

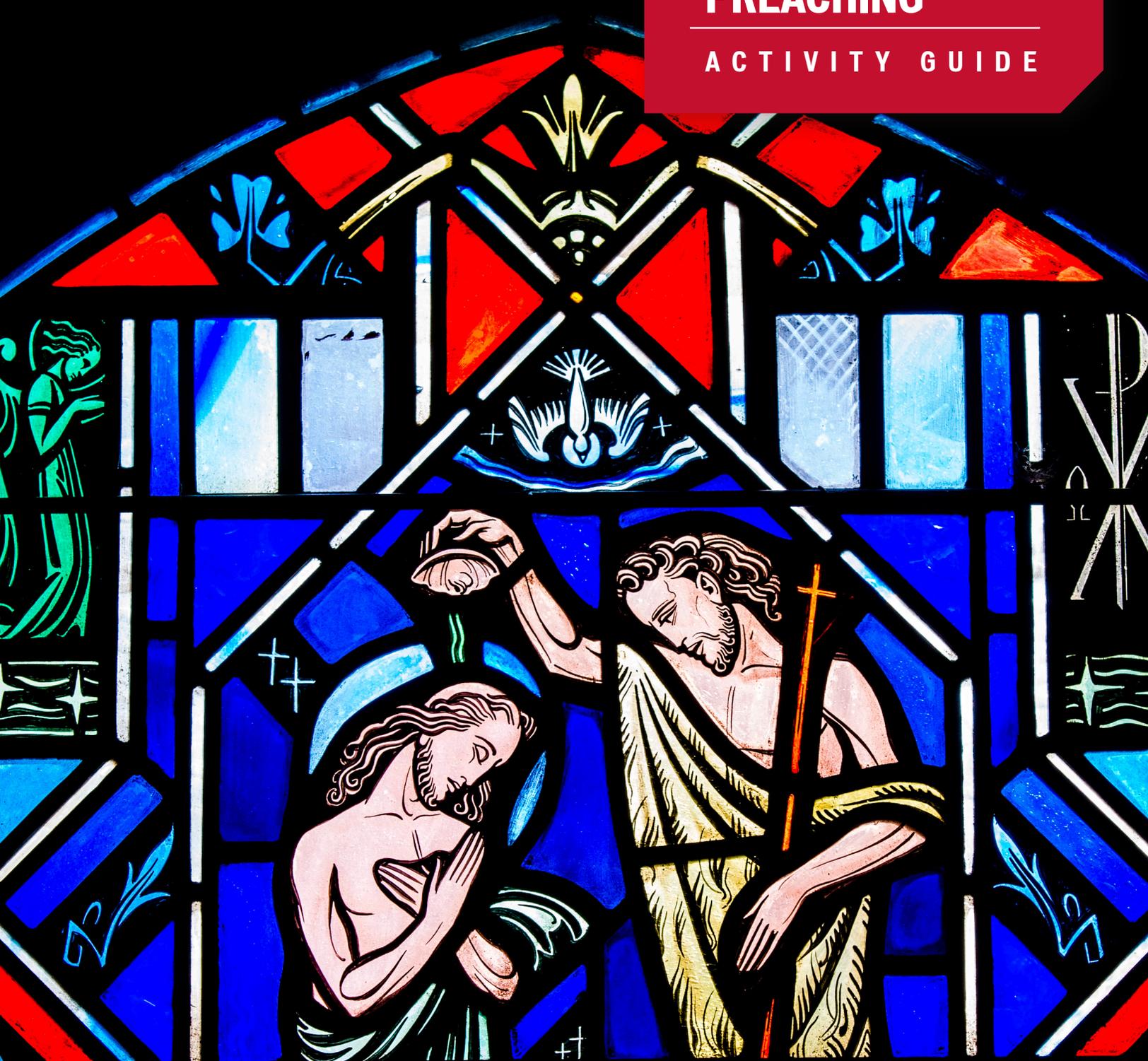


**PREACH THE
WORD**
It's *Still* All About
Jesus

MODULE 10

**CATECHETICAL
PREACHING**

ACTIVITY GUIDE



Introduction:

What is catechesis? Catechesis is “God’s way of teaching to convert sinners to the new life of faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Teaching the Word of God and passing on the language of our holy faith, so that the baptized learn how to receive God’s gifts in the Divine Service, how to pray, how to confess, and how to live where God has called them — in the freedom of the forgiveness of sins, with faith in Christ and love to the neighbor” (*Lutheran Catechesis*, p. 321). Catechetical preaching engages this task best in the context of a congregation in which a culture of learning by heart the catechism and daily meditation upon the Scriptures is promoted. Faith in Christ is the goal of all catechesis and every doctrinal sermon.

