



Reformation Lutheran Church

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

July 2023

“At that time Jesus declared, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.’” -Matthew 11:25-26

Within the context of this passage, Jesus is rebuking the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum since they would not repent despite the miracles that Jesus did in their midst. In so doing, he tells them that on Judgment Day, it will be better for the cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom than for them since these latter would have repented had Jesus done comparable miracles in them. It is at this point that Jesus thanks his heavenly Father for hiding divine things from the wise while revealing them to children.

But this raises an important question. What does Jesus mean by “revealing”? After all, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum saw the miracles of Jesus. Doesn’t that count as “revealing”? The answer seems to be that there is both outer and inner revelation. In outer revelation God presents Himself to the human senses from without. In inner revelation, by contrast, God opens human hearts to receive outer revelation. The problem with Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum is that God did not give them the inner revelation to receive the outer revelation of Jesus’ miracles. As a result, the outer revelation merely hardened their hearts, rather than convincing them.

The need for inner revelation follows from something that Lutherans call “the bondage of the will.” Because the will is bound in sin, it is spiritually dead—not just sick—until God quickens it and sets it free. Thus, the natural will resists God incessantly. Its problem is not intellectual but moral. It knows the truth but suppresses this truth in unrighteousness. It cannot believe because it will not believe, and it will not believe because it is fallen, evil, and hard. Hence, we are not merely saved by faith in Christ, but rather saved by grace through faith in Christ. After all, God must first overcome our resistance and work saving faith in us before we can believe in Christ.

For these reasons Lutherans believe in salvation by God’s grace alone (monergism), and not by a cooperation of our will with God (synergism). Because our will is spiritually dead, not just sick, we cannot make a decision for Christ to be born again. Rather, we must be born again to make a decision for Christ. God must open our hearts within before we can receive his revelation from without. Otherwise, his word will bounce off our hearts like a marble off a stone.

Pr.

Prayer for the Church: Heavenly Father, we know you have plans for your church – specifically for Reformation Lutheran Church – that are for your glory. The Bible says the church is your house, you dwell in the midst of your people. We ask your wisdom and support as we seek to honor your purposes for us. May Christ dwell in our hearts through faith so that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength to know and share the love of Christ that surpasses all understanding. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

“God bless America, land that I love. Stand beside her, and guide her, through the night with the light from above.” Irving Berlin

Independence Day! Every year we remember those whose bravery earned our freedom from England and those men and women over the years who sacrificed for America to continue to be a free country. As Christians, we value the freedom in our country and the freedom we have in Christ Jesus. We have freedom over sin and darkness when we follow Christ. I think we’re all shaking our heads over some of the craziness going on in our country right now. It seems people are seeking freedom from Christ and his precepts. We need God. We need His guidance. We need His love and mercy. We need to share that with others! We need to pray! The ancient words of the Psalmist are still true, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.” Let’s continue to do our part at RLC to make it so.

Peace be with you, Gabi



July 2nd – Tammy Jensen

July 10th – Stephanie Stephens

July 11th – Keith Owen

July 12th – Pastor Jon Jensen

July 23rd – Wayne Ramming

JULY CALENDAR

Sunday – July 2nd – Service – 10:30 a.m

Sunday – July 9th – Service – 10:30 a.m.; Executive Council after service

Sunday – July 16th – Service – 10:30 a.m.; Council after service

Sunday – July 23rd – Service – 10:30 a.m.

Saturday – July 29th – Clean-up Day – 9:00 a.m.

Sunday – July 30th – Service – 10:30 a.m.

	July 2	July 9	July 16	July 23	July 30
Altar Guild	Wayne	Carolyn	Junior	Tammy	Amy
Usher	Junior	Wayne	Carolyn	Junior	Carolyn
Lector	Amy	Chuck	Wayne	Gabi	Lynne
Sermon	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor	Wayne	Pastor
Thrive	Gabi	Pastor	Wayne	Gabi	Pastor
Oaks			Chuck		Chuck

Fellowship: Let's have a cookout! We can talk in church, but maybe something either before school starts, or shortly after, when more folks are likely to be around.

Property: Our July clean-up day will be Saturday, the 29th, 9:00 a.m. Helping hands are always welcome!

Education: We have enjoyed learning about the differences between Lutheranism and other Christian religions around the world. Join us in the fall as we study the topic of spiritual warfare.

Worship and Music: We are well into the season of Trinity, the longest season of the church year.

We will begin our Bible class in September. It will be based on the book, *The Sword and The Mask – Building an Antifragile Approach to Spiritual Warfare* by The Rev. Dr. Jon C. Furgeson. Also, a prerequisite for the class is to read or listen to the YouTube audio of *This Present Darkness* by Frank Peretti.

How many of us really remember the “what does this mean” from our days in catechism class? Over the next months, we'll go back and review beginning with the 10 Commandments.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT – You shall have no other gods.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN – We should fear, love and trust in God above all things. We fear God above all things when we revere Him alone as the highest being, honor Him with our lives, and avoid what displeases Him.

Mission and Ministry: We are about to have one project in the works where we will be providing food to Focus Food Bank. There is always a great need there. I am still trying to get more information from the foster care organization that I mentioned before. School is going to start soon, and I'm sure there will be needs in several different areas. All ideas are welcome!

WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH “Preachers, Pietists, and Socialists: Finns in North America ”

"The Finns are different." This sentiment, by a Finnish-American leader, expresses a reality that sometimes is not always acknowledged—that the experiences of Finnish immigrants to North America differ in significant ways from those of other Lutherans. Finnish immigrants are often lumped together with those from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, and usually as an afterthought. But this is to miss the distinctive factors behind the Finnish immigration.

To start with, Finland in the nineteenth century was a subject nation. For a long period of its history, it was ruled and influenced by Sweden, although after 1809 it was taken from Sweden and given to the Russian Empire. As with many other European peoples, there was a strong birth of Finnish nationalism in the late nineteenth century, especially in reaction to Russian domination. A number of Finnish immigrants left Finland so that their sons would not be conscripted into the Russian Imperial army. This burning new nationalism was translated into a Finnish pride and independence among immigrants to North America.

As well, the Finnish immigrants came later than other Lutherans; Finnish immigration did not begin in earnest until the 1880s and 1890s. By this time the American frontier was closed, and most of the good agricultural land was already taken. Finnish immigrants found jobs in mining, timbering, fishing, and in factories in the Midwest and Pacific Northwest U.S. and in Canada. Even today the northern areas of Michigan (the Upper Peninsula), Wisconsin, and Minnesota (the Iron Range) are the traditional heartland of Finnish-Americans, with significant Finnish colonies elsewhere.

The economic and geographic settlements of the Finns in North America meant that they were located differently from many other Lutherans, who were essentially agricultural. The mining, timbering, and factory sections of the economy at this time were at the center of the new labor movements, both in Finland and North America.

These movements were often socialist in orientation and viewed the leaders of the Christian churches as being unconcerned with the vocational and personal concerns of working people. There was a strong Finnish element in the labor and socialist (and even communist) movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in North America.

There were, however, also strong religious awakenings in nineteenth century Finland, and many immigrants brought with them a deep grounding in the Lutheranism of the Church of Finland, as well as a burning religiosity from the Pietist and awakening movements. Finland was overwhelmingly Lutheran, and revival leaders such as Paavo Ruotsalainen, Frederik Hedberg, and Lars Levi Laestadius preached fiery awakenings that strengthened the people's faith as well as challenged the official Church of Finland. This religiosity also set up conflicts between the official church (the Preachers), the newly-awakened (the Pietists), and those cool toward religion (the Socialists), which rolled through the immigrant communities.

Finnish-American Lutheranism took on several different organizational forms in North America. Although the first Finnish Lutheran congregation in North America was formed in 1876, the formation of such congregations was slow, especially due to a severe shortage of pastors as well as serious economic challenges. It was not until 1890 that these initial congregations were drawn together into a denominational structure, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, popularly known as the Suomi Synod. This group became the largest religious group among Finns in North America; of all the religious groups, it was probably closest to the Church of Finland, although it also had deep roots in the Finnish awakenings, especially those of Ruotsalainen. This denomination opened a seminary and school at Hancock, Michigan, which is now Finlandia University.

Not all Finnish Lutherans joined the Suomi Synod. Another group of Finnish Lutherans, mainly inspired by the awakening led by Frederik Hedberg, in 1898 formed a second, smaller group, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran National Church in America (the "National" Finns). This second denomination came under the influence of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in the 1920s and eventually became a part of the LCMS in 1964. A third group of Finnish Lutherans were those who followed revival leader Lars Levi Laestadius, known as the Apostolic or Laestadian Lutherans, which is a uniquely Finnish form of Christianity, emphasizing emotional preaching for conversion and repentance, and individual laying-on of hands and absolution. This movement, both in Finland and North America, has been led by charismatic individuals but has had a history of schism and divisions. In North America they are divided into at least twenty different groups, some much like other conservative evangelical Christians and some strictly removed from "the world."

Since the Finnish immigrants arrived later than many others and tended to be isolated, many congregations maintained at least some worship in Finnish well into the twentieth century.

“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”