn with fire. And woe, woe then to all flesh that has not become spirit, that has rejected or driven out the spirit of God. Where there is carrion, there the eagles will gather. The end and portion of the ungodly world is the fire that will not go out and the smoke of torment that will rise from eternity to eternity. But it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. While all other flesh trembles and shakes, the rest, the believers who have received and kept the baptism of the Spirit, go forward confidently and with assurance to the great and terrible day of the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, comforts, strengthens and supports their souls in the final distress, in the midst of fear and judgment. Even in the midst of the storms and pains of the last day, the Holy Spirit fills the hearts of believers with his comfort and peace and holds them fast in the name of the Lord, in the grace of Jesus Christ, so that they joyfully lift up their heads and rejoice in anticipation of the One who is coming to redeem them. Those who belong to the Lord will then enter the heavenly, eternal kingdom with the Lord. There the new creation will be revealed and perfected. Then we will be fully partakers of the divine nature, spiritual and transfigured. Then vision, dreams and prophecy will come to an end. Then we will see face to face. Then our joy, the joy of Pentecost, will be complete. We already have the first-fruits of the Spirit. So perfection, completion, cannot fail to come. May the Spirit of God help us and complete what he has begun! Amen.

Twenty-eighth Sermon. [^]—

(St. John's Day.)

Isa. 40:1-5.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it..

Today we celebrate the feast of John the Baptist. But with this we honor Christ the Lord alone. John rejected all honor from himself and gave it to Christ. He was the forerunner of the Lord from his conception and birth until his death. The annunciation which Zacharias received from the angel Gabriel was a forerunner of the greater annunciation which was given to Mary. Even before the birth, John, the son of Elizabeth, was cheering for the son of Mary. The birth of John the Baptist, which we commemorate today, points to the birth of Christ, which took place six months later. The name John points to Christ. John means: God is gracious. The hymn of praise that Zechariah sang at the circumcision of his son praises the Redeemer of Israel, who saved his people from all their enemies. This was the profession of John the Baptist, of whom today's epistle, like today's Gospel, says that he prepared the way for the Lord and bore witness to the greater One who was to come after him. John rejoiced when he heard the voice of the bridegroom, when Christ increased and he decreased. After he had finished his work and shut up in prison,

Christ appeared as a prophet in Galilee. When John was beheaded, Jesus withdrew into solitude with his disciples and prepared them for his own death. He knew that as they had done to this Elijah, so they would do to him.

Isaiah, the prophet who prophesied about Christ, also remembered his forerunner. He hears in his spirit the voice of the preacher in the desert, the great preacher of repentance: "Prepare the way for the Lord." But this preaching of repentance was intended to pave the way for the Lord, to make way for the comforting preaching of the Gospel. That preacher in the wilderness ultimately pursued no other goal than that God's people might be comforted, that they might properly grasp the comfort of the New Testament, of the forgiveness of iniquity. "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God!" This command is given to all preachers who are sent to God's people. And so the consolation of God is proclaimed to the Church of God at all times. That glad tidings: "Speak kindly to Jerusalem and preach to her that her reign is over, for her iniquity is forgiven", this gospel, whose core and star is Christ, the Redeemer, is the best, most powerful consolation that God's people will need until the end of time. Isaiah, the prophet, also comforts his people with the deliverance from Babylon, announcing to them, especially in the second part of his prophecy, the deliverance from captivity with which they will soon be afflicted. But he only touches these temporal blessings with a fleeting foot, as it were, and repeatedly places himself and his people on the solid, eternal rock of salvation, on the promise of Christ and his eternal redemption. He also unfolds this consolation of the New Testament in our text. And what he says about the preaching of John, the preaching of repentance, which never ceases in the Church of God, is only meant to prepare the way for the other preaching, the gospel of the forgiveness of sin. Everything is aimed at the latter, just as John himself let his exhortation to repentance end in the gospel, in vain consolation, in the testimony of Christ. It is God's will that his people should be comforted as long as they live and walk in this dark land. We now want to give space to this thought:

**The preaching of the gospel is the best, most powerful consolation
in this vale of tears.**

1. because the misdeed is forgiven, the knighthood has now come to an end.
2. And through righteous repentance the way is prepared for the Savior.

I.

