



19 Minutes with Luther

The Third Article

- The Knowledge of God
- Law and Gospel
- Introduction to the Law
- 1st Commandment
- 2nd Commandment
- 3rd Commandment
- 4th Commandment
- 5th Commandment
- 6th Commandment
- 7th Commandment
- 8th Commandment
- 9th & 10th Commandments
- The Conclusion
- The Gospel & the Nature of God
- The Apostles' Creed (Faith)
- 1st Article (Creation)
- 1st Article (Preservation)
- 1st Article (Protection)
- 1st Article (The Fall into Sin)
- 2nd Article (Christ's Person)
- 2nd Article (Christ's Office)
- 2nd Article (Christ's Work)
- 2nd Article (Christ's Humiliation)
- 2nd Article (Christ's Exaltation)
- 2nd Article (Christian Life)
- 2nd Article (Saved by Faith)
- 3rd Article (The Holy Spirit)
- 3rd Article (Calls)
- 3rd Article (Enlightens)
- 3rd Article (Sanctifies)
- 3rd Article (Keeps in Faith)
- **3rd Article**
- (Invisible Church)**
- 3rd Article (Visible Church)
- 3rd Article (Forgiveness)
- 3rd Article (Eternal Life)
- Baptism (Part 1)
- Baptism (Part 2)
- Holy Communion (Part 1)
- Holy Communion (Part 2)
- Keys & Confession (Part 1)
- Keys & Confession (Part 2)
- Keys & Confession (Part 3)
- Introduction to the Lord's Prayer
- The Address
- 1st Petition
- 2nd Petition
- 3rd Petition
- 4th Petition
- 5th Petition
- 6th Petition
- 7th Petition
- The Doxology

I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

1. We believe in the holy Christian church, the communion of saints. According to the following passages, what is the holy Christian church? What other meanings (definitions) might there be for the word *church*?

"To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

"Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior" (Ephesians 5:23).

2. Why are the following words used to describe the holy Christian church?

holy, saints

Christian

communion (or union)

3. The holy Christian church is called the invisible church. According to the following passages, what does it mean that this church is invisible?

"The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20,21).

"The Lord knows those who are his" (2 Timothy 2:19).

4. Although invisible, the communion of saints can be located. Read the following passages. Where will believers, that is, the church, always be found?

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word” (Ephesians 5:25,26).

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, . . . so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10,11).

5. What comfort do you find in the following passage?

“Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion [that is, the holy Christian church], which cannot be shaken but endures forever” (Psalm 125:1).

6. Comment on the following statements:

Only people like Peter and Paul can properly be called saints.

The holy Christian church is all believers in heaven and on earth, whether Lutheran, Catholic, Jew, Mormon, or Baptist.

In spite of doctrinal differences, all Christians enjoy a wonderful unity.

I can see that some in our church aren't really believers by the way they live.

The Spirit uses us to share the Word and bring others into the communion of saints.

Luther said:

“In this communion of saints we are all brothers and sisters so closely united that a closer relationship cannot be conceived.” (Plass, Vol. 1, p. 275.)

Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, preserve your church on earth. Strengthen us through the Word. Move us to rejoice over the tie that binds us to Christ and to one another, and lead us to share the message of his love with the world. Amen.

At home

Memorize the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed and Martin Luther's explanation.

Helps

(1) The holy Christian church, the communion of saints, is all people everywhere who believe in Jesus as their Savior. The word *church* might also refer to a Christian congregation, a denomination, a building, or even a worship service. (2) The words *holy* and *saints* are used because by faith in Jesus, believers have had their sins washed away. The word *Christian* is used because the believer's hope is built on Christ alone. The word *communion* is used because by faith, believers are joined to Christ and to one another. (3) Faith is a matter of the heart, not of buildings or external organizations. We trust that a person's confession of faith is sincere. Yet in an absolute sense, God alone knows who is truly a member of his church. (4) The holy Christian church, that is, believers, will be found wherever the gospel is preached and the sacraments are used. (5) The holy Christian church is imperishable; there will always be people along with us who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. (6) Contrary to how sainthood is established in the Roman Catholic Church, the Bible teaches that all believers in Christ have had their sins removed and are properly called saints. The holy Christian church is all people in heaven and on earth who believe that Jesus Christ is true God and their Savior. That would exclude Jews, Mormons, and all those who deny that Jesus is true God. While we cannot ignore or condone the false teachings in many Christian churches today, we rejoice over the fact that the Holy Spirit continues to call many into the church by the gospel so that they enjoy a blessed fellowship with Christ and us. Saving faith is invisible; we must be very careful about judging those who confess Christ but whose faith and faith-life is weak or immature. The Holy Spirit continues to bring people into the holy Christian church through the gospel in Word and sacrament, and according to Christ's Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28, he is sending us to be the agents by which the gospel is spread.