

Series Theme: *Confession and Absolution – Part 3 of 6*

“Divine Service 4”

Based on Various Passages

4th *Wednesday of Lent – 2011*

March 30 → 11:00 & 7:00

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

- **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!*

Today, we focus on the words of confession and absolution from Divine Service 4 in the Lutheran Service Book. When compared to DS 1 and DS 3, *it is very different*: ♦The pre-confession statements are long; ♦the confession itself is short, and ♦the absolution is in the form of a prayer. We normally use this particular confession and absolution on the *fourth Sunday of each month*:

1. **Pre-Confession Statements:** Some of these statements *have already been covered in earlier confessions*; others *are new*:
 - a. (Psalm 124:8) **Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.** Again, forgiveness is a huge request, but the Lord is able to grant it *because He made heaven and earth!*
 - b. (Psalm 130:3-4) **If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?** Let’s think about our ability to sin: For a Spirit-filled Christian who is extremely

careful, he could possibly proceed through a day with very few sins of **word** or **deed**. However, sins of **thought** *can pileup very quickly!* So imagine the Lord keeping a record of YOUR sins: You love Him and you want to honor Him, so you seek to follow His Word; nevertheless, *you average about 9 sins per day*, which is a very small number! But how do those nine add up? They equal over 3,000 per year; so a 10-year-old has 30,000 sins, a 40-year-old has 120,000 sins, and an 80-year-old has nearly a quarter-million sins! So who could stand? *Absolutely no one!* But there is good news; you say to the Lord: **But with You there is forgiveness; therefore, You are feared.** Since the wages of sin are temporal death and eternal punishment, *forgiveness is so very important; therefore, we fear the Almighty God!* That means we ♦ greatly respect Him, ♦ very much stand in awe of Him, and ♦ hold Him in very deep reverence!

- c. Then, I continue the pre-confession statements by reminding us WHY we have gathered: **Since we are gathered to**
- i. ♦ **hear God's Word** – Keep in mind, *each part of our Divine Services → are God's Word itself or → are carefully based on God's Word*; therefore, ♦ pay attention, ♦ listen, ♦ understand, ♦ believe, and ♦ receive God's eternal blessings!
 - ii. ♦ **call upon Him in prayer and praise** – We gather *primarily to receive from God*, but also to give to Him in the form of our prayers – ♦ praising Him for who He is (almighty, holy, good, etc.), ♦ thanking Him for His many blessings, and ♦ handing Him our many concerns!

- iii. ♦**receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar** – Well, even though we are not receiving the Supper today, it is still always good to **understand** and **do** these pre-confession words:
1. **consider our unworthiness** – We are poor miserable sinners!
 2. **confess before God and one another that:**
 - a. **we have sinned in thought, word, and deed** – We admit that we have, we are sorry, and we desire to stop.
 - b. **we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition** – No amount of ♦goodness, ♦nor money, ♦nor sacrifice *on our part* can ever fix or remove our sins! (Mark 8:37)
- d. Then, *hopefully realizing our own total inability to save ourselves*, I say and pray: **Together as His people let us take refuge [find safety, protection] in the infinite [unlimited] mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace [His undeserved love] for the sake of Christ [B-L-D-R-A], and saying: God, be merciful to me a sinner.**

2. **Confession:** Then, understanding ♦our need, ♦God's ability to help, and ♦God's action in Jesus, we confess: **Almighty God [He is able to forgive us], have mercy upon us [hold back the punishment we deserve], forgive us our sins [wash us clean in the blood of Jesus], and lead us to everlasting life [keep us in Your Word, aware of our sins, and trusting in Jesus alone as our Savior]. Amen.**

3. **Absolution**: This one – *from DS 4* – is in the form of an *all-encompassing prayer!*
- a. **Almighty God, merciful Father** – All powerful, *but full of mercy and our very Father!*
 - b. **in Holy Baptism You** ♦declared us to be Your children and ♦gathered us into Your one, holy Church in which You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit – Since we were sinners from conception, we were also sinners when we were infants; nevertheless, God took action in baptism – *by the Spirit through His Word* – to unite us to Jesus our Savior, thus to make us ♦His very children and ♦members of the one true church, *the very body of which Jesus is the head!* He also gave us the gift of spiritual life; *even now He continues to fully forgive our sins through Jesus!*
 - c. **Be in our midst** [*be present with us to bless us*], **enliven our faith** [*cause it to function in ways that honor You and bless others*], **and graciously** [*though we are undeserving*] **receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord** [the One through whom You have done everything for our salvation].

Conclusion: Now, *having a better understanding of the Divine Service 4 Confession and Absolution*, let us †confess our sins and †be certain of God’s forgiveness! *Amen!*