

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATTHEW 9:18-26.

Contents: Two examples of faith, and Christ's call from the dead.

While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

I. TWO EXAMPLES OF FAITH

1. This narrative is more fully and faithfully presented by the other Evangelists, Mark and Luke, and is a rich and beautiful Gospel, both in its doctrine and consolation, for it teaches the correct knowledge of the divine will in spiritual wisdom and understanding, (as may be noted in the Epistle for to-day) and affords consolation and strength under the cross and amid suffering. Let us note a few of its lessons.

2. First, the Lord is here represented surrounded by the people, as a kind and affable man, as St. Paul in Titus 3:4, says, that through him the grace and love of God have been made manifest, through which he shows himself willing and ready to help and serve all men, and also renders help to those who in true faith seek it from him.

3. But they are people who are in misery, trouble, sorrow and distress. He will be with them and permit himself to be found by them; for with such, his Word and work can be made effective. But his Word and miracles are useless and lost among the carnally secure, the mighty, the rich and prosperous, because they are not capable of receiving his grace and favors, for they are already satisfied and satiated, and seek comfort and happiness in other things or even in themselves. In order to receive the grace and benefits of Christ, men must realize they have no comfort and help in any creature, and that they

experience nothing but trouble and sorrow; and it is true as the Church sings in Luke 1:53: ***“The hungry he hath filled with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”***

4. From this you see how graciously and paternally God manifests himself toward us, since he comes to us so closely through his beloved Son and seeks the poor and miserable, in order to pour out his grace upon all, who are willing to receive it; because he sent his Son to us, in order to be with us and dwell among us, as St. John, 1:14, says, and take care of us as his own flesh and blood. He assumed the same poverty and misery, so that he might deliver us from our misery, that is, from sin and death. Therefore, he also desires that we seek and expect such help from him through faith, as he says in John 6:40: ***“For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son and believeth on him, should have eternal life.”***

5. This is the knowledge which Christians require and through which alone they become Christians and children of God, as Isaiah, 53:11, says: “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many,” and John 1:12: “To them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name.” For whatever else can be taught, done, or comprehended, however great, beautiful, praiseworthy, valuable or holy it may appear, cannot make Christians of people, that is, persons who have obtained forgiveness of sins and a gracious God, unless they know and by faith lay hold of the Savior, the Son of God, who came into the world that by the shedding of his blood he might take away our sins and reconcile us to God.

6. This doctrine and knowledge of the Gospel should be cherished and lauded by the whole world, because it alone publishes this true and joyous consolation, that God has had mercy on poor, unworthy and miserable sinners, and does not wish to impute unto them their sins, but out of pure grace forgives them. No other doctrine or sermon on earth can save or give the same, as the whole world, Jews, Gentiles and Turks, must acknowledge.

7. Therefore, no person can of himself reach that point where he is before God free from horrible unbelief, and a condemned conscience, is able with a true heart to call upon God, and knows for a certainty that God will hear him, except alone through this knowledge of Christ, whom God himself has appointed as his Mediator and publicly testified that he will be gracious, hear and bless all who call upon him through Christ. Hence those only are Christians who render true service to God and can comfort themselves in the joyful assurance, that the true God is their God and that he will be with them and help them; whereas all others, who do not know Christ, are truly without God and cannot call upon him with true hearts, nor be comforted, but must perish before God in eternal and terrible doubt and destruction.

8. This Gospel presents two beautiful examples both of the help of Christ and of faith which clings to and finds comfort in Christ, and obtains help from him. First, that is a beautiful faith of the ruler of the synagogue, which leads him to Christ in his distress, at

