

THE MEANS OF GRACE

THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS

DEVOTION

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What do you believe according to these words?

I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19)

“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 18:18)

FOR SHARING

1. An atheist once remarked, “What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness. I have nobody to forgive me.” Describe, in your own words, life without forgiveness.
2. The pastor, as a “called and ordained servant of the Word,” speaks for Christ on behalf of the entire congregation. How does receiving absolution from a pastor compare to receiving a pardon from the governor?
3. God’s mercy is available to all people, but only those who are repentant and who trust in Christ receive forgiveness. What is true repentance? What is saving faith?
4. God’s gift of forgiveness in Christ is free, but it isn’t cheap. Explain.
5. Why does confession and absolution most often occur at the beginning of the Christian worship service?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I come to You fully aware of my sinfulness. But I also know that I have been forgiven by Your Son’s sacrifice on the cross. Give me wisdom and strength to point others to Your mercy in Jesus. Help me live in forgiveness with my brothers and sisters in Christ and with all people. In Jesus’ name. Amen.