

Celebrate the 500th with 50 Days of Scripture and Luther

It is exactly 50 days between our Rally Day, September 10th, and Reformation Sunday, October 29th, which is the day we will celebrate the 500th Anniversary of Luther's posting the 95 Theses and start of the Reformation. We are putting forth a challenge to you to read scripture every day for 50 days from Rally Day to Reformation Sunday. Luther says in his Preface to his translation of the New Testament, "In a word St. John's Gospel and John's first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine."¹ In this devotional, passages from these favorite books of Luther are selected for us to read on each of the 50 days as well as a short word from Luther on each passage. Members of SLC can sign up to receive a daily email with your scripture and reading by emailing slc@silverdalelutheran.org with the message "50 Days List" or download this document and share with anyone you wish. Please note, the scripture verses are not printed out for you as we want you to look them up and read them from your print Bible or digital Bible! What better way to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation than to immerse yourself in some of Luther's most beloved scriptures and ponder a short word from him?!

Week One

Introduction/Psalm 118

Luther's early work in the Psalms laid the foundation for the Reformation. Therefore, we will begin our journey by delving into some Psalms. First we will read through Psalm 118, Luther's favorite, as is indicated from his own description of this Psalm: *"This is my own beloved psalm. Although the entire Psalter and all of Holy Scripture are dear to me as my only comfort and source of life, I fell in love with this psalm especially. Therefore I call it my own. When emperors and kings, the wise and the learned and even saints could not aid me, this psalm proved a friend and helped me out of many great troubles. As a result, it is dearer to me than all the wealth, honor, and power of the pope, the Turk, and the emperor. I would be most unwilling to trade this psalm for all of it."*² If you would like a brief overview of the Psalms, click [here](#) to watch a 9 min presentation from the Bible Project.

Sunday **9/10** **PSALM 118:1-4**

A word from Luther: *Now tell me, for what kind of gift may these people be expected to give thanks to God? . . . What is it? He himself will discuss it fully. It is comfort and help in every kind of suffering, want, and trouble. This is nothing less than the beginning of everlasting life.*

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

¹ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I](#). (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 35, p. 362). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

² [Luther's works, vol. 14: Selected Psalms III](#). (Vol. 14, p. 45).

Monday 9/11 PSALM 118:5-14

A word from Luther: *This distress is either outward or inward persecution, which is discovered when it is found that the Lord alone is good, but they are evil. This is what Ps. 116:3 says: "I suffered distress and anguish," namely, within myself, seeing myself wretched, poor, evil, foolish, weak. Therefore "I give thanks (confiteor) to the Lord, for He is good, and I call on Him in such trouble, and He hears me, giving me His goodness, wisdom, strength, blessedness, and riches." At the same time this verse sheds light on the first verse, since He is not good in that He gives physical things, but because He gives spiritual things and delivers from spiritual evils.*

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Tuesday 9/12 PSALM 118:15-20

A word from Luther: *The right hand of God . . . is the power of God, that whoever believes and trusts in Him is thereby delivered from all sins, from a guilty conscience, a sorrowing heart, error, lies, deception, darkness, and all the power of the devil, and is led to grace, righteousness, truth, understanding, consolation, and the true light. As a result, God is our power. We do not live in ourselves but in Him, and He acts and speaks all things in us. These are all great, mighty, divine works and miracles, none of which human reason, power, and might can comprehend, much less help to accomplish.³*

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Wednesday 9/13 PSALM 118:21-29

A word from Luther: *In the verse before us the psalmist summarizes the sufferings and resurrection of Christ. By using the word "rejected" he indicates the suffering, death, disgrace, and reproach to which Christ was subjected. By using "the chief Cornerstone" he indicates His resurrection, life, and eternal dominion. He uses the parable of a building. When a stone does not fit into the wall or match the others, but disfigures the whole building and is an unfit, useless stone, it must be rejected. Then another builder, a stranger, comes along. He knows well how to use the stone and cries: "Stop, you big fools, are you really builders and still do not want that stone? I can use it, not merely to plug a hole or for fill, nor as a common, ordinary stone, but as a cornerstone in the foundation. It shall bear not one but two walls, and it shall do more than all the other stones in the whole building." Thus Christ would not fit the ways and holiness of the Pharisees, or the whole world itself. They could not stand Him. He disfigured their building. He reprimanded and rebuked their outwardly fine and holy behavior. Then they became angry and condemned and rejected Him, for they did not know how to use Him. Then God, the real Builder, chose Him and made Him the Cornerstone of the foundation on which the whole Christian Church, made up of Jews and Gentiles, stands. It is no different today. The stone is rejected and stays rejected. Nonetheless, with the believing righteous, who build, not on their human works or on the might of princes but on this stone, He remains precious, noble, and valuable (1 Peter 2:7).⁴*

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

³ Ibid., p. 82.

⁴ Ibid., p. 96.

Introduction/Psalm 51 (for Thursday)

Now we turn to a Psalm 51. Luther writes on this Psalm extensively and in his introduction makes very clear the importance of this Psalm: *“This is the twofold theological knowledge which David teaches in this psalm, so that the content of the psalm is the theological knowledge of humanity and also the theological knowledge of God. Let no one, therefore, ponder the Divine Majesty, what God has done and how mighty He is; or think of a person as the master of one’s property, the way the lawyer does; or of one’s health, the way the physician does. But let us think of one’s self a sinner. The proper subject of theology is humanity guilty of sin and condemned, and God the Justifier and Savior of the sinner. Whatever is asked or discussed in theology outside this subject, is error and poison.”*⁵

Thursday 9/14 PSALM 51:1-5

A word from Luther: *A true and penitent heart sees nothing but its sin and misery of conscience. He who still finds any counsel and help in one’s self cannot in all earnestness speak these words; for the one who is not yet altogether miserable but feels some comfort in one’s self, apart from God’s mercy. The sense, then, is this: “O God, no person or creature can help or comfort me, so great is my misery; for my affliction is not bodily or temporal. Thou alone, therefore, who art God and eternal, canst help me. Have mercy on me, for without Thy mercy all things are terrible and bitter to me.”*⁶

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Friday 9/15 PSALM 51:6-9

A word from Luther: *Thus far the prophet has condemned all righteousness, wisdom, and truth in general. He has exalted the single truth that is in secret, the wisdom that is in a mystery that confesses its sins and hopes for the mercy of the God who justifies sinners. The same thing is expressed in John 1:12, 13: “To all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” There he universally condemns whatever reason and whatever “self,” that is, whatever a person by their own nature and powers can accomplish without the Holy Spirit. All he leaves is trust in the name of Jesus.*⁷

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Saturday 9/16 PSALM 51:10-14

A word from Luther: *“Create in me a clean heart...” A wonderful and great word! Many do not commit sins, but only good deeds, and yet the most subtle kind of pride alone, born of their own virtues, has soiled them. Therefore he does not say, cleanse the hand, eyes, feet, tongue, ears, flesh, because with regard to these someone is perhaps not yet sinning, but only his heart is puffed up and soiled.*

⁵ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther’s works, vol. 12: Selected Psalms I](#). (Vol. 12, p. 311).

⁶ Ibid., (Vol. 14 p. 166).

⁷ Ibid., (Selected Psalms III Vol. 12, p. 359).

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Sunday **9/17** **PSALM 51:15-19**

A word from Luther: *That is, Thou wilt have no one ascribe praise and honor for his righteousness and wisdom to himself, but to Thee alone. Therefore Thou carest not for sacrifice—much less for the other, lesser works; for sacrifices are the greatest. Thou desirest to be merciful and not to be a judge. Thou dost not wish to see how pious we want to be, but how pious we wish to become through Thee, so that Thou and not we may be praised and honored, that we do not give Thee anything but receive from Thee righteousness, wisdom, truth, merit, good works, etc. . . . It is as if he said: Everything else He despises except a heart that is humble and broken, for it ascribes honor to God and sin to itself. Such a heart gives God nothing but only takes from Him. This is also what God wants so that He may be truly God. For it behooves God to give, not to take.*⁸

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Week Two

Introduction/I Peter (for Monday)

This week we will turn to the Epistle of 1st Peter. Luther believed that I Peter was one of the most important books in the Bible because it so clearly articulates the Gospel. Luther states in his introduction to I Peter:

*“Accordingly, this Epistle of St. Peter is also one of the noblest books in the New Testament; it is the genuine and pure Gospel. For St. Peter does the same thing that St. Paul and all the evangelists do; he teaches the true faith and tells us that Christ was given to us to take away our sin and to save us, as we shall hear.”*⁹ If you would like a brief overview of I Peter, click [here](#) to watch an 8 min presentation from the Bible Project.