the time when his daughter was lying at the point of death and when he could only say that she must die before he could return home; for he says: “My daughter is even now dead,” and when all men had given up the hope and thought that help could be secured for her. Yet he did not despair, but, while the rest of his household despaired, wept and lamented, and could think of nothing except how to lay out the dead body and arrange it for the flute-players and others, he went to Christ in the firm confidence that if he brought him to his daughter, she would be restored to life. He believed Christ was the one who could help not only to restore and maintain health as long as body and soul were still united, but that he could also restore life after body and soul had been separated by death. This was certainly at the time a remarkable example of faith, since nothing like it had ever before been heard or seen, unless perhaps the miracle of the raising of the widow’s son to life, Luke 7:11 sq., had occurred before and the report of it had reached his ears. Nor was it a greater mark of faith that he could without a doubt conclude in his heart that Christ would restore his daughter to life; for if he would have doubted and followed the human thoughts of reason, he would certainly not have gone to Christ, but would have thought that he had delayed too long; or that although Christ had restored some one else to life, it would not necessarily follow that his daughter should also be restored to life, since so many sons and daughters of parents were daily dying, none of whom were being restored to life.

9. This is the virtue of the right kind of faith, which was also, shortly afterwards, praised in the woman who had an issue of blood, namely, that it clings steadfastly to Christ, grasps and holds fast to the Word heard from him, does not inquire or look to that which the human mind may suggest, nor to what other people believe or do; but straightway concludes, with reference to the reports concerning Christ, that he is the one who can help in time of need; who has helped others and therefore will help now. Such a heart and faith truly find Christ and receive according to their faith.

10. In the second place, his faith concerning the Person of Christ was of such a character (which was indeed a great spiritual knowledge) that he rightly regarded him as the true Messiah sent by God, not such as the great mass of the Jews, especially the scribes, thought that he would come publicly before the people as a great and mighty lord and king with great pomp and show, so that everybody would regard and receive him as the one sent to them from God and in addition expected that he would deliver them from bodily slavery under the foreign dominion of the Roman Emperor and establish them as the mighty rulers of the world. On the contrary, overagainst such dreams and Jewish notions, he regarded him as the true Lord and Messiah, although he was not thus regarded and received by his own people, the Jews, who was sent from God, not to confer temporal power, possessions, honor and freedom, but to help in those things and necessities where no man can help, namely, to redeem us from the peril of death and the power of the devil, yea, to turn death into life and confer life. He must not be regarded as a mere man, but as that one who truly has in himself divine and eternal power and authority over all creatures, because he believes that he holds in his hands power over life and death, that is, that he truly is the Son of God, as the Scriptures declare.

11. The other example of faith deserves no less praise, namely, that of the poor woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, on account of which she suffered in her body and lost all her strength, and because of this she had long despaired of receiving human help and comfort. She came to Christ, as she had heard of him, and could come to him in the certain and undoubted confidence that he could help her in her great need, and with the heartfelt assurance that he was so good and gracious as to help her and not let her go away unaided. Of this she was so certain and confident that her heart was free from care and grief, although she had reason to doubt. She was concerned only with the thought of how she would be able to get to Christ, wondering and thinking: "Ah! If I could but touch the hem of his garment." Then she firmly and confidently concluded in her heart, "I shall be made whole." But she did not know how to reach him, because she saw the crowd was so great and she, a poor, sick woman, could not well break through such a crowd of people. Besides, the law did not permit her to come among the people; yet her faith and desire urged her not to desist, but to press through the crowd until she came behind him and touched his garment.

12. Behold here, how her faith overcame two obstacles. First, her faith was so strong that she believed she could obtain help, if only she could touch his garment. She did not deem it necessary to come to him and with many words present her complaint and pray that he would have mercy on her and help her, nor did others pray for her; but she sought only to reach him and touch him, for she thought, if only she could do this, she would receive help. She neither doubted his power, nor his willingness to help. Hence she did not deem it necessary to do more, in order to secure his help, than to touch merely the fringe of his outer garment. Therefore she did not deem it necessary that she should come before him to be touched by him; yea, she did not regard herself worthy to be addressed by him; nor was her heart so full of confidence that, notwithstanding this, she lacked courage to come into his presence, and hence was neither seen nor heard by him. But she was satisfied simply to come up behind him, secretly and unnoticed by the crowd, and did not doubt as to the help she expected to receive. Nor did her faith deceive her, for as soon as she touched the hem of his garment, the fountain of blood was stopped.

13. Now, that a poor, simple woman should be able to see and know that this man's help and power were such that it was not necessary to speak to him at length, but that he was able to see in secret, even though he should not publicly show that he knows anything of our necessities or wished to help us, must be the result of a great and extraordinary illumination of the Spirit and the knowledge of faith. Accordingly, her faith produced such an assurance in her, that all doubt was removed, and she realized that if she could only reach him with even the most insignificant means, she would be helped. This, indeed, means a strong faith that this man must possess divine, almighty power and authority, that he can see and understand the secret thoughts and desires of the heart, although not a word is spoken; and that he can prove his work and help, although she sees and feels nothing externally except the words we heard him utter, which produced faith in her heart.

14. She desired nothing besides this Word, nor did she ask for more than merely to touch his garment, which she used as an external means and sign to gain the desired help. Likewise, we need nothing more in our lives and in the kingdom of faith than the external Word and Sacraments, in which he permits himself to be touched and seized as if by his garment.

15. Hence you may see what faith, which clings to the Person of Christ is and does, namely, a heart that regards him as the Lord and Savior, the Son of God, through whom God reveals himself and bestows upon us his grace, assuring us that through him and for his sake, he will hear and help us. This is the true spiritual and heartfelt worship of God, where the heart has to do with Christ and prays in his name, even though not a single word may be uttered aloud, and gives the honor due him, regards him as the true Savior, who can hear and know the secret desires of the heart and manifest his power and help, although he does not permit himself to be externally touched or approached, according to our thoughts.

16. The other master-piece of her faith is, that she is able to overcome the feeling of her own unworthiness and roll from her heart the heavy stone, which weighed her down so heavily, and yet makes her so diffident that she dare not publicly approach Christ like other persons. The judgment passed upon her by the law was that, as an unclean woman, she was not allowed to associate with other people. For, in Leviticus 15:19 we read that a woman like her shall be regarded unclean as long as she has the issue of blood; and that whatever she has on or about her, shall be unclean; and that whoever touches her or whatever she touches, shall be unclean. This proved no small distress to her, not only by reason of her malady and bodily uncleanness, but especially because she recognized and felt in it the punishment of God, imposed upon her before all people, and which separated her from the congregation of God's people. This continued for twelve long years, during which time she had tried all kinds of remedies with many physicians and yet was not helped by any, but grew worse continually, so that she was compelled to conclude that God had punished her with special severity because of her sins and would not help her. She was now forced to despair of human aid and thought she had to die of her disease and punishment.

17. It was, therefore, not without a struggle and conflict that she maintained her faith in that which she sought in Christ; for she could not help but think: Behold, I am an unclean woman, punished of God, and every one knows me. If I appear before this Lord, every one and even he himself may simply condemn my boldness and impudence for coming into his presence and I may receive more wrath and severer punishment from God instead of mercy, and be forced to confess that I had been served rightly if he casted me from him in his anger. This trial and struggle show also that, as the text says, after she had been discovered, she was terrified and trembled, even though she had received the desired help; and yet she was filled with fear, lest he would speak harshly to her and

censure her, because she had not been afraid to come to him and secretly steal the desired help.

18. But her faith, which clearly set before her the good and gracious heart of Christ, broke through all these barriers; besides, her great need, yea, even her despair compelled her to become impudent before God and, regardless of the prohibition and judgment of the law, her own shame urged her to conclude: This Savior must be laid hold of, in spite of what the law, her own heart and all the world, yea, what even he himself may say. Here is the man who can help and who is also a good, gracious and faithful Savior. On the other hand, I am a poor, miserable woman, who needs his help. He will certainly not become other than he is, because of me, nor permit his grace and help to fail me. Let his will be done in me; it will be better for me that I should be covered with shame, than the injury I would receive if I should fail to seek the help which I may be able to receive from him. She fixed her heart on the idea that if she could only touch this man, her need would be removed and the desired help received; and she would afterwards speak with Moses and the law, so that she might remain un-condemned by him, etc.