Phase 1:

TRIAD MEETING – OPENING REFLECTIONS ON THE TOPIC

1.1 CONFESSION AND CHRISTOCENTRICITY:

A. General description: All topics related to preaching can be considered in terms of the heart and art of preaching.

At the heart of Lutheran preaching lies the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. This section considers how catechetical or doctrinal preaching is not primarily about education or the imparting of a body of knowledge, but about the call to repentance and faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and how that faith in Christ is lived out in love for others in the lives of Christians and the church.

In addition to the heart of preaching, there is also the art of preaching. Practicing the art of catechetical preaching, while shaped by the different personalities and experiences of the catechist, is nevertheless grounded in Jesus’ preaching, the way He engages His hearers in the call to repentance and faith, and the way in which God’s Word and faith is passed on to every generation of baptized Christians. Four videos challenge you to “think outside the box” about catechetical or doctrinal preaching and apply the lessons you learn to your own context. The first is a general introduction to catechesis. The second is a chapel address on confession and Nathan’s ministry to David. The third is an extended example of “catechetical preaching” on the Lord’s Prayer. The fourth is a more conventional sermon on Holy Baptism set within the liturgical context of the celebration of the Baptism of Our Lord.

B. Module materials: This section of the module offers a set of 20 theses on catechesis; examples of Jesus’ method of catechesis for group discussion; and four video segments and discussion prompts that consider the content, method and art of catechesis.

Theology: Video Segment and Group Discussion

Watch the video segment (“Introduction to Catechesis”) and then discuss the following 20 Theses on Catechetical Preaching and the discussion questions.

20 Theses on Catechetical Preaching

1. Catechetical preaching, like all true Christian preaching, is the preaching of repentance for the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name (LUKE 24:44-47).
2. According to the Scriptures, the death and resurrection of the Christ *and the preaching-of* repentance for the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name are necessary for salvation (LUKE 24:44-47).
3. Faith in Christ is the goal of all catechesis (ROM. 10:17).
4. Catechetical or doctrinal preaching must always be related to the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ (LUKE 24:25-27, 44-47; 1 COR. 2:2).
5. Preach as if you believe what you are teaching — this only comes through familiarity with the Word of God, the catechism and the Lutheran Confessions, as well as the conviction that the Word of God is sufficient (it needs no help) for you as a preacher and for your hearers.
6. By "catechism," we mean the primary texts used by the church catholic (Ten Commandments, Creed, Lord's Prayer and the texts on the Sacraments), along with Luther's devotional explanations. (We do not mean the lengthy questions, answers, explanations and Bible verses.)
7. The Six Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine relate to one another as an organic whole, with the redemption of Christ as its center and foundation.
8. Luther's explanations are deeply scriptural, faithful to the biblical vocabulary and Christocentric; this is why the pastor and congregation learn the catechism by heart.
9. Knowing the catechism by heart (memorization by pastor and people) gives you the facility and freedom to speak clearly the apostolic doctrine as you open up the Scriptures to your hearers.
10. Knowing the catechism by heart helps you and your hearers to interpret the Bible rightly, objectively and in harmony with the church of every age.
11. Knowing the catechism by heart shapes the way Christians think and live.
12. Knowing the catechism by heart gives us the vocabulary for preaching, prayer and confessing the faith to others.
13. Creating a culture of catechesis and prayer in the congregation — whereby the pastor and his flock are regularly reading Scripture, praying the psalter, reciting the catechism and singing the great hymns of the faith together — is an indispensable aid in the task of catechesis and in passing on the objective Christian faith and life to the next generation of Christians.
14. Catechetical preaching is not chiefly about imparting a body of knowledge but fostering meditation upon and contemplation of the Word of God and the promises of the Gospel, which serves to create and nurture faith in Christ and love to the neighbor.
15. Repetition in preaching and teaching is important in laying a solid doctrinal foundation in the hearts and minds of your hearers.
16. The pastor is called to know the Scriptures and the catechism so well that in his teaching he can arrive at the goal of a particular lesson by many different avenues of discussion depending upon the responses of his catechumens.
(This is a major part of catechetical teaching where the catechist engages his catechumens in an encounter with the Word of God through questions and a discussion of a particular biblical text. It also aids the preacher in learning how to construct his sermon for his congregation and the issues with which his flock or individual members may be struggling.)

17. Put yourself in the shoes of your catechumens in attempting to explicate the Christian faith. What are they stumbling over, and how are those things addressed by the Word of God and the catechism?
18. Avoid anecdotal stories from your ministry that may give the impression that you cannot be trusted to keep the seal of the confessional or pastoral confidentiality.
19. Make use of the narrative, imagery and vocabulary of the Scriptures because they teach the divine authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures.
20. Catechize in such a way that the hearer sees himself in the narrative of the Scriptures as the object of God's love in Christ and the one who is being called to repentance and faith.

