LD 6; Heb. 1:1-4; Heb. 4:14-5:10 “Knowing the Good News” I. What He is Like II. What He Does III. How We Know Him

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing the truth is very important. There are so many people in our world living in ignorance of their own peril. God is just- a God of wrath and vengeance- a consuming fire. Yet there is good news- He is also a God of love, mercy and grace. But how do we know this? Can we be sure that God is kind and compassionate? Think of all those people living in Rock Valley. Do think that those people living in Rock Valley would like to know that the levee was about to break? Was it wise of the city to sound the alarm so that people could flee to higher ground? What would happen if you ignore the warning and just stayed in bed? But not only knowing how great their peril was is important- it is equally important to know where to go to find safety. In what direction will they find deliverance? Well- today we are going to find that our God graciously reveals the good news to us. God tells us which direction to go in order to find safety! Last week we saw that salvation is possible- a substitute who will pay our debt will satisfy God’s justice. This week week find out who this substitute is specifically. Added to this- where do we learn about the identity and work of this one who will save? If you were on a ship that was sinking- finding and getting into a lifeboat is your first concern! Well then- since we as humans are on a ship that is sinking- how grateful we are that the message of deliverance is passed on to us! So today we see that our gracious God reveals the good news to a dying race for their comfort!

**I. What He is Like**

To begin, in our first point we focus in on the marks of this one mediator and acceptable sacrifice. In order for a substitute to take our place, what must He be like? As we considered last week, there are specific requirements that must be met in order for someone to be our substitute. Last time we saw that no other creature could take on our burden because they were all disqualified. First, God would not judge another creature for the sin of mankind, and second, it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away our sins. But the fact remains, blood must be shed. And that blood must be the blood of a man. Added to this, sinners cannot pay for the sins of others. Any substitute must then be a fully righteous man as we saw in QA 15. This week, as we come to QA 16 the answer comes in an even clearer form. Our mediator, substitute and savior must be a man because man sinned- thus a man must pay for the sins of humanity. He must be one with us- one of us! A son of Adam and a descendant of Abraham according to the covenant. One of the reasons that we have the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3 that traces the lineage of Jesus all the way back to Seth and Adam is to prove his genuine human nature. The incarnation is proof of His fully human status- being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Added to this, the body that Jesus took on is one that is like us in every way. He took on a true body and soul. Remember that the Catechism is called a book of comfort. You can enjoy comfort for your body and soul- and the reason that you have comfort for your body and soul is because Jesus took on our nature- He took on a body and soul to provide comfort to your body and soul. This fact also equips Jesus to be an intercessor like no other. Since He knows what it is like to be a human- He knows what it is like to be tempted, to suffer, to cry, to experience pain in the body and anguish of the soul. He knows and understands- it is in this way that you can pray to Jesus knowing that He understands you! He is the compassionate and merciful High Priest. As Heb. 4:15 identifies, Jesus our high priest is able to sympathize with us because He has been tempted as we are, and yet without sin. So when you are praying to Jesus, you can know that He understands. But more than that- He knows how to resist temptation! He is like us in every way- and yet He remains without sin! As we also saw last week, no sinner could pay for the sins of others. He needs to be righteous as QA 16 continues- because no sinner could pay for another sinner. You would never ask someone with dirty hands to wash your clothes for you. Jesus knows how to resist temptation- for He was able to resist the Devil for 40 days in the wilderness! His clean hands can cleanse you! When you are tempted- what better advocate than one who is like you and one who has already gone through the fire and remained unstained. But being a true and righteous man is not enough. More is needed- greater power and worth. QA 17 then goes on to explain why no mere man could ever pay for the sins of humanity. He needs to be more than just a man- He has to be divine! He is both the Son of Man and the Son of God! Indeed, this is a mystery. He is fully man and fully divine! One with the Father and one with us! This too is for our comfort! What good would it do to ask for help from someone who was not able to help! For example, when we visit with someone who is sick or with someone who has just lost a loved one, our ability to do anything about the situation is rather limited. We cannot heal the sick nor can we raise the dead. Sympathy can only go so far- but what if the one who is compassionate is also the one who can do something about it! For example, consider that Jesus helps us in our need and gives us what we need! When we are tempted, and we cry out to Jesus- in His sympathy He can understand our trial for He is a man who was tempted like us! But more than that- since He is divine- He is able by way of His Spirit to really help us! To enable us to resist temptation and resist the evil one! Consider also the example of Jesus going to the tomb of Lazarus. In His humanity, Jesus shows great sympathy and compassion to Mary and Martha! Remember that Jesus wept- He showed real human emotion and sorrow! So Jesus is fully man! But that is not all that Jesus did! It is this same Jesus who said- Lazarus, come out! It was at the call of the Son of God that the dead man was raised! So as God’s people, the humanity and divinity of Jesus are both necessary in order for us to enjoy the full blessing and comfort that we need! The issue of this point is clear. What nature must our Savior have? Well, in order to be a qualified substitute he has to be fully man. And in order to be an able substitute, He has to be fully God! A mediator is one who brings peace between two warring parties. Heb. 4-5 make it clear- the twofold nature of Jesus enables Him to be compassionate, sympathetic and gentle. Yet also perfect and powerful! Jesus is uniquely gifted to be our mediator because He is a member of the offending race- as well as one with the supreme judge who has been offended!