19. Behold, that is a beautiful faith, which realizes its unworthiness and yet does not permit itself to be hindered on this account to place its confidence in Christ, nor to doubt his grace and help, but breaks through the law and everything that frightens it away from him; yea, if the whole world would attempt to hinder and thwart, yet it does not think of leaving this man until it has laid hold on him. Therefore it presses through all barriers and attains what it seeks in Christ, and immediately experiences the power and work of Christ, even before he begins to speak. For it cannot apply to Christ in vain, even as Christ himself testifies, when he says: "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

20. Besides, faith like this is so pleasing to Christ that he does not wish it to remain concealed in her and that the power and work made effective by it should remain a secret, but what is in her heart must be published to everybody so that her faith may be praised before the whole world and be strengthened in her. Therefore, turning and looking around, he asked and desired to know who touched him; for he felt that power had gone forth from him. When she found she had to be discovered, she became afraid and began to tremble; for a heart filled with the great and implicit trust which she had in him, and yet also with humility and the knowledge of her unworthiness, must regard itself guilty, because she had gone contrary to Moses and because she realized he might justly be angry with her, because she could be so bold and impudent as to press through the crowd to him. And hence in the midst of the work, after she had already been healed and her heart was filled with joy, her faith had to contend with fear and terror, and yet only to enjoy all the more consolation and joy in Christ. For Christ does not wish faith to remain concealed in the heart, but desires it to be publicly confessed, so that the glory of God may thereby be praised and others also be spurred on to believe.

21. Therefore, when this woman was in fear and danger, lest she should be disgraced before all and be condemned according to the law, yea, even she herself be compelled to make a public confession, Christ began to confirm her faith, to say she had done well in

disregarding Moses and the law, that is, the judgment passed upon her unworthiness; and now he publicly shows the same disregard, will have her un-accused and un-condemned, yea, esteems her faith so highly that he ascribes to it alone the power and efficacy that helped her, just as if he had done nothing in the matter. In like manner, he was accustomed to speak at other times, as to the ruler, Matthew 8:13, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee," and again to the Canaanite woman, Matthew 15:28, "Be it done unto thee, even as thou wilt."

22. We should learn from this woman to realize the power of faith, and in our temptations and conflicts to call for help. For, as I have already stated, it is through such faith that we become Christians, and a distinction is shown between us and all other people on the earth, the Turks, heathen and Jews. For we must know that it is one thing to be a good man, perform many and great deeds, live a good, honorable and virtuous life, but quite another thing to be a Christian. For in that which concerns our lives and work we often receive great praise and honor before men, even from Jews and Turks, as many great and excellent men have been highly praised in pagan histories for their uprightness and virtue. Again, there have been many among the Jews, as Gamaliel, Paul before his conversion, Nicodemus and others (as this poor woman), who have with all zeal lived according to the law, so that in their external life before the world, they surpassed many true Christians.

23. But even here a difference as great as between heaven and earth must be noted between Christians and others. A Christian is one who has a different kind of light in his heart, that is faith, which truly knows and lays hold on God and truly worships him. Through the Word of God he knows and realizes his own unworthiness and receives the true fear of God; and again finds comfort in his faith, believes and trusts he has obtained forgiveness of sin and redemption in Christ, the Son of God, and for his sake is acceptable to God and elected to eternal life; and in all his need, when he feels his own weakness, or is tempted, can find refuge in God, appeal to him and expect his help; and he knows he shall be heard.

24. No other person than a Christian has this faith and assurance, be he Jew, Turk, Papist, or whatever he may be called, no matter how pious and good his life may be, or how much he may pride himself that he worships and serves God and hopes for eternal life; for the service, worship and life of such persons still lack two great things, which prevent them from being acceptable to God: first, they do not have the true God, that is, do not know him as he has revealed himself and will be known, towit, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, his Son. Hence they walk in blindness and miss God, because they seek him according to their own notions and apart from Christ, and are deprived of the knowledge of the true Divine Being.

25. Secondly, they lack the possibility of the true and assured knowledge of the will of God, because they do not have the Gospel. Hence, they cannot be certain that God will assuredly hear them, and must always remain in doubt whether or not God will hear them

and interest himself in their behalf. Accordingly their appeals and prayers can be nothing more than mere vain and useless thoughts and babblings, through which the heart finds no consolation in God, nor expect anything from him, but rather flee from him and are therefore truly without God, and use the name of God in vain.

26. But the Christian's prayer consists in this that he prays to the true God, namely, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has revealed himself to men through his Word; and besides he has the certain confidence and assurance against all doubt that God will be gracious to him and hear his prayer for the sake of Christ, his beloved Son.

27. This is the beautiful example of the woman. Now we turn to the daughter of the ruler of the Synagogue. But here, too, faith must contend and be strengthened; for although, as we have already heard, he had an excellent faith, yet it could scarcely have been maintained, had it not been strengthened. For, while Christ was still speaking with the woman, Mark 5:35-36 and Luke 8:49, say a message was brought, stating the man's daughter had died, and requesting him not to trouble the Master. This meant all would amount to nothing, since they had delayed too long; hence he should leave the matter and think only of how to bury his child.

28. This must have been a severe blow to the ruler's faith. But the fact that the woman had just been healed, must have prevented his faith from failing, and indeed strengthened it to resist the doubts concerning his daughter. And Christ himself is present to comfort and strengthen him against this stumbling-block, in order to show that he is unwilling that even such weak faith should be injured in any way, but be established and strengthened; and in view of this he admonishes and encourages all persons by saying: ***"Doubt not, only believe, etc."*** This he said in order to see how highly he was pleased with the faith that clings to him, and that he was ready to guard against its being overcome; as he spoke to the Apostles, and especially to Peter, who fell so easily,

"I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

29. Now when Christ came to the house, this man's faith had to receive another blow; for there they saw and heard nothing but the tumult, weeping and wailing, and the blowing of trumpets (which they used at the death of their friends, as we do bells). All this cries in his heart that nothing was left but death, and his faith had nothing on which to lay hold against despair, except the word which Christ spoke against the tumult and lamentations: "The child is not dead, but sleepeth," on account of which he was mocked and laughed at as a fool; for they all saw and knew that the maid was dead, and that there was no breath nor spark of life in her. They could not but think: See, our master or ruler must be mad or silly to bring this fool here, who tries to convince us that the maid is not dead, when every one can clearly see she lies stiff in death, a dead corpse, ready to be placed under ground.

30. They had come together at the synagogue, as at a common gatheringplace, as we do at our churches, where on the Sabbath the Word of God was taught, because throughout

the whole country there was neither church nor temple, except at Jerusalem. And this ruler of the synagogue occupied the same position among them that our pastors occupy, and others occupied the place of assistants or readers, who read Moses or preached, circumcised the children and instructed the young, and visited the sick and sorrowing to comfort them. These had to be together in the synagogue and testified concerning this work of Christ, even with their mocking and scornful laughter, namely, that the maiden had certainly died and been raised from the dead. The ruler therefore, before he could experience the work of Christ, was compelled, in the face of this offense and mockery, to cling to the one word of Christ and with him be regarded as a fool and in his folly learn this spiritual wisdom that death is not death to Christ, but only a sleep.

II. CHRIST' S CALL FROM THE DEAD

31. Let us learn from this to become fools with Christ and this ruler and teacher, in order that we may understand these words. Although this man's words may be despised by the world and be regarded as foolishness, yet they are very precious, for in them there certainly lies hid the highest wisdom of heaven and earth. For this passage, as a general expression, teaches you that your death in Christ is nothing more than a mere sleep, so that you may be able to look through and beyond the horrible sight and frightful larva of death and the grave, yea, apprehend the same truth of death, if only you hear these words in faith and accept them as true in Christ.

