

October Newsletter

Dear Friends in Christ:

As we move into October I have to say that I have a better attitude than I had last Summer. To be sure, the cooler air and shorter days have something to do with it. The end of the “Covid Emergency” declared by our unelected State and National leaders probably helps as well. I think the big boost for me is the restart of more normal worship and educational programming in the Fall. It even feels good to be back with the catechism students despite their attention spans which are somewhat shorter than those of gnats.

We may have an interesting beginning of the month. At the time of this writing, Hurricane Ian is still threatening to come up our way. If not, we should have some lovely Fall weather to enjoy as the month begins.

I am looking forward to a big fellowship event in the middle of the month. When we encountered difficulty deciding between an Oktoberfest and an Italian Feast, someone brought up a fusion event with both. It will happen October 21 at 6pm. So far we have talked about pasta bolognese, lasagna, sausage and peppers, garlic knots, spätzle, schweinenschnitzel mit bratensosse, pork chops with sauerkraut, and, of course, bratwurst mit Kartoffelbrei. Stay tuned, or see Emil to volunteer. Soft drinks will be provided. All else is BYO.

At the end of the month is Reformation Sunday which we will celebrate on October 30. We do not celebrate that the entire church was reformed in the 16th century. It most assuredly was not. In fact, the church is never fully reformed as there is always some part of it that yields to sin or unfaithfulness. What we celebrate on the anniversary of Luther’s nailing the 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, is the recovery of the Gospel of Salvation by grace through faith. There is no program or set of steps or series of spiritual feats that can put us back into right relationship with the God whom we have sinned against and rejected. It is only through the preparation of repentance and the receiving of God’s free gift of forgiveness for Christ’s sake that we can be made right with God. Any time we think we have done what is necessary for salvation, we are lost in sin.

Here is how Luther put it in his explanation of the second article of the creed in his Small Catechism:

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

4] What does this mean?—Answer. I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won [delivered] me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, in order that I may be [wholly] His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

Here is how Melancthon put it in the Augsburg Confession (Article 4):

Also they (our churches) teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for **2]** Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. **3]** This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.

John Shepherd McKenzie

