

Lesson 27: Sanctification

“All this then, is the office and work of the Holy Spirit, to begin and daily to increase holiness on earth through these two means, the Christian church and the forgiveness of sins. Then, when we pass from this life, he will instantly perfect our holiness and will eternally preserve us in it by means of the last two parts of this article.”

- Dr. Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*: The Third Article of the Creed

Keys to Lesson 27:

Topic: Sanctification

Thesis: Sanctification is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit whereby He day by day renews the believer more and more after the image of God (Sverdrup 229).

Key question: How does the Holy Spirit sanctify us?

Catechism: Sverdrup Questions 228-236

Accompanying Bible Story: John 15:1-11 – The Vine and the Branches

Warm-up or review:

As students enter the classroom, have a task posted for them.

Options:

Finish paragraph from Lesson 26

Finish questions from Lesson 26

Finish Lesson 26 summary

Lesson 26 quick quiz

Read and summarize John 15:1-11

Read the Sverdrup questions assigned for this lesson

Introduce new lesson:

Options: Tomato plants don't go out in central Minnesota until June 1. It may not be too late to start plants indoors from seed.

If there is room on the church grounds, consider setting up a straw bale community garden. Do an online search for instructions.

Maybe the class can plant a fruit tree. Or maybe if one has been planted in previous years, a trip to the tree this time of the year can become a ritual and learning experience.

Read and discuss the student worksheet text

Spring! (At least it likely is if you live in the northern hemisphere.)

The sap in the trees starts to flow again now. The earth's rich nutrients are carried to the budding leaves. The leaves sprout out, and the new green fills the world in front of us. It's called "spring green," this first green that contrasts the grays and browns of winter.

Some of you may be helping to plant a garden. We eat the roots of plants like carrots and potatoes. We eat the leaves of plants like lettuce and spinach and kale. Some of our garden plants will produce vines from which we will harvest fruit: tomatoes and squash and pumpkin.

Some of you may have fruit trees, an orchard, where you will soon see flowers bloom. Bees and wind will pollinate the flowers. Fruit will start to grow. Over the summer, you might watch as the fruit, fed by the tree's sap, grows to edible size.

One of the necessary though often hard things to do, as a gardener, is prune the fruit trees or vegetable vines. Pruning means cutting off part of the plant: branches that won't produce fruit, extra leafy ends that rob the fruit of the needed sap. On a tomato vine, the suckers, or branches that grow out of a the "V" where other branches are attached to the stem, need be pinched off. Suckers don't produce good tomatoes. Instead, they unnecessarily use up the nutrients the tomatoes need.

Jesus must have been familiar with good gardening techniques. The Bible doesn't tell us whether or not his family had a garden while he was growing up, but they might have. What was plentiful in Israel during the years Jesus walked the earth were grape vines. It would not be surprising if Jesus had learned how to prune grape vines so they would produce a good crop of grapes. If he did not learn, at least he would have watched as others did the pruning.

Because the practice was so common, Jesus used the grape growing process as a metaphor to help us understand God's relationship with us. He called Himself the trunk of the grape vine. He called us the branches. He talked about our need to receive our life from Him just as the branches get their life from the trunk. He talked about pruning the branches to produce more fruit just as the Father works to shape our lives so we are fruitful in His kingdom.

We call this work by God, especially by the Holy Spirit, to renew us after His image, "sanctification."

Lesson:

Help the students work through the text and Bible passages in the student material.

*** Read the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed out loud.**

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.

*** Look at the Luther quote from the Large Catechism at the beginning of this lesson. What two things does the Holy Spirit use to increase holiness or sanctify us?**

The Holy Spirit uses the Christian church and the forgiveness of sins to increase holiness in us.

When will we be perfectly holy?

We will be perfectly holy when we pass from this life, when we die and go to heaven.

*** Use the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. What are the last two parts of this article the Holy Spirit will use to keeps us for eternity?**

The Holy Spirit will use the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting to keep us in eternity.

*** Look at the meaning to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed in your Lutheran Small Catechism. Copy the part of the meaning that explains the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.**

"...and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead and will grant everlasting life to me and to all who believe in Christ."

*** Read John 1:8, 9.**

He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

What does Jesus, the true Light, do?

Jesus, the true Light, enlightens us.

Put this verse into context. The “he” in verse 8 is John the Baptizer. John was not the Light, but John was a witness to the Light. The Light is identified as the Word in verse 4. The Word is identified as God incarnate in verse 14. God incarnate is finally named in verse 17.

Explain that Jesus opens the truth of God’s Word to us and helps us understand both justification and sanctification. You might ask the students to recall the last few lessons where we have studied justification. Point out that justification must happen before sanctification.

It is important that we keep this distinction throughout this lesson. Both justification and sanctification are the work of the Holy Spirit. Though Scripture uses words like “work” and “do” and “prove,” these are all in the context of what God does first. Never is sanctification something we do to earn salvation. Highlight through this lesson those questions that point to God’s working in and through us.

The following John 15 verses are not in sequence because we are showing the progressive order in justification and sanctification. As Jesus relates the metaphor, His order follows His narrative style. We do take some liberty in rearranging the verses to show identity, justification, and sanctification in that order.

*** Read John 15:5.**

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

What metaphor does Jesus use to refer to those in whom He lives?

Jesus says those in whom he lives (abides) are branches that must receive their life from Him, the Vine.

Note: “apart from Me you can do nothing”

*** Read John 15:3.**

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

What is already true about us if we are branches?

We are clean.

Pruning cleans off the dead so the living can flourish, which is the point of verse 2. If we are indeed branches, we are so because we have been cleansed, declared righteous, and justified.

How were we made pure?

We are clean because of the Word spoken to us.

Here is an opportunity to reconnect to how God gives us faith. Faith come by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. It is also an opportunity to “front load” for year two and the Means of Grace and Sacraments. The Word is the primary means of grace. The Sacraments are means of

grace because the Word says they are.

There is also a connection to 1 John 1:9. The Word says that when we confess our sins, God is faithful and right or just to forgive us our sins and *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness.

*** Read John 15:2.**

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

What does the vinedresser do to make the branches produce more fruit?

The vinedresser prunes the branches so they will produce (bear) more fruit.

What is Jesus saying about us with this metaphor?

Jesus is the vine. The Father is the vinedresser. We are the branches. God “prunes” us so that we will bear more fruit.

Space limitations prevent us from including all the possible Bible references that might apply here. Certainly we could include a discussion or at least a look at Galatians 5:22, 23: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* God is at work to produce in us the character traits there listed.

*** Read Philippians 2:12-16.**

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

There are a great many verses we can use to show the process and effects of sanctification. Romans 12 is a good starting place, but pretty much the end of any of Paul’s epistles has specific direction for living the Christian life. Philippians 2:12-16 is here included at the direction of those—including Martin Horn, Wade Mobley, and Todd Erickson—who worked on the scope and sequence and first writing of a few lessons in this curricula.

Who is at work in us?

God is at work in us.

Even though the text itself says “work out your salvation,” it is to be understood that sanctification is God’s work.

Why is He at work?

God is at work “both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

What God does in us is for His glory because it pleases Him. One of the truths about Jesus that ought to be continually held in awe is that He willingly went to the cross for us. So great is God's love for us that He emptied Himself of "Godness", became a servant, humbled Himself first into humanity and then to death on the cross because He loves us and wants to be in relationship with us. He wants to forgive our sins and give us the gift of salvation and life everlasting.

What attitude does God create in us about Him?

God creates within us an attitude of fear and trembling.

A beautiful juxtaposition exists between fear and fear. See for example Luke 12:5-7: "*But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.*" First, fear the One who has authority to cast into hell. We need to regain or reclaim a healthy fear of God, a healthy understanding of what it means that the Creator of the universe is indeed angry at our sinfulness. Paul calls it the wrath of God poured out against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Romans 1:18). But then, we come to the end of Jesus' words and we find there is no cause for fear as even He says, "Do not fear, you are more valuable than many sparrows."

What is the result of God's work in our lives?

When God works in our lives, we "do all things without grumbling or disputing" and we prove ourselves "to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach."

How is the world described?

The world is a "crooked and perverse generation."

What relationship does God want us to have with the world?

We are lights to the world.

Here we come full circle to the John 1 text. Jesus the Light of the world shines through us so that we can be lights to the world.

To what should we hold tight?

We hold tight to the word of life.

Before students write their learning summaries or SEE paragraphs, help them to complete the circle. Jesus shines truth into our lives. He chose us. By His Word He cleansed us and made us His. The Holy Spirit continues to work in us "day by day" renewing us "after the image of God." As we live out our God image witnessing God's work in our lives to the world, we do so without grumbling or arguing proving that the Word of life has indeed declared us right and just (blameless and innocent).

Summary:

Options:

Students write questions in their question column

Students write a three to four sentence summary: What did I learn in this lesson?

Students write a SEE paragraph

Possible paragraph prompt:

How does the Holy Spirit sanctify us?

Sample paragraph:

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us by giving us the Christian church through which God's Word is proclaimed and by forgiving our sins. Dr. Martin Luther explained the end of the Apostles' Creed with these words: "in this Christian Church, He daily forgives abundantly all my sins and the sins of all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead and will grant everlasting life to me and to all who believe in Christ." God gave His Church the Word. Through His Word God declares that my confessed sins are forgiven. When God forgave my sin, He changed me and made me His blameless and innocent child. That is sanctification.

John 15:1-11

1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. 11 These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”