32. Here we have nothing to do with ox-eyes, or even man's eyes, but with the eyes with which Christ sees, and with the ears with which Christ hears, yea, a mind and heart like Christ himself has. A swine, when it sees the dead body of a man lying before it, can only conclude that it is a carcass like any other dead body, which is devoured by birds or animals, or is decomposed. So also a person without faith neither sees nor understands more, and in this respect cannot be distinguished from the brute, except in so far as he carries his head upright, while that of the brute is turned to the ground; for his thoughts can reach only as far as this life is concerned. Therefore, it is not to be wondered at that the mind should affect such so-called wisdom as this: "How can a person be said to sleep when he no longer has either breath or life, is buried under ground and is in process of decomposition?" On the other hand, he who desires to learn how to perceive and understand God's kingdom, power and work, must shut his mind and understanding, purify his eyes, cleanse his ears, and see and hear what Christ says in this matter, and how it is in his sight apart from this life, where our understanding, mind and thought cannot reach.

33. In this passage you hear that Christ says that to him the dying of a person is not death, but a sleep, yea, from his point of view none of those who have lived and died before our time are dead, but are all alive, as those we see standing before us; for he has concluded that all shall live, yea, he holds their lives in his hands. For you must here clearly distinguish between the thoughts and actions of Christ, and the views, thoughts and understanding of the world, as I have said before, so that you may not remain in the blind and brutish thought and opinion concerning the dead and putrifying body, but rather

perceive that this is the Lord of all creatures, whether to us they be dead or alive, and that all life comes from him and is maintained in and by him, so that if he would not maintain life no one could live a single moment.

34. Besides the regular daily maintenance of life, he must maintain it without our will and help when we sleep, a condition in which man has no control over his mind and life, and does not know how he falls asleep and wakes again. Therefore it is not difficult for Christ, in the hour when body and soul are separated, to hold in his hand the soul and spirit of man, even though we ourselves neither feel nor see anything, yea, even though the body be entirely consumed. For, since he can preserve the breath of life and spirit, apart from the body, so he can again bring the body together out of dust and ashes. This he has proved in this and similar examples, when he restored to life with one word those who had truly died and whose body and soul had been separated. Hence we must conclude that he holds in his hand the life of those who have died; for if this power did not belong to him, he could not restore life.

35. In the second place, you must not calculate how far life and death are apart, or how many years may pass while the body is wasting in the grave, and how one after another dies, but endeavor to grasp the thought of Christ with reference to the conditions apart from this time and hour. For he does not calculate time by tens, hundreds or thousands of years, nor measure the years consecutively, the one preceding, the other following, as we must do in this life; but he grasps everything in a moment, the beginning, middle and end of the whole human race and of all time. And what we regard and measure according to time, as by a long drawn out rule, all this he sees as at a glance, and thus both the death and life of the last as well as of the first man are to him as only a moment of time.

36. Thus we should learn to view our death in the right light, so that we need not become alarmed on account of it, as unbelief does; because in Christ it is indeed not death, but a fine, sweet and brief sleep, which brings us release from this vale of tears, from sin and from the fear and extremity of real death and from all the misfortunes of this life, and we shall be secure and without care, rest sweetly and gently for a brief moment, as on a sofa, until the time when he shall call and awaken us together with all his dear children to his eternal glory and joy. For since we call it a sleep, we know that we shall not remain in it, but be again awakened and live, and that the time during which we sleep, shall seem no longer than if we had just fallen asleep. Hence, we shall censure ourselves that we were surprised or alarmed at such a sleep in the hour of death, and suddenly come alive out of the grave and from decomposition, and entirely well, fresh, with a pure, clear, glorified life, meet our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the clouds.

37. Therefore we should entrust and commend to our true Savior and Redeemer ourselves, body, soul and life, with all confidence and joy, just as we must commend to him our life without care in our bodily sleep and rest, assured that we shall not lose it, but be truly and carefully preserved in his hand, maintained and again restored. Here you see, as he shows in reality, how easy it is for him to awaken men from the dead and restore

them to life, as he came to the maiden, took her by the hand, as some one else might do to awaken one from sleep, and with a word called, "Maid, arise!" and the maiden suddenly arose, as if she had been awakened from sleep. We see here neither sleep nor death, but wakefulness and freshness, even as Lazarus came forth from his tomb.

