



Reformation Lutheran Church

“Come and See, Learn and Rejoice, Go and Tell!”

September 2020

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” - Matthew 18:1 - It sure seems like there are lot of people out there who think they’re really great. Just ask them and they’ll tell you so! Seems like if you’re truly great, you won’t have to tell anyone. They’ll see it when they look at you, when they observe how you live your life, so there’s no need to post on social media to try and convince people. In Jesus’ opinion, it’s not the CEO’s of the world, or the top ten richest people, or even powerful elected officials. It’s the most humble who are great in God’s eyes. Maybe there’s something to learn there.

In typical paradoxical fashion, Jesus pulls a small child onto his lap for an object lesson. “See this child,” he says to his disciples, “this here is what greatness looks like.” The child hadn’t accomplished a thing. He hadn’t even finished his schooling yet. He simply believed in Jesus and was open to his teaching. Greatness is a matter of faith; it’s a simple, yet profound belief in the power and authority of Jesus, and that boy had it!

We all know that faith is a gift we receive from the Holy Spirit. It’s not something we even ask for, it is simply given to us. However, it seems to be our human propensity to try and measure it, much as the disciples were trying to measure greatness. There are times, aren’t there, when we wish we could give it to others. For instance when someone is struggling with a fatal disease and questions the very existence or goodness of God. But faith is not ours to give. We can pray for the Holy Spirit to give faith, but it’s not in our power to bestow it on our loved ones or anyone else. If we had that power we would probably find a way to misuse it, anyway. Only the greatest to ever live has that power and he, when quizzed about who is truly great, points to a child as Exhibit A.

This is quite humbling to us, and it should be. We strive to be great leaders, great church people, great neighbors, etc. But still it all boils down to simple faith, faith like a child. It’s not a contest anyway - it’s an invitation to walk with Jesus as he transforms the world one heart at a time. It’s okay not to be greatest! There’s always going to be someone better. If you want to see who that is, just look at the child sitting in front of you.

Pr.

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

I love this verse! I have given it as an “8th grade graduation” verse to many of my former students. That said, do I always take it to heart? Nope. Sometimes I still look up to Heaven and say, “Really God? What in the world?” This verse has been on my mind a lot recently though. Remember the chaos and dread surrounding school opening that I mentioned last month? Has it gone away? Nope. But....it has gotten better. Keeping in mind that God has a plan – always for GOOD – is helping me (most of the time anyway) to keep some perspective and not let myself veer off into negativity. That’s so easy to do when that is so much of what surrounds us these days. It’s a daily effort, but I know God has only good things in store. I know because He said so and He always keeps His promises!

Peace be with you,
Gabi

Treasurer's Report: Many thanks to the folks who are keeping up with their tithes and adding to the building fund each month. Thanks to Mel and Ingrid for their donation to start a Flower Fund! It'll come in handy whenever we wish to send flowers to someone.

Blessings to all,
Judy

Fellowship: Nothing is planned for the moment, but we'll get started again soon! (I've been saying that for a few months now. Hopefully, soon will actually be SOON!)

Property: Work day will be Saturday, September 26th.

Education – Our in person Bible study will resume at some point in life. 😊

Worship and Music: WORSHIP AND MUSIC Not a lot has changed since last month. We are holding Sunday services each week with social distancing as the rule. It continues to work well. We still have a few people who don't feel safe yet, which is fine, so the service and Pastor Jon's audio sermons are being sent to everyone who doesn't make the Sunday morning service. We did have some good news on Sunday, August 30, when Junior was able to come back for the service. Karen is also doing fine, and is essentially recovered from Covid, but she is having some re-occurring back issues which have hampered her return.

The new organ is great! Lynn is mastering all of the new capabilities, so each Sunday brings some beautiful music with some new additions.

Our Monday devotion is continuing with the Lord's Prayer. For the next four weeks we will be reviewing the second, third, fourth and fifth petitions.

Mission and Ministry: Fall, leading into winter, is usually one of our biggest times for Outreach activities. With concerns about Covid, we will likely have to revamp the way we do some things, but the opportunities are out there! Please share any ideas you have!



September 18th – Donna Maness



"The breezes taste
Of apple peel.
The air is full
Of smells to feel-
Ripe fruit, old footballs,
Burning brush,
New books, erasers,
Chalk, and such.

