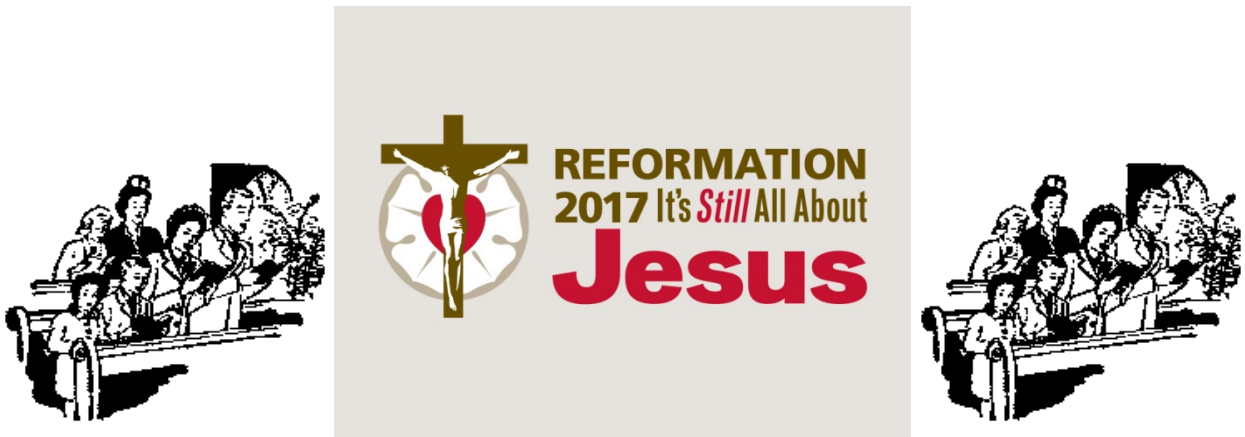


Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! Having just gotten married, my wife Anna and I are both preparing for the new school year. Anna has accepted a call to Christ Our Rock Lutheran High School in Centralia, and I will be teaching Religion class at St. Peter as I continue to serve for their vacancy. It'll be back to the early morning alarms for us, and for some of you, too. As we prepare for classes, we continue our study of the Third Article in the Large Catechism.



Last month, we heard about how we pray that God would defend us from pastors who would teach as only humans, giving us false doctrine. This month, we continue our reading as found in the Book of Concord, the Kolb and Wengert edition (2000), on pages 436 to 437: “The Creed calls the holy Christian church a *communio sanctorum*, a communion of saints. Both expressions have the same meaning...The word *ecclesia* properly means nothing but an assembly in German. But we (the German people Luther was writing to) are accustomed to the word *Kirche*, which the common people understand not as an assembled group of people, but as a consecrated house or building. But the house would not be called a church if it were not for the single reason that the group of people come together in it. For we who come together choose a special place and give the house its name because of this group. Thus the word ‘church’ really means nothing else than a common assembly...Therefore, in (their) mother tongue and in good German it ought to be called a ‘Christian community or assembly,’ or best and most

clearly of all, ‘a holy Christian people.’ Likewise, the word *communio*, which is attached to it, should not be translated ‘communion’ but rather ‘community.’”

With these words, Luther reminds us of some good Scriptural truths. Church is not about the building. It is good and proper to have a church building which is well-kept and beautiful out of thanksgiving to God for all His mercies. But, the only reason the building should be so celebrated is because it is there that you and I receive the Lord God’s gifts. We go to get these gifts because we are the Church. Therefore it is better for us to call ourselves a community rather than a communion. We are the community which receives God’s gifts of Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, and the proper teaching of His Word.

“Communion,” as Luther put it, “is nothing but a comment or interpretation by which someone wished to explain what the Christian church is. But some among our people, who understand neither Latin nor German, have rendered it ‘communion of saints,’ although no German (or United States English speaker) would talk that way to understand it. To speak proper German we ought to say a ‘community of saints,’ that is, a community that is composed only of saints, or, still more clearly, ‘a holy community.’ This I say (and I include it in my newsletter article to you) in order that the word might be understood; it has become so established in usage (for Luther’s time and our own) that it cannot well be uprooted, and it would be next to heresy to alter a word. This is the meaning and substance of this phrase: I believe that there is on earth a holy little flock and community of pure saints under one head, Christ (p.437).” We will continue our study of this phrasing next month; in the meantime, keep this word from Luther in mind: that we are a community in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd/Vacancy pastor in Christ,

Pastor Josh