

Announcements

- ◆ A warm welcome to all our visitors and guests, friends both old and new. We pray that God has blessed your time among us with His Word and Holy Spirit. We cordially invite you to join us this morning for coffee and other refreshments downstairs following the Divine Service; and we ask that you please sign the guest book at the back of the church.
- ◆ Following coffee & refreshments this morning, our Family Bible Class will continue our study of Genesis, following Dr. Luther's Lectures on that book.
Catechesis class for younger and beginning catechumens meets at the same time. Also, Mike Jindra and Ian Walsh are teaching a catechesis class for children of approximately eight through twelves years of age. And Dave Smith is teaching a class for teenagers and others who may be interested.
- ◆ Deaconess Rhein and her husband, Rob, will be on vacation overseas over the next several weeks. Please remember them in your prayers as they travel to and fro. Our thanks to Hannah Stuckwisch, Monica Stuckwisch, and Sarah Osburn for serving as our organists while Dcs. Rhein is away.
- ◆ Looking ahead a few weeks, please take note that we will be gathered for the significant Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord on Thursday the 25th of May, in the Divine Service beginning at 6:00 p.m.
- ◆ **COLLECTIONS FOR 30 APRIL 2017: \$ 1,802.05**
In order to meet our financial obligations and commitments, an average of \$2400 is needed each week.
- ◆ The Altar flowers this morning have been provided by Pastor & LaRena Stuckwisch to the glory of God, in celebration of May birthdays: grandson Jude (1 May), granddaughter Gianna (4 May), daughter Monica (10 May), granddaughter Cherianne (13 May), and daughter Oly'Anna (28 May).
- ◆ **IN THE LORD'S SERVICE THIS EASTER DAY:** (ELDER) Robert Rhein; (USHERS) Matthew Horner & Nathan Jindra; (ACOLYTE) Gerhardt Stuckwisch; (ORGANIST) Dcs. Sandra Rhein; (GREETER) Pat Nering.
- ◆ Rev. D. Richard Stuckwisch, Pastor Home Phone: (574) 233 – 0574

On the Epistle to the Galatians

Luther prefaced his lectures on Galatians (in 1535), as follows: “We have taken it upon ourselves in the Lord’s name to lecture on this Epistle of Paul to the Galatians once more [Luther had done so previously, in 1519]. This is not because we want to teach something new or unknown, for by the grace of God Paul is now very well known to you. But it is because, as I often warn you, there is a clear and present danger that the devil may take away from us the pure doctrine of faith and may substitute for it the doctrine of works and of human traditions. It is very necessary, therefore, that this doctrine of faith be continually read and heard in public. No matter how well known it may be or how carefully learned, the devil, our adversary, who prowls around and seeks to devour us (1 Peter 5:8), is not dead. Our flesh goes on living. Besides, temptations of every sort attack and oppress us on every side. Therefore, this doctrine can never be discussed and taught enough. If it is lost and perishes, the whole knowledge of truth, life, and salvation is lost and perishes at the same time. But if it flourishes, everything good flourishes—religion, true worship, the glory of God, and the right knowledge of all things and of all social conditions. To keep from doing nothing, we shall begin again where we broke off, according to the saying (Ecclus. 18:7): ‘When a man has finished, he is just beginning.’”

THE ARGUMENT OF ST. PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

“First of all, we must speak of the argument, that is, of the issue with which Paul deals in this epistle. The argument is this: Paul wants to establish the doctrine of faith, grace, the forgiveness of sins or Christian righteousness, so that we may have a perfect knowledge and know the difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness. For righteousness is of many kinds. There is a political righteousness, which the emperor, the princes of the world, philosophers, and lawyers consider. There is also a ceremonial righteousness, which human traditions teach, as, for example, the traditions of the pope and other traditions. Parents and teachers may teach this righteousness without danger, because they do not attribute to it any power to make satisfaction for sin, to placate God, and to earn grace; but they teach that these ceremonies are necessary only for moral discipline and for certain observances. There is, in addition to these, yet another righteousness, the righteousness of the Law or of the Decalog [that is, the Ten Commandments], which Moses teaches. We, too, teach this, but after the doctrine of faith.

“Over and above all these there is the righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness, which is to be distinguished most carefully from all the others.

For they are all contrary to this righteousness, both because they proceed from the laws of emperors, the traditions of the pope, and the commandments of God, and because they consist in our works and can be achieved by us with 'purely natural endowments,' as the scholastics [that is, the medieval theologians and university professors] teach, or from a gift of God. For these kinds of the righteousness of works, too, are gifts of God, as are all the things we have. But this most excellent righteousness, the righteousness of faith, which God imputes to us through Christ without works, is neither political nor ceremonial nor legal nor work-righteousness but is quite the opposite; it is a merely passive righteousness, while all the others, listed above, are active. For here we work nothing, render nothing to God; we only receive and permit someone else to work in us, namely, God. Therefore it is appropriate to call the righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness 'passive.' This is a righteousness hidden in a mystery, which the world does not understand. In fact, Christians themselves do not adequately understand it or grasp it in the midst of their temptations. Therefore it must always be taught and continually exercised. And anyone who does not grasp or take hold of it in afflictions and terrors of conscience cannot stand. For there is no comfort of conscience so solid and certain as is this passive righteousness.

“But such is human weakness and misery that in the terrors of conscience and in the danger of death we look at nothing except our own works, our worthiness, and the Law. When the Law shows us our sin, our past life immediately come to our mind. Then the sinner, in his great anguish of mind, groans and says to himself: ‘Oh, how damnably I have lived! If only I could live longer! Then I would amend my life.’ Thus human reason cannot refrain from looking at active righteousness, that is, its own righteousness; nor can it shift its gaze to passive, that is Christian righteousness, but it simply rests in the active righteousness. So deeply is this evil rooted in us, and so completely have we acquired this unhappy habit! Taking advantage of the weakness of our nature, Satan increases and aggravates these thoughts in us. Then it is impossible for the conscience to avoid being more seriously troubled, confounded, and frightened. For it is impossible for the human mind to conceive any comfort of itself, or to look only at grace amid its consciousness and terror of sin, or consistently to reject all discussion of works. To do this is beyond human power and thought. Indeed, it is even beyond the Law of God. For although the Law is the best of all things in the world, it still cannot bring peace to a terrified conscience but makes it even sadder and drives it to despair. For by the Law sin becomes exceedingly sinful (Rom. 7:13).”

(From Dr. Martin Luther’s Lectures on Galatians, A.D. 1535)