Monday **9/18** **I PETER 1:3-9**

A word from Luther: *He also says that everything has been given to us by the Father out of pure mercy and without any merit on our part. These are genuinely evangelical words. They must be proclaimed. God help us, how little preaching of this kind one finds in all the books, even in those that are said to be the best, as, for example, the writings of St. Jerome and St. Augustine! How little they have in common with these words! Therefore one must preach about Jesus Christ that He died and rose from the dead, and why He died and rose again, in order that people may come to faith through such preaching and be saved through faith. This is what it means to preach the genuine Gospel. Preaching of another kind is not the Gospel, no matter who does it.*¹⁰

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Tuesday **9/19** **I PETER 1:13-25**

⁸ Ibid., (Vol. 14, p. 174).

*By “flesh” Luther does not mean simply our physical body, but our turned inward sinful nature.

⁹ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther’s works, vol. 30: The Catholic Epistles](#). (Vol. 30, p. 4).

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 10

A word from Luther: *Sobriety serves the body externally and is the chief work of faith. For even though a person has become righteous, one is not yet completely rid of evil lusts. To be sure, faith has begun to subdue the flesh; but the *flesh continues to bestir itself and rages nevertheless in all sorts of lusts that would like to assert themselves again and do what they want. Therefore the spirit must busy itself daily to tame the flesh and to bring it into subjection, must wrestle with it incessantly, and must take care that it does not rebel faith. Therefore those who say that they have faith, think that this is enough, and, in addition, live as they please, are deceiving themselves.*¹¹

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Wednesday 9/20 I PETER 2:1-10

A word from Luther: *How can we build ourselves? Through the Gospel and preaching. The preachers are the builders. The Christians, who hear the Gospel, are those who are built and the stones one must join to this Cornerstone, so that we place our confidence in Him and our hearts rest and repose on Him. Then I must also be prepared to retain the form of this Stone; for if I am placed on Him through faith, I and everyone with me must do the kind of works He did and lead the kind of life He led. It is now a fruit of faith and a work of love that we all should accommodate ourselves to one another and become one building. Thus St. Paul also speaks of this, although in another way, when he says in 1 Cor. 3:16: "Do you not know that you are God's temple?" The house of stone or wood is not His house. He wants to have a spiritual building, that is, the Christian congregation, in which we are all equal in one faith, one like the other, and are all placed and fitted on one another and joined together through love without malice, guile, hypocrisy, hatred, and slander, as the apostle has said.¹² . . . A priest must be God's messenger and must have a command from God to proclaim His Word. **You must, says Peter, exercise the chief function of a priest, that is, to proclaim the wonderful deed God has performed for you to bring you out of darkness into the light. And your preaching should be done in such a way that one brother proclaims the mighty deed of God to the other, how you have been delivered through Him from sin, hell, death, and all misfortune, and have been called to eternal life. Thus you should also teach other people how they, too, come into such light.**¹³*

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Thursday 9/21 I PETER 2:13-17

A word from Luther: *As we have heard, a sincere Christian believer has all the possessions of God and is a child of God. The time of his life, however, is but a pilgrimage. For through faith the spirit is already in heaven, and this makes him lord over all things. But God permits him to remain alive in the flesh and lets his body walk the earth in order that he may help others and bring them to heaven too. Therefore we must use everything on earth in no other way than as a guest who travels across country, comes to an inn where he must spend the night, and takes nothing but food and lodging from the innkeeper. He does not say that the innkeeper's property belongs to him. Thus we must also deal with temporal goods as if they did not belong to us. We must*

¹¹ Ibid., p. 27.

¹² Ibid., p. 52.

¹³ Ibid., p. 64).

limit our enjoyment of them to what is necessary for the preservation of the body. With the rest we must help our neighbor.¹⁴

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Friday 9/22 I PETER 2:23-24, 3:8-18

A word from Luther: *It will not come about that those who are on the way to heaven will have good days on earth, since those who do not come into heaven cannot have good days either. For all people are subjected to what God says to Adam (Gen. 3:19)—“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread”—and to the woman (Gen. 3:16)—“I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing.” Now since we are all subjected to misfortune, how much more it is necessary for those who want to come into eternal life to bear the cross! For this reason St. Peter says that because God wants it this way, it is better for you to suffer for doing right. Those who suffer for doing wrong have an evil conscience and a twofold punishment. But Christians have only half of this. Outwardly they suffer, but inwardly they are comforted.*¹⁵

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Saturday 9/23 I PETER 4:7-11

A word from Luther: *We should serve one another. With what? With the gifts of God which everyone has received. The Gospel wants everyone to be the other person’s servant and, in addition, to see that one remains in the gift which one has received, which God has given, that is, in the position to which one has been called. God does not want a master to serve his servant, the maid to be a lady, a prince to serve the beggar. For He does not want to destroy the government. But the apostle means that one person should serve the other person spiritually from the heart. Even if you are in a high position and a great lord, yet you should employ your power for the purpose of serving your neighbor with it. Thus everyone should regard one’s self as a servant. Then the masters can surely remain masters and yet not consider themselves better than the servant. Thus he would also be glad to be a servant if this were God’s will. The same thing applies to other stations in life.*¹⁶

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Sunday 9/24 I PETER 5:6-11

A word from Luther: *When God lets His own be cast down in this way, it appears as though He wanted to hold Himself aloof too long. This is why the apostle says: Do not be misled. Forget about it, and rely on the fact that you have a sure promise that this is the hand and the will of God. Therefore you should not think about how long you are subject; for even though God delays, He will nonetheless exalt you! Therefore he goes on to say: You have the kind of promise that makes you sure that God does not forsake you, but that He cares about you. Therefore forget about all your anxiety, and let Him manage. These are exceedingly delightful words. How could God act in a more pleasing and friendly manner? But why does He speak so alluringly? Because no one*

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁶ Ibid., 123–124.

*humbles one's self gladly and forgets about one's sentiments. Therefore St. Peter gives us the comfort that God not only sees us but also cares about us and has our best interests at heart.*¹⁷

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Week Three

Introduction/John (for Monday)

Now we turn to the Gospel of John for a couple of weeks. Of all the books in the New Testament, Luther seems to have prized the Gospel According to St. John most highly¹⁸ because in it he believed the good news was most clearly proclaimed. Luther cherished all the Gospels and how they bring us the teachings of Jesus but he believed that before we take Christ as our example, we first must receive him and what he did for us in the cross and resurrection. As he says, "The chief article and foundation of the gospel is that before you take Christ as an example, you accept and recognize him as a gift, as a present that God has given you and that is your own. This means that when you see or hear of Christ doing or suffering something, you do not doubt that Christ himself, with his deeds and suffering, belongs to you. On this you may depend as surely as if you had done it yourself; indeed as if you were Christ himself."¹⁹ John, in Luther's view, communicates this gift most poignantly. The words of Luther this week come from his sermons on St. John. If you would like a brief overview of the first half of the Gospel of John, click [here](#) to watch an 8 min presentation from the Bible Project.

Monday 9/25 JOHN 1:1-13

A word from Luther: *In the Godhead, however, the entire divine nature and essence passes into the Son; yet the Son, who remains in the same Godhead with the Father, is one God together with Him. Likewise, the Holy Spirit partakes of the same divine majesty and nature with the Father and the Son. This must be accepted by faith. No matter how clever, acute, and keen reason may be, it will never grasp and comprehend it. If it were susceptible to our wisdom, then God would not need to reveal it from heaven or proclaim it through Holy Scripture. So be governed by this fact and say: "I believe and confess that there is one eternal God and, at the same time, three distinct Persons, even though I cannot fathom and comprehend this. For Holy Scripture, which is God's Word, says so; and I abide by what it states."*²⁰

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Tuesday 9/26 JOHN 1:14-18

A word from Luther: *Thus the most precious treasure and the strongest consolation we Christians have is this: that the Word, the true and natural Son of God, became man, with flesh and blood like that of any other human; that He became incarnate for our sakes in order that we might enter into great glory, that our flesh*

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 140.

