



## LIFE IN ALL THINGS: A 40 END GOALS STUDY ABOUT SERVICE AND MISSION

youth  RESOURCE

### LEADER'S NOTES

The Christian view of being "pro-life" is far more than just being anti-abortion or against euthanasia. Our "pro-life" attitude is really a reflection of our Life in Christ. This four-part study aims to give a top-down approach to our theology of life – from creation to the fall, to salvation, and onward and outward to our vocation and service to others. It seeks to show that rather than being a political view, a Christian's pro-life-ness stems from where he stands before God. We have a God that loves life, in its many forms, and while we may not feel comfortable marching for life or advocating in political circles, we can realize that by living as Christ calls us to live, we are showing what life is meant to be.

"In All Things" as the theme for the 2022 LCMS Youth Gathering allows for a broader discussion of everything relating to the Christian life. The following four studies are meant to expand upon students' understandings of what *life* is.

- The first lesson focuses on compiling our Lutheran understanding of a "theology of life," letting Scripture tell us what we need to know. We will learn how God sees life and why we adhere to His descriptions about life and living.
- The second study focuses in on Jesus Christ's Incarnation and how that has changed the course of human life and what Christians can truly say about living.
- The third study will focus on suffering in the midst of life. We know that sin causes these things but what can be done about it? This lesson discusses faithful suffering and the hope we have in Christ Jesus.
- The fourth lesson will be about vocation and service towards others. Having been formed by a theology of life, redeemed by Christ to live a new life, how do Christians live? Why do Christians seek to serve?

Developing a "theology of life" is not meant to be only an intellectual exercise. The life we have been given in Christ is not one that we hide away. We treasure it, of course, but the best witness we can give to a world that despises life is to live according to the Word of God and share Christ with our neighbor.

Two notes on the study: throughout the study, questions for the group will be bulleted. Light blue italic text is designed as notes for the leader.

## SESSION ONE: LIFE THROUGH GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

### Opening Discussion

- What do you think of when you hear the phrases, "I'm pro-life" or "life issues"?

*Allow students to respond freely, knowing answers may vary.*

For some of us, "pro-life" is simply the opposite of "pro-choice," or "life issues" are a collection of political talking points. Christians are called to stand against practices which would actively harm the human body in any way – whether that practice is abortion, physician assisted suicide, smoking, or self-harm. This is because the way Christians look at human life is directed by how God looks at human life.

- What do you think when you hear the word, "theology"?

*Allow for student responses.*

Theology is literally the study (-ology) of God (*theo*-). When someone talks about theology of "something" they mean, essentially, "What God says about this." Knowing our theology helps us to interpret the world around us. Knowing our theology also ensures that our worldview and practice is in line with what God has ordered, even before the Fall into sin.

### Compiling a Theology of Life

*Read the following questions out loud. Give students time to reflect and respond, either verbally or writing down their answers.*

- If we were to compile a "theology of life", what might that look like?
- Where would we start to find out what God says about life?
- Why would we even need something like a theology of life?

As Christians, we look to Holy Scripture as the source of our doctrine, or beliefs, and theology. Scripture IS the Word of God. He spoke it to His people and so when scripture "speaks," we listen and take the Word seriously. Scripture, the Bible, will be our guide to discovering our "Theology of Life." We will begin with creation.

### Creation: Where does human life come from?

*Read the following Scripture passages aloud.*

- How do the following verses answer "where does human life come from?"

Genesis 1:26-31, 2:7

God created man and woman, breathing life into them

Psalm 139:13-16

Not only did God make Adam and Eve, but He forms every human life in the womb, including you, He made you and all humans in His image.

It is obvious that any kind of creator puts lots of time and intentionality into a creation. An artist spends hours painting or sketching, to make the finished work perfect. The Lord of the Universe created Adam and Eve in His image. God formed each and every one of us in the womb, also in His image. He formed you, fashioned you, made you. He formed, fashioned, and made every other person ever. You are not an accidental product of happenstance. God designed you and everyone else. Life, the literal life of breathing, eating, sleeping, and so on, originates with God, the maker and preserver of all life.

