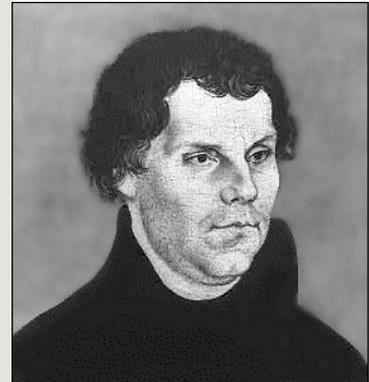
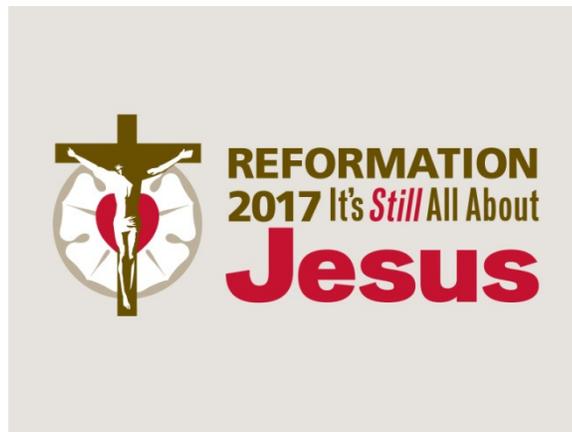
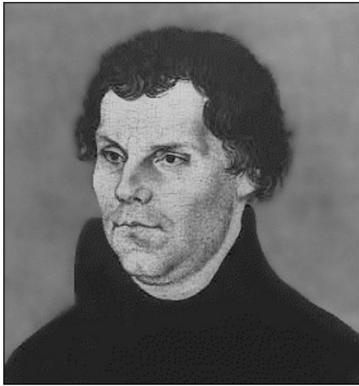


Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! This is the month! Reformation month! This whole year we've been hearing about and celebrating the Reformation—that beautiful time period where Martin Luther posted his ninety-five theses in an attempt to get the Roman Catholic pope to reform his policies according to the Scriptures. The pope refused, made it legal for anyone to kill Luther, and may have succeeded in defeating him if it were not for Guttenberg's Printing Press. Thanks be to God that Guttenberg's invention lined up with Luther's attempt at reform so that we now know that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone! Speaking of Luther, let's start covering more of his writing on the Third Article of the Creed from the Large Catechism.



Last time we heard how the Spirit created and increases holiness in us so that we bear fruits of faith. Luther continues: “Further we believe that in this Christian community we have the forgiveness of sins, which takes place through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire gospel. This encompasses everything that is to be preached about the sacraments and, in short, the entire gospel and all the official responsibilities of the Christian community. Forgiveness is constantly needed, for although God’s grace has been acquired by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word in the unity of the Christian church, yet we are never without sin because we carry our flesh around our neck (BoC, p.438).”

In other words, the Holy Spirit is active in all that we do as Christ’s Church. By everything that we do as members and organizations in the Church, we point to our justification in Christ by His death and resurrection. My preaching points to it. The work of the Ladies’ Aid/LWML points to it. The work of the Elders points to it. The work of our organists, musicians, and vocalists points to it. In the Divine Service, God

outpours His love and forgiveness in the means of grace, His Word and the Sacraments, on us. Then, as members of His Church, the Holy Spirit guides us to attend these services, demonstrating to all around us where God may truly be found.

Yet we are not perfect at this. Sin still creeps into the Church as we carry it on our necks. “Therefore everything in this Christian community (the Church) is so ordered that everyone may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and signs (the sacraments, footnote 158.) appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live on earth. Although we have sin, the Holy Spirit sees to it that it does not harm us because we are a part of this Christian community. Here there is full forgiveness of sins, both in that God forgives us and that we forgive, bear with, and aid one another.

“Outside this Christian community, however, where there is no gospel, there is also no forgiveness, and hence there can be no holiness. Therefore, all who would seek to merit holiness through their works rather than through the gospel and forgiveness of sin have expelled and separated themselves from this community (BoC, p.438).”

It seems pretty apparent that Luther wrote this last paragraph to warn against the Roman Catholic Church, yet how many other denominations emphasize works? How many other religions? As some of you have been hearing in adult Bible Class, at least the Mormons do this; and I’m here to tell you, every other religion and denomination than the LCMS and the denominations with which it has Communion fellowship throughout the world emphasize works in the wrong manner. Thanks be to God who worked through His Son, Jesus Christ, to grant us forgiveness; and for His servant Martin Luther who showed us through his writings that forgiveness is free in Christ, not the result of works! Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh Frazee