

Lesson 17: First Article - Loving, Merciful, Gracious

“All this he does out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a kind father who cares for us so that no evil may befall us.”

- Dr. Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*: The First Article

Thesis:  
God forgives us  
because He is loving,  
merciful, and gracious.

Key question:  
What does it mean that  
God is loving,  
merciful, and gracious?

Catechism:  
Sverdrup's Questions  
123-135

Accompanying Bible  
Story:  
Exodus 14 – Crossing  
the Red Sea

My questions:

The people of Israel were stuck. God had just shown His power through the ten plagues He sent on the Egyptians. He had put to death the firstborn in Egypt. Pharaoh's will was finally broken. The people of Israel had been sent away to worship the Lord. But...

But God had led them to a dead end, it seemed. That, at least, was their conclusion. They began to panic as soon as they saw that Pharaoh had changed his mind. He was not so happy that he had driven his slaves out of Egypt. He called up his army and pursued them. He knew they were trapped; and they would either die or go back to Egypt, back into slavery. Behind them was the wilderness through which they had just traveled filled by Pharaoh and his army. Before them was the Red Sea, menacing, uncrossable. They were stuck.

The people grumbled and complained, crying out to God, asking why they had been brought to the wilderness to die. Moses spoke to them from God, though, the plan God had for them: “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.”

Then God parted the waters of the sea. A wind blew to dry the exposed ground. The people of Israel passed safely through the sea, its waters a high wall on each side of the way. As they reached the safety of the far shore, the Egyptians followed them. But God finished His plan by closing the gap. The Egyptians were drowned. As the story ends we read, “Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.”

It's a true story, but it is also a foreshadowing about what God did for us through Jesus. Because God loved His people Israel, He saved them from Egyptian slavery and death. They did not show themselves worthy. As a matter of fact, they only complained. But God showed them His mercy and graciously saved them by taking them on dry ground through the Red Sea. Because God loves us, He saves us from our slavery to sin. He has had mercy on us even though we do not deserve it. By His grace He has given us the path to life through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In this lesson we learn that God is loving, merciful, and gracious.

\* Copy the First Article of the Apostles' Creed.

\* Copy the end of the meaning for the First Article from your Lutheran *Small Catechism* beginning with "and that He does..."

\* Read and summarize Jeremiah 31:3.

\* Read and summarize John 3:16.

\* Read and summarize Romans 5:8.

\* What do these three verses tell us about why God wants to forgive us our sins?

\* Read and summarize Romans 15:8, 9.

\* Read and summarize Titus 3:5.

\* Read and summarize 1 Peter 1:3.

\* What do these three verses say about God's motivation to save?

\* Read and summarize Romans 3:24.

\* Read and summarize Ephesians 2:8.

\* Read and summarize Titus 2:11.

\* Which of His attributes does God use to bring about our salvation?

\* List all twelve attributes of God that we have learned in these lessons.

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What did I learn in this lesson (three or four sentences)?