Discussion:

- 1) Identify which of the theses are part of your current understanding of catechesis and preaching.
- 2) Identify which of the theses have not been part of your understanding of the task of catechesis and preaching.
- 3) Identify which of the theses you particularly want to focus upon developing over the course of this module.

The Theology and Art of Catechesis:

The Catechetical Preaching of Jesus – The Confrontation of Unbelief

Jesus' catechesis and preaching combines both the theology and the art of catechetical preaching. Notice in the four examples how Jesus confronts His hearers.

The Sermon on the Mount – Jesus Confronts His Disciples

In the excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus confronts His disciples with the assertion that He alone is the one who fulfills the Law and the Prophets. He must be their righteousness, or they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. He challenges their understanding about the problem of sin by explicating how the Fifth and Sixth Commandments condemn not only the outward actions of murder and adultery, but also the hatred and lust of the heart.

- “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (MATT. 5:17-18).
- “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (MATT. 5:20).
- “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment” (MATT. 5:21-22).
- “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (MATT. 5:27-28).

Jesus and the Rich Young Man

In the encounter with the rich young man, Jesus confronts the man's self-righteousness in a subtle yet powerful way by using the man's own words against him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone."

- "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone'" (MARK 10:17-22).

Jesus Confronts the Scribes and Pharisees with the Parables of Luke 15

In self-righteous unbelief, the scribes and Pharisees murmured against Jesus that He received sinners and ate with them. The three parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son confront them directly with how radically different God's love and mercy are from their merciless works righteousness. The open ending of the Parable of the Prodigal Son shows the father giving an opportunity to the scribes and Pharisees (represented by the older brother) to repent and return to the family.

The Emmaus Disciples

In His encounter with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (LUKE 24:13-35), Jesus confronts their unbelief with a playfulness, pretending not to know why they were upset or what had happened to the one they had believed to be the Redeemer. He draws them out by His questions. They know the facts, but they do not believe. They confess that they stumbled over the cross. He confronts their unbelief, "O foolish ones..." and opens up the Scriptures to them that they might "see Him" rightly through the eyes of faith, which God's Word alone creates. In this encounter, Jesus demonstrates the role that faithful catechetical preaching plays in leading to the faithful reception of the Lord's Supper.

Discussion:

- 1) List other examples of how Jesus confronted His hearers with the call to repentance and faith.
- 2) What can we learn from Jesus' examples that we also see reflected in the 20 Theses on Catechetical Preaching?

The Theology and Art of Catechetical Preaching:

Video Segment 1 – Chapel Address: Nathan Calls David to Repentance What is confession?

Discussion of Video Segment 1:

- 1) How did the pastor make use of the Ten Commandments in reviewing the account of David's sin?
- 2) How effective is it for the preacher to interrupt the narrative with questions about the narrative?
- 3) How does the preacher continue to lead the children back into the Scriptures?
- 4) How does the language of the catechism concerning confession grow naturally from the preaching?
- 5) How are elements of the 20 Theses on Catechetical Preaching demonstrated in the chapel address?
- 6) What other helpful lessons do you learn from the excerpt?

The Theology and Art of Catechetical Preaching:

Video Segment 2 – Didache Divine Service: Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Pray Catechesis on the Lord’s Prayer

See Appendix 1 for the sermon outline. See Appendix 2 for the catechumens’ questions, which are difficult to hear in the video.

Points of Interest to Watch for in the Video

Introduction and Review Section of the Video:

- Providing outlines can be helpful in catechetical preaching, but do not make the outlines trite or cliché. Rather, make them concrete, biblical and plain spoken. Don’t be clever; it can actually obscure the text of Scripture and the doctrine you desire to communicate.
- Stating a thesis, elaborating on the point and then circling back to the theses is an important technique in catechesis.
- The biblical narrative gives all the material necessary to engage the catechumen in an encounter with his or her own unbelief and the call to repentance (“The Friend at Midnight” scene).
- In the Large Catechism, Luther recommends “playful interaction” with the catechumens, which can be done in a respectful way with the text (“The Friend at Midnight” example).
- Jesus’ catechesis often involves an encounter with us that demonstrates the radically different character of the way in which God deals with us in the Gospel as opposed to how our sinful hearts think. (“The Friend at Midnight”: God is NOT like the man in bed. He is motivated by grace and love, not by self-interest.)
- It is important for the preacher/catechist to be able to “read” the catechumens or get reactions from them to see if he is getting through or if he needs to state something in a different way so that he is understood.
- Knowing your material so well that you can answer and anticipate questions and use the questions to amplify the points of your preaching/catechesis is important.
- All doctrine (every part of the catechism) circles back to Christ and His atoning work, including prayer and our access to God in prayer.

Introduction to the Lord’s Prayer Section of the Video:

- Continues to review and backtrack on the central truths about prayer.
- Sees the catechism as an organic whole: Prayer takes us into the First and Second Articles of the Creed, as well as Baptism.
- The importance of assertions.
- An example of praying using the text of the Small Catechism.
- Vocabulary is important to know. We hang our knowledge and understanding of the Word of God and the Christian faith to this biblical vocabulary.
- Epistle texts reinforce the assertions of the Bible narrative and become obvious when the text of the narrative is rightly expounded. This amplifies in the hearer the affection for those promises of God.
- Hymn texts, learned by heart, function in the same way. This amplifies in the hearer the affection for those hymns.

First, Second and Third Petitions of the Lord's Prayer Section of the Video:

- The catechism language is deeply biblical.
- Connecting the petition to our ordinary lives as pastors, heads of households, etc.
- Interrelationship of the petitions to each other and to other parts of doctrine and the liturgical life.
- How knowing the catechism well teaches us how to interpret the Bible and the Bible's vocabulary rightly.
- Drawing upon other biblical narratives or the parables to supplement and illustrate points.
- References to the liturgy show forth the significance of the church's historic liturgy and how that flows from the doctrine.
- Connection of the Lord's Prayer to the Sacrament of the Altar.

Discussion of Video Segment 2:

- 1) Discuss how this example of extended catechetical preaching challenges or modifies your understanding of preaching.
- 2) What lessons can you draw from this example to help you in your preaching?

The Theology and Art of Catechetical Preaching:

Video Segment 3 – Sample Sermon on the Baptism of Our Lord Catechesis on the Sacrament of Holy Baptism

Once you've viewed the sermon, you can review the manuscript in Appendix 3.

Discussion of Video Segment 3:

- 1) How does this example demonstrate the 20 Theses on Catechetical Preaching?
- 2) What can you learn from this video to help you in your preaching?

1.2 COMPETENCY:

A. General description: Having examined extensively the theology and art of catechetical preaching, the module will continue to develop in you the wedding of theology and the art of catechesis as you focus on developing your skills as a catechetical preacher with a series of exercises to lay the groundwork for greater competency.

B. Module materials: You are the material for this section. This section of the module specifically addresses three questions in you as a Lutheran preacher and catechist:

- 1) What is the devotional discipline of my life personally and with my family and congregation?
- 2) How well do I know the Small Catechism by heart?
- 3) Am I able to speak coherently about a narrative of Scripture, using the theology and language of the catechism, without spending hours in preparation?

The Rationale for Self-Assessment:

This section of the module will require the members of the triad to be honest and vulnerable with one another. One of the major themes of this module is that learning the catechism by heart in the context of the pastor's devotional life and study of the Scriptures has a profound effect upon his ability to teach, preach and communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the truths of God's Word effectively. This is why the opening video spoke against the idea of wanting a quick "how to" approach to preaching. Unless we actually take the time to allow the catechism to mold and shape our minds and hearts, we cannot begin to realize the fruit and benefits of this approach for our preaching and in the hearts and lives of our catechumens.

Activities for Self-Assessment:

Take turns answering the following questions as honestly as you are able.

1) What is the devotional discipline of my life personally and with my family and congregation?

2) How well do I know the Small Catechism?

A member of the triad should ask another member to recite randomly a small section of the catechism. For example, "John, what is the Fifth Petition? What does this mean?" How well are each of you able to do this? How much do you need to think about it?

3) Am I able to speak coherently about a narrative of Scripture, using the theology and language of the catechism, without spending hours in preparation?

Answer this by randomly assigning each member of the triad a biblical narrative and its assigned section of the catechism (from the list of six options below) to speak on in an extemporaneous devotion for 2 to 3 minutes.

Narrative choices from which to select for brief extemporaneous devotion:

- Jesus Prays in the Garden of Gethsemane — Matthew 26:36–46 and the First and Second Commandments
- Abram Gives Lot the Choice of the Land — Genesis 13:1–12 and the Seventh Commandment
- A Canaanite Woman Prays for Her Daughter — Matthew 15:21–28 and the Sixth and Seventh Petitions of the Lord's Prayer
- Naaman is Cleansed of His Leprosy — 2 Kings 5:1–14 and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism
- Jesus Forgives the Paralytic — Matthew 9:1–13 and the Office of the Keys
- Water from the Rock — Exodus 17:1–7 and the Sacrament of the Altar

NOTE: Extemporaneous preaching is NOT the goal of this module, but the more a pastor knows by heart the text of the catechism, the language of the liturgy and the hymnody of the church, the greater his capacity will be to teach and prepare authentic *written* catechetical sermons.