The misdeed is forgiven, so the knighthood has come to an end. This is the consolation of God's people, our consolation in this vale of tears. Our text speaks of a preacher and a sermon. This refers to the man who answered those who asked him, "Who are you?": "I am the voice of a preacher in the wilderness," John the Baptist. However, we know that the sermon given to all preachers in the New Testament has the same content as John's sermon: "Prepare the way for the Lord!" Above all, however, God's command: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God", is general and is given to all evangelists, to all preachers of the New Testament. Yes, even the preachers, the prophets of the Old Covenant already knew this theme: "Their iniquity is forgiven", and comforted their people with the promise of redemption in the New Testament.

This gospel of the forgiveness of sins is the consolation of all times, the consolation, the medicine that all the afflicted need. For the reign of sin is the greatest misery there is on earth. All other woe is small compared to the torment of this tyranny. The knighthood, the tyranny that Israel had to endure in Babylon was a small thing, all external tribulation and affliction is a small thing compared to the knighthood that is meant in our text, the knighthood of sin. Yes, sin has become powerful on earth. All human beings are under the sentence of sin. We are all sold under sin by nature and birth. Sin dominates the heart, senses and thoughts, forcing the members of the body to serve unrighteousness and impurity. Some spend their lives in the service of worldliness and lust, others in the service of avarice and

greed, others in the service of ambition and arrogance. Sin has become powerful through the law. The law is the sting of sin. The law of God, which in itself is good and holy, has become an oppressive yoke, an iron fetter for sinful people. The law commands and demands with an imperious voice: "Thou shalt! Thou shalt!" But man, sold under sin, conceived and born in sin, does not do what the law demands, cannot do it, does the opposite. Thus the law becomes a sting to him, a rod of the driver. The law torments and accuses the sinner. And we cannot satisfy the troubled, frightened, terrified conscience. The wound only gets bigger, the rift only worse, when we turn to and fro in our fear and want to atone and make amends for what we have sinned. Sin has subjected all people to the authority of darkness, to Satan's power. Satan has his work in the children of unbelief. They must do his will, and when they have done his will, he pays his obedient servants their reward in hell. Sin has cursed man's entire life, his existence on earth. Earthly labor is cursed for the sake of sin, a laborious servitude. With sin, a whole army, an armed force of sorrows, plagues, suffering and pain has entered the world, and what makes bodily pain and illness so bitter is sin, the sting of sin. And the final wages that sin pays is death, yes, eternal death. This is the knighthood and tyranny to which Isaiah points in our text.

And that is why there is no more comforting message and sermon for people than that which our text brings, that the knighthood has come to an end, that iniquity is forgiven. John the Baptist "as" the Lamb of God who bears the sin of the world. Christ testified of himself that he had come to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the oppressed, to preach the gospel to the poor. And he commanded his disciples to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name. The preaching of the great, eternal redemption fills both testaments. If the children of the Old Covenant could already boast on the basis of the prophecy that the judgment had an end, that iniquity was

forgiven, how should we now, after the prophecy has been fulfilled, doubt what our God has spoken, what the mouth of the Lord has spoken? Yes, sin and iniquity are forgiven. Jerusalem has received twofold things from the hand of the LORD for all her sins. If the transgression was great, if sin has become mighty, grace has become even mightier. It is not the same with the gift as with sin. The gift, which outweighs grace, far, far outshines all the sin of Jerusalem, all the sin and iniquity of the whole world. One drop of the blood of Christ could already cleanse the world of its sin. But now Christ has shed all his blood on the cross. Thus there is a full, superfluous measure of grace and forgiveness. We have received twofold things from the hand of the gracious Lord. Now the knighthood has truly come to an end, the shackles are broken, the yoke, the yoke of the driver is broken. Sin and iniquity have been atoned for, forgiven, eternal righteousness has been acquired for us. The law must now be silent, must no longer accuse us. The prince of this world is judged and has no more power over us. We are freed from the ban and compulsion of sin, from the service of unrighteousness. Sin may no longer rule over us. We have power to resist sin and Satan, to walk with Christ in a new life. The comfort of grace and forgiveness turns all the suffering that sin has brought upon us, transforms the curse into a blessed cross, drives away sorrow and sadness, even the fear and sadness of death. We overcome far, far, for the sake of him who loved us.

