

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 in this Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord. We cordially invite you to join us this morning for Easter Breakfast following the Divine Service; and we ask that you please sign the guest book at the back of the church.
- ◆ Deaconess Rhein is in Houston this weekend, working on proofreading the Ethiopian hymnal. Thanks to Rob for serving as our organist this morning.
- ◆ Following coffee & refreshments, our Family Bible Class continues a study of Genesis, making special use of Dr. Luther's commentary on that book.

Catechesis class for younger and beginning catechumens meets at the same time. Older children, especially between the ages of eight and twelve, have class with Nathaniel Rhein & Nicholai Stuckwisch. And Dave Smith is teaching a catechesis class for teenagers and others who are interested.
- ◆ Catechumens (and parents), note that our weekday catechesis classes are resuming this week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, as per the usual schedule.
- ◆ Dcs. Rhein will be taking a group Easter Caroling next Sunday (15 April).
- ◆ The Altar flowers this morning are provided by Jerry & Sharon Makowski to the glory of God, in celebration of their 51st wedding anniversary.
- ◆ **COLLECTIONS FOR 1 APRIL 2018: \$ 2,522.00**

In order to meet our financial obligations and commitments, an average of approximately \$2590 is needed each week.
- ◆ **IN THE LORD'S SERVICE THIS LORD'S DAY:**
(ELDER) Eldon Knepp; (USHERS) Egon Tribble & Matthew Horner;
(ACOLYTE) Stefan Horner; (ORGANIST) Robert Rhein; (CRUCIFER) Justinian Stuckwisch; (GREETER) Pat Nering.
- ◆ Rev. D. Richard Stuckwisch, Pastor Home Phone: (574) 233 – 0574

On the Epistle to the Galatians

“The false apostles equipped and trained themselves in every possible way to attack and convict Paul in the presence of the church. They also tried to abuse the authority of the Apostles, saying: ‘Paul has brought this uncircumcised Titus into the sight of the whole church. He is denying and condemning the Law in the very presence of you who are Apostles. If he has the audacity to try this here in your presence, what would he be willing to try among the Gentiles in your absence?’”

“When Paul saw that he was being attacked with such tricks, he resisted the false apostles vigorously and said: ‘We did not permit the liberty we have in Christ Jesus to be imperiled, even though the false brethren tried in every way to trap us and caused us a great deal of trouble. But we overcame them by the very judgment of the Apostles themselves, and we did not yield submission to them even for a moment. (For undoubtedly they said: “Paul, surrender this liberty at least for a while!”) For we saw that they wanted to require the observance of the Law as necessary for salvation.’”

“If all they had urged was charitable patience with the brethren, Paul would have yielded to them. But they were after something quite different, namely, to bring Paul and all adherents of his doctrine into bondage. And this was why he refused to yield submission to them even for a moment.”

“In the same way we are willing to concede everything possible to the papists, in fact, more than we should; but we will not give up the freedom of conscience that we have in Christ Jesus. We will not be forced, or let our conscience be forced, into any work, as though we could be righteous by doing this or that, or as though we could be damned for failing to do it. We are willing to eat the same food that they eat and to keep the same feasts and fasts, provided that they permit us to do so with a free [spirit] and refrain from the threats by which they have terrified and subjugated the whole world, as when they say: ‘We command, we require, we require once more, we excommunicate, etc.’ But we cannot obtain the concession of this freedom any more than Paul could. Therefore we do what he did. When he could not obtain this freedom, he refused to yield submission to the false apostles even for a moment.”

“Just as our opponents refuse to concede to us the freedom that faith in Christ alone justifies, so we refuse to concede to them, in turn, that faith formed by love justifies. Here we intend and are obliged to be rebellious and stubborn with them, for otherwise we would lose the truth of the Gospel. We would lose that freedom which we haven, not in the emperor or in kings and princes or in the pope or in the world or in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. We would lose faith”

in Christ, which, as I have said, takes hold of nothing but Christ, the Jewel. If our opponents will let us keep intact this faith by which we are born again, justified, and incorporated into Christ, we are willing to do anything for them that is not contrary to this faith. But because we cannot obtain this concession from them, we for our part will not budge the least little bit. For the issue before us is grave and vital; it involves the death of the Son of God, who, by the will and commandment of the Father, became flesh, was crucified, and died for the sins of the world. If faith yields on this point, the death of the Son of God will be in vain. Then it is only a fable that Christ is the Savior of the world. Then God is a liar, for He has not lived up to His promises. Therefore our stubbornness on this issue is pious and holy; for by it we are striving to preserve the freedom we have in Christ and to keep the truth of the Gospel. If we lose this, we lose God, Christ, all the promises, faith, righteousness, and eternal life.

“But here someone will say: ‘But the Law is divine and holy.’ Let the Law have its glory. But no Law, no matter how divine or holy, has the right to tell me that I obtain justification and life through it. I will grant that it can teach me that I should love God and my neighbor, and live in chastity, patience, etc.; but it is in no position to show me how to be delivered from sin, the devil, death, and hell. For this I must consult the Gospel and listen to the Gospel, which does not teach me what I should do—for that is the proper function of the Law—but what someone else has done for me, namely, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has suffered and died to deliver me from sin and death. The Gospel commands me to accept and believe this, and this is what is called ‘the truth of the Gospel.’ It is also the main doctrine of Christianity, in which the knowledge of all godliness is comprehended. It is, therefore, extremely necessary that we come to know this doctrine well and constantly inculcate it. For it is delicate and is easily bruised, as Paul had learned and all the saints have often experienced.

“In short, Paul was not willing to circumcise Titus, and this, as he says, for no other reason than that certain false brethren had slipped in to spy out their liberty and wanted to force Paul to circumcise Titus. When Paul saw this force and compulsion, he would not yield submission to them even for a moment but vigorously resisted them. Therefore he says (Gal. 2:3): ‘But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Gentile.’ If they had demanded this as an act of charity or fraternal deference, he would not have refused. But they demanded it as something necessary, and they did so by compulsion; thus they set a bad example for others and threatened to bring the consciences of men into bondage and to overthrow the Gospel. Therefore Paul took a firm stand against them and won, and Titus was not circumcised.

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