Exercises for Skill Acquisition:

Each member of the triad should select a portion of the Small Catechism to be learned by heart over the days and weeks that the triad continues to be engaged in Phases 2 and 3 of the module. During this period, you should think about that portion of the catechism with every text of Scripture that you read, study, think about or teach in your work as a pastor. Is there any relevance to that portion of the catechism and the text you are studying? Are there any connections? What are they? How are you taught by this practice?

1.3 CONGREGATIONAL CONTEXT:

A. General description: In this segment, you will converse with one another about the devotional life of your congregation and the responsibilities you are given to preach and teach.

B. Module materials: Assess the devotional life of your congregation, your congregation's practice of utilizing the Small Catechism, and therefore the preaching context in your congregation for which you will prepare a catechetical sermon.

Exercise 1: Congregational Devotional Life and Use of the Catechism

If you are intentional about regularly providing guidance and resources for the devotional life of your members and their meditation upon the catechism, identify ways to improve these practices. If you are not intentional about giving such guidance, then develop a plan to do so. Starting modestly at first is best.

Identify several members who will join you in learning by heart and meditating upon the same section of the catechism with which you are working. Encourage them to recite the portion of the catechism out loud to learn the words by heart. Encourage them to think about that portion of the catechism as they read the Bible and have their devotions. After a week or two of working with the text, discuss with them what insights they gained from the process.

Exercise 2: Preparing to Preach a Catechetical Sermon

With thought given to the answers you gave in the earlier discussion exercises in Phase 1, and with special attention to the areas of interest you identified from the 20 Theses on Catechetical Preaching, plan for one or two preaching experiences. The first should be the main sermon on an upcoming Sunday. If you wish, you may also prepare a chapel address or catechetical sermon similar to what you witnessed in the videos.

For the Next Steps:

Determine among your triad the plans for viewing the sermons you will record in your congregations. Will they be viewed together at your next triad meeting, or should you watch them in advance? (Instructions for uploading sermons to the internet to facilitate viewing in advance are given in the following section.) Be sure the host site of the next meeting has everything you need.

Select Bibliography for Further Study:

If you want to pursue further study on catechetical preaching, the following books might be of interest:

Bender, Peter C. *Lutheran Catechesis: Catechist Edition*. 2nd ed. Sussex, WI: Concordia Catechetical Academy, 2011.

Harrison, Matthew C. *Why Am I Joyfully Lutheran? Instruction, Meditation, and Prayers on Luther's Small Catechism*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018.

Kleinig, John W. *Grace Upon Grace: Spirituality for Today*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008.

Pless, John T. *Praying Luther's Small Catechism*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016.

Preus, Rolf D. *Christ for Us: Catechism Sermons of Rolf D. Preus*. Sussex, WI: Concordia Catechetical Academy, 2017.

Phase 2:

Preaching and Response in the Congregational Setting

After the first meeting of the triad, you will put what you have learned into practice in a sermon and perhaps an additional chapel address or catechetical preaching experience.

Each pastor will preach a sermon or two that uses what he has learned in this module and engage in some form of feedback with congregational members. The sermon will be recorded so that it can be uploaded and discussed in the second meeting of the triad.

2.1 PREACHING AND RESPONSE:

A. General description: Having discussed catechetical preaching with brother pastors, you will now preach a sermon and perhaps another catechetical preaching experience in which you use what you have learned in a way that is appropriate to your congregation. In addition to preaching the sermon(s), you will engage in conversation with members of your congregation using the exercise provided. Since the sermons will also be used in the next meeting of the triad, you will want to record them so that they can be uploaded and viewed by members of the triad.

B. Module materials: In this section, you will facilitate conversations with your members about catechetical preaching, sharing with them the 20 Theses on Catechetical Preaching and offering opportunity for discussion and feedback on the sermons you have preached.

Post-Sermon Conversation

Group selection: Identify five or six members of the congregation (or school community or other group if you have also preached a chapel address or another catechetical preaching experience) who will meet with you after the sermon and discuss the 20 Theses on Catechetical Preaching and the sermon they have heard you preach. You may choose to offer an open invitation for members to participate in this exercise, or you may select the members by personally inviting them. When selecting members, you may think about engaging a cross section of the congregation.

Engaging a larger group in the congregation could foster an increased awareness of both what hearers should look for in a sermon and how the Small Catechism is more than a textbook on Christian doctrine, but a handbook and prayer book for the Christian faith and life that is used throughout the life of a Christian and the Christian congregation.