**Order: What does God want for mankind?**

God gives us His will in the Law – the Ten Commandments given to the Israelites in Exodus 20. God desires that all creation follows His law, a law which preserves and sustains life.

*Read the following Scripture passages aloud.*

- What do the following verses say God requires of us?  
Deuteronomy 6:1-9  
Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind.

Micah 6:8

Walk humbly with your God, according to His ways

Luke 10:25-28

Love your neighbor as yourself

- What is the summation of the Law?  
*Allow students to respond.*

The summation of the law of God is love: Love of God first, and love of our neighbor second. This love aspect is the driving force for Christian life – Christ has shown us love, so we now show love to others (1 John 4:19).

**The Fall: Why can we not keep God's law?**

Adam and Eve were created perfect, but they fell to temptation in garden of Eden. In their eating of the fruit of the tree in midst of the garden, they had doomed themselves and all creation to death. Sin had entered the world.

Psalm 50:5	In sin did my mother conceive me
Romans 3:23	All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God
Romans 6:23	Wages of sin is death

- What do we learn about our condition as humans from the following verses?

Psalm 50:5	Romans 3:23	Romans 6:23
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1. Sinful by nature -inherited from Adam and Eve
2. Sinful in thought, word, and deed
3. We are going to die

Since the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden, human life, as we know, it is now under threat. For the sin we commit, we are condemned to earthly death. Humankind because of the sinful nature inherited from Adam and Eve seek to harm God's gift of life, in great and small ways. The natural world has now become hostile to life: natural disasters, pestilence, plague – all of this now endangers life.

### Sin & Death: Now What?

And yet, God is a God that loves life. Adam and Eve (and the rest of us) were not left to die without hope. God promises a savior to Adam and Eve, a promise kept in the life and work of Jesus Christ.

Genesis 3:14-15

What is a curse to the serpent is hope of life for mankind.

John 3:16-17

Christ came to save the world, not condemn it. And this life brought to us by Jesus is for all people – the whole world.

Genesis 17:7

The Promise made to Abraham

Romans 1:16-17

The Gospel of Christ Jesus extends to all people God gave His Son, Jesus Christ to defeat sin, death, and the devil is His death and resurrection from the dead. In Him, we have new life. God, in Jesus,

has redeemed life. Life no longer ends in eternal death for those who are in Christ. At the last day, death will be swallowed up entirely.

- What does Christ's death and resurrection have to do with our Theology of Life?

In short, everything. We know that God values life because He values His creation. Beyond that, in Jesus' incarnation as the Word made flesh, humanity has been redeemed (bought back/ been made right with) to God. Human life is no longer waiting to die. Human life, in Christ, is a joyful hope of the resurrection and an eternal life with God.

### Theology of Life: Why does human life matter?

Christians care about life and the lives of others because we are following the example of Christ Jesus – who perfectly kept God's law of *love*. This love is not a passive emotion but an active reality. John 15:13 tells us love is laying down our lives for one another.

The theology of life presented to us in Scripture tells us the following about human life and what God designed for it:

- Each person you meet is a person that God created on purpose and by design
- Each person you meet is a person for whom Christ died
- Each person you meet is a person for whom we are called to love

Discuss with your group how understanding this theology of life can impact their day to day vocations. Where do they currently see this impacting how they see and shine the Gospel light to others through the work of the Holy Spirit?

This may also be a place where you take questions that may be addressed more clearly through the rest of the series.

### In Conclusion

Our theology shapes our living, and the Word of God forms our theology. Going forward, we will take a further look at the earthly life and person of Jesus. We will be exploring how our theology shapes the way we live and the way we see the world and others.

### Closing Prayer

*Heavenly Father, by Your Spirit You breathed life into Adam and made him a living being. By Your Son, Jesus Christ, You redeemed Adam and all his*

*descendants from sin and every corrupting effect, which at last You will remove forever when creation is restored in the resurrection. Convince us by Your Word and Spirit of the value of all human life. Where life is fostered and preserved, let us give thanks; where life is vulnerable or abused, give us courage; where life is fragile and debilitated, give us compassion; and where life is injured and dying, point us in hope to the resurrection, where He who does all things well will make all things new; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## LESSON TWO: LIFE IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST

### Introduction

The theology of life from the previous lesson gave us a view of human life from God's perspective: He creates life and loves life, preserving it and providing for it. This lesson will be a theology of life from a different point of view- focusing on the Second Person of the Trinity- The Son.

- What do we learn about life through God, the Son, becoming Man?

### The Promise of Salvation

In Genesis 3:14-15, what are two things God promises?

1. The serpent will bruise the heel of the woman's offspring
2. The offspring of the woman will crush the serpent's head.

The mention of "crushing the serpent's head" is the first promise of a Messiah, or Savior. This Savior would crush the head of, or kill, the serpent, who is Satan. A crucial detail of the promise from God is that the Savior will be the offspring of the woman. The Savior would be human.

It was to the Jews, the people of God, that the covenant with the Lord had been made. This meant that the Messiah would come from their literal bloodline, even while the Messiah would save all people. The people of Abraham would know what to look for in their Messiah – included in that description are the words of the Lord from 2 Samuel 7:12-17.

Read the section from 2 Samuel 7:12-17.

- What words or phrases in this promise of God indicate a human son for David?
- What phrases or words could indicate something more than human at play?

*Allow student to respond.* The Lord mentions, "your offspring" and "come from your body." God promised a human, literal son to David. The mention of a "forever" kingdom or throne signaled immediately that the full weight of this promise could only be from and carried out by God. Men died; how could an eternal kingdom be established by a son of David? It would be made known that the Messiah is true God and true Man.

### Incarnation: God Becoming Man

- How does God become human?

For that we turn to the Incarnation of Christ. *Incarnation* means, "embodied in flesh or taking on flesh." For God to be incarnated, He would take on a bodily form.

- When does the Son of God become incarnated as Jesus, the man?

*Allow students to respond.* In Luke 1:26-35, we are given the Annunciation account. The Angel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary she will conceive and bear a son. God's entrance to our earthly lives would be a human one.

Take a look at Matthew 1:1-17.

- What is contained here? Why is it significant?

*Allow students to respond.* Matthew's genealogy of Jesus shows His bloodline, starting from Abraham, through David, and on down to Joseph, the father of Jesus. This is significant because rather than just taking on a human body, as He could have, God chose to give Jesus, the Incarnate Christ, a human family, bloodline, and lineage.

### Redemption: The Second Article

The below quotation is Martin Luther's explanation of what we confess about Jesus Christ in the Apostle's Creed. We have discussed first part, about Who Jesus is but now we will look at what Jesus has done for us and what it means for our theology of life.

*"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity."*

*-Explanation of the Second Article of the Apostle's Creed. Luther's Small Catechism*

We confess that Jesus has redeemed us.

- What does "redemption" mean?

To redeem something or someone is to buy back that person or thing; to pay a debt

- How did Jesus' death redeem us?



For that, we must look back to the Old Testament sacrificial laws. The sacrifices God required of His people were to be made in thanksgiving or in repentance. Animal sacrifices were made constantly at the altar in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and later at the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem. In Exodus 24:5-8, Moses takes blood from sacrifices and throws it on the people of God to remind them of the covenant God had made to their fathers.

At the crucifixion of Jesus, His blood was a pleasing sacrifice to God and fulfilled to covenant God made with Abraham and his offspring. The sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God atoned for us and with the spilling of Jesus' blood, we were redeemed, bought back, from damnation and hell. Luther also mentions that we are "purchased and won" from all sins, death, and the power of the devil. Consider the transactional language of "purchased." If Jesus has purchased us, who were we bought from and who "owns" us now?

#### *Allow students to respond.*

As uncomfortable as it is to refer to us as bought and sold, the process of redemption is just that. Prior to Jesus' work, we were *owned* by sin, death, and the devil – as St. Paul writes, "slaves of sin." Jesus' precious blood along with His innocent suffering and death bought us from sin and death. We are no longer slaves to sin, having a new master in Christ. St. Paul goes on to discuss that we have been made "slaves to righteousness" which can be an alarming phrase. To be bought by Christ's blood is to be removed from death and into life. Luther's Explanation says, "that I may be His [Christ's] own." This is an absolute: we do not belong to sin, death, and the devil, nor do we belong to ourselves. We belong to Jesus Christ, and we live under Him and through Him.

#### What Does Living Under Christ Look Like?

- What do you think of when you hear, "Life in Christ"?
- Do you think of your church life and spiritual growth?
- What do you think the extent of a "life in Christ," is?

*Allow students to answer.* Our life in Christ has eternal and spiritual consequences, definitely, but we do not confine life in Christ to just Sunday mornings or prayer at meals. To live in Christ is to take the grace we receive in worship on Sunday out to the unbelieving world. Our theology of life and living under Christ means we show mercy to those to whom Jesus has shown mercy because we have been made new in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Christ's crucifixion, His death, was the perfect and final sacrifice needed for us to be made right with God. In Baptism, we receive the gifts merited by Christ through His death and resurrection. Life is made new in Jesus. In fulfilling the Law of God, Jesus redeemed all human existence. The purification rites at the temple in Jerusalem were not necessary. The sacrifices and laws about bodily functions making one unclean were not required. The clean versus unclean distinctions for animals and food were not needed anymore. It is no longer a life of shame we live, but a life made new in Christ.

#### In Relation to God

We now have direct access to God. We have an advocate with the Father (1 John 2) in Jesus. We are made holy through Jesus, we are welcomed into God's family through Jesus, and we pray to God through Jesus. We are no longer cast off from God because of our sin, we are called sons of God, alongside Jesus Christ.

In Baptism, we die and are buried in Christ and raised to new life – as a child of God! Jesus poured out Himself on the cross for us, and He continues to supply us sustenance from Himself. In the Sacrament of the Altar, we eat Jesus' Body and drink His Blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Every Sunday, we are again reminded of our new life in Christ and refreshed by the grace God gives.

#### In Relation to Ourselves

Jesus being incarnated, having a physical, tangible, body has consequences for us. It indicates that the human body is worthy – if the God of the Universe would humble Himself to take on human flesh, how much more should we care for our bodies? Christ being human does not endorse self-indulgence, but it reminds us that taking care of our bodies is good. Christians do not believe that our humanness is wrong.

#### In Relation to Others

In Christ, we see people differently. Read Romans 6:5-14.

- What, according to St. Paul, are we to do now that we have died to sin?

We are now "instruments for righteousness." We are now to go about the doing the work of the Church. We see other people as Christ sees them: people for whom He died, and people in whose likeness He shared. Thus, the value of other humans is affected by the Incarnation.

- How should we view other people, in light of Christ's Incarnation and working of salvation?

"Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel!" We sing these words in the Christmas hymn, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." Keep in mind that "Immanuel" means "God with us." Jesus was pleased to dwell with us, among the sinner, sick, and dying. His love for the sinner, sick, and broken is a love in which we now share.

### Theology of Life & Christ

Let's return to our theology of life. What does Jesus, the Incarnate Lord, contribute to our understanding of the value of human life?

- Every person you meet is a sinner for whom Christ died
  - We see people as Christ sees them: we must love them
  - We now seek to uphold life, as it is given anew in Christ
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- How can seeing a person as a sinner for whom Christ Jesus died change our attitude towards others in our day-to-day lives?
  - How would thinking this way change our interactions with people suffering from homelessness or those that suffer from a terminal illness?

*Allow students to answer.* We show them the love God shows us. Loving sinners means we walk with people in their suffering and seek to help and support them when we can. Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil enables us to love life in all its forms because it has been redeemed by Christ. We also show this love to those who hate us and those who hate life. We share the love of Christ with them and tell them of the forgiveness found in the Sacraments.

### In Conclusion

The Son of God became Man to save sinners. Jesus lived, died, and rose that mankind might have life in Him. Because this gift is the free gift of God, intended for all people, we are called to share the good news of salvation to all people. We are also called to value mankind the way Jesus does. Looking at human life through the Incarnation is this: the infinite God became a finite human because He loves you. If God would become human and die for the sake of all human life, why would we let human life be reduced to anything less than what God intends for humanity?

### Closing Prayer

*Almighty and everlasting God, You are the Creator and Sustainer of life, and You have magnificently made us creatures with mind, body and soul, created to work in perfect harmony. We thank and praise You that, though*

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*these have been corrupted through the fall into sin, through the resurrection of Your beloved Son and through Holy Baptism You have revealed that You have fully and wonderfully redeemed us in mind, body and soul, which will once again be in the perfect harmony You intended on the day of resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## LESSON THREE: LIFE IN SUFFERING

### Introduction

Suffering is part of the Christian life. Its purpose is to drive us closer to Jesus. The cause of suffering is sin in the world and there are a variety of ways in which suffering manifests. The following verses give us an understanding of suffering and the ways in which God acts in and through suffering.

### Why Do We Suffer?

Because We Are Christian

Matthew 5:11-12

Blessed are the persecuted, your reward in heaven is great

Luke 11:49

The prophets and apostles were sent and killed

John 15:20

They persecuted Jesus; they will persecute you

We are told that because of our faith, we will suffer. Interestingly enough, Jesus tells us that the persecuted are blessed.

- Where do we see persecution in our world because of Christian beliefs?
- Why would we be blessed to be persecuted for the sake of Christ?

*Allow students to respond.* If we are persecuted for the sake of Christ, the blessing comes in knowing the truth. Our reward in heaven is life eternal with the Almighty God. Persecution comes from those who have heard the truth of Christ Jesus and hate it. When we face persecution, we look on those who would harm us in love because Christ died for those who hate Him.

Because of Sin Done to Us

Judges 2:18

God heard the groanings and oppression of His people

Exodus 2:23-25

The oppression by the Egyptians caused suffering

We suffer at the hands of others. This goes along with being persecuted but it is also true that Christians suffer at the hands of other Christians. Sin done

to us does not hurt less when a Christian brother or sister hurts us – it often hurts more. Let youth give examples of how they have experienced sin against them. Don't feel the need to brighten those things, but rather recognize that hurt is a part of our brokenness.

Because of sin we commit

Numbers 14:26-33

Because the Israelites didn't listen, they would die

Isaiah 24:6

Inhabitants of the earth suffer because of their guilt

Leviticus 26:14-17

If you disobey God, you will be punished

2 Samuel 12:7-14

David's child would die, his family would suffer for generations

We suffer because of our own sins. These are the consequences of our actions. Baptism saves us from the eternal effects of sin – but while we live on earth, we suffer because of decisions we make. These punishments are deserved but are not always as obvious. Have youth consider how their sin might impact the lives of others in big or small ways. Remind them of their forgiveness in Christ.

There is also the general suffering of living in a fallen world: natural disasters, famine, disease. Suffering from these things is also very real and often does not have a set cause and effect relationship. The thing that unites all humankind is that we are subject to sin and therefore, subject to suffering.

### Faith in Suffering

So, what are we to do? Why do we suffer if God loves us? What is there for us in suffering? How do we avoid it or hide from it?

Look back the Scripture verses we just read. There is a lot of Law in these verses: things that remind us we are sinful or that people who sin will be punished.

- Is there any comfort in these verses? Where?

Exodus 11:23-24

God knew and heard the suffering of His people

Matthew 5:11-12

Reward in Heaven

- Take a look at a few more verses and answer the question, where, if at all, is comfort?

John 17:33

Christ has overcome the world (suffering)

Psalms 35:22-28

You have seen me, Oh Lord!

The Christian comfort in suffering is this: God knows and sees us. Christ has overcome suffering that we might live to see Him. The Lord hears our prayers. He preserves us through suffering. We want to avoid platitudes towards people in suffering, but rather recognize God's presence and power in those moments.

### Job: A Brief Summary

This comfort relies on faith in Christ Jesus and thank the Lord that our faith is not dependent on us, but on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit strengthens us to ensure suffering faithfully. In this way, God has preserved His people. We will now take a brief look at faithful suffering through the account of Job. Job was a blameless and upright man before God, whom the Lord invites Satan to test. In one day, all of Job's 10 children are killed, as are his 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen 500 donkeys, and nearly all his servants.

Job 1:20-22 – Read Job's response and consider what you might have done in his situation.

After this, God allows for disease to rack Job's body and his wife offers unhelpful advice.

Job 2:9-10 – What are your thoughts to Job's assertion that just as we receive good from God, so also, we receive evil?

Job 3:1-26 – Job laments his birth to his friends, wishing he had not been born and expressing the immense suffering and pain he has endured. He wonders why God has done this.

The rest of the account is a conversation between Job and his useless friends, all of whom believe they know why Job is suffering.

Job 19:23-27 – Job gives the confession of his confidence and faith. His redeemer lives and he will see God! That is the comfort for Job, even as his life is tormented by the devil.

This is not the end of Job's story. He does go on to appeal to the Lord, who hears him and does call Job to repentance but afterwards, the Lord restores Job's fortunes. Job is given 10 children and twice as much wealth as he had before. The comfort to us is Job's confession of a living Redeemer and the truth that we have a God who hears us and answers us.

### In Suffering, We See Christ

The understanding that God is with us in our suffering is a great comfort to Christians. It is the belief that gave the Apostle Paul strength to continue ministry even as the Jews and Romans tried to kill him. The truth of Christ is what carried the early Christian martyrs into the Colosseum of Rome and into eternal life. How is this possible?

In Jesus Christ, God became man in order to suffer and die. Jesus lived every pain and suffering of the human life, and He died that we might live. In His death on the cross, Jesus took on our sin, He carried it and suffered the consequence for it. Jesus knows your suffering, not only because God is all-knowing, but because your God knows what it means to be human. Jesus knows what pain feels like and how it feels to be scorned and hated. He knows hunger and thirst. He knows grief and loss. Your God is not far off from you in times of suffering.

### Service to Those Who Suffer

What does this response to suffering have to do with the Theology of Life? Many life issues arise because of suffering and its effects. Women seek abortions because they cannot afford to keep a child. Elderly and disabled people wish to die because their suffering at the end of life is difficult. Mentally ill people die from suicide because their illness causes them suffering which they can no longer stand.

Christians possess an answer to suffering that is unworldly: Jesus. We know that love of Jesus will not cause suffering to cease. It is true that loving Jesus increases suffering. Christians believe that suffering pushes us to Christ.

- How is it that experiencing suffering would push you or lead you to Jesus?

*Allow students to respond.* When we are hurt, we go to someone who can help us. When we are upset, we run to family or friends who will comfort us. When we are faced with the horrors of death and sin, we run to the Man that defeated sin, death, and the devil. Our God, Who became man for us, grants us preservation and strength. To strengthen us, Christ gives us His



body and blood as sustenance. He sends pastors to shower absolution over us. When we are Baptized into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are marked as God's child, whom He will not forsake.

When we serve those in suffering, we are the Body of Christ for them. We show them Jesus in our works and in the comfort we give them by walking with them. We are called to bear one another's burdens.

Read Galatians 6:2

- What is the "law of Christ" St. Paul mentions?

*Allow students to respond.* From previous lessons and from Scripture (Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34), We know that the "law of Christ," is simply *love*. Specifically, loving your neighbor.

### Suffering in the Theology of Life

In our Theology of Life, there is room for suffering. We do not try to explain away suffering. We trust that God's will is done, even in suffering. We look to Christ Jesus as our salvation and savior from eternal suffering. We believe that the Holy Spirit works faith in us to trust in God when we face trials in this life. Christians also seek to share this hope with others, knowing that God holds all things in His hands.

### In Conclusion

When faced with suffering, in its many forms, Christians look to Jesus Christ. He is our rock and firm foundation. He gives food to strengthen our weary bodies and souls out of His body and blood in the Lord's Supper. He gives us constant forgiveness of sins and assurance of our salvation every week in the Divine Service. Christians also look to each other, the Body of Christ, for support, encouragement, and love. When we venture into the world, to help the sick, suffering, and needy, we go with Christ. Suffering is only temporary. St. Paul reminds the church in Rome and all of us that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). Our God does not leave us or forsake those in Christ Jesus.

### Closing Prayer

*O Almighty God, You did not allow Your Holy One, our Lord Jesus Christ, to see corruption, but raised His body from death for our justification. Just as He ascended bodily into heaven, so He will return at the Last Day to raise us in our bodies to be immortal and glorious as He is. Keep us always mindful of this certain hope in the resurrection, that we would confess Your gift of*

*life while in this body, and that we would confess the expectation of the resurrection to eternal life when we lay our bodies to rest in death; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## LESSON FOUR: LIFE IN SERVICE TO OTHERS

### Introduction

This lesson will focus on a more interactive aspect of our theology of life. We have learned that God creates all human life for His purposes. We have been assured and promised that human life is redeemed in Christ Jesus. We have also looked at what it means to encounter suffering in life. Now we turn to service to others and good works, or simply, the life of a Christian. The Lutheran church can often become very hung up on good works; what they are, what they are for, etc. However, Scripture is clear: good works are in fact, good! God commanded His people to serve those in need and Jesus also instructed His disciples to take care of the poor and needy among them.

### Good Works Are Not...

#### How We Get Salvation

Ephesians 2:8-10

- How are we saved? *By grace, through faith in Christ*
- Where does St. Paul say good works come from? *God, prepared beforehand*

We learn two things in these three verses. The first is that we do not gain salvation by doing good things in this life. The second is that because we have been made new in Christ, we now do good works. And these good works are not ours- they are God's. He prepared them beforehand, we are carrying them out.

#### For the Glorification of Yourself

Matthew 20:25-28

- What is Jesus warning us against in the verses from Matthew?

Jesus is instructing His followers to seek to serve one another and unlike the Gentiles, not lord power and influence over others. He is telling them to be humble in service.

Luke 18:9-14

- What is wrong with the Pharisee's motivation for doing good (tithing)?

The Pharisee, while doing good, serves not out of love for his neighbor but out of the need to congratulate himself and elevate himself above others, like the tax collector.

From this we learn that it is possible to do good things for the wrong reasons, but that is not the life of the Christian. To live the Christian life is to serve humbly because of the joy of the life we have been given in Christ Jesus.

### Why, Then, Do We Do Good Works?

As we read the following verses, take note of the reasons Christians live in service to others.

1 John 4:7-21

Christ first love us, The Spirit abides in us, so we love others like Christ did, for God is love.

1 John 3:16-18

Christ laid down His love for us, we love not just in word, but love in deed and in truth

Now we will look at what our service, enabled by the Holy Spirit, looks like.

John 13:34-35

Love one another, in this way others will see you are Christians

Romans 12:9-21

Do good, love even those who hate you.

Luke 6:32-36

Do not expect anything in return

We do good works because it is the Will of God. Because we have been forgiven and made right with God through Christ Jesus, we now are free to do good. We have been enabled to good by the Holy Spirit, which at our Baptism, granted us the gift of faith.

### Service to Others & the Theology of Life

We've learned that Christians, having been made new in Christ, and given a new understanding from the Holy Spirit, live in service to others. Where does "service to others" fit into the theology of life we have been forming?

