

From the Pastor's Desk

Lutheran Core Beliefs

In preparation for our new member class, I have put together these Lutheran core beliefs and thought you may find these interesting to review.

“Lutheran” - Was originally a derogatory term, i.e., people are accused of following Luther and not Christ. Luther preferred “evangelical” - i.e., “Gospel centered” rather than “papal” or church structure centered. He stated: “What is Luther? The teaching is not mine—it is the Gospel. I was not crucified for anyone.”

Core Beliefs of Lutheranism

- Justification by grace through faith—seen as the heart of the Gospel. The fourth article of the *Augsburg Confession* states: “On this article (Justification by faith) the church stands or falls.”
 - “Faith” - not primarily intellectual or emotional—it is relational and a form of trust in God’s promises.
 - “Decision Theology” says you have to make a decision for Christ. This “decision” can be a sort of “good work” in which one attempts to earn God’s favor. Lutheranism teaches that God always takes the initiative—we do not choose God, rather, God has chosen us and will never let us go. We have been “grasped” by the grace of God. Whatever decision we make is only an affirmation of the decision God has already made for us.
- Law and Gospel—The Scriptures come to us in two forms: Law—Tells people what they should do. The Gospel is what God has done for us in Christ. The Law accuses, the Gospel frees us. Luther: “The law says ‘do this’ and it is not done. The Gospel says, ‘believe in this’ and everything is already done.”
- Means of Grace—*The Augsburg Confession* refers to God’s Word and the Sacraments as a “means of Grace”. “Means” refers to how things happen, i.e., “this is how and where God’s grace happens”. When the Good News is preached, someone is baptized, the Lord’s Supper received, grace happens.
- Theology of the Cross and Glory—The God who choose to come down from heaven, chose not to come down from the cross. A theology of glory says, “God is in heaven and all is well with the world.” The theology of the cross keeps our feet firmly upon the earth and says: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to God.” We live in both and through Christ participate in both.
- Saint and Sinner—Luther describes Christians as “simultaneously saint and sinner.” Some Christian traditions distinguish between “saints” who obey God’s will and “sinners” who disobey. Lutherans cling to a “both/and” understanding, i.e., a saint is a forgiven sinner.

Core Beliefs of Lutheranism (continued)

- Vocation—“Vocation” literally means “calling”. Before Luther, “vocation” referred to people called to be priests, nuns and monks. Luther expanded this to include all Christians—seen it the term: “The Priesthood of all believers”. Luther affirmed that all human work, if done in faith and for service of neighbor is a calling from God. According to Luther, God doesn’t need our good works, people do.

~PB

Adult Education

(Meets in the Fellowship Hall at 10:15 AM. Everyone is invited to attend.)

- May 4th **The Blessings and Challenges of Retirement** Discussion will be led by retired Pastor Phil Erlander who will also be presiding at services this weekend. Pastor Bob and Joan will be out of town.
- May 11th **Living the Fruits of the Holy Spirit** Discussion will be led by George Scudella
- May 18th **Conclusion of Living the Fruits of the Holy Spirit** Led by George Scudella
- May 25th **Daily Discipleship Bible Study** Discussion led by Adele McKinna

Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly from May 22-24

This year’s theme is “Christ’s Own Body—Called to Courageous Community.” Pastor Bob, Roger and Linda Coffey will represent our congregation during this year’s Assembly which will be held in Denver. We will celebrate the RMS 20th anniversary.