Listener reflection: Ask the members participating in the exercise to listen to the sermon and, after reflecting on it, write out answers to questions you have given them based upon what you hoped to accomplish in your sermon. You may also include the following questions:

- 1) As you consider the sermon, what insights have you gained from the 20 Theses on Catechetical Preaching? (You may do well to review and discuss the theses as participants address this question.)
- 2) Did the sermon engage the biblical text?
- 3) Were references to the catechism forced or natural?
- 4) Were you drawn into the sermon and confronted by God’s Word? How?
- 5) Did you receive comfort, strength, guidance or new insights from God’s Word?

Group discussion: Meet with the members and proceed through the questions as you guide group discussion about catechetical preaching.

Remember that demonstrating a spirit of openness to feedback and gratitude for your members who are participating in this exercise will encourage honest and helpful feedback. Be honest about your goals in moving the congregation forward in creating a culture of catechesis and prayer with renewed use of the Small Catechism for everyone in the congregation.

Follow-up discussion: Ask your members to reflect upon their understanding of what the Small Catechism is and how they had previously understood its use. How has this experience changed, modified or deepened their understanding about the catechism and what they should expect to hear in preaching and teaching?

2.2 UPLOADING THE SERMON:

A. General description: Before the next meeting of the triad, you may wish to upload a video of your sermon(s) to the internet so that it/they can be watched prior to the meeting by the other members of your group. You may also choose to email them the manuscript of the sermon.

B. Module materials: Before you preach the sermon, make a test video recording of yourself in the preaching space. This will enable you to make any adjustments to lighting, sound and visual representation so that the video recording of the sermon is of excellent quality.

After recording the sermon, upload the video for use by the members of your group. If you do not have a church website to which you are uploading the video, you may use either YouTube or Vimeo. If you want your video to remain private, you may use the privacy settings in YouTube or password protect the video in Vimeo. For more information about uploading videos for private viewing, see the video-based instructions readily available by searching for “How do I upload a private video to YouTube?” or “How do I password protect a video on Vimeo?”

Phase 3:

TRIAD MEETING - Reflections on Your Practice of Catechetical Preaching

The second meeting of the triad completes the practice-reflection model of learning. You will watch one another's sermons, reflect with one another on your practice of catechetical preaching, and consider how to grow in this area.

3.1 WATCHING THE SERMONS:

A. General description: Depending on the preference of the group, the videos may be watched before the group meets, or you may watch the sermons together. Pastors will view the sermons and converse about how they more intentionally tried to make use of what they learned in the task of catechetical preaching. If the videos are to be viewed prior to the meeting, each pastor will upload a video of his sermon so that it may be viewed in advance.

B. Module materials: In this section, you will find two exercises that prepare you for reflecting with the preachers in your group on catechetical preaching.

Exercise 1: Assessment through rubrics

- 1) Watch the video of the sermon.
- 2) Identify what the preacher did well to expound the biblical text according to the 20 Theses on Catechetical Preaching.
- 3) Offer constructive suggestions on how the preacher might have expanded his use of the catechism or engagement with other lessons learned in the module.
- 4) After viewing the sermon, ask the preacher about the most challenging aspects of the assignment and the areas in which he seeks further improvement.
- 5) Discuss together the reactions of the members of your congregation to each of the sermons and the discussions you had with them on the Small Catechism and catechetical preaching.

Exercise 2: Congregational Devotional Life and Use of the Catechism

- 1) Reflect upon the experience each of you had with the catechism selection you chose to learn by heart and/or meditate upon since the triad's first meeting.
- 2) What lessons did you and/or your members learn from this experience?
- 3) In what ways might this shape your pastoral practice in promoting the Small Catechism and/or giving more intentional devotional guidance to your members in the future?
- 4) How have the things you learned in this module broadened your understanding about preaching and pastoral care in general and the task of catechesis and catechetical preaching specifically

3.2 PASTORAL CONVERSATION:

A. General description: After viewing the sermons, you will engage in pastoral conversation with members of your group. Each member should have the opportunity to have his sermon processed by the group.

There are three purposes to this conversation: (1) to assess and process how effectively the sermon taught the faith; (2) to process the congregational response to the sermon and their reception to a more focused use of the Small Catechism in the task of catechetical preaching; and (3) to consider how to improve this aspect of preaching and the culture of catechesis and prayer within the congregation in the future.

B. Module materials: After viewing the sermon, the members of the triad will reflect with the preacher on how well he engaged the text of the Scriptures and the catechism in catechetical preaching.