Certainly, this gospel is the most powerful consolation in this valley of misery. It can comfort human hearts. That is why God calls out so urgently to his servants: "Comfort, comfort my people! This is the consolation that goes to the heart. "Speak kindly to Jerusalem!" So says our text. It actually says: Speak to her heart! This consolation alone can lift up and revive broken, shattered and saddened hearts. This is the true consolation, the consolation of all who mourn. If we only say to the miserable, the afflicted: Be still, God will help you - we only disappoint the poor souls who are anxious for consolation, and sadden them all the more. For God may do the opposite and not take the cross from

their backs. Or if we put off the prisoners, the afflicted, solely to the hour of final help and redemption, they may reply: But what is our rod and staff, what shall we hold on to as long as we are still wandering in this dark valley? We are not yet at the end. If, on the other hand, we say to the sorrowful: The transgression is forgiven, the knighthood is over, you are free, loosed, delivered from all your sins, the body may be bound, but the soul is free in God, you have a gracious God, God is the comfort of your heart and your portion, and God is for you, who then can be against you? - when we preach this gospel to them, yes, then the oppressed hearts breathe freely, the light of divine consolation shines in the midst of darkness. This gospel of Christ, of the forgiveness of sins, is the consolation of groaning Zion, the consolation of Jerusalem, the church of God, in the suffering of this time.

II.

But through righteous repentance, the way is prepared for the Savior. If the comforting preaching of the gospel is to prove powerful for us, we must also hear the other voice that resounds in our text: "It is the voice of a preacher in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight a highway for our God in the desert." Thus alone will the glory of the Lord be revealed, the glory of his grace. All flesh together will see that the mouth of the Lord speaks. But of course he who follows the way of all flesh, who pursues the vain goods, pleasures and delights of this life, has lost his part, he sees and tastes nothing of the consolation of God. This can only be found on the quiet, lonely, narrow desert path of righteous repentance.

Our text mentions three pieces of righteous repentance. The first is true repentance and humility. "All mountains and hills must be brought down." The mountains and hills of pride, self-righteousness and self-confidence must fall. They block the view of God's grace and comfort. Thus said the arrogant Israel of Isaiah's time, thus said the proud Pharisees in the days of John the Baptist: "What is the use of preaching to us about the Servant of God, about the Lamb of God who is crushed and martyred, what is the use of preaching to us about the Savior of sinners?"

After all, we are not God-forsaken heathens, we fear God and keep his commandments. Such thoughts still move the hearts of many who bear the name of Christ. These are the mountains of coarse, impudent Pharisaism. These mountains have hills beside them. Many who outwardly belong to the people of God, yes, who indeed boast of the cross of the Lord, yet at the same time boast of their work, their obedience, their patience, the services they have rendered to the Lord, and say in their hearts: We have forsaken and denied everything for the sake of the name of Jesus, what will we get for it? These mountains and hills must fall. We must recognize and believe the preacher in the wilderness, we must believe the Scriptures, that human nature and being are completely lost and corrupt, we must become fully aware of our misery, our misery, that nothing good dwells in us, that is, in our flesh, that we have become guilty of all God's commandments, that we are considered transgressors before God, that all good works become an abomination as soon as we establish them as our own righteousness before God, we must sigh with the apostle: "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Only then can and will our heart also grasp the consolation of grace and behold the glory of the Lord, the Savior.

But righteous repentance includes both repentance and faith, humility and trust. "All thieves shall be lifted up." This was the voice of the preacher in the desert: "Repent and believe in the gospel!" From repentance, a side path also leads into the abyss, into the deep, dark valley of despair. Many who are shocked by their sinful misery have now also despaired that such damage could ever be healed and mended. They find no strength within themselves to rid themselves of sin. They see no other help. They think that God has cast them off, that God's mercy has been forfeited forever. Thus the voice of the preacher, thus all scriptural preaching, calls out to the faint-hearted and despondent that they may rise from their deep valleys, from their caves of gloom, that they may abandon the dark thoughts of death and look at the bright sun that shines for all sinners, the sun of grace and salvation, that they may also make room in their part for the consolation of God, the consolation of the forgiveness of sins.

This is followed by a third and final point, which is recalled by the voice of the preacher in the desert. Righteous repentance also includes righteous fruits and works of repentance. "What is uneven should become even, what is bumpy should become bad." All bumps and unevenness should be cleared out of the way. From true repentance, from faith, a straight, right and careful walk follows. Those who have recognized their sinful misery and have comforted themselves in the faith of forgiveness of wrongdoing, now also go their way cheerfully and confidently and walk before God in purity, holiness and righteousness that is pleasing to them.

This is the way of God. This is the right way. May God guide us along this path and keep us on this level path so that we may see his glory here and there, so that we may taste the comfort of God in time and eternity! Amen.