¹⁸ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 24: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14-16](#). (Vol. 24, p. ix).

¹⁹ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I](#). (Vol. 35, p. 119)

²⁰ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 22: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 1-4](#). (Vol. 22, p. 6).

*and blood, skin and hair, hands and feet, stomach and back might reside in heaven as God does, and in order that we might boldly defy the devil and whatever else assails us. We are convinced that all our members belong in heaven as heirs of heavens realm.*²¹

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Wednesday 9/27 JOHN 3:11-21

A word from Luther: *But now we have to make the practical application and learn why the Person who is God and human came into the world. The Lord Christ teaches us this too when He says that any believer in Him shall be delivered from eternal death and be assured of eternal life. It was not an angel, a principality, or any of the world's mighty who became incarnate and died for us—no, both the angelic and the human nature would have been too weak—but it was the divine nature that assumed humanity. It was Christ who adopted our flesh and blood that we might be saved through Him. Now we see how gloriously the evangelist John speaks of Christ and of the sublime doctrine of our Christian faith: that Christ is both God and human. This is what John stresses in his Gospel.*²²

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Thursday 9/28 JOHN 4:7-15

A word from Luther: *It is of the utmost importance to recognize this gift and to know Him who gives it. But neither the gift nor the Giver is known.” This is also our lament—and it will eternally remain so—that the schismatic spirits do not recognize the gift even when exhorted to do so; and the great multitude also despises this ineffably precious treasure and fails to recognize the Giver of this gift. In fact, we too, who claim to be saints, pay it no heed and do not fully appreciate the value of this treasure offered to us through the Gospel. My dear friend, how few there are among us who esteem this as a genuine treasure, as an eternal gem, as everlasting life! There must be some, however, who will hazard life and limb for it.*²³

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Friday 9/29 JOHN 8:31-38

A word from Luther: *This (freedom) does not mean that the conscience does not feel the terrors of the Law at all. Of course it feels them. But it means that the conscience cannot be condemned and brought to the point of despair by such things. For “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1); again: “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Regardless of how terrified the Christian is by the Law and how much they acknowledge their sin, they do not despair; for they believe in Christ, into whom they has been baptized and through whom they have the forgiveness of sins. Now if our sin has been forgiven through Christ Himself, the Lord of the Law—and forgiven by His having given Himself for it—the Law, that slave, no longer has a right to accuse and condemn us because of our sin; for this has been forgiven, and we*

²¹ Ibid., p. 110.

²² Ibid., p. 352.

²³ Ibid., pp. 525–526.

have become free by the deliverance of the Son. Therefore the entire Law has been abrogated for believers in Christ.²⁴

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Saturday 9/30 JOHN 9:35-41

A word from Luther: *That's what happened also in this Gospel. The blind man was a sign of the blindness that lay hidden in our hearts. And it follows from rigs that what Augustine said is true, that the works of Christ are words and the words are works. Therefore at the end of this Gospel, when the aloof and spiritual Jews said, "Are we also blind?" our Lord concludes, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains" [John 9:40–41]. Look, what an upside-down judgment that is for Christ to make! Therefore one must try to understand all the gifts that a person can have. Those whom we think are learned are ignorant in the sight of God. And anybody who does not know this will have a bad time of it in the judgment of God.*²⁵

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Sunday 10/1 JOHN 10:22-30

A word from Luther: *Here you see the security which is in the kingdom of Christ, through whom we have knowledge and light. Now, if Christ has all things in his hand [cf. John 3:35] and has power over all things just as the Father himself has, then no one can snatch anything from his hand, as he himself says in John [10:28–30], "I give them eternal life . . . and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." Therefore all Christians, if they have accepted the gospel, may well rejoice that they are in the hands of this Christ and need not be troubled by one's sins, if they have accepted the gospel, for Christ, under whom they live, will carry on from there. It is true, the devil will go on tempting him them with this or that vice, with adultery, fornication, theft, slaughter, envy, hatred, anger, and whatever other sins there are, but there is no need to be troubled, for they have a strong, mighty King; he will defend them well. It will be hard for you, it will be bitter; therefore prayer will be needed and others too will have to pray for you, that you may have strong courage and a brave heart to withstand the devil. But one thing is certain; you will not be forsaken. Christ will surely save you. There is no need to worry, but only do not fall from his kingdom.*²⁶

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Week 4 John Continued If you would like a brief overview of the 2nd half of the Gospel of John, click [here](#) to watch an 8 min presentation from the Bible Project.

Monday 10/2 JOHN 11:17-27

²⁴ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#). (Vol. 26, p. 447).

²⁵ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 51: Sermons I](#). (Vol. 51, p. 37).

²⁶ Ibid., p. 128.

A word from Luther: *But when we put forward our works, the devil will use them for his own end, and that's just what he does do with them. Let us therefore learn to know from the Gospel how kindly Christ deals with us; then we shall without a doubt love him and avoid sinning, and so see everything in a different light. See how kindly he draws our hearts to himself, this faithful God. He loves Lazarus, who was a sinner. He tolerates the timid faith of his disciples when they say, "Oh, Lord, don't go to Jerusalem, they will kill you" [John 11:8]. All this he would have condemned, if he had wanted to deal harshly. "Ah," said his disciples further, "if Lazarus is sleeping, as you say, then it isn't necessary for you to go there" [John 11:12]. And what about Mary and Martha? "Oh, Lord," they said, "if you had been here, our brother would not have died" [John 11:21]. And also they were earthly, so that they were unable to refrain from weeping and the people had come to them to console them because of the death of their brother, as the evangelist describes so skillfully. From this we learn that they were all in unbelief and sin. And then we see how kindly the Lord deals with them, praying and weeping with them, and all this at the behest of his Father. This is the true guidebook, from which we learn the will of the eternal Father.*²⁷

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Tuesday 10/3 JOHN 13:31-35

A word from Luther: *Because you are full and rich, you have no other commandment according to which you serve and obey Christ, except that you direct all your works so that they are good and useful to your neighbor, exactly as Christ's works are good and useful to you. For this reason he said while eating the evening meal: "This is my commandment that you love each other as I have loved you" [John 13:34]. You see here that he has loved us and that he has done all his works for us. The purpose is that we, in turn, do likewise, not to him—he is not in need of it—but to our neighbor. That is his commandment; that is our obedience; and so faith brings about that Christ is ours, even as his love brings about that we are his. He loves, and we believe, and those are the ingredients of the cake. Again, our neighbor believes and is expecting our love. We, then, should love him, too, and not let him look and wait for us in vain. The one is the same as the other: Christ helps us, so we help our neighbor, and all are satisfied.*²⁸

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Wednesday 10/4 JOHN 14:1-9

A word from Luther: *You say: "Well, does not Christ Himself often frighten and threaten us in the Gospel? For example, when He says in Luke 13:5: 'I tell you, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.' " Why, these are Christ's own words, and a faint and saddened conscience must constantly worry lest they pertain to it. It must declare: "Say what you will, Christ Himself makes this statement. Who can ignore it?" I reply: This is why I said that we must become skilled artists and learn to distinguish well between Christ's rebukes and His threats, and know where to apply His words. For there are two classes of people on earth. Some are wicked and unruly; they pay God's Word no heed and live as they see fit. These must feel struck when He threatens. The curse is aimed at the people to whom it is addressed and at no others, namely, at the obdurate, proud, and insolent characters*

²⁷ Ibid., Vol. 51, p. 48.

²⁸ Ibid., Vol. 52: Sermons II, pp. 16-17

who care nothing for Christ and His Word. These constitute a large multitude today, . . . The other small group addressed here by Christ strives to lead a pious, Christian life, has Baptism and Christ's Word, conducts itself to the best of its ability in such a way that it does not despise the Gospel, and, unlike the group just mentioned, abstains from greed, robbery, theft, lies, deceit, and wantonness. These are the ones whom the devil besets as an enemy does, with all sorts of distress and misfortune, to frighten, sadden, and discourage them. Thus both groups are in trouble. Those who are fainthearted and timid to begin with the devil intimidates without any reason. This is what he did to the apostles after the Lord's death, when he drove them to seek cover and made them afraid to appear in the open. But the others, the insolent and smug whom he should frighten and torment, he lets go their way; he flatters them and strengthens them in their wickedness. Thus the devil always plays a role directly opposed to that of Christ.

Therefore it is necessary to differentiate among people and to judge them as they are. Take, for example, a person who loves the Gospel and longs to believe and to live properly. One must learn to resist the devil, who frightens and saddens, and to say: "You lie, you wicked devil, even though you appear in the guise of Christ my Lord and employ His words. I am baptized in His name, and I believe the Gospel. By the grace of God I am not one of the wicked and profligate who trample the Gospel underfoot and deliberately live contrary to it; but I act and I suffer in accord with it as well as I can. Would to God I could do more! Therefore such menacing and terrifying statements do not pertain to me. I must not and will not listen to them now. I will cling to the words Christ addresses to the poor, wretched little group which suffers persecution, misfortune, distress, and anxiety." Now if one could learn to differentiate, then each side would be fairly treated. Christ would comfort those whom the devil wants to frighten and dishearten, and, on the other hand, He would intimidate those whom the devil makes smug and presumptuous.²⁹

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Thursday 10/5 JOHN 14:25-31

A word from Luther: *Thus Christ comforts and admonishes Himself against the devil. For now that Christ stands face to face with the prospect of being so miserably abandoned, reviled, and shamefully treated, this begins to touch His heart, "But it does not matter. Let it come to pass, since the Father wants the devil to be defeated and weakened, not by might and power and magnificent miracles, as has happened heretofore through Me, but by obedience and humility in the utmost weakness, by cross and death, by My submission to Him, and by surrendering My right and might. But in this very way I will take and wrest from the devil his right and might over you, since he is attacking and killing Me even though I am guiltless. Then he, judged and condemned by his own guilt, will have to give way, and flee from Me to the ends of the world. And then it shall be proclaimed and made known to all the world that I suffered this, not by reason of any lack of power or might but out of obedience to the Father, to defeat the devil. Thus God's honor, both His divine grace and goodness toward us and His omnipotent power against the devil, will be exalted and proclaimed. Thereby the Christians will be comforted and strengthened, and the devil's realm will be totally destroyed." Amen.³⁰*

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

²⁹ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14-16](#). (Vol. 24, pp. 14–15).

³⁰ Ibid., p. 191-192.

Friday **10/6** **JOHN 15:1-11**

A word from Luther: *“But how, my dear, does one remain in Christ? How am I a branch in this Vine, or how do I remain a branch?” Christ adds this comment here: “Just pay attention to My Word; for everything depends on whether My Word remains in you, that is, whether you believe and confess the article taught in the children’s Creed: ‘I believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was crucified for me, who died, rose again, and is seated at the right hand of the Father,’ and whatever pertains to it. If you remain faithful to this and are ready to stake all on it, to forsake all rather than accept a different doctrine or works, if you thus remain in the Word, then I remain in you and you in Me. Then our roots are intertwined; then we are joined, so that My words and your heart have become one. . . How I worked and tortured myself sick with fasting, waking, praying, etc., to attain this when I wanted to be a pious monk! And I actually was pious. Yet during all those years my heart could not gain the assurance that my works, which I did most assiduously, were pleasing to God, or that my prayers would surely be answered. . . Therefore I will go my way and perform all the tasks I can and must in my calling, no matter how lowly this calling may be. I know that God places His stamp of approval on them and that they please Him just as much as do the most beautiful, most arduous, and most precious works performed in the highest vocation. . . Now that I have learned to know Christ and believe in Him, I can rejoice and boast that everything I do in such faith is pleasing to Him. I can fall down before Him and pray for relief from all distress and need, and I can be sure and convinced that I shall receive help.”³¹*

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Saturday **10/7** **JOHN 16:1-4**

A word from Luther: *In the two preceding chapters Christ informed His disciples at length about their lot in the world after His departure. He wanted them to be prepared for this and to adjust themselves to it. now He concludes this subject and says briefly: “I told you all this to keep you from being offended, that is, to keep you from falling away or from despairing of Me. For when you see and feel that the whole world will hate and persecute you, and especially those who are called God’s people and the true church, you will be troubled; and you will be moved either to doubt that your faith and doctrine are true or to become impatient and weary, and to think: ‘I am not going to worry about this doctrine any longer. I might just as well believe and live as the others do. Then I will have peace.’ ” . . . Thus all Christians are tried, especially those engaged in the ministry. They are so plagued by the devil and the world that they would surely become weary, despair, or give up their work if they were not supported by God’s Word and Spirit. Therefore Christ comforts them here, lest they be influenced or offended by such trials, fall away from Him, or cease their work in troublous times, when adversity befalls them and they must see, hear, and feel that both the devil and the world make them sick at heart.”³²*

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Sunday **10/8** **JOHN 16:12-15**

³¹ Ibid., p. 240.

³² Ibid., pp. 301-302.

A word from Luther: Now because Christ has said: “All that the Father has is Mine,” He concludes from this and repeats what He has said of the Holy Spirit: “Therefore I said that He will take what is Mine.” Here the circle is completely closed, and all three—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are embraced in one divine essence. Christ says: “From that which is Mine, which is the Father’s, namely, the fact that I am one God with Him, the Holy Spirit also takes what He is and has. Therefore He is and has exactly what both the Father and I are and have. For if He takes and has what I have, it follows that He must be of the same nature and essence, since what I have for Myself and call My own cannot be ascribed to any creature.” . . . Behold, this is what Christ meant when He said that the Holy Spirit will speak and proclaim only what He hears in the eternal Godhead with Christ and the Father. Nowhere else can He see and learn what is happening in the Godhead. But this, says Christ, He will proclaim to you—first to your hearts and then through your mouths, that it may be believed until we, too, come to the place where we shall see it publicly. For in this life we have no more than His light, which He has lit in a dark cellar, as it were. This light is the Word, to which we must cling, ever persisting in faith until we arrive at the place where there will be nothing but eternal and brilliant clarity.³³

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Week Five

Introduction/Galatians (for Monday)

The famous Luther scholar, Jaroslav Pelican, in his introduction to the English translation of Luther’s lectures on Galatians, says, “If the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians is, as it has often been called, the Magna Charta of Christian liberty, then Luther’s Lectures on Galatians of 1531 (1535) deserves to be called a declaration of Christian independence—of independence from the Law and from **anything or anyone else** except the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Characteristically, Luther described his relation to the epistle in more vivid terms. ‘The Epistle to the Galatians,’ he once said at table, ‘is my epistle, to which I am betrothed. It is my Katie von Bora.’”³⁴ Galatians was and is extremely important to the Reformation. The question which prompted Paul’s epistle, Luther believed to be one in the same with the conflict of his day: does the law or human works justify or not? Although many contemporary scholars believe the main issue in Galatians was not how one is made righteous but how Gentiles enter the fellowship of the church, Luther would most likely view these contemporary efforts as another example of the “old self” trying to remove the offense of the Gospel, and make our justification and salvation, in small or large part, our achievement. Luther believed the point of Galatians is **Christ alone** and **faith alone** justifies. It is important to note that Luther’s concern is that the law must be kept in its proper place. He was not antinomian (freedom to do as one pleases with no guide) but rather, **when it comes to our justification**, the law, or Moses, has been unseated by Christ. If you would like a brief overview of Galatians, click [here](#) to watch an 8 min presentation from the Bible Project.

Monday 10/9 GALATIANS 1:6-9

A word from Luther: In fact, they (false teachers) are prouder than anyone else of the name of Christ, and they claim to be the most sincere preachers of the Gospel. But because they confuse the Law with the Gospel, it is

³³ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther’s works: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14-16](#). (Vol. 24, p. 374).

³⁴ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther’s works, vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#). (Vol. 26, p. ix).

inevitable that they subvert the Gospel. Either Christ must abide, and the Law perish; or the Law must abide, and Christ perish. It is impossible for Christ and the Law to agree and to share the reign over a conscience. Where the righteousness of the Law reigns, there the righteousness of grace cannot reign; and, on the other hand, where the righteousness of grace reigns, there the righteousness of the Law cannot reign. One of these two will have to yield to the other. And if you cannot bring yourself to believe that God wants to forgive your sins for the sake of Christ, how will you be able to believe that He wants to forgive you for the sake of the works of the Law or for the sake of your own works? Therefore the doctrine of grace simply cannot stand with the doctrine of the Law. One of them must be rejected and abolished, and the other must be confirmed or substantiated . . . But just as the Jews were inclined away from this doctrine of faith and grace, **so we also are inclined away from it.** I personally would like to keep both the righteousness of grace as that which justifies and the righteousness of the Law as the basis for God's attitude toward me. But, as Paul says here, **confusing these means perverting the Gospel of Christ.** Yet in a controversy the stronger side can defeat the better side. So it happens that the righteousness of grace and of faith is lost; and the other righteousness, that of the Law and of works, is advanced and defended. Christ and His side are weak, and the Gospel is a foolish proclamation. On the other hand, the kingdom of the world and the devil, its prince, are strong; in addition, the wisdom of the flesh is very impressive. But this is our consolation that the devil with his members cannot accomplish what he wishes. He may trouble many persons, but he cannot destroy the Gospel of Christ. The truth may be endangered, but it cannot perish. It is attacked, but it cannot be conquered; for "the Word of the Lord abides forever" (1 Peter 1:25).³⁵

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Tuesday 10/10 GALATIANS 2:4-10

*A word from Luther: The truth of the Gospel is this: Our righteousness comes by faith alone, without the works of the Law. The falsification or corruption of the Gospel is this, that we are justified by faith but not without the works of the Law. The false apostles preached the Gospel, but they did so with **this condition** attached to it. The scholastics do the same thing in our day. They say that we must believe in Christ and that faith is the foundation of salvation, but they say that this faith does not justify unless it is "formed by love." This is not the truth of the Gospel; it is falsehood and pretense. The true Gospel, however, is this: Works or love are not the ornament or perfection of faith; but faith itself is a gift of God, a work of God in our hearts, which justifies us because it takes hold of Christ as the Savior.*³⁶

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Wednesday 10/11 GALATIANS 2:15-21

A word from Luther: It is as though Paul were to say: "I have not preached in such a way that I would now rebuild what has been destroyed. For if I did this, I would not only labor in vain but would make myself a transgressor and overthrow everything, after the style of the false apostles. That is, I would change grace and Christ back into the Law and Moses, and, vice versa, change the Law and Moses into grace and Christ. By the

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 54–55.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 88.

Gospel I have destroyed sin, sadness, wrath, and death. For this is what I have been teaching: 'Your conscience, O man, is liable to the Law and to sin and death. But here comes the Gospel, which preaches the forgiveness of sins to you through Christ, who has abrogated the Law and has destroyed sin and death. Believe in Him, and you will be free of the curse of the Law. You will be righteous and will have eternal life.' . . .

. . . But is this blasphemy (nullifying the cross) something to be tolerated and covered up, that when the Divine Majesty did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all (Rom. 8:32), He was not doing this seriously but was merely playing? Before I would grant this, I would rather that the holiness not only of the papists and fanatics but even of the angels be eternally rejected and condemned, along with the devil! I refuse to look at anything except this Christ. He should be such a treasure to me that in comparison with Him everything else is filthy. He should be such a light to me that when I have taken hold of Him by faith, I do not know whether there is such a thing as Law, sin, or unrighteousness in the world. For what is everything there is in heaven and on earth in comparison with the Son of God? Nullifying the grace of God is, therefore, a very great and very common sin, and one that all the self-righteous commit; for as long as they seek to be justified through the merit of congruity or through their own works and afflictions or through the Law, they nullify the grace of God and Christ, as we have said. . . . But if my salvation was worth so much to Christ that He had to die for my sins, then my works and the righteousness of the Law are vile—in fact, nonexistent—in comparison with such an inestimable price.³⁷

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Thursday 10/12 GALATIANS 3:23-29

A word from Luther: *Therefore the function of the Law is only to kill, yet in such a way that God may be able to make alive. Thus the Law was not given merely for the sake of death; but because humanity is proud and supposes that one is wise, righteous, and holy, therefore it is necessary that one be humbled by the Law, in order that this beast, the presumption of righteousness, may be killed, since a person cannot live unless it (the presumption) is killed.*

Although the Law kills, therefore, God still uses this effect of the Law, this death, for a good use, namely, for life. When God saw that the most widespread pestilence in the whole world, that is, hypocrisy and confidence in one's own saintliness, could not be restrained and crushed in any other way, He decided to kill it by means of the Law. This was not to be permanent; but it had as its purpose that when this pestilence was killed, a person would be raised up again and would hear this voice beyond the Law: "Do not fear. I did not give the Law and kill you through it with the intent that you should remain in death, but that you should fear Me and live." A presumption of good works and of righteousness leaves no room for the fear of God. But where there is no fear of God, there cannot be a thirst for grace and life. Therefore God must have a mighty hammer to crush the rocks, and a fire burning in the midst of heaven to overthrow the mountains, that is, to crush that stubborn and perverse beast, presumption. When a person has been brought to nothing by this pounding, despairs of his own powers, righteousness, and works, and trembles before God, he will, in his terror, begin to thirst for mercy and the forgiveness of sins.³⁸

³⁷ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4](#). (Vol. 26, p. 183).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 335–336.

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Friday 10/13 GALATIANS 4:4-7

A word from Luther: *This is a rhetorical exclamation and a conclusion, as though Paul were saying: “Now that it is established that we have received the Spirit through the hearing of the Word and that we can cry in our hearts: ‘Abba! Father!’ then it is surely defined in heaven that there is no slavery anymore, but sheer liberty, adoption, and sonship.” Who produces it? The sigh. How? Because it is the Father who promises. But He is not a Father to me unless I respond to Him as a child. First the Father offers me grace and fatherhood by means of His promises; all that remains is that I accept it. This happens when I cry out with that sigh and when I respond to His voice with the heart of a child, saying: “Father!” Then Father and child come together, and a marriage is contracted without any ceremony or pomp. That is, nothing comes in the way: no Law, no work is demanded here. For what would a person do in these terrors and in this horrible darkness of trial? There is only the Father here, promising and calling me His child through Christ, who was born under the Law. And I for my part accept, reply with a sigh, and say: “Father!” **There is no demand here**, but only the sigh of the child, who grows confident in the midst of tribulation and says: “Thou dost promise and dost call me ‘son’ or ‘daughter’ on account of Christ. I accept and call Thee ‘Father.’ ” This is becoming a son or daughter completely without works. But these things cannot be understood without the experience.³⁹*

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Saturday 10/14 GALATIANS 5:1-6, 13-15

A word from Luther: *What is more, those whom the apostle was forced to oppose in the same sixth chapter of Romans also have a fleshly idea of freedom, as if in Christ it were permissible for anything at all to be done, whereas this freedom is such that because of it we do of our own accord and gladly, without regard for penalties or rewards, the things that are stated in the Law. But it is slavery when we do these things out of slavish fear or childish desire. Therefore it profits nothing. Neither is there any difference between a slave of sin and a slave of the Law, because he who is a slave of the Law is always a sinner. He never fulfills the Law except to put works on display, and a temporal reward is given to him just as it is given to children of slave women and concubines. But the inheritance goes to the son of the free woman. “Christ,” he says, “has made us free with this freedom.” It is a spiritual freedom, one to be preserved in the spirit. It is not that heathen kind, which even the pagan Persius knew was not enough. It is freedom from the Law, but in a way contrary to what usually takes place among people. For it is human freedom when laws are changed without effecting any change in men, but it is Christian freedom when men are changed without changing the Law. Consequently, the same Law that was formerly hateful to the free will now becomes delightful, since love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). In this freedom, he teaches us, we must stand strongly and steadfastly, because Christ, who fulfills the Law and overcomes sin for us, sends the spirit of love into the hearts of those who believe in Him. This makes them righteous and lovers of the Law, not because of their own works but freely*

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 389–390.

because it is freely bestowed by Christ. If you move away from this, you are both ungrateful to Christ and proud of yourself, since you want to justify and free yourself from the Law without Christ.⁴⁰

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Sunday **10/15** **GALATIANS 5:22-26**

A word from Luther: Like love, “joy,” the second fruit, has to do with God and with one’s neighbor. It has to do with God when we are glad because of His divine mercy and even in the midst of the world’s storms praise and bless the Lord in the fiery furnace day and night. But it has to do with our neighbor when we are not envious of his goods but wish him joy in them as though they were our own and praise the gifts of God that he has. But just as the adherents of the flesh feign love in tranquil times, so it is with joy too. They praise God and the gifts of God in people, but only till they are offended. . . . The third fruit is “peace”; and this, too, is twofold. When it has to do with God, it is the good conscience that relies on the mercy of Christ. But at times it surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:7), when it is disturbed because God hides Himself and turns away His face, and the conscience is left to itself. It has to do with one’s neighbor, however, when one yields to his will. For this peace can never exist among men if everyone wants to justify, protect, seek, and demand his own advantage.⁴¹

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Week Six

Introduction/Romans (for Monday)

As we draw closer to October 31st, we turn to Paul’s letter to the Romans in which Luther had his “tower experience” where he saw with complete clarity that our right standing before God is a gift that we receive by trusting and believing in the person and work of Jesus Christ. After Luther completed his lectures on the Psalms, he turned to Romans lecturing twice a week from 1515-16. Later in his life Luther, reflecting on his work in Romans he would say, “The words ‘righteous’ and ‘righteousness of God’ struck my conscience like lightning. When I heard them I was exceedingly terrified. If God is righteous [I thought], he must punish. But when by God’s grace I pondered, in the tower and heated room of this building,⁶⁵ over the words, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live’ [Rom. 1:17] and ‘the righteousness of God’ [Rom. 3:21], I soon came to the conclusion that if we, as righteous men, ought to live from faith and if the righteousness of God contribute to the salvation of all who believe, then salvation won’t be our merit but God’s mercy. My spirit was thereby cheered. For it’s by the righteousness of God that we’re justified and saved through Christ. These words [which had before terrified me] now became more pleasing to me. The Holy Spirit unveiled the Scriptures for me in this tower.”⁴² In this section Luther’s words come mostly from his lecture notes on Romans, a true treasure. If you would like a brief overview of Romans 1-4, click [here](#) to watch an 8 min presentation from the Bible Project.

⁴⁰ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther’s works, vol. 27: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5-6; 1519, Chapters 1-6.](#) (Vol. 27, pp. 325–326).

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 375.

⁴² Luther, M. (1999). [Luther’s works, vol. 54: Table Talk.](#) (Vol. 54, pp. 193–194).

Monday 10/16 ROMANS 1:16-17

A word from Luther: *We should note that it says the power of God in distinction from “human power.” The latter is the power by which a person gains strength and health according to the flesh and by which one is able to do the things which are of the flesh. But this power God completely canceled by the cross of Christ in order to give His own power, by which the spirit becomes strong and is saved and by which one is able to do the things of the spirit . . . “The righteousness of God is revealed.” In human teachings the righteousness of a person is revealed and taught, that is, who is and becomes righteous before one’s self and before other people and how this takes place. Only in the Gospel is the righteousness of God revealed (that is, who is and becomes righteous before God and how this takes place) by faith alone, by which the Word of God is believed, as it is written in the last chapter of Mark (16:16): “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” For the righteousness of God is the cause of salvation. And here again, by the righteousness of God we must not understand the righteousness by which He is righteous in Himself but the righteousness by which we are made righteous by God. This happens through faith in the Gospel. Therefore blessed Augustine writes in chapter 11 of *On the Spirit and the Letter*: “It is called the righteousness of God because by imparting it He makes righteous people, just as ‘Deliverance belongs to the Lord’ refers to that by which He delivers.”⁴³*

Tuesday 10/17 ROMANS 1:20-25

A word from Luther: *A god is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need. To have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe him with our whole heart. As I have often said, the trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true God. On the other hand, if your trust is false and wrong, then you have not the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is, I say, really your God.⁴⁴*

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Wednesday 10/18 ROMANS 3:21-31

A word from Luther: *Therefore we need humility and faith. What these words seek to establish and maintain is solely this, that inwardly we become nothing, that we empty ourselves of everything, humble ourselves and say with the prophet, “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, so that Thou art justified in Thy words.” “In Thy sight I am foolish and weak, so that Thou mayest be wise and powerful in Thy words.” For all creation teaches that “there is no need of a physician except for those who are sick” (cf. Matt. 9:12), that no sheep is sought except the one who is lost (Luke 15:4), that no one is freed except the captive, that no one is enriched except the pauper, that no one is made strong except the weak, that no one is exalted except the person who has been humbled, nothing is filled except that which is empty, that nothing is built except that which has been torn down. . . . Therefore, since every creature proclaims this, it cannot happen that one who is filled with one’s own righteousness can be filled with the righteousness of God, who fills none but the hungry and the thirsty. Therefore one who is sated with one’s own truth and wisdom is incapable of receiving the truth and wisdom of God, which can be received only in an empty and destitute heart. Hence, let us say to God: “O how willingly we*

⁴³ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther’s works, vol. 25: Lectures on Romans](#). (Vol. 25, pp. 151–152).

⁴⁴ Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). [The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church](#). (p. 365). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

are empty that Thou mayest dwell in us! How gladly weak that Thy power may dwell in me; gladly a sinner that Thou mayest be justified in me; gladly foolish that Thou mayest be my wisdom; gladly unrighteous that Thou mayest be my righteousness!" Behold, this is the meaning of the statement, "Against Thee have I sinned ... so that Thou art justified in Thy words" (Ps. 51:4).⁴⁵

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Thursday 10/19 ROMANS 4:16-25

A word from Luther: *The death of Christ is the death of sin, and His resurrection is the life of righteousness, because through His death He has made satisfaction for sin, and through His resurrection He has brought us righteousness. And thus His death not only signifies but actually effects the remission of sin as a most sufficient satisfaction. And His resurrection is not only a sign or a sacrament of our righteousness, but it also produces it in us, if we believe it, and it is also the cause of it.*⁴⁶ . . . *Is not this a beautiful, glorious exchange, by which Christ, who is wholly innocent and holy, not only takes upon himself another's sin, that is, my sin and guilt, but also clothes and adorns me, who am nothing but sin, with his own innocence and purity? And then besides dies the shameful death of the Cross for the sake of my sins, through which I have deserved death and condemnation, and grants to me his righteousness, in order that I may live with him eternally in glorious and unspeakable joy. Through this blessed exchange, in which Christ changes places with us (something the heart can grasp only in faith), and through nothing else, are we freed from sin and death and given his righteousness and life as our own.*⁴⁷

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Friday 10/20 ROMANS 6:1-7

If you would like a brief overview of Romans 5-16, click [here](#) to watch a 9 min presentation from the Bible Project.

A word from Luther: *Baptism, then, signifies two things—death and resurrection, that is, full and complete justification. When the minister immerses the child in the water it signifies death, and when he draws it forth again it signifies life. Thus Paul expounds it in Rom. 6[:4]: "We were buried therefore with Christ by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." This death and resurrection we call the new creation, regeneration, and spiritual birth. This should not be understood only allegorically as the death of sin and the life of grace, as many understand it, but as actual death and resurrection. For baptism is not a false sign. Neither does sin completely die, nor grace completely rise, until the sinful body that we carry about in this life is destroyed, as the Apostle says in the same passage [Rom. 6:6–7]. For as long as we are in the flesh, the desires of the flesh stir and are stirred. For this reason, as soon as we begin to believe, we also begin to die to this world and live to God in the life to come; so that faith is*

⁴⁵ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 25: Lectures on Romans](#). (Vol. 25, p. 204).

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 284.

⁴⁷ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 51: Sermons I](#). (Vol. 51, p. 316).

truly a death and a resurrection, that is, it is that spiritual baptism into which we are submerged and from which we rise.⁴⁸

Questions about the reading? Pastor Bill would love to hear them: pastorbill@silverdalelutheran.org

Saturday 10/21 ROMANS 7:14-24 (Longer word today from Luther but necessary☺)

A word from Luther: *Thus it is astonishing that the idea could have come into anyone's mind that the apostle is speaking these words in the person of the old man or a carnal man, words which are of such great perfection, as if the apostle like a hypocrite had to think and say nothing but good things about himself, that is, to commend himself and deny that he is a sinner, so that he does not commend grace but denies it. Rather it is a comfort to hear that such a great apostle was involved in the same sorrows and afflictions as we are when we try to be obedient to God.*⁴⁹ . . .

*This is as if to say, "So long as we live here on earth, believing in his word, we are a work that God has begun, but **not yet completed**; but after death we shall be perfect, a divine work without sin or fault." . . . We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal but it is the right road. At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed.*

To bring the matter to a conclusion, the Lord's Prayer alone is enough to show that all of us are still sinners, for all the saints must also pray, "Hallowed be thy name, thy will be done, thy kingdom come," etc. . . . I know, of course, what my opponents like to say to all this. They claim that this evil which remains after baptism is not sin and they invent a new name for it. They call it Penalty and not guilt, claiming it to be a defect or weakness, rather than sin. My answer is that all this is arbitrarily fabricated without any basis or reason in Scripture. Indeed, it is contrary to Scripture, for St. Paul does not say, "I find in me a defect," but expressly, "With my flesh I serve the law of sin" [Rom. 7:25], and again, "The sin which dwells within me" [Rom. 7:20] does the evil. And St. John says not, "If we say that we have no defect," but, "If we say we have not sinned" [I John 1:10].

*It is an outrage that cannot be tolerated that people should do such violence to God's Word and call that a defect which God calls sin. . . . I would not believe St. Augustine if St. Paul did not support him when he says in Rom. 8[:1], "Those who believe in Christ have nothing damnable in them, because they do not obey the flesh." He does not say, "They have nothing sinful in them," but, "nothing damnable," for he has said previously that there is sin in the members and the flesh which is at war with the spirit. But since the spirit fights against this sin and does not obey it, it does no harm, and God judges a person not according to the sin by which one is assailed in the flesh, but according to the spirit which is at war against sin, and is thereby like the will of God, which hates and fights against sin. It is one thing, then, to say that sins are forgiven and another to say that there is no sin present. After baptism and repentance, all sins are forgiven, **but sin remains present until death**. But because of God's forgiveness, this sin does not impair our salvation, provided we fight against it and do not surrender. Therefore our opponents should not deny that sin remains after baptism, as though we needed*

⁴⁸ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 36: Word and Sacrament II](#). (Vol. 36, pp. 67–68).

⁴⁹ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 25: Lectures on Romans](#). (Vol. 25, p. 335).

grace no longer to drive out sin. Rather, they should deny the assertion that not all sins are forgiven. Then they and I would be unanimous in our denial.

For this is the abundant grace of the New Testament and the surpassing mercy of the Heavenly Father that, through baptism and repentance, we begin to become godly and pure. **God does not hold against us whatever sin is still to be driven out**, because of the beginning that we have made in godliness and because of our steady battle against sin which we continue to expel. He chooses not to charge this sin against us, though, until we become perfectly pure, he might justly do so. For this reason, he has given us a bishop, namely Christ, who is without sin and who is to be our representative until we too become entirely pure like him [Heb. 7:26; Rom. 8:34]. Meanwhile, the righteousness of Christ must be our cover. His perfect godliness must be our shield and defense. For his sake, the sin that remains in those who believe in him, may not be charged against them, as St. Paul so masterfully describes it in Rom. 3[:24–26]. . . . **This makes for free, joyful, and brave Christians, whose love causes them to fight against sin**, and gladly repent. But those who would hide our sin from us and make it out to be merely a weakness, lull us into a false security, make us lazy and sullen, take Christ from us, and allow us to go on without fear and without care concerning the eradication of our sin. If we become callous in such horrible presumption we shall relish neither Christ nor God. God preserve us from this presumption and save all those now caught in it. Amen.⁵⁰

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Sunday 10/22 ROMANS 8:28-38

A word from Luther: For there is no other reason or cause why numerous adversities and evils do not separate the saints from the love of God except the fact that they have not only been called but “called according to His purpose,” and therefore to them alone and to no others “He works all things for good.” For if it were not the purpose of God, and if our salvation depended upon our will and works, it would depend upon chance, a chance which—I do not say all of these evils together—but one of them might easily hinder or overturn! But now when he says: “Who will bring a charge? Who will condemn? Who will separate?” (vv. 33–35), he is showing that the elect are not saved by chance but by necessity. Here we are shown that neither chance nor wonderfully strong resistance against so many evils impede our salvation. Indeed He saves us in this way and exposes His elect to as many rapacious forces as are mentioned here, all of which are striving to pull the elect down into damnation so that they might be lost, in order to show that He saves us not by our own merits, but purely by His own election and immutable will, in the very face of so many rapacious and terrifying adversaries who try in vain to harm us. For if He did not lead us through so many frightful things, He would leave much room for high opinions concerning our own merits. But now He shows that we are saved by His immutable love⁵¹

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Week Seven (Romans Cont. & I John)

Monday 10/23 ROMANS 12.1-2

⁵⁰ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 32: Career of the Reformer II](#). (Vol. 32, pp. 27–29).

⁵¹ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 25: Lectures on Romans](#). (Vol. 25, p. 371)

A word from Luther: *The apostle is about to teach Christian ethics, and so no other concern is of such prime importance up to the end of the epistle as to eradicate our own wisdom and self-will. . . . At this point, and from here to the end of the epistle, Paul teaches how we should act toward our neighbor and explains at length this command to love our neighbor. But it is remarkable how such a clear and important teaching of such a great apostle, indeed of the Holy Spirit Himself, receives no attention. . . . Paul has said in Rom. 6:19: "Yield your members to righteousness for sanctification," and in 1 Cor. 7:34: "That she may be holy both in body and spirit." In brief, then, "holy" is the same as "sacred," to be pure and clean before God, whereby it is different from the cleanness which is observed among people.⁵² . . . The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness (being made righteous by faith in Christ). This is that manner of life spent profitably in good works, in the first place, in slaying the flesh and crucifying the desires with respect to the self, of which we read in Gal. 5[:24]: "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." In the second place, this righteousness consists in love to one's neighbor, and in the third place, in meekness and fear toward God. The Apostle is full of references to these, as is all the rest of Scripture. He briefly summarizes everything, however, in Titus 2[:12]: "In this world let us live soberly (pertaining to crucifying one's own flesh), justly (referring to one's neighbor), and devoutly (relating to God)." This righteousness is the product of the righteousness of the first type, actually its fruit and consequence.⁵³*

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Tuesday 10/24 ROMANS 12.3-8

A word from Luther: *The leader in diligence. But in our day the one who leads, both spiritually as well as in the secular realm, does so in luxury, idleness, riches, pleasure, in glory and honor, in power and terror. Ezekiel 34:2 ff. says of these conditions: "Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the crippled you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, but with force and harshness you have ruled them." Who does not shake at these words and whose hair does not stand on end! These are the people who attack this command. For they do not ascend in order to descend, as did the angels on Jacob's ladder. For to ascend means to rule, but to descend means to be diligent. They do not rule in order to serve, although everyone who is exalted is exalted for the purpose that one seeks nothing for one's self nor seek to live for one's self, but that one recognize that one has been made a servant of one's servants.⁵⁴*

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Wednesday 10/25 ROMANS 12:9-21

A word from Luther: *Do not be overcome by evil. That is, see to it that those who hurt you do not cause you to become evil like them and that their iniquity does not overcome your goodness. For one is the victor who*

⁵² Ibid., pp. 436–437.

⁵³ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 31: Career of the Reformer I](#). (Vol. 31, pp. 299–300).

⁵⁴ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 25: Lectures on Romans](#). (Vol. 25, p. 450)

changes another person to become like one's self while remaining unchanged. But rather by your well-doing make others become good like you. Let your goodness overcome another's wickedness and change them into you. . . . Hence blessed Gregory says: "It is better to escape from anger by silence than to gain the victory by answering." And Prov. 26:4–5 reads: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." . . . But one who is "overcome by evil" and does not change the fool but rather falls into the same violence is one who answers the fool according to his folly and becomes like him. . . . For by replying in kind you accomplish nothing to cause the fool to see one's self as a fool, but rather you only increase foolishness by the foolishness with which you repay.⁵⁵

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Introduction/I John (for Thursday)

I John is also one of Luther's favorite books. In the Forward to his published lecture notes on I John, Luther says: "Since I see that the devil is assailing us on all sides and that we do not have peace anywhere, we should bear in mind that God wants to keep us in His church, in which He has given us His Word. And we should understand that this Word of His is more powerful than all devils. For it is God's practice to join the cross and persecution to His Word, etc. This is an outstanding epistle. It can buoy up afflicted hearts. Furthermore, it has John's style and manner of expression, so beautifully and gently does it picture Christ to us. It came to be written because at that time heretics and sluggish Christians had rushed in, which invariably happens when the Word has been revived. Then the devil harries us constantly and seeks in every way to cast us down, in order that we may give up preaching and good works. In John's time there were the Cerinthians, who denied the divinity of Christ; and there were sluggish Christians, who thought that they had heard Christ's Word enough and that it was not necessary to forsake the world and to do good to their neighbors. Here the apostle attacks both evils and urges us to guard the Word and to love one another."⁵⁶ If you would like a brief overview of the Epistles of John, click [here](#) to watch a 9 min presentation from the Bible Project.

Thursday **10/26** **I JOHN 2:1-5**

A word from Luther: *Who does not transgress now and then? I and everyone feel the need of praise. We should not despair of God's mercy. He who is presumptuous concerning his merits and is without confidence concerning God's mercy commits the same kind of sin. For God says in Ps. 86:5: "I am merciful to those who sin and call upon Me. No righteousness is so great that it pleases Me." Thus if someone errs and sins, he should not add the sin of despair. After sin the devil always alarms the heart and makes us tremble. For he hurls a person into sin in order that he may finally force him into despair. On the other hand, he lets some live smugly without temptation in order that they may think and believe that they are holy. And when somewhere he tears the Word out of one's heart, then he has conquered. This is his cunning. He wants to make saints sinners, and confident sinners saints. Do not despair after sin, but lift your eyes on high to where Christ intercedes for us. He is our Advocate. He intercedes for us and says: "Father, I have suffered for this person; I am looking after him." This prayer cannot be in vain. In Heb. 4:14 we read: "We have a great High Priest." But even though we have had Christ as our High Priest, Advocate, Mediator, Reconciler, and Comforter, yet we have fled for refuge to the*

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 466–468.

⁵⁶ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 30: The Catholic Epistles](#). (Vol. 30, p. 219).

saints and have regarded Christ as a Judge. Accordingly, this text should be written with golden letters and should be painted in the heart. Therefore you should get understanding and say: “Christ,² I know Thee alone as the Advocate, the Comforter, and the Mediator; and I do not doubt that Thou art such a Person for me but cling firmly to this with my heart and believe.” Christ is born for us, suffers, ascends into heaven for our sakes, sits at the right hand of the Father, and intercedes for us. Satan strives in every way to strike our hearts with blindness, lest they believe what the Holy Spirit says here through John. **The condition of Christians is wonderful. For the same person is a sinner and is righteous—a sinner because of the infected flesh he bears, righteous because of the Spirit, who holds him in check.** Reason can by no means understand that condition.⁵⁷

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Friday 10/27 I JOHN 3:13-24

A word from Luther: “For the kingdom of God does not exist in talk but in power,” 1 Cor. 4:20. Therefore John calls every Christian a brother and sister, because there is a brotherhood/sisterhood among Christians. Moreover, brothers and sisters should share the same inheritance. But to love a brother or sister who is kind and pleasant in return—this is a trivial matter. This is the way the world also loves. “The crowd judges friendships by their usefulness.” Accordingly, John does not say: “Let us love those who are saintly, agreeable, and rich.” No, he says: “Let us love the brotherhood/sisterhood,” in such a way that then nothing but the brotherhood/sisterhood is loved and regarded; for a brother or sister is loved out of a sense of duty, not because of usefulness and not because of praise. **All the gifts we have should serve those who do not have them.** For example, the one who is learned should serve the one who is not learned; one who is rich should serve one who is poor; one who is sensible should serve one who is foolish, etc. it is easy to love Paul and other apostles. They serve you even after their death. But to love those who are weak, troublesome, and unlearned—this indeed is to love truly. Otherwise there is no brotherhood or sisterhood, but there is carnality. In short, it is the duty of Christians to serve, not for their own advantage but for the advantage of their brothers and sisters.⁵⁸

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Saturday 10/28 I JOHN 4:7-12

A word from Luther: John proves that God not only loves but is love itself. It is as if he were saying: “If you knew that God is love, you would know that He sent His only-begotten Son, that He poured Himself out into us completely and handed over to us the things that are His.” This is a sure saying, as Paul states in 1 Tim. 1:15: “The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” Our text has emphasis and forcefulness. We are sin and death. But through Him, the Son, we live and are righteous. If all things are through Him (cf. John 1:3), it follows that they are not through us. Take hold of this in opposition to free will. Through Him, Christ, are all things; through us there is nothing. This rule of the apostles excels the rules of Augustine, Benedict, and others. Indeed, it is always contrary to their rules. For if salvation and life are through Christ alone, it follows that they are not through our works and efforts, no matter of what nature those works and efforts are. . . . Therefore

⁵⁷ Luther, M. (1999). [Luther's works, vol. 30: The Catholic Epistles](#). (Vol. 30, pp. 235–236).

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 278–279.

God does not regard us, because we for our part do not regard His only-begotten Son. And the emphasis lies in the fact that John not only says that God sent “His Son,” but that He sent “His only-begotten Son.”

Into the world that we might live through Him. This is an emphatic statement, since the kingdoms of the devil, by which the elect are oppressed, are in the world. Consider the inestimable love of God, and show me a religion that could proclaim a similar mystery. Therefore let us embrace Christ, who was delivered for us, and His righteousness; but let us regard our righteousnesses as dung, so that we, having died to sins, may live to God alone.⁵⁹

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Sunday 10/29 EPHESIANS 2:4-10

We conclude our journey with statements of Luther from the Heidelberg Disputation in 1518. Scriptures like Ephesians 2 brought Luther to make these bold statements intended to spark debate and conversation. May they continue to keep the Reformation conversation going even today! They certainly are at the core of what the Reformation is all about.

A word from Luther: *Distrusting completely our own wisdom, according to that counsel of the Holy Spirit, “Do not rely on your own insight” [Prov. 3:5], we humbly present to the judgment of all those who wish to be here these theological paradoxes, so that it may become clear whether they have been deduced well or poorly from St. Paul, the especially chosen vessel and instrument of Christ, and also from St. Augustine, his most trustworthy interpreter.*

- 25. *He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ.*
- 26. *The law says, “do this,” and it is never done. Grace says, “believe in this,” and everything is already done.*
- 27. *Actually one should call the work of Christ an acting work and our work an accomplished work, and thus an accomplished work pleasing to God by the grace of the acting work.*
- 28. *The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of a person comes into being through that which is pleasing to it.⁶⁰*

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⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 293–294.

⁶⁰ Luther, M. (1999). [*Luther’s works, vol. 31: Career of the Reformer I.*](#) (Vol. 31, p. 41).