For each preacher, the following process might be used to guide the conversation:

- 1) **Preacher’s reflections:** The preacher whose sermon(s) is/are being discussed begins the conversation. He introduces the sermon by describing how he intentionally tried to engage what he had learned from the module on catechetical preaching. He identifies what he felt were his strengths and weaknesses, as well as the areas in which he hopes to grow.
- 2) **Triad’s response:** The other members of the group enter the conversation when appropriate to affirm or clarify the self-evaluation of the preacher and to share their observations and insights about the sermon.
- 3) Walk through the questions of Exercise 1 above for each of the sermons.
- 4) After each sermon has been discussed, the triad should take turns walking through the questions and their answers to Exercise 2 above.

Conclude by praying for one another’s preaching and the catechetical and devotional life of your congregations, that you would be faithful to the Lord’s Word and that He would grant you patience, wisdom and perseverance in your calling as pastors. Prayers may focus on the needs and commitments expressed in the conversation.

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Didache Divine Service

Session 19 — Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Pray

Luke 11:1–13

The Lord's Prayer: The Introduction and the First, Second and Third Petitions

Lutheran Catechesis: Catechumen Edition

New King James Bible

1. Invocation and Prayer

2. Hymn: “Our Father, Who from Heaven Above” (LSB 766:1–4)

3. Review of “The Friend at Midnight” (LUKE 11:1–13)

Five Foundational Truths Regarding Christian Prayer:

1. **God's Word is the foundation for prayer.** Every petition of the Lord's Prayer is FIRST a promise of God to us, then it becomes our prayer to God.
2. **Prayer is the voice of faith that claims the promises of God's Word.** God's Word reflects God's will for us. Therefore, the primary focus for us as believers is to cry out to God to give us the very things that He Himself promises us and desires for us. In prayer, the Christian desires that God would make HIS will OUR will, rather than the other way around.
3. **God's Word is what gives certainty to prayer.** When we pray “according to God's Word,” we have the ABSOLUTE promise that He hears and answers us.
4. **Our Baptism gives us the rights and privileges of a child:** to call upon God “as dear children ask their dear father” (Small Catechism, Introduction to the Lord's Prayer).
5. **Our prayers are heard for Christ's sake, not because of our merit or worthiness.** As baptized children of God, we have access to God through the merits of Jesus' death for our sins. Therefore, our heavenly Father never turns away His child who comes to Him through faith in Jesus.

4. The Catechism in Detail:

The Introduction: “Our Father who art in heaven.”

- We are joined to Christ, the Son of God, in our prayers. “Through Jesus Christ...”
- Baptismal identity as the children of God.
- Terms: prayer, disciple

The First Petition: “Hallowed be Thy name.”

- “Holiness” and “the name of God” are associated with God's Word (John 17, the High Priestly Prayer).
- Catechism emphasis: Teaching God's Word faithfully and living our lives according to God's Word.
- Terms: invocation, holy lives, to profane, salutation, collect, the Prayer of the Church, priesthood

The Second Petition: “Thy kingdom come.”

- “The kingdom of God” in the Scriptures centers on God's gracious activity in Christ and our faith (reliance, dependence and trust) in Him.
- Catechism emphasis: The gift of the Holy Spirit (through the Word) and faith in God's Word/Christ (linkage between the first and second petitions).
- Terms: the kingdom of God, godly lives, the Psalms, Matins, Vespers, Compline

The Third Petition: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

(The end of the petition belongs to each of the first three petitions.)

- “The will of God” is known by God's Word. If it is not known in God's Word, then our prayers are “if it be Your will.”

- Catechism emphasis: That the devil, world and flesh (which are opposed to God’s will) would not hinder “the hallowing of God’s name” or “God’s kingdom from coming” (i.e., that God would strengthen and keep us firm in His Word and faith until we die). “This is His good and gracious will.”
- Terms: the will of God, the theology of the cross

5. The Holy Communion Liturgy

- Confession of sins and Absolution
- The Prayer of the Church
- Spoken Communion liturgy
- Distribution
- Thanksgiving Collect
- Benediction

Questions Asked by Catechumens in the Video, Which Are Difficult to Hear

Tom's question: "The way to heaven is more difficult than getting through the eye of a needle?"

Polly's question: "So, if you're praying for something according to God's will and you are persistent ... then are you ... should you ... is it OK to be persistent?"

Tom's comment on "through Jesus Christ, our Lord": "That's because those [the words of the Lord's Prayer] are Jesus' words..."

Wally's question about king and royalty: "The kingdom of God ... now that is related to the church, for the sake of the church ... ah ... He does things ... and we participate in His royal nature?"

Wally's question: "'On earth as it is in heaven.' Could we say 'on earth as it is already done in heaven'?"

