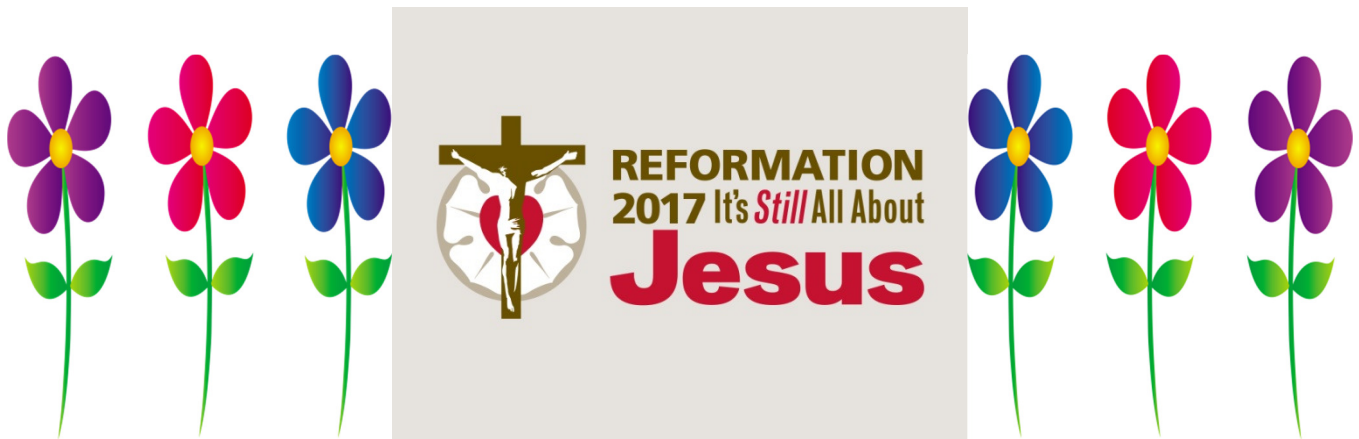


Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! It is officially spring now—no longer just the spring weather at the end of winter. With that said, so often looks can be deceiving. You can look outside and the sun can be shining, but it can be cold or even begin to rain. As you know, those who predict the weather can say one thing about an upcoming day, and you go outside that day and it's completely different than they'd thought. Thanks be to God that His Word is not deceptive, but is inspired by His Holy Spirit and useful for rebuking and training in righteousness. Let's continue with our study.



Last month we began the season of Lent, and our study of Luther's Explanation of the Second Article of the Apostle's Creed in his Large Catechism. We read how Jesus has "become my (yours and my) Lord." Though we human beings fell into sin following creation, the Son of God "in his unfathomable goodness, had mercy on us because of our misery and distress and came from heaven to help us." Luther continues: "Those tyrants and jailers have now been routed, and their place has been taken by Jesus Christ, the Lord of life, righteousness, and every good and blessing. He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father's favor and grace (BoC, p.434)."

Just in these couple sentences we find a number of metaphors for how Jesus has saved us and from what He has rescued us. First, Jesus has "routed" our "tyrants and jailers," and has taken their place. Here we might consider Jesus' prophecy about binding the strong man in Mark 3:27. Before His death on the cross for our sins, we were being held in Satan's house. But through Jesus' death, He has bound the strong man Satan and has reclaimed humanity—Jesus' creations—for Himself.

Second, Jesus has “snatched us...from the jaws of hell.” I’m not sure if I can think of a much worse way to die than to be eaten alive. I know that God has the power to restore my body in the Resurrection should such a thing happen, but I still hope that it won’t happen. There’s only two ways to go should an animal choose to devour someone: being masticated to death, or being burned up by its stomach acids—neither of which are pleasant thoughts. But had it not been for Jesus’ death in our places, we would be headed to eternal condemnation, where there would be “weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 22:13b);” and where “their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh (Isaiah 66:24b).” The only thing I can imagine worse than dying by being eaten alive would be being eaten and not being able to die. Thanks be to God Jesus has “snatched us...from the jaws of hell (BoC, 434)” so that we don’t have to face such a fate!

Instead of an eternity in hell for our sin, Jesus has “won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father’s grace and favor (BoC, p.434).” Although we are in Lent, where it is good, right, and salutary to consider our sinfulness and repent of it, we already know that Easter is coming. Right now we are considering how Jesus suffered hell on the cross so many years ago in our place so that we don’t have to. Then He said “It is finished,” and He died. Descending into hell, Jesus began proclaiming His victory over Satan and all of his minions. Finally He was raised on Easter Sunday. Even in the midst of our Lenten repentance, we have a taste of the joy of Easter each Sunday. Each one we hear again how we are living eternal life today, in God’s “favor and grace,” for the sake of Jesus’ death and resurrection. But just as we are not yet at the end of the season of Lent and the joy of Easter, we are not yet completely restored in this life. That will happen in the joy of our own Resurrection, for which we eagerly await. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh