

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

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Trench Warfare

That's what the powers that be sought to avoid in World War II. They had experienced it in World War I and they knew that tremendous loss of life resulted even though positions on the field of battle changed relatively little. If you read histories about 'the war to end all wars' it does seem that French, English, and German commanders were in many cases unfit for command.

Why do I bring this up? Because that's how the past 6 months have been to me. I'm hunkered down in a trench while the 24-hour news cycle lobs pandemic bombs, racial unrest, hurricanes, vaccine rumors, and politics on my position, but it's not that the leaders are unfit for command. It's that nobody seems in charge.

Regardless of what side you are on the bombs explode the same way: Be afraid, be worried, be stressed. Here's a 6-year-old who died from it. Here's another strain or version. Here's someone who got it twice. Here's a nurse in Florida saying, "I've never seen so much death." Fear this: it's the end of the world as you know it.

Shelling unnerves people fast. It took a toll in the First World War – truthfully, it takes a toll in every war. In WW I, the British found this distinction between troops. When enlisted men were broken, they developed mutism. When officers were, they developed a stutter. Read of the controversial attempts to "cure" this. What I found interesting is the difference and it seems it's a matter of training. First and foremost, no matter what, an officer is trained to do something. So, even when he can't speak, he tries and tries.

There is other phenomena on the battlefield that is apropos to "times like these". What was termed Shellshock in WWI, became Battle Fatigue in WW II and later, till the First Gulf War gave us PTSD. All these terms describe a poorly understood thing. They all reveal that people under constant stress show physical signs and even scars of that stress much later.

In the Army chaplaincy, they said it was important to be able to distinguish the above from what is called Old Sergeant's Syndrome. Before battle, a veteran

soldier may start to shake, tremble, sweat, even vomit. This may not be a sign that he is undone. It may be a sign that he knows what's coming. He's been through this before. He knows the savagery, the death, the pain, the horror that is on the way. He's reacting as if it's already here. He's not breaking down. He, in a sense, is preparing. They told us it's like the phenomena found in war horses. An experienced war horse starts to tremble and snort when he hears and smells the first signs of battle.

So, if you're showing signs of the persistent stressing that the Devil, the World, and your own Flesh are only too happy to rain down on you, that is not surprising. It may be Old Sergeant's Syndrome. It may be Battle Fatigue. If it's the former, you can steady someone else. If it's the latter, you need to get off the battlefield. Unlike the soldier, you can.

Bishop Quayle of the Methodist Episcopal Church "would stay up at night and worry himself to distraction about problems he couldn't solve, until he heard God speak to him. 'Quayle,' God said to him, 'you go to bed. I'll set up the rest of the night'" (Reiss, *That I May Know Him*, Teacher's Guide, 12). Of course, you'll never go to bed if you wait to hear the voice of God directly. Or worse, you will hear something. Then you will expect it and come to need it before you can go to sleep. Or you can go to where God reliably does speak to you. How about Psalm 4:8, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makes me dwell in safety."

Of course, the early 20th century Bishop Quayle speaks according to his theology, his confession of faith as everyone, even you, does. Luther takes me off the battlefield in a more fitting way. Luther would close his prayers at night saying, "Lord, I turn all things over to you. I've done whatever I thought best the best way I knew how. If you can't do better, then the world is in big trouble." I have no citation because I don't remember where I read this. I know I'm accurately reflecting what Luther said, though.

Why this takes me off the battlefield is that it recognizes there is battle going on – there always is as long as we're in the Flesh in this World and the Devil prowls about it. And on a battlefield, you expect you

will struggle and fight, so no wonder you feel tired and wrung out. But ultimately “for us fights the Valiant One whom God Himself elected.” This One won’t lose and won’t fail to deliver His little flock. As the Old Testament’s Church’s battles were not really theirs but the Lord’s, so the battle to believe, hope, trust, and rejoice is your Lord’s.