Preach the Word

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The Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord

(JOSHUA 3:1-3, 7-8, 13-17; 1 COR. 1:26-31; MATT. 3:13-17)

Jesus put it pretty simply when it comes to Baptism: “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (JOHN 3:5). You see, to us poor sinners, heaven was closed; from the day the door was shut to Eden, the cherubim and a flaming sword barred the way.

Our first parents rose up in rebellion against the God of love, and so heaven barred its doors, and we were shut out. And we had only ourselves to blame. In sin and in bondage did we come into this world. From our infancy, we had been allied with the enemy, the devil.

We have sinned against God. We have sinned against one another. We have hurt others by the way we have lived. Our thoughts and desires have been soiled by sin. As we confess, we justly deserve God’s temporal and eternal punishment. Therefore, heaven was closed to us, from the day when the gate swung shut to Eden and the cherubim stood guard with the flaming sword.

Today, Jan. 13, we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord. We give special attention to what Jesus’ Baptism means in the lives of His Christians.

In our Gospel this morning, folks are confessing their sins at the Jordan River. They’re coming to John for a Baptism of repentance. But now here comes the holy Son of God down to that river. And He asks His cousin John to baptize Him. John essentially responds, “Are you nuts? I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?”

It’s as if John is saying, “Wait a minute. You are holy, and I am a sinner. You the Son of God, and I am a sinful son of Adam. What need have you for Baptism? What possible sins do you have to confess?” But Jesus’ answer said it all: “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (MATT. 3:15).

The key to understanding this day is to learn from John’s bewilderment. Because he was right! Jesus had no need to be baptized! There were no sins to be forgiven, and, unlike us, He certainly wasn’t barred from heaven’s gates. After all, He IS the kingdom of heaven.

But here is the wonderful, comforting, bewildering mystery of Jesus’ Baptism: Though He Himself had no need to be baptized, He does it all for us.

Think back again to what all those folks were doing at the Jordan River. They were confessing their sins. But now, for the first time, One comes to step into that water not to add His own sins, but to make them all His and to take them all away. Jesus enters the water with all the other sinners — not to make Himself clean but to make Himself dirty. That’s the point.

When John points to Jesus on the banks of the Jordan and declares, “Behold, the Lamb of God,” those are words packed with meaning! Because He is our Passover Lamb. He’s our scapegoat. When He steps into those waters, that’s what He’s embracing. In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is embracing the cross and all that came with it. Yes, promising to lay down His life for us, but also, as He said, to fulfill all righteousness — to be and do and accomplish what we never could. To live a life of perfect sacrificial love — the sort of life that God intended for all of us when He created the heavens and the earth and man as His co-regent over all creation.

When our Lord comes out of those waters, the heavens are opened. Pay careful attention to that. The heavens are opened. The heavens that were closed by man’s rebellion and unbelief. The heavens that were closed because of your sin and mine. But now look how, at Jesus’ Baptism, the doors of heaven swing wide

open. The Spirit of God comes to rest upon Him as a dove, calling to mind the peace promised to Noah and his family after the flood.

The Father from heaven spoke: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (MATT. 3:17). The Father is well pleased because there Jesus was carrying all your sins always. He is pleased because in Baptism Jesus was committing Himself to the cross. Pleased because the promise God made from the beginning was coming to its glorious fulfillment — and that, by the power of His resurrection, those doors would soon be swinging wildly open to the whole world.

What benefits does Baptism give you? Well, as we pray in the catechism, it works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

How so? You see, in those waters we see what we Christians call the blessed exchange. In His Baptism, Jesus took your rebellion, your sins, and He made them His own. He took everything ugly in you and made it His. He exchanged your sins for His perfect, holy life. He exchanged your disobedience for His righteousness. Your hideousness for His beauty. He exchanged your hell for His heaven.

But what you really needed was access to God — a way home, a hope for the future. To us, heaven was closed, cherubim and flaming swords barring the way. We had been aliens — exiles — and drifters.

So, Jesus said, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Do you see how wonderful Baptism is? In your Baptism — and I’m talking about what you’ve got right here and right now — those mighty doors of heaven swing open. The cherubim angels barring the way sheathe their sword. And you are welcomed. Tenderly invited to enter in. The Father says of you, “This is my beloved, my own child, with whom I am well pleased.” That’s right! In Baptism, you’ve got God’s divine and perfect approval.

Know, therefore, that Baptism is never an over-and-done deal. Never. It keeps on flowing throughout your life like an artesian well, bubbling up and spilling over with forgiveness and life.

In our first reading this morning, you got a nice little preview of what’s to come. With Joshua, the congregation of Israel crossed over the Jordan River — right into the Promised Land. But what’s that compared with our greater Joshua, Jesus, leading us through Baptism into the promised land of eternal life? In the name of Jesus. Amen.



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