**II. What He Does**

As we move on- we find that the good news is not only who Jesus is but what He does! We can start by looking at this question in relation to the obedience of Jesus Christ. A Mediator- as we find in QA 18- is one who stands between and brings peace. Christ’s work brings reconciliation between two warring parties- man and God are at odds and cannot dwell together in peace- unless a mediator come and sue for settlement and reunion! So then- a relationship is secured by Jesus Christ- what was once hostility is replaced by peace. But how was it possible for Jesus to bring peace between God and man? Well- that answer is found in His active and passive obedience as we saw last week. In the passive obedience of Christ, He willingly suffered on our behalf- paying for our sins as QA16 says and bearing the weight of God’s anger as QA 17 says. Or as Is. 53 relates- the iniquity of us all was laid on Him! By taking on this punishment- He satisfied the justice and appeased the wrath of God- called propitiation. But more than that- He also by His active obedience perfectly kept all the Laws and commands of God! He obeyed His Father’s will in all things- doing what we failed to do- and kept every requirement for us and on our behalf. In this way, he was sent to fulfill all righteousness as Mt. 3 says- He secures blessings and righteousness for us! So we can see that he both died for our sins- but also lived for our righteousness! As Heb 1:3 says- He made purification for our sins.

But we can also find an answer to the question- what is the good news- by looking at what we receive-

what is the benefit we get from this work of Christ? The answer is our justification! A two-fold blessing is here- both the removal of debt and the securing of blessings! Being justified means that we are not only declared guilt free- we are also declared righteous and holy! Not only are our sins washed away- we are also clothed in the righteous robes of Christ! Because of Christ’s work, we are spared from wrath and granted blessings- the curse removed and restored to life and righteousness as QA 17 says. This is what we call double imputation- our sins placed on Christ- His perfect life given to us! By now it is clear- why is message of Jesus called good news? Why is the content called a joyful message? Because in this we find out how we can be forgiven of our sins, restored to a good relationship with God- we can not only flee the coming wrath but also enter into the joys of eternal life! This is what the gospel reveals! This is the heart of what makes us joyful, thankful Christians! Whatever may befall us- this blessing that Jesus grants is secure! That is why this message is called a hidden treasure- a pearl of great price! It is here that we find good news! We all need good news -there is so much bad new out there. So many causes of worry and fear. So many needs and concerns. It is good to know that someone knows how to help!

**III. How We Know**

Now that we understand what the good news is- who Jesus is and what He has done- we conclude by looking at how we come to know this! Just because salvation is possible does not mean that the way is clearly known or revealed. Is the gospel like a hidden path- overgrown with bushes? Or like a secret door that God hides? If the work of Jesus Christ is the content- the reason why we can have hope; what our 3rd point considers is how do we know this? In what way has this message been delivered to us? QA 19 is a reflection of QA 3- how do we come to know our sin and misery? By the Law. So now- how do we come to know about our salvation and savior? By the gospel! As we find in John 1:17- for the law was given though Moses but grace and truth came through Christ Jesus. But where and when do we read about Jesus? Well- as QA 19 sets before us- the gospel was actually revealed right away in the beginning! In Genesis 3- after God had revealed the consequences of sin- He also chose to reveal the good news! There would be hostility between the man and the serpent- between the seed of the woman and the serpent- and that hostility would end when that promised seed would crush the head of the serpent! In the context of the fall into sin- there is the mother promise of One who would crush the instigator or the fall. AS QA 19 says- God began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise. And as time progressed- this message of good news came in various manners, times and ways. The joyful message revealed to various people throughout the ages. As we found in our text from Heb. 1, long ago at many times and ways- God spoke to our fathers. These various ways included Theophanies- where God appeared and spoke to the patriarchs like Abraham and Moses. God also spoke by dreams and visions- as Jacob and Joseph experienced. God sent prophets like Isaiah and Ezekiel to be a mouthpiece of God- reminding the Israelites who God is, what He has done and how His people should respond! But God also worked through history itself- the exodus out of Egypt itself was a giant sermon telling of God’s deliverance. And as QA 19- the ceremonies and the sacrifices portrayed the good news- that forgiveness of sin could be received only with the shedding of blood- that the Israelites were called to be a holy and clean people. In all of these times and ways- God was revealing Himself. You see- the good news cannot be known to man by natural revelation. The gospel is only understood by Special Revelation. And through the ages one message is progressively revealed. That there is hope for the lost mankind- that salvation is possible by God’s hand! All of these dreams, ceremonies and pronouncements were leading to one- specific event! As Heb. 1:2 says- in these last days He has spoken to us by his Son whom He appointed heir of all things. Or as QA 19 concludes- God fulfilled the gospel through His own dear Son. You see- as Luke 24:44 says- the Law of Moses and the Psalms and the Prophets all reveal Him- they point to Jesus and His work! Jesus is the fulfillment- the culmination of the Gospel! He is the good news incarnate! There is one gospel message and one messenger- the unfolding revelation though the ages were leading up to this one event- the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ! He is God’s last Word- the perfect and clear revelation of what we need to know in order to be saved! So the Apostles recorded what Jesus said and did- and now the Spirit applies this recorded Word- and in this way God continues to speak today. The Holy Spirit does speak today- but the words of the Spirit are found in the Word of God- the Bible is the final and complete recording- in it we find everything we need to know for our salvation! Everything we need to know about the person and work of Christ is here recorded! It is so important to have good sources today. Social media just feeds you what you want to hear and reinforces your own bias. But a true, objective source of truth? Where can you find that? Well, there is only one source of truth! And that source has both promised and revealed our only savior! To be clear- this message of salvation is not hidden- it is not a secret door that only a few see- Jesus makes this message loud and clear- come to me all you who are weary- and I will give you rest! Good news is only beneficial only if we can hear it! The truth valuable to those who know! We are living in the flood plain- the siren is sounding- flee the coming wrath! Flee to Jesus- He is the hill upon which we can find rescue! Jesus wants everyone to know- there is a way to be saved! That is why we are so willing to tell others- our God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked- rather that they would turn and be healed as Ez. 18 says!

To conclude, our gracious God reveals the good news to a dying race! The good news is this- a Savior has been born- He is Christ the Lord! Jesus has come- and has purchased our salvation- suffering in our place and purchasing righteousness on our behalf! This good news is revealed in the Word and by the Word- and is for all men! Praise God for revealing good news to us! That we can know Jesus as our Mediator! Who is this mediator- this true God and man? Who is the only one who can save- the only name under heaven by which we can be rescued? He is our Lord Jesus Christ- the Son of God and the Son of Man. He remains both the promised and the perfect mediator!