The falling shells will ultimately serve you if when they go off they do what physical shells do. As physical shells drive the soldier to hug the dirt and sink right in, so may the bombs, shells, and shots of the Devil, the World, and our Flesh drive us to find shelter in the Rock of Ages cleaving for us, in His riven side open for us, under the arms of the cross stretched out for us. Hmm, this looks like a good place to sleep.

“It seemed Good To Me...”

That’s how St. Luke introduces his decision to write an orderly account of the life and ministry of Jesus (Luke 1:3). Later in his second book, Acts, he records the decision of the Jerusalem Council saying, “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15:28). Well, it seems good to me, to have you hear from another Confessional Lutheran pastor in times like these. This is from the official magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. I like how, even though it’s from the editor, is not styled as an “editorial” but a “devotional” (ph).

EDITOR’S DEVOTIONAL SERIES

“In these uncertain times...”

by REV. KYLE MADSON, Editor THE LUTHERAN SENTINEL, Norseland, Minn.

You’ve heard it many times by now: “in these uncertain times...” or “in these unprecedented circumstances...” These may even have become some of your most loathed phrases because of their frequency of use (or overuse).

To be sure, it’s no strain at all for us in the midst of the summer of 2020 to think of any number of things that have been “uncertain” or “unprecedented”: Will the wedding happen as planned? What will it look like? Will we be able to have a funeral for grandma? How will that go? Synod Convention canceled?! When has that ever happened before? Will school be able to start again in the fall? If so, how will that go? What will be different? Will we have in-person church this Sunday? What will the protocols be today?

There is little question that the past few months have been filled with “uncertainty” and “unprecedented” circumstances (at least in our lifetimes). But the repeating of the expression assumes something else. It assumes that prior to the pandemic or prior to nationwide riots, daily life was full of “certainty,” full of “precedented times” that were as guaranteed as granite is sturdy.

It seems honest to consider the past four months “uncertain.” But is it honest to presume that what preceded these months was “full of certainty?” Were we guaranteed wedding celebrations and funeral services without disruption? Or did we just grow to presume that to be the case? Has an annual synod convention without a hitch been a birthright? Or has our little church body just been granted so many uninterrupted that we’ve come to think of it this way? C.S. Lewis, the great 20th century author and apologist, had this to say about “learning from war-time” that seems to instruct us well during our current uncertainties: “The war creates no absolutely new situation: it simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it. Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice. Human culture has always had to exist under the shadow of something infinitely more important than itself.”

Could it be that the past handful of months of pandemic, economic turmoil, and civil unrest have actually yielded us nothing new at all? Rather, these months have merely “aggravated the permanent human situation so that we no longer can ignore it?”

It should not be so easy for us to forget who we are: depraved and dying sinners with bodies at all times susceptible to disease, dying, and death; minds at all times prone to ambivalence, fear, and despair; hearts defaulted to hatred and always chasing the mirage of “control.” But we make ignoring this permanent human condition an art form... and the devil and the world happily aid us. We are easily sold the notion that mankind (us and our neighbor) is “basically good” and that it’s reasonable to expect that we’re progressing beyond “good,” that we can even aspire to a day when there is no longer any inconvenience to daily life, no more “risk” of illness or death, no more injustice or hatred or violence. We envision the treasure is that “good life” going back to “normal” so that “better-than-normal” might again be pursued.

The Psalmist brings us to ourselves: Truly God is good to Israel (the people of God) - To those who are

pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, My steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant When I saw the prosperity of the wicked... When my soul was embittered, When I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward You (Lord). (Ps. 73 selected vss.) To the extent that these “uncertain times” have in fact “aggravated our permanent human condition,” we ought to thank God. For it is only in knowing our real condition that we can recognize the real Treasure: A God who is with us in our always-desperate condition. Nevertheless, I am continually with you (Lord); You hold my right hand. You guide me with Your counsel, And afterward you will receive me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Ps. 73:23-26)

May God grant us the right amount of “uncertain times,” that our failing flesh and hearts might always be returned to real Certainty: “In these uncertain times...”

by REV. KYLE MADSON, Norseland, MN, Editor, THE LUTHERAN SENTINEL, July-August 2020, p. 4

**Countdown to Advent/Lent
Sermon Series
*Creedal Christianity is....***

A Nine Part Sermon Series on Luther’s Small Catechism’s Second Chief Part: The Apostles Creed
Advent 2020 – Lent 2021

Wednesday, December 2nd at 7:30 PM, starts this sermon series. It is a Reformation Era tradition in Advent and Lent to focus midweek services on the Catechism. That’s what I’ve done since 1992. Prior to that I did the usual thematic services: People of the Passion, The Hands of Lent, Christmas in Bethlehem, etc... I’m not saying you can’t preach Law and Gospel in these. I am saying these pre-packaged programs, were just that: programmatic. I decided it was better to be catechetical. A leader in the congregation recently said to me: I want to be sure we keep the strong emphasis on teaching whenever it is time to transition to a new pastor. That is well said. The mark of open Communion, contemporary worship, emerging churches is nondoctrinal teaching. If you’re communing everyone, you’re hooking people on a feeling with worship, then doctrinal, ‘thus says the

Lord’ teaching, is jarring. An emphasis on doctrine – and that’s what Creedal Christianity is – is an antidote to the abyss (see article) that many 21st century churches have slipped into.

This time I’m approaching the 2nd Chief Part, the Apostles’ Creed, from the standpoint of things I have wanted to make mention of or be clearer about. All services are on a Wednesday. They start at 7:30 PM. With the exception of Ash Wednesday, you can be out the door at 8:15.

Creedal Christianity is....

December 2	... Ancient
December 9	... Consistent
December 16	... Resistant
Ash Wednesday	... Useful
February 24	... Mindful
March 3	... Hopeful
March 10	... Broad
March 17	... Narrow
March 24	... Nuanced

A Free Conference For Independently-Minded Confessional Lutheran Congregations and or Pastors

**February 20-21, 2022
Trinity Lutheran Church, Austin, Texas**

I proposed this idea to the July 2020 Elder’s Meeting. They liked the idea and they brought a resolution to the September 2020 Voters Assembly who approved it. You will note, Elders, Voters, and Bulletin Readers, that I have made a subtle but significant change. I’ve changed “Independent Confessional Lutheran” to “Independently-Minded Confessional Lutheran.” This was in response to whether I’m trying to invite only those congregations and pastors totally independent of any organization. No, in fact, I’m trying to attract those.

I am even now working on a theme, presenters, and speakers. Once I have these, the congregation will be asked to come up with a meal plan, serving at least two meals here, refreshments throughout the day, and a happy hour setting before an evening meal. The workload will be more than when we hosted the 2013 ACELC conference. However, I anticipate less attendees.

My goal over all is twofold: to bring the independently-minded Confessional Lutherans together and to give members of Trinity an opportunity to see what is out there in terms of Confessional Lutheran associations.

Stay-tuned to the bulletin and the newsletter for updates.

The Visit I Didn't Want to Make – Cowboy Church

Posted on July 28, 2020 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

(The cartoon below was sent to me after reading this blogpost of mine. While it made me laugh, it also is true.)

I didn't even want to write up this account of my 2019 visit to a Cowboy Church in Bryan, Texas. First, it was far more Pentecostal than it was Cowboy and less "church" than both. For fifty-five minutes the pastor prayed, preached, talked, and sang and I couldn't tell you when he was doing which. His eyes were closed throughout. He wanted you on your feet and he made that a confessional point – you were surrendering yourself to God, he said. "To another spirit" I thought. I didn't do that and when he upped the game to lifting your hand for further surrender, I didn't do that either. I was really in trouble when the pastor commanded us "to breath in His presence." I could only hold my breath so long.

The pastor had the idiosyncratic practice of saying "church" when other pastors would say "people", "members", or "folks." There is good theology here. And though the Gospel was seldom explicitly preached, it was there: "I have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and my testimony." Now that is based on Rev. 12:11, but it has the hook of the law that while not preached explicitly is wielded all the same. Here's the pastor's lesson from the Prodigal Son: "When you boldly and completely repent, then God will...." This is part and parcel of the total surrender the service is built on. Both Muslims, with their

submission to Allah, and Catholics with their if you do your part God will do His, are familiar with this.

For these Pentecostal cowboys, the sacrificial part of worship was their sacrament. With their uplifted hands conveying yearning, wanting, surrendering, and actual physical motions, they looked like they were trying to claw their way into heaven. The climax of the service was at the foot of the stage where we were all invited to gather "before God". Having gathered but four people, the pastor came down to that space and dramatically fell to his knees.

You know how when there is a pause in a service when people know something is supposed to happen, but nothing is and they get uncomfortable? This pastor went there and stayed there. He then said it was time for emotional and spiritual healing. He said, "I'm not talking about physical healing. We're not doing that now." "Shoot, I thought. My neck has been hurting for a year." But after that uncomfortable silence, he invited those able to, to pray in tongues. They did. I didn't and felt as uncomfortable as a non-dog loving person being licked by a dog.

No, I am not calling them dogs. I am saying this is the most uncomfortable I have been in a church since visiting the LGBTQ Metropolitan Community Church. I am also saying that if you find these accounts of church visits helpful, you owe me. I took one for the team.



"It's just the abyss, dear. Try not to gaze into it."

OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION

by Rolf Preus

Author's Note: I was recently asked by a reader of this website which of the several articles on justification most clearly dealt with the doctrine of objective justification. In my search I found that, apart from the article by H. A. Preus, this topic had not

received much attention in the papers included on this site. So I went through my files and found this undated article that I wrote about twenty years ago, in the early nineties.

Like a bad penny, the denial of objective justification keeps coming up among conservative/confessional Lutherans in America, and we who are the heirs of the wholesome, biblical, and confessional theology of such genuine Lutherans as C. F. W. Walther and H. A. Preus need to reiterate again and again the clear gospel truth that God, for the sake of the vicarious obedience and suffering of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, has justified the whole world of lost and condemned sinners who fell in Adam's fall. As St. Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Romans 5, 19)

The doctrine of universal grace is not a Lutheran construct. It is clear biblical teaching. And there is no universal grace apart from objective justification. The faith that believes in the forgiveness of sins and receives the forgiveness of sins is the faith that is given the forgiveness of sins. No mere man or minister can discern faith in the heart of another. But any pastor can absolve the penitent – and that by the authority of Jesus Christ himself! How can this be? It can be, it must be, and it is because the same Jesus who gives his Church and her ministers the authority to forgive sins is the Jesus who has taken away the sin of the world! Objective and universal justification is the foundation for the efficacy of the absolution and the ground of the Christian's faith. May God graciously keep the teaching of objective justification pure among us!
Pastor Rolf David Preus, March 16, 2012

Some time back, my brother-in-law, who was raised Roman Catholic and is now a Lutheran, was recounting to us how the nuns used to threaten the children by saying, "You'd better behave, or God won't . . ." After telling us how the nuns would always make God's blessing contingent on the good behavior of the children, he summed up their approach by saying, "You'd better be good or Jesus won't rise from the dead!" Sorry, sister. It already happened. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead on the third day. But so what?

The "so what" of Christ's death and resurrection is the recurring question and topic for hot debate among theologians. It shouldn't be. The clear meaning of this

event cannot honestly be disputed. St. Paul's theological interpretation of it (Rom. 4:25) stands: "He was delivered over because of our sins and was raised because of our justification." It was because of our sins that he died on the cross. It was because of our justification that he was raised from the dead.

Jesus was identified by John the Baptist as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He "takes away." The word translated "takes away" can also be rendered "bears" or "forgives." One may emphasize either aspect of the same truth. We would not teach that God forgave us our sin without talking about how Jesus bore it. If our sin were not laid on Jesus it remains on us and we must bear it. Without the shedding of blood (Christ's blood) there simply is no forgiveness. On the other hand, it would be a denial of the "so what" of Christ's death and resurrection to say that Jesus did bear our sin, but our sin is not thereby forgiven. Why did he bear our sin - and our sins - if not to take them away? What does his suffering mean if not that our sins are forgiven? Or, to put it another way, what should I believe about my sins as I see Christ crucified for me? Are my sins imputed to me or to Christ? To Christ! Then what do I, in faith, conclude? That they are not imputed to me! The little child who is taught to confess, "Jesus died for my sins," is, at the same time, taught to believe the therefore, the "so what," the inescapable and undeniable conclusion that "my sins are forgiven because Jesus took them away."

This is the gospel. We can state it in a variety of ways because the Bible does so. Just a few common soteriological terms (that is, words the Bible uses to describe how Jesus saved us) will make the point.

Redemption. Jesus redeemed me. He paid the price to set me free. Since the ransom he paid for me (his own life) was accepted by God (God raised him from the dead) I am therefore set free. We should note here that sometimes the Bible uses a word for redeem which emphasizes the payment Christ made and sometimes it uses a word which emphasizes the freedom from sin which results from that payment. In English, we translate both words with redeem.

Propitiation. Jesus is the propitiation for my sins. He is, as the NIV puts it, the atoning sacrifice for my sins. God is not angry with me, he is propitiated or pacified because Jesus has stilled his anger by being the propitiation (the means by which God is propitiated).

Reconciliation. God, for Christ's sake, is my friend. He is at peace with me. On account of Christ's doing and dying, I have peace with God.

Salvation. Jesus has rescued me from certain damnation. He has delivered me from my sins, from death, from the power of Satan. I was helpless. I needed a Savior. Jesus is my Savior because he saved me. And we can also say that he saved me because he is my Savior.

Justification. Jesus has justified me. He is, as God said through Jeremiah, "the LORD, our righteousness." The closest synonym to justify is forgive. When the Bible says that God forgives me, it is stated negatively in reference to my sins, that is, my sins are "sent away," "blotted out." When the Bible says that God justifies me, it is stated positively in reference to Christ's righteousness being reckoned to me. My sins were imputed to him and his righteousness was imputed to me. This double imputation is what Luther calls the "blessed exchange."

Every one of these soteriological terms assumes the truth of all the others. Redemption, propitiation, reconciliation, salvation, and justification all refer to the same truth while addressing or emphasizing different facets of it. We call that truth the gospel. One is not redeemed if God is not propitiated, and vice versa. One is not forgiven if he is not saved, and vice versa. It is a supreme error to assume that one of these soteriological terms may obtain while others may not.

Furthermore, the Bible uses all of the above terms to describe both what God has done for the whole world and what God has done for the elect. That is, the words are used to state both the universal grace of God and to describe what God does in reference to his saints, that is, believers. When we talk about what God has done for the whole world, we often use the word "objective" to describe it. It is objectively true. It is done. When we talk about the individual sinner receiving this objective gospel through faith, we use the word "subjective" to describe it. We've done this in the Missouri Synod for many years. From Walther's day to our own, pastors have been taught "objective" and "subjective" justification. Sadly, in recent years a number of people have objected to this and have called into question the biblical doctrine of "objective" justification.

Other terms, such as "general" justification or "universal" justification have been used to designate the same teaching. C. F. W. Walther preached an Easter sermon (see The Word of His Grace, Board for

Publications of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1978) in which the theme was: "Christ's Resurrection - The World's Absolution." This is a portion of what Walther preached:

"Since it was all mankind in whose place and for whom Christ suffered, died and made payment, who was it, then, that was absolved in and through Christ's Person when the eternal Judge set Him at liberty? It was - oh, marvelous and endlessly comforting truth! - it was **all mankind**. . . . Are you saying that God has already in Christ absolved all men, including all the ungodly, all slaves of iniquity, all unbelievers, all mockers, all slanderers? Who could believe that! - And yet it is so, dear friends. Let these thoughts sink deep into your consciousness: It is certain that God has loved the world, the ungodly world, so much that He not only wanted to give His only begotten Son for the salvation of the world, but has already given Him. It is certain that Christ was the Lamb of God who not only wanted to take upon Himself the sins of the world, but has already borne the sins not only of a part of the world, but of the whole world. It is certain that Christ not only wanted to be the Reconciler, the Savior and Redeemer of all men without exception, but is that already as Paul writes: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19a). As certain as these things are, so certain it is also that God the Father, in raising Jesus Christ from the dead, has already absolved all men from all their sins" [emphasis in the original].

This teaching has been called objective justification because it is objectively true apart from whether or not anyone believes it or benefits from it in any way. There is nothing particularly confusing about this teaching. Walther's words are quite clear. And Walther's words on objective justification are, if we permit Walther to interpret his own position, foundational for his entire theology. Commenting further on his assertion that "Christ's resurrection was the absolution of all men," Walther said: "And this is not just one of the many comforting doctrines which the Scriptures contain, but rather it is the only real foundation of the comfort which is contained in any doctrine of the Scriptures. Remove this comfort from the Scriptures, and all its other doctrines become empty husks that have no comfort."

Walther went on in his Easter sermon to demonstrate the necessity of faith to receive the forgiveness of sins. He clearly rejected the false conclusion that, since God has absolved the whole

world, the whole world has therefore **received** the forgiveness of sins. No, he said, "so false is the conclusion that everyone has forgiveness." Walther then explained that the gift must be received, and that faith and faith alone is the only way to receive it.

We emphasize Walther's position and quote from him at length, not to prove the truth of the doctrine of objective justification, but to prove that Walther taught it and regarded it as foundational. Critics of objective justification should, if they wish to be honest, indict Walther. They rarely do, however. One critic of objective justification, in a recently written book which purports to show the historical development of this doctrine, claims to trace the concept of "universal justification" back to F. A. Schmidt in 1872. He further claims that this doctrine evolved in the Missouri Synod so that the position after 1930 was different than the position before it. The quotation above disproves that claim. Compare what Walther said to the CTCR document, Theses on Justification, approved by the 1986 convention of the LCMS. Our position has not changed. We teach what Walther taught.

But we don't base our confidence in the truth which Walther preached on the dignity of Walther or any other 19th century Lutheran. We, with Walther, believe in the perspicuity of the Scriptures. The Bible compels us to teach that God has, for Christ's sake, forgiven the entire world of all its sin.

John 1:29 teaches objective justification. Jesus has taken away the sin of the world. This passage alone should settle the issue. What does take away mean, if not forgive? Romans 4:5 teaches objective justification. The God who justifies the ungodly (the Greek word is never used to refer to believers, but always and only to unbelievers) is the God who has justified everyone. This is the God in whom Abraham believed and was thus, subjectively, justified. Romans 4:25, as noted above, teaches objective justification. Romans 5:19 teaches objective justification. 2 Corinthians 5:19 teaches objective justification. Anyone reading these passages as they stand, in their context, without any prior bias against this doctrine, will conclude that all of these texts - and many more - teach the simple truth that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven all sinners all of their sins. The Missouri Synod fathers were right when they said that the resurrection of Christ is God's absolution of this whole world of sinners.

I cannot imagine how a pastor who rejects the doctrine of objective justification could possibly give pastoral care to the individual who suffers from feelings of great guilt which bring doubt concerning the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. The care of the penitent who is so suffering consists in nothing else than a patient, careful, thorough, and simple explanation of the doctrine of objective justification (usually without using the technical jargon). To make the giving of the forgiveness of sins contingent on the penitent's confidence that his sins are already forgiven is a denial of the Lutheran doctrine of the means of grace.

Can I, as a called minister of Christ, pronounce an unconditional, efficacious, and genuine absolution upon someone who confesses his sins? Can I do so by the authority of God? Can I do so while assuring the penitent that my words - which are God's words - guarantee to him that he is indeed absolved and set free before God in heaven? Well I certainly cannot do this if the sin of the whole world has not objectively been forgiven. There is no absolution, in fact there are no objective means of grace, and there is no pure gospel preaching without objective justification.

The denial of objective justification is an extremely serious matter. Quite simply, no man who does not believe in objective justification can be a good gospel preacher. He cannot care for the soul who is burdened by guilt and fears the punishment of God. He cannot be trusted to be a faithful pastor to the bruised reed or the dimly burning wick (Isaiah 42).

The proper distinction between the law and the gospel is more an art than a science. It can only be learned in the school of experience, as Walther taught. Many a novice has learned (from his mistakes) that he was too quick to apply the gospel to the one in spiritual pain. The doctrine of objective justification is not held, promoted, and defended by us to excuse us from preaching and applying God's law strictly and exactly. We hold to objective justification because it is biblical and true. We hold to it because without it the gospel itself becomes dependent on what happens within us, rather than on what happened on Calvary. We hold to it because when the law has done its work, a gospel contingent on faith is no good to elicit faith - this is an absurdity on the face of it - and what those accused by the law need is **faith**. Faith receives the pardon, faith receives the verdict, faith receives the absolution, the declaration; it creates nothing, it causes nothing, it does nothing, it contributes nothing, it simply trusts

that word which is true prior to faith's existence. Faith trusts that word by which faith itself is created. Faith always trusts that which is fully and objectively true before there is any faith. The denial of objective justification forces us all into a vicious kind of fideism (faith in faith in faith in faith) which cannot get out of the circle because the final question to be answered is never "what does God tell me?" but always "how is my faith?" Those who deny this precious truth often parade themselves as being very concerned about sanctification, but what they actually accomplish is the undermining of the very foundation for every good work a Christian will ever do.

I appeal to those conservatives who are even now wavering on the issue of objective justification to consider two evils and decide which is worse. The first evil is that an impenitent man comes to church, leaves impenitent, but thinks he's forgiven of his sins. The second evil is that a penitent man comes to church, leaves penitent, but thinks he's not forgiven. Isn't the second evil far worse? If we are concerned about the false hope of the impenitent, let's preach the law in its full severity, but for God's sake, don't deny objective justification just because folks are going to distort this truth to avoid facing their sin and the need to repent. Consider instead those who labor and are heavy laden. Don't give them a message which directs their faith inward to their faith! Give them the pure gospel, the objective gospel. Nothing else can bring them to repentance and true faith.

Marriage and the Altar

Posted on May 16, 2016 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

Nope this is not about the marriage altar, but marriage and the Communion altar. If Paul can speak of marriage and really be speaking of Christ and His Church, I can speak of marriage and really be speaking about Communion.

First, finally someone other than a poor, probably besieged, parish pastor has spoken the unvarnished truth about those churches practicing open Communion. In the July/October 2014 *Concordia Theological Quarterly* in an article entitled "Doctrinal Unity and Church Fellowship" the Rev. Doctor Roland F. Ziegler says, "Likewise a church that does not practice closed communion or a church that communes members of heterodox churches does not administer the Lord's Supper according to Christ's institution"

(70). That means this mark of the Church is missing in regard to their Lord's Supper. St. Paul says such churches are coming together for the worse not the better (1 Corinthians 11:17).

Ca alors! No mealy-mouthing about how churches not practicing closed communion could do "a better job." None of this tap dancing around the issue to the tune of "extraordinary circumstances" which are really quite ordinary. None of this compulsion to write close(d) communion out of deference to all those weak-kneed pastors who practice open communion in the name of and under the color of the authority of the phrase "close Communion." Such a practice is all the more deplorable because it is so close to the truth, but being close to the truth means you are still in error.

The following is not my story but illustrates my point; a brother pastor told it to me, and it shows how I can be talking about marriage but really be talking about the Communion.

A husband and wife are out on a date for their anniversary. The waitress gets friendly with the couple and finally works up the nerve to ask, "Do you have an open marriage?" The wife quickly replies, "It's closed." The husband pipes up, "No, it's close."

You don't have to be married or a theologian to understand what the husband hopes to drop by dropping the letter 'd.' You do have to be a bold theologian to confess that churches not practicing closed Communion do not have one of the two marks of the holy Christian Church. You have to be married to Someone other than "our beloved Synod" to do something about this sad state of affairs.

Adulterous affairs are what we're really talking, or more accurately not talking, about. About half of the Lutheran Church Misery Synod is just fine bringing the waitress into the marriage bed. Should the Bride of Christ continue to pretend she doesn't see what their marriage has become? Who's in bed with whom is exposed at the at the Altar, and that's where you see what kind of marriage you really have open/close or closed.

The Lutheran Church And The Roman Catholic Church AGREE That A sinner Is Justified By Grace For Christ's Sake Through faith

**(But they teach radically different things!)
By. Rev. Rolf Preus**

Lutheran Teaching

A sinner

Sin leaves man with no “free will” in spiritual matters. He is by nature spiritually dead and helpless. FC SD II 7

Is justified

God justifies the sinner by forgiving him all his sins and by imputing or reckoning to him the righteousness of Christ. This makes the sinner wholly righteous before God. He is a sinner and a saint at the same time. FC SD III 30-32

By grace

God’s grace is God’s goodwill toward undeserving sinners for Christ’s sake whereby He chooses to give them forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. FC SD IV 22 & V 25

For Christ’s sake

“For Christ’s sake” means that God imputes to the sinner the righteousness of Christ. FC SD III 17

Through faith

Faith receives and has the gift of forgiveness and righteousness that God offers in the gospel. Faith is not a virtue, but the receptive means through which Christ’s righteousness is obtained. Faith is confidence that one has received the forgiveness of sins and is in a state of grace. Ap XII 88; FC SD III 13-14

Roman Catholic Teaching

A sinner

Man has “free will” in spiritual matters. He is by nature spiritually wounded and weak. CCC par 405 & 407

Is justified

God justifies the sinner by transforming him into a righteous person. God does not impute Christ’s righteousness to the sinner. He is not a sinner and a saint at the same time. CCC par 1989-1991

By grace

God’s grace is God’s freely given help and strength that enables the sinner, through the right use of his free will, to cooperate with God to become progressively more righteous. CCC par 1996 & 2010

For Christ’s sake

“For Christ’s sake” means that Christ has made the justification of the sinner possible. CCC par 1992

Through faith

Faith is necessary as a theological virtue. It is the beginning of justification. Faith is not the certainty of salvation. It is possible to have faith and not to be in a state of grace. CCC par 1814 & 2005

(The Lutheran citations are from our Formula of Concord (FC) and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (AP). The Catholic authority is the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC). prh)

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OCTOBER 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3 WORKDAY
4 12:15 PM ADULT CLASS	5 5 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	6	7 PASTOR	8 ON	9 VACATION	10 WORKDAY
11	12 NO CONFIRMATION	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 NO CONFIRMATION	20	21 7:15 PM DANIEL	22	23	24
25 NO ADULT CLASS 5 PM REFORMATION DINNER	26 5 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	27 6:30 PM BUDGET MEETING	28 7:15 PM DANIEL	29	30	31

NOVEMBER 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 12:15 PM ADULT CLASS	2 5 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	3 6:30 PM ELDERS	4 7:15 PM DANIEL	5	6	7
8 12:15 PM ADULT CLASS	9 5 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	10 7 PM VOTERS	11 7:15 PM DANIEL	12	13	14
15 12:15 PM ADULT CLASS	16 5 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	17	18 7:15 PM DANIEL	19	20	21
22 12:15 PM ADULT CLASS	23 5 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	24	25 7:30 PM THANKSGIVING EVE SERVICE	26	27	28
29 12:15 PM ADULT CLASS	30 5 PM JR. CONFIRMATION					