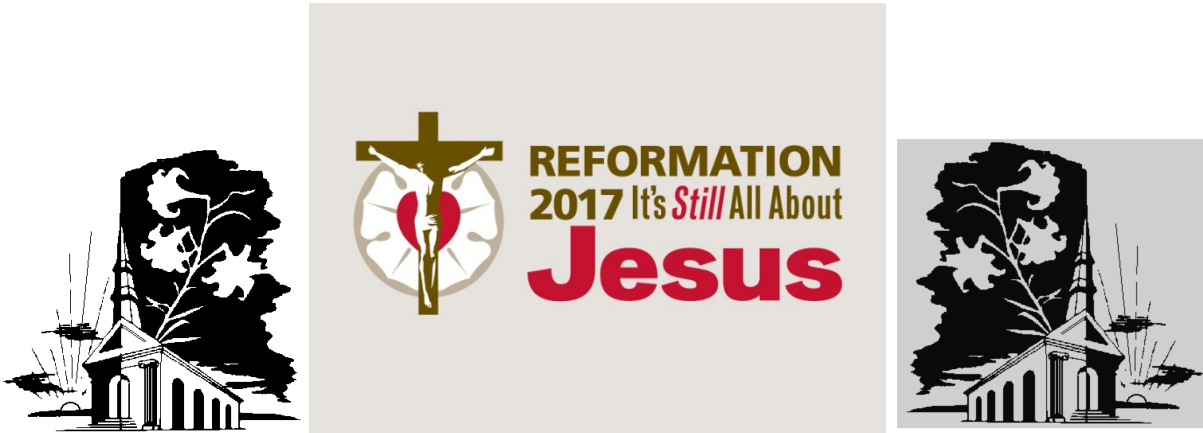


Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! Autumn is quickly approaching and I'm getting anxious to put out our fall decorations. It's still a little early for them, but it's never too early for hearing from God. His Word is always in season; and it's still all about Jesus!



Last month, we ended on the statement “I believe that there is on earth a holy little flock and community of pure saints under one head, Christ (BoC, p.437).” This month we will continue looking at this phrase, and the meaning of The Third Article according to Luther’s Large Catechism.

The above statement regards the Church, the “communion of saints.” “It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, and yet it is united in love without sect or schism (BoC, pp.437-38).” Luther draws on the writings of Paul in his commentary on this line. You might recall Paul describing the Church as the Body of Christ, with many different members, but each necessary to do their specific functions. You are a part of the Body of Christ and you have been given a specific talent set to assist in God’s mission. As Luther continues: “Of this community (you can also say) I am a part and a member, a participant and copartner in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought into it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God’s Word, which is the beginning point for entering it (BoC, p.438).”

When the Body works in fluid motion, it is a beautiful thing. When you use your gifts and talents toward the mission of God, you work in coordination with every other believer. You are a unique individual with a singular talent set, yet you are also one human being among all of us found in Jesus Christ.

This is what Satan hates to see. But Satan also knows the truth of Jesus' words: "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls (Luke 11:17b)." If he can create confusion, uncertainty, division, and schism, the devil can slow or even stop the work of God being done in our midst. So he continues to ask, "Did God really say?" And he continues to lie, "If you only do this, you will be wiser than God..." Taking our eyes, ears, and hearts off of the Word of Christ and making us judges as to what is right and wrong, Satan succeeds in dividing us.

Any time we think about how things go in the world, or for our neighbors, or how we might want to do things, we sin against God and our Lord Christ Jesus. We stray from listening solely to Jesus' Words. He alone has the one and only Truth, no matter what the world may say or do.

But as members of the community of saints, the Church, we repent of our sins, and God, who is faithful and just, forgives us our sins, as we remind each other and ourselves when we confess these words in Confession and Absolution in the Divine Service. For Jesus' sake, our sin is removed from us, and the Holy Spirit continues His good work in us.

As Luther wrote, "The Holy Spirit will remain with the holy community of Christian people until the Last Day. Through it he gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word. By it he creates and increases holiness, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in its fruits, which the Spirit produces (BoC, p.438)." And God will continue to work in us to use the gifts He has given us and to keep us from divisions and schisms. He does all this for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh