

# 3

## DIVINE SERVICE FOR THE DEPARTED

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### Objective

The confirmands know that through their prayers for the souls in the beyond they can help along in the work of salvation.

### Contents

Help for unredeemed souls.  
Significance of the divine service for the departed.  
What we can do.

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### Hint

This lesson should be taught before a divine service for the departed.

## 1 Lead-in

### Tell

*Lazarus and  
the rich man*

There once was a rich man who lived a life of ease every day. Lazarus on the other hand was a poor man who had to live on the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. When the two died Lazarus went to be with Abraham. The rich man however, went into a realm where he suffered in agony. When he saw Lazarus with Abraham in the far distance he shouted, "Father Abraham have pity! Send Lazarus to me to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames" (cf. Luke 16: 19–31).

## 2 The various realms in the beyond

### Ask

**Why did these two men go into different realms after they died?**

### Listen to answers and summarise

*Death does not change  
the soul's condition*

When people die their soul goes into the realm in the beyond that corresponds to its condition during their lifetime. For example, if they permitted themselves to be influenced and became liars, thieves, unbelievers, mockers, etc. then this is the spiritual condition in which they go into the beyond. Their soul also continues to be burdened with all the sins which have not been forgiven. Consequently the souls of the departed can find themselves in prisons or dark realms.

In the beyond we also find the dead in Jesus Christ. This group also includes those who have received the sacraments in the beyond. Like us, they wait for the return of Christ and prepare themselves for it.

## 3 Help for unredeemed souls

### Ask

**How can these souls find out about God's activity of salvation?**

**Elaborate on answers through further questions**

*Jesus preached to Noah's contemporaries*

*They testify to God's grace*

*Prayers are indications of love*

## – Where did Jesus go and what did He do after His death?

Apostle Peter writes: "... by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine long-suffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3: 19–20).

## – What is the role of those children of God who are already in the beyond?

We believe that redeemed children of God in the beyond bring the gospel of Christ to the unredeemed souls. They point to the fact that God wants to help them come to the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Timothy 2: 3-4) and find redemption.

## – What can we do for the souls in the beyond?

Even in the old covenant people interceded for the dead (cf. 2 Maccabees 12: 43–45). In the new covenant the means for salvation are offered. In 1 Corinthians 15: 29 it says that the faithful in the early church were baptised for the dead. We too want to plead with our heavenly Father to help the unredeemed souls in the beyond. Our prayers for these souls are indications of our love for our fellow human beings (see also section 5).

## 4 Divine service for the departed

**Explain**

In section 3 the confirmands were shown that the souls in the beyond can also be brought testimony about God's work and the grace born out of Jesus' sacrifice. They are invited to each divine service. Yonder realms are opened through the once brought sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice provides free access to salvation for each soul longing for redemption and salvation.

Three times a year (on the first Sunday of the months of March, July, and November) there are divine services for the departed in which the sacraments are dispensed to them.

**Ask**

**Listen to answers and supplement**

*Souls are permitted to participate in the divine services ...*

## What happens in a divine service for the departed?

Through His sacrifice the Lord Jesus procured the opportunity for souls who are in the beyond to be redeemed. Departed souls who have recognised their condition and long for redemption are able to receive forgiveness (cf. John 20: 23) and the sacraments (cf. 1 Corinthians 15: 29) at Christ's altar established on earth. For this they have to come to the place where the means of grace are dispensed through Jesus' Apostles. After His death on the cross Jesus Christ preached the gospel to the souls in the beyond (cf. 1 Peter 3: 19–20 and 4: 6).

*... they hear  
God's word...*

During the divine service these souls hear God's word just as we do. After the forgiveness of sins and celebration of Holy Communion the officiant prays. In this prayer he expresses his gratitude that through Jesus' Apostles the means of grace, redemption, and salvation can also be dispensed for unredeemed souls from the beyond. He also expresses his joy that by receiving the sacraments these souls, together with us, constitute one spiritual fellowship.

*... and receive the  
sacraments.*

The Chief Apostle, District Apostles, or an Apostle so commissioned will then dispense the sacraments for the departed. Souls who have not yet been baptised may first receive Holy Baptism. The gift of the Holy Spirit is dispensed upon those who are prepared accordingly. Afterwards Holy Communion is dispensed for the departed. Two ministers serve as proxies for the departed during the dispensation of the sacraments (cf. 1 Corinthians 15: 29).

That which is done upon these souls will have an effect upon their condition in the beyond.

## 5 How can we be of help to the souls in the beyond?

**Explain**

It is our responsibility to be of help to all unredeemed souls in the beyond. We are prepared for this task on the Sunday before the service for the departed.

**Workbook exercise**

The confirmands now work on the exercise in their workbook. Unlike the list which is to be prepared as homework these lists are of a general nature and continue to be valid.

The idea is to help the children conclude that we are to pray for all without prejudice. When there is an accident the doctors do not first ask who is to blame for this accident. Instead they help each of the injured in the same manner. Our responsibility as God's children is not to judge. Instead we intercede with God on behalf of each and every one.

**Ask**

**When do we pray?**

**Listen to answers  
and supplement**

We include the souls in the beyond in every prayer. Before a divine service for the departed though we especially pray for them. They are to

- overcome everything that separates them from God (hatred, irreconcilability, etc.), and
- accept Jesus Christ as their Redeemer.

**The main points**

**I also want to ...**     **... pray for the souls in the beyond!**

**Homework**

The confirmands consider the souls in the beyond for whom they especially want to intercede. On a separate sheet of paper (not in their workbook) they write the names of all those they want to pray for.