



“Simply Lutheran: Only Christ”

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
Saturday and Sunday, September 30 and October 1, 2017

All Services

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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:23-32

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

So, what does it mean to be a part of this tribe of Christians known as Lutherans? This month we will be doing a sermon series called “Simply Lutheran.” We’ll be looking at some of those simple beliefs that we hold that if we’re really honest with ourselves are kind of hard to live out.

Luther called them the *Solas*, in Latin that’s defined as *the only* or *alone*, as in Only Christ or Christ alone. Over five weeks we’re going to explore the great Five Solas of the Reformation as we join the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the beginning of The Reformation in Germany. Solas; only Christ, only faith, only grace, only God’s glory and only the word, the scriptures.

The brilliance of the theology of Martin Luther was that he focused on the things that really matter. His concerns stemmed from all of the fluff and misguided practices he saw in the mid evil church. The selling of indulgences which promised the forgiveness of sins that could be bought without a need for repentance. The refusal to translate the Bible into the common language of the day so that average people could understand and read the scriptures. The ill-advised spiritual practices that minimize the necessity of Jesus to name only a few of the abuses. They were in majoring in the minors Luther would say, and so he responded with the Solas to keep the Christian faith simple, focused, and strong.

And it all begins with Jesus, only Christ. Luther said that the highest art among Christians is to be able to define Christ. That is the purpose after all for which He came down, for which he was born in a manger, lived among us, suffered, died, rose again triumphantly so that Christ could be present to you and to me in every possible way. Everything, everything springs from Christ, only Christ, our life, our faith, our hopes, our dreams, our purpose. Jesus has inspired millions and millions throughout the centuries.

Someone ask author and Pastor Mike Slater where he saw himself in the next five to ten years. Pastor Mike responded that if he was in charge of his own life he would know the answer to that question, but if God was in charge of his life he had no idea how to answer. Pastor Mike knew that he must accept the authority of Christ in his life for his life to have true meaning and purpose. And so, whose authority for your life do you

accept? Is it your way or God's way? It won't matter in the future whether we are all driving electric, self-driving GPS cars or not, you, me and all of humanity will never get to where we need to be without the love and tender mercies of Christ in our life. So how well do you know him? Are you seeking him in prayer, worship, and scripture? Are you following after him and acting on what he tells you?

Too many people out there are like the second son from today's gospel reading, the one who says yes, but then doesn't go into the vineyard to work. All talk no action. Christianity is a faith about action however. It is a faith about relationship, a relationship and love of God as well as for our neighbor. And the core relationship of all those relationships is with Jesus Christ. It is he who guides our life, who leads us through death so that we can enjoy that relationship with him through all of eternity.

Martin Luther said that "Now that we have the Christ as the foundation and chief blessing of your salvation, then the other part follows: that you take Him as your example, giving yourself in service to your neighbor just as you see that Christ has given Himself to you." And you see that, love of God and love of neighbor lived out in the world. God has come to us to be in relationship with us.

This past week I decided to go out with another member of the congregation to do some archery. So, he went out with his bow, I went out with my cross-bow. When I started shooting I was relatively close to the bull's eye, but as time went on it kept getting further and further away. Now when I looked through the scope everything looked the way it should have looked. But when I pulled the trigger the arrow would go off to the side. So, I had to make some adjustments. I had to tweak it a little bit here and a little bit there until once again I was hitting the bull's eye and the arrow was going where I wanted it to go. Our relationship with Jesus can be the same way; it doesn't take much for it to go astray a little bit. Not praying, irregular worship, lack of engaging with the Bible, not being generous, not attending to our spiritual life, or anger or jealousy, or distrust or unfaithfulness, these and other things can lead to a damaged relationship with Christ.

The Apostle Paul says, "Nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interest, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that which was in Christ Jesus." Our life doesn't have to be out-of-whack. The good news is that what God wants for us, in and through the person of Jesus Christ is a real powerful relationship with him, and that relationship is open to every single person on the earth.

In the gospel reading Jesus even singles out the tax collectors and the prostitutes, those who would be considered the dreads of his society, they too are offered repentance and new life through Christ. Nothing is of more value; nothing is of more significance than this in our life, our relationship with Jesus.

Luther said, "I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but those that I placed in God's hands, those I still possess." With Jesus Christ as our Lord to the Glory of the Father there is life and life abundant for each one of us.
Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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