

**Series Theme:** *Confession and Absolution – Part 2 of 6*

# “Divine Service 3”

Based on Various Passages

3<sup>rd</sup> *Wednesday of Lent – 2011*

March 23 → 11:00 & 7:00

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ, we return again to the topic of **confession and absolution**:

- **To confess our sins** is to SAY they are *true*, be SORRY that we have done them, and *desire to STOP* them.
- **Absolution** is *God’s gift of forgiveness!*

Here at Bethlehem, we try to have both *variety* and *consistency* in our Divine Services; therefore, we use at least five different forms of confession and absolution – *some* on a regular basis, *others* once in a while.

Today, we focus on the words of confession and absolution from Divine Service 3 in the Lutheran Service Book. Can anyone identify the Sunday of each month on which we typically follow Divine Service 3? Your choices are: first, second, third, fourth, or fifth.

Here at Bethlehem we use the Divine Service 3 confession and absolution in two ways: ♦ Sometimes using the standard words from the hymnal, ♦ other times putting the standard words into the form of questions and answers. The focus of this sermon will be on the **questions** and **answers**.

1. **Pre-Confession Statements:** These preliminary statements – *when we actually THINK about what we are saying* – are intended to encourage us to confess:

- a. (Based on Hebrews 10:22) **Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God, our Father, beseeching (begging) Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.** *So how does the Lord look upon us? We are beloved or much-loved by Him – just look at a crucifix! Since we are so loved by Him, it should be easy to draw close to Him – with complete honesty – and confess to Him, our very Father, begging Him to forgive us for Jesus' sake!*
- b. (Psalm 124:8) **Our help is in the name of the Lord. Who made heaven and earth.** Think about it; asking for forgiveness – *to be washed clean from every sin* – is a HUGE request, but our Father is able to answer *because He made heaven and earth!*
- c. (Psalm 32:5) **I said, I will confess my transgressions (sins) unto the Lord. And You forgave the iniquity (wickedness) of my sin.** As David confessed and was forgiven, *so we are encouraged to do the same!*

2. **Confession:** We say, we are sorry, and we desire to stop!

- a. **To whom do you confess your sins? To the almighty God, my merciful Father.** He is almighty – *able to crush us*, but also our merciful Father – *who loves us!*
- b. **How do you look upon yourself? I am a poor miserable sinner.** Yes, *we are!* But Jesus said: <sup>NAU</sup> **Mt. 5:3** “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” By *the Spirit working through the Word*, we know ♦we are sinners and ♦we are helpless to save ourselves. Therefore, we

are *beggarly poor*, thus *fully dependant* on God for  
♥forgiveness, ♥spiritual life, ♥eternal salvation!

- a. **What sins do you confess? I confess all my sins and iniquities.** Since →we cannot hide anything from God AND →we want His forgiveness for all of our sins, we are moved to confess ♦all the times when we have fallen short of His will AND ♦all the wickedness in our hearts and minds!
- b. **What have you justly deserved? I have justly deserved temporal death and eternal punishment.** The Almighty God said: Don't eat from that tree or "you will surely die!" (Genesis 2:17 NAU) He also said: <sup>NAU</sup> **Leviticus 19:2** "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." So they ate – *and we inherited their sin*; God commanded – *but we have all fallen far short of being holy*; therefore, we truly deserve ☹physical death and ☹punishment forevermore!
- c. **What is your attitude toward your sins? I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them.** Heartily sorry; *that means to be sorry with our entire being!* Sincerely repent; *that includes a ♦true desire to stop and ♦true faith in Jesus for forgiveness!*
- d. **What is the basis of your request? The boundless mercy of my Heavenly Father and the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.** Notice God's mercy; it is boundless – *without any boundaries!* We tend to think: *Some sins are forgivable, others are not!* But God's forgiveness – *based on Jesus' finished work* – is sufficient to remove every sin: *big, small, in between!*

- e. **What do you request from your merciful Father?**  
**Dear Father, be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.** In other words, we say: Love me – *even though I am UNDESERVING* and hold back Your punishment – *even though I AM DESERVING!*

3. **Absolution**: *God's gift of forgiveness!*

- a. **Upon this your confession** – Thus based on what you have just said.
- b. **I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word** – Thus I speak as a Christian pastor of this congregation.
- c. **I announce the grace of God unto all of you** – Thus it is my privilege to announce that – *though you are sinners deserving the worst* – you have God's undeserved love in Jesus!
- d. **In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ** – Thus I stand here in Jesus' place and speak according to His command.
- e. **I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit** – Jesus said:  
<sup>NAU</sup> **John 20:23** "If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them..."

**Introduction**: Now, *having a better understanding of the Divine Service 3 Confession and Absolution*, let us †confess our sins and †be certain of God's forgiveness! *Amen!*