The bee, his hive,
Well-honeyed hum,
And Mother cuts
Chrysanthemums.
Like plates washed clean
With suds, the days
Are polished with
A morning haze. "

- John Updike, *September*

September

Sunday – September 6th – executive council

Sunday – September 13th – council

Saturday – September 26th – cleanup day beginning at 9:00



| | <u>Sept. 6</u> | <u>Sept. 13</u> | <u>Sept. 20</u> | <u>Sept. 27</u> |
|--------------------|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Altar Guild | Carolyn | Judy | Junior | Wayne |
| Comm. Asst. | none needed as we are currently using intinction during communion | | | |
| Usher | Junior | Carolyn | Judy | Wayne |
| Lector | Gabi | Wayne | Chuck | Junior |
| Sermon | Pastor | Pastor | Pastor | Pastor |



REFORMATION SUNDAY

We are working our way toward October 25, which is Reformation Sunday...for Lutherans, one of the most special Sundays of the year. Here is some information to help set the stage for Reformation Sunday.

Luther's Theological Legacy: Trusting Jesus Christ – Alone.

In December 1536, Martin Luther thought that his death was near and, in fact, he nearly did die. His territorial ruler, John the Constant of Saxony, had enlisted him to prepare a summary of Lutheran teaching in preparation for a possible church council. Luther delivered, as he had in the past, but not before suffering a serious heart attack during the writing. The product of his work that winter would eventually be included in the collection of the authoritative Lutheran confessional writings, the Book of Concord of 1580. Early on in this piece he wrote:

Here is the first and chief article: That Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, “was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification” (Romans 4:25); and He alone is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29); and “the Lord has laid on Him the inequality of us all”(Isaiah 53:6); furthermore “All have sinned,” and “they are now justified without merit by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...by His blood” (Romans 3:25)

Notice that Luther develops this “first and chief article” by simply weaving together four familiar Bible passages. This is a fitting method for Luther, for he had been a professor of Bible at the University of Wittenberg for much of the past quarter century – and he was convinced that these particular passages spoke for themselves, without any need for extensive commentary on his part.

But it had not always been that way. Early in his career, even after he had begun teaching, the word of God had not been so clear to him. Indeed, as he read the Bible then, he heard its demands and its accusations more clearly than its promises or its consolation. It was only when he had learned – after much prayer, study, and experience – to distinguish between **law and gospel** that the Word of God came alive for him. For then he came to read the Bible as above all the book that brought him the gospel of Jesus Christ, which did not demand for him ever more and ever better works. Now the Word invited him only to hear and trust the promises of him who had died and risen again FOR HIM...(and for us – CH) The personal righteousness that he was helpless to produce on his own was God's gift to him in Jesus Christ. Luther would come to call this the “righteousness of faith.” The gift of Christ's righteousness, which Luther came to appreciate fully in about 1518 was too good to keep confined to a university classroom. The gospel, as Luther had come to understand it, would transform not only his own theology and life and that of his immediate followers, but the teaching and lives for great numbers in the Christian church as well.

If men and women were free – in Jesus Christ – from any need to please God by their own efforts or activities, they were now free to express their faith in all manner of service to their neighbors. St Paul had described this Christian ethics as “faith active in love” (Galatians 5:6). Luther would call it simply “vocation.” By this he meant that the gospel of Jesus Christ calls people to trust the mercy of God for every temporal and eternal need; and they in turn are invited to recognize their ordinary settings in life as places and opportunities for sacrificial service to others. No longer were some works valued or esteemed more highly than others. This was true even of works that sixteenth-century church and society deemed as particularly “religious.” Instead, the daily and routine tasks of life are perhaps even more important. Why? Because God has no need for human works, but the flesh-and-blood neighbor in need certainly does. Luther himself pulled these thoughts together beautifully in his Large Catechism of 1529.

How could you be more blessed or lead a holier life, as far as works are concerned? In God's sight it is actually faith and makes a person holy; it alone serves God, while our works serve people. Here you have every blessing, protection, and shelter under the Lord, and, what is more a joyful conscience and a gracious God who will reward you a hundredfold (Explanation of the 4th Commandment).

The published writings of Martin Luther number literally thousands of pages. But the core of his thought can be captured in the conviction that Jesus Christ is a “mirror of the Father's heart.” To know and be embraced by the love of God in Jesus Christ is the single greatest gift one can ever receive. It is Martin Luther's theological legacy that he unpacked that gift – its meaning and its implications – for his students and his parishioners. Thus, he has passed it on to all those who trust Jesus Christ today.

