

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Middle School · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

O Lord, keep Your family the Church continually in the true faith that, relying on the hope of Your heavenly grace, we may ever be defended by Your mighty power; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Which part is missing?

***Answer:** Address: "O Lord." Petition: "keep Your family the Church continually in the true faith." Purpose: "that, relying on the hope of Your heavenly grace, we may ever be defended by Your mighty power." Ending: "through Jesus Christ..." The reason is missing.*

2. The collect calls the Church God's "family." What does that say about us?

***Answer:** We belong to God by adoption in Baptism. We are brothers and sisters under our Father's care.*

3. Why ask to be kept in the faith "continually"?

***Answer:** Faith does not sustain itself, and the attacks on it never stop. The Spirit keeps us day by day.*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

Matthew 13:24-30

24 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, **25** but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. **26** So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. **27** And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' **28** He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' **29** But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

1. Jesus explains this parable in Matthew 13:37-39. Who is the enemy?

***Answer:** The devil (v. 39).*

2. Why doesn't the master pull the weeds right away?

***Answer:** Pulling them would damage the wheat. Final judgment belongs to God at the harvest, and until then He is patient.*

3. The weeds were likely darnel, which looks like wheat until it ripens. What does that teach?

***Answer:** False faith and false teaching can look like the real thing. Only God sees the heart.*

4. Does this parable mean the Church should never correct false teaching or discipline its members?

Answer: No. The parable is about the world and the final judgment, not a ban on church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17). What it forbids is anyone playing God by trying to root people out.

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

Answer: "Keep Your family the Church" matches the master protecting his wheat (v. 29). "The true faith" matches the good seed set against the weeds (vv. 24-25). "Defended by Your mighty power" matches the enemy's attack (vv. 25, 28). "The hope of Your heavenly grace" matches the wheat gathered into the barn (v. 30). Any two, well explained, are enough.

2. 2 Timothy 2:19 says, "But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his.'" How does that comfort Christians who cannot tell wheat from weeds?

Answer: We do not have to sort people. The Lord knows His own and will keep them.

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The Third Article. 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. **What does this mean?** I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. **In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.** In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Cross-reference. "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." (Ephesians 2:19)

1. Luther says the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church." In Jesus' explanation, who sows the good seed (Matthew 13:37)?

Answer: The Son of Man. Christ plants His people by His Word, and the Spirit gathers them.

2. How does the Spirit keep the Church "in the one true faith" while weeds grow nearby?

Answer: Through the Word and Sacraments. He keeps what He has planted.

3. Ephesians calls believers "members of the household of God." Which word in the collect matches?

Answer: "Family."

Parent note: the question they may ask. "How can I know if I am wheat or a weed?" Do not look inward for proof; look to Christ's promises. Wheat grows from the good seed of His Word. A person who hears the Word, is baptized, repents, and trusts Christ is wheat. The Lord knows those who are His (2 Timothy 2:19).

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short collect of your own for this day. Use all five parts.

Answer: Answers will vary. Example: "O Lord, You guard Your wheat until the harvest. Keep us in Your true faith and protect us from the enemy, that we may be gathered into Your barn; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for you in His Church?

Answer: *He keeps me in the true faith by His Word and Spirit, and at the harvest He will gather me into His barn, which is heaven.*