38. Behold, this Word of Christ is not a matter of laughter and foolishness to faith (as to others among the prudent and the saints according to the law, who nevertheless remain in fear and terror of death, have to do with their thoughts about death and works), but of great wisdom, by which death and all the images of death are swallowed up, and in their place true comfort, joy and life are obtained. The act and experience must assuredly follow this Word of Christ and faith in his Word cannot fail. Let this be regarded as a master-piece and a wonderful work of alchemy or a science, which indeed does not turn copper and lead into gold, but turns death into sleep, your grave into a soft sofa, the time from the death of Abel until the last day into a brief hour, a work which no creature has nor can attempt except through faith in Christ. If you can believe this, that is, let the Word of Christ be true and not a lie, you have already overcome both death and the sting of death, and in their place have obtained sweet rest.

39. Scripture everywhere affords such consolation, which speaks of the death of the saints, as if they fell asleep and were gathered to their fathers, that is, had overcome death through this faith and comfort in Christ, and awaited the resurrection, together with the saints who preceded them in death. Therefore the early Christians (undoubtedly from the Apostles or their disciples) followed the custom of bringing their dead to honorable burial and wherever possible interred them in separate places, which they called, not places of burial or grave-yards, but coemeteria , sleepingchambers, dormitoria , houses of sleep, names which have remained in use until our time; and we Germans from ancient times call such places of burial God's acres, as St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:44, says: "***It is sown a natural body;***" for what we now call church-yards were not at first places of burial. This is the teaching and comfort of this Gospel lesson.

40. Further, we are shown here, as in a painting, both in the woman with the bloody flux and in the maiden, the result of attempting to govern conscience by means of the law, without a knowledge of Christ. There are two classes of people: One class consists of the sick, poor timid consciences, who feel their secret need and sins, as well as the judgment and curse of the law, that is, that they are under the wrath of God, desire earnestly to be freed from it, seek help and counsel from many physicians, expend all their possessions, body and life, and yet receive no help, neither improvement nor comfort, but continually grow worse; until they at last give up in despair and resign themselves to death; finally Christ comes to them with his Gospel. Many good-hearted people have hitherto experienced this under the Papacy, who earnestly strove to become pious, did everything as they were directed and taught, and yet gained from it only terrified and timid consciences, and on account of the fear and horror of death and of the judgment day, would gladly have ended their lives. This is the result of all teaching at its best, apart from the knowledge of Christ.

41. The other class, like the daughter of the ruler, are those who are without the law, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, that is, are free and live securely, do not feel the terrors of the law, think they are prosperous and safe until they are suddenly struck down and die, as St. Paul, speaking of himself, Romans 7:11, says that he lived without the law, but afterwards through the law sin became alive and slew him.

42. Since both the woman and the daughter were delivered from their need and from death, there is no counsel or help other than that which acknowledges Christ and hears the truly comforting, living voice of the Gospel, which has the power to abolish sin and death, and to give to the conscience everlasting comfort, joy and life, wherever these are accepted in true faith. And here the doctrine is clearly set forth, that we are justified and saved, without our merit, gratuitously, alone through faith, and so are delivered from sin and death. The poor woman brought nothing to Christ, except her great unworthiness, so that she had to be ashamed of it, yea, was filled with fear and terror when forced to make herself known. There was even far less personal merit or worthiness in the ruler's daughter, because she lay there in death and was altogether without life and action. In a word, we must confess that in ourselves we have nothing, nor are able to live or do anything to please or to bring us favor and life, unless his pure grace be conferred upon us.

43. But after we have received forgiveness of sin, consolation and life, let us begin to teach and do good works. Just as the woman, after she had been healed, and the maiden, after she had been restored to life, did good and living deeds. Thus we too have power in Christ to live according to the will of God, and know that our lives and works begun in Christ are acceptable to him. Whatever else might be said here, how Christ performs his works and wonders in his Church, in which are seen the fruits of faith, though secretly and obscurely, as in both these instances of the woman and the maiden, so that the world was not allowed to see them, would make our present discussion too lengthy.