#### The Fifth Commandment & Its Explanation

*Thou shalt not kill.*

*What does this mean?*

*We should fear and love God that we may not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body but help and befriend him in every bodily need [in every need and danger of life and body].*

*-Luther's Small Catechism, the Ten Commandments*

- What does this commandment forbid?
- What does Martin Luther, in his explanation, say we ought to do about the lives of our neighbors?

### The Flip Side

Consider the phrase, *"It's okay as long as it's not hurting anybody else."*

- What does this phrase say we ought to do about the lives of our neighbors?

We often hear it as an explanation to various lifestyle choices: sexual preferences, drug use, reproductive care, and gender identity. The unbelieving world says that if something makes you feel good, and doesn't outright hurt anyone else, you should be allowed to do it.

This next exercise will compare Luther's Christian response to caring for others and how it differs from the response of the world.

### The World vs. The Church

"As long as it's not hurting anyone else."	"Help him in every bodily need."
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bodily autonomy, "I know what I want and what's best for me."</li> <li>2. As long as no one else is harmed, I can do whatever I want (even if it's harmful to me)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communal effort to keep others alive and well</li> <li>2. Implies the Body of Christ- if one suffers, we all suffer</li> </ol>

In the theology of life for Christians, we understand the concept of the Body of Christ- we have been incorporated into the whole group of believers. In the family of God, in which we are made a part of in Baptism, we are charged with taking care of one another. In this understanding, service out of love for the other means keeping each other safe. It is not enough to refrain from harming our neighbors. We must also seek to preserve and protect them from danger – including harm done to them by themselves.

### Practically Speaking, What Does Service Look Like? Vocation

Vocation, in Lutheran doctrine, is the way in which each of us is called to live, by God, for the service of others. We all have more than one vocation, and thus, more than one way we are given to do good by God.

List below a few of the vocations you are in now:

*(for example: student, son, daughter, friend, Child of God, musician, athlete)*

From your list of vocations, identify three ways in which you serve those around you.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- How do those vocations support and protect the lives of others?

In our vocations, we are fulfilling the commands given by God to love our neighbors as ourselves. In this way, we are given the joy of being God's hands in the loves of our families, friends, and community.

### Service Specific to Preserving Life

For centuries, Christians have been involved in the communities in which they lived. They continuously gave to the poor, cared for the sick and infirmed, and completely confused their neighbors. Instead of fleeing plague-ridden areas, they would stay, to care for the sick when no one else would. Churches have also been key to establishing orphanages, hospitals, and other institutions for human care.

- What are some other examples of human care opportunities?
- What interactions, if any, have you had with these human care ministries?

*Allow students to respond, letting them share their experiences of service as well.*

Food banks, crisis pregnancy shelters, homeless shelters, and programs helping immigrant settle in a new country are all examples of how Christians can care about human life.

- What are ways you would want to serve the vulnerable? What needs do you see in your community?

*Allow students to respond. This question is meant to encourage service within the community to show students that the love of Christ is effective even where they live.*

- How are Christian's uniquely called by God to preserve life?
- What can that look like for you? For the church?

The key to all Christian service is that we serve not expecting anything in return. We also are not to reserve our service to only Christians – we are called to love and serve all people and share Christ's love with them. In our

first lesson we discussed life in God's eyes. Service to others is our living out of that truth.

### In Conclusion

Service to others is a response to the love we receive from God. Our works no longer serve ourselves, but they are for others. We are strengthened by God Himself through the Word and Sacrament to do this work. We learn from Jesus to value all life and to love human life, no matter what it looks like. We are also called to defend life in all stages, just as the Church has done since her beginning.

### Closing Prayer

*Lord of life, You create and bless all life with Your abundant care and mercy. Make us ever mindful of the many blessings You have given to us in this life. Move us to share Your mercy, protecting and supporting that blessing of life for all people, especially the unborn, the elderly and those who suffer in the body. Keep us steadfast in Your Word of life forever; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*