



Reformation Lutheran Church

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

July 2025

25 “And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” 27 And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” 28 And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.” - Luke 10:25-28 -

One of the uses of God’s Law is to show us our sinfulness and our consequent need for a savior. By giving us a perfect standard of good and evil, God’s Law is like a mirror in which we see the true state of our hearts. When we measure our actions, intentions, and motives against the plumb line of God’s Law, we see that we are deficient at best and rebellious at worst. So, in his earthly ministry, Jesus sometimes preached the Law to show people their inability to save themselves. He did this in the Sermon on the Mount, and he did it to the lawyer in our text.

A lawyer stood up to test Jesus by asking him what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Rather than challenging the lawyer’s reliance on God’s Law, Jesus asked him to clarify what the Law says. The lawyer responded by summarizing the Law, saying that one must perfectly love God and neighbor. But once again, rather than challenging the lawyer’s reliance on God’s Law, Jesus said, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.”

Of course, Jesus knew that it is impossible for sinful human beings to fulfill the Law. Indeed, it is for precisely this reason that Jesus came into the world to die on a cross. Why then did Jesus respond in this way? Perhaps he wanted the lawyer to sharpen the Law’s demand for moral perfection and to state this demand with his own mouth. Perhaps he also wanted the lawyer to try living up to the Law’s all-encompassing demands. And perhaps finally, he wanted the lawyer to come to the end of his own resources in a complete moral failure as a prelude to throwing himself upon the grace and mercy of God.

The lawyer had tried to test Jesus only to be tested by Jesus in turn. Yet, through this very test, lay the possibility that his heart would be opened to the gospel.

Pr.

Mission and Ministry Outreach: Summer seems to be our usual slow time for both Outreach and Fellowship. We will be applying for a Thrivent card to work with Scarlett’s Closet should there still be needs there. As always, if you hear of any needs in our community, please let us know! All ideas are welcome!

Education: We continue our Sunday Bible Study at 9:15 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall, currently covering the book of Revelation. Please join us!

Property: Our July clean-up day will be Saturday, July 26th at 9:00 a.m. Helping hands are always welcome!

Fellowship: Other than our usual after-worship snacks, we don't have anything planned at the moment. Let's give some thought to having an "End of Summer" cookout or something in August.

JULY CALENDAR

JULY BIRTHDAYS TO CELEBRATE ☺

July 2nd – Tammy Jensen

July 10th – Stephanie Stephens

July 11th – Keith Owen

July 12th – Pastor Jon Jensen

July 23rd – Wayne Ramming

Sunday – July 6 – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service

Sunday – July 13 – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service; Council after service

Tuesday – July 15 – 11:30 a.m. Lutheran Men's Lunch – Cataula Creek

Sunday – July 20 – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service

Saturday – July 26 – Clean-up Day – 9:00 a.m.

Sunday – July 27 – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service

	July 6	July 13	July 20	July 27
Altar Guild	Tammy	Junior	Carolyn	Amy
Usher/Greeter	Amy	Carolyn	Amy	Junior
Lector	Wayne	Dick	Gabi	Tammy
Music	Amy	Amy	Amy	Amy
Children Time	Pat	Pat	Pat	Pat
Sermon	Pastor	Gabi	Pastor	Pastor
Bible Study	Tammy	Amy	Tammy	Pastor
Thrive	Wayne	Gabi	Wayne	Gabi
Oaks	Pastor	Chuck	Pastor	Chuck

COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S CORNER

We are halfway through the calendar year, and we are now well into the longest season of the church year...the Season of Trinity...a season of growth. Attendance at Sunday services and also at Bible classes provides personal growth. We also have a mission of growing the church.

Let's build Reformation Lutheran Church...why not bring a friend or neighbor with you on Sunday.

Chuck Hunsaker, Council President

THOUGHTS FROM RLC COUNCIL'S V.P.

WHO IS OUR TARGET AUDIENCE? We have agreed that articles in the Harris County paper for Back to Church Sunday are a good idea. So, who is our target audience? It's not "Start to Church" it's "Back to Church". Well, who stops going to church? Why? Maybe:

1. Wasn't getting anything out of the service.
2. Work schedule problems.
3. Married a spouse of a different faith or Christian denomination.
4. Difficult relationship(s) with former fellow parishioners.

There are probably almost as many reasons as there are lapsed Christians out there. It would be impossible to address all these issues. So, instead, it might produce better results to simply focus not on "why you left" but rather something along the lines of "It doesn't matter why you left or how long you've been away, just c'mon back! Here's what's waiting for you at your local church".

JUST FOR GRINS ☺

"The organizing documents for the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in 1847 advised Pastors to limit sermons to not more than an hour and forty-five minutes. And, of course, those sermons were in German. We are truly blessed."

Dick Donovan, Council Vice President

WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH "The Story of Two Lutheran Mergers"

Without a doubt, the twentieth century for American Lutherans was a century of merger. From over a dozen different major Lutheran denominations (not counting many smaller ones) in 1900 to two major denominations at the close of the century, Lutherans spent the twentieth century merging. Fifty years ago, Lutherans were celebrating the completion of two major mergers bringing together eight different Lutheran denominations-the American Lutheran Church (ALC, 1960-1988) and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA, 1962- 1988). But the road to these unions was neither quick nor smooth.

These two mergers were preceded by three mergers in the early part of the century. Eastern Lutherans (from the colonial "Muhlenberg" tradition) had reunited in 1918 to form the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA, 1918-1962). The majority of Norwegian-American Lutherans overcame their differences to merge together in 1917, forming the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC, 1917-1960). And four Midwestern German denominations, the Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, and Texas Synods, worked out a merger in 1930, forming the American Lutheran Church (ALC, 1930-1960). These three denominations-along with the Augustana Synod (Swedish), United Evangelical Lutheran Church

(Danish), American Evangelical Lutheran Church (Danish), Suomi Synod (Finnish), and the Lutheran Free Church (Norwegian-cooperated in an association called the National Lutheran Council (NLC).

Even before these mergers were completed, American Lutherans began to explore the possibilities of further unification. The 1920s, the immigrant Lutherans were quickly making the transition to English, greatly lessening the need for separate linguistic denominations. This was the age of consolidation in many areas of American life, including the great American corporations and large Protestant mergers. Many Lutherans hoped that a united Lutheran denomination would strengthen their outreach to the world, and show the power of their influence. (Lutherans had become the fourth-largest Protestant family in the United States.) But how was such a further merger to be accomplished, and who would be invited to the table?

Though merger discussions began in the 1920s, they languished through the Great Depression and World War II. After the war the pace of discussions quickened, though huge obstacles remained, especially around the degree of theological unanimity required to achieve merger. The eastern Lutheran ULCA held to unity in essentials only, while the Missouri Synod insisted on complete doctrinal agreement before fellowship or merger. These two large Lutheran groups defined the borders of merger negotiation, while the seven other, smaller groups positioned themselves in between. Which direction should these seven Lutheran groups go? If the ULCA was included in negotiations, Missouri likely would not participate. If Missouri was included, it would only work if the ULCA was excluded. Through the late 1940s and the early 1950s, the Lutheran merger dance was a complicated balancing act of competing positions and ideas.

Finally in 1952, the whole process collapsed. The Augustana Synod (Swedes), historically close to some of the eastern Lutheran groups, decided to walk out of merger negotiations that had excluded the ULCA, leaving behind the ELC (Norwegians), the Midwest Germans (ALC), and others. From here there were two different merger negotiations:

1. ULCA, Augustana, Suomi (Finns), and the AELC (Danes)
2. ELC and Lutheran Free (Norwegian), UELC (Danes), and ALC (Germans)

Missouri declined to participate in either merger process. Once these merger processes got rolling, they moved to form two large Lutheran denominations, each in excess of two million members. The first, in 1960, was the American Lutheran Church (1960-1988), which consisted of the ELC, the "old" ALC (Germans), and the UELC. The Norwegian Lutheran Free Church eventually came into the merger in 1963, after a bruising round of congregational voting. The Lutheran Church in America was formed in 1962, consisting of the ULCA, Augustans, Suomi, and the AELC.

The outcome of this process was deeply problematic to many people. On the surface of things, it was hard for many to see why there should be two mergers and not one, while others were upset that Missouri did not participate in either process. But others were heartened that the number of Lutheran denominations was now at least reduced to three-the LCA, the ALC, and the Missouri Synod. Optimism ran high in some quarters that this was just another step toward the formation of a single Lutheran denomination in the United States.

Yet it never happened. And the great expectations of the benefits of merger never materialized, either. American Lutherans in 1962 numbered around eight million members. In 2012 these numbers have declined to around 7.4 million members, even while the population of the United States has doubled. Merger has not brought either the growth or the influence for which its proponents had hoped, even with the formation of the ELCA in 1988, bringing together the LCA and ALC, along with a portion of congregations that had left Missouri.

THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE.