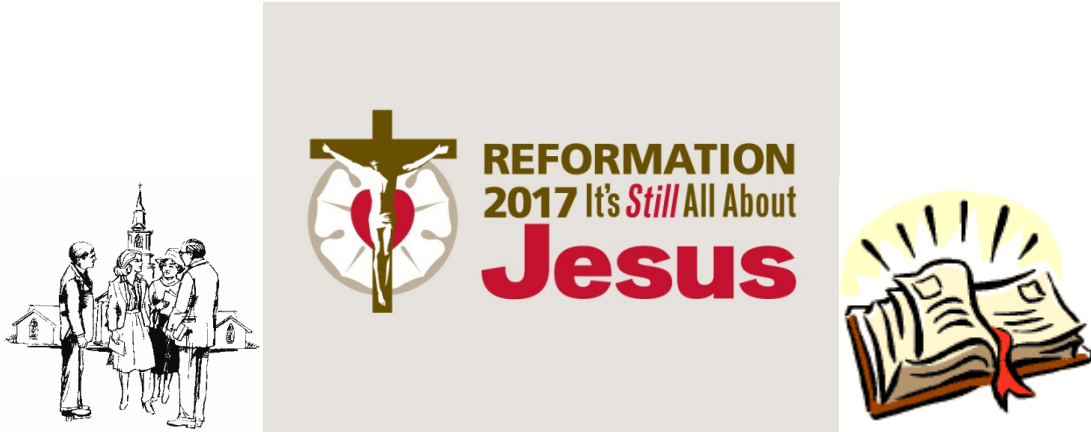


Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! The end of school has arrived, and summer vacation has begun. But don't let it be a vacation from your relationship with God, His Word, and His Church! As you'll read below, God has preserved each of these for you through Jesus' death and resurrection, and through His Holy Spirit.



Having completed the Second Article on Jesus Christ as our Lord, we now begin our review of the Third Article. This article is devoted to the work of the Holy Spirit, which is called Sanctification. Having just discussed some of these concepts in Adult Bible Class and having heard them in the sermons the last few weeks, Luther reminds us that what we've been hearing is summarized in this article. Sanctification is all about being made holy in our trust in our Lord Jesus and in our beginning to strive not to sin and to live in love toward one another. Luther basically wrote the same thing as he wrote "(t)o this article...I cannot give a better title than 'Being Made Holy.' In it are expressed and portrayed the Holy Spirit and his office, which is that he makes us holy (BoC, p.435)."

"Therefore, we must concentrate on the term 'HOLY SPIRIT,' because it is so precise that we can find no substitute for it...God's Spirit alone is called a Holy Spirit, that is, the one who has made us holy and still makes us holy. As the Father is called a Creator and the Son is called a Redeemer, so on account of his work the Holy Spirit must be called a Sanctifier, or one who makes us holy. How does such sanctifying take place? Answer: Just as the Son obtains dominion by purchasing us through his birth, death, and resurrection, etc., so the Holy Spirit effects our being made holy through the following: the community of saints or Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. That is, he first leads us into his holy community, placing us in the church's lap, where he preaches to us and brings us to Christ (BoC, pp.435-36)."

As usual, Luther has given us more to chew on than I could hope to discuss in one of these simple articles; but here is the gist: The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of God, and it is He who accomplishes all the things we confess that we believe in the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. By His work we are brought to Christ to receive faith, and to grow in that faith. That growth will be brought to completion on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit begins this process by bringing us to church. Whether you are a lifelong Lutheran or a new convert, the Spirit worked through someone around you to bring you to church that first time. From that point on, He has continued to cause you and me to go to church "where he preaches to us and brings us to Christ (BoC, p.436)."

As Luther put it, "(n)either you nor I could ever know anything about Christ, or believe in him and receive him as Lord, unless these were offered to us and bestowed on our hearts through the preaching of the gospel by the Holy Spirit. The work (of our salvation) is finished and completed; Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death, and resurrection, etc. But if the work remained hidden so that no one knew of it, it would have all been in vain, all lost. In order that this treasure might not remain buried but be put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to be published and proclaimed, in which he has given the Holy Spirit to offer and apply to us this treasure, this redemption (BoC, p.436)." As we discussed in Adult Bible Class, God has worked over the centuries to preserve His Word for us because it is only the canon of the Bible which contains His Word. No new book has the certainty of being God's Word, so He preserved the Bible over the centuries so that we might hear it. He did this because His Word is the only place where we may find the Gospel that our Lord Jesus has saved us. "Therefore being made holy is nothing more than bringing us to the Lord Christ to receive this blessing, to which we could not have come by ourselves (BoC, p.436)." In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh