

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, 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.

- ◆ Dcs. Rhein will be taking a group Easter Caroling today (April the 15th).

- ◆ Looking ahead, we will be gathered for the Divine Service in celebration of the Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist on Wednesday **the 25th of April**, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Plan to join us for that opportunity to receive the Holy Gospel in Word and Sacrament, in faith and with thanksgiving.

- ◆ A flower chart is available in the hallway at the back of the church, where you can sign up to provide flowers for the Lord's Altar in memory of loved ones or in celebration of special events to the glory of God in Christ.

- ◆ **COLLECTIONS FOR 8 APRIL 2018: \$ 2,923.00**

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) Robert Rhein; (USHERS) Caleb Smith & Nicholai Stuckwisch;
(ACOLYTE) Stefan Horner; (ORGANIST) Deaconess Sandra Rhein;
(GREETERS) Lois Veen & Marilyn Dulmatch

- ◆ Rev. D. Richard Stuckwisch, Pastor Home Phone: (574) 233 – 0574

On the Epistle to the Galatians

“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.

“It may seem a trifle whether or not one is circumcised. But if the condition is attached that we are to be afraid or confident on the basis of it, then hell and death are brought in; then God, Christ, grace, and all the promises of God are being refused. If circumcision were by itself, without this condition attached to it, there would be no danger. Thus if the pope simply required that we observe his traditions as mere ceremonies, there would be no danger either. For how hard is it to wear a cowl or a tonsure, since we do observe other ceremonies? But it is satanic and blasphemous to add this wicked condition, that in this trifle, this mere nothing, life or everlasting death is involved. If you keep silence about this issue, whoever you are, may you be accused! I am willing to eat or drink or wear a cowl or do anything the pope wishes, so long as he leaves all of this free. But since he requires these as something necessary for salvation, binding consciences to them and counting them as an act of worship, we must refuse at any cost. There would be no harm in carving a statue of wood or stone; but to set it up for worship and to attribute divinity to the wood, stone, or statue is to worship an idol instead of God. Therefore we must consider carefully what Paul has in mind, lest we speak foolishly, as Jerome did when he imagined that the issue under debate was the practice itself. In this he was wrong. For the issue is not whether wood is wood or stone is stone, but what is attached to them, that is, how these things are used: whether this wood is God, whether divinity resides in this stone. To this we answer that wood is wood, as Paul says that ‘neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision’ (1 Cor. 7:19). But to attach righteousness, reverence, confidence in salvation, and the fear of death to such things is to attribute divinity to ceremonies. Therefore we must not yield one bit of submission to our opponents, just as Paul did not yield submission to the false apostles. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision nor a tonsure nor a cowl has anything to do with righteousness; only grace, and grace alone, does. This is ‘the truth of the Gospel.’

“‘And from those who were reputed to be something (what they were makes no difference to me)’ (Gal. 2:6). Paul uses an elliptical form of speech, for the words ‘I did not receive anything’ are missing. But it is forgivable when the Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul, sins a little against the rules of grammar. He speaks with great fervor, and anyone who is fervent when he speaks cannot be very precise about following the rules of grammar and the principles of rhetoric. Augustine testifies to this in his *On Christian Doctrine*. ‘I suppose,’ he says, ‘that the orators themselves were unable to live up to their own rules.’

“This is a vehement and proud refutation. For Paul does not call the true Apostles themselves by any honorific title. Almost as though he wanted to minimize their position, he speaks of ‘those who were reputed to be something,’ that is, those who were in authority and on whose nod or refusal everything depended. Nevertheless, the authority of the Apostles was actually very great in all the churches, and Paul does not take any honor away from them. But this is his way of giving a contemptuous answer to the false apostles, who sought to weaken Paul’s authority and to cast suspicion upon his whole ministry by pitting the authority of the Apostles and of their pupils against Paul in all the churches. This Paul would not stand for. In order to assure the continuance of the truth of the Gospel and the freedom of conscience in Christ among the Galatians and in all the Gentile churches, Paul gives a very proud answer to the false apostles. He did not care how great the Apostles were or what they had once been; and if the false apostles cited the authority of the apostolic name against him, this did not impress him. He acknowledges that the Apostles are indeed ‘something’ and that their authority deserves respect. Nevertheless, his Gospel and ministry are not to be jeopardized on the basis of anybody’s name or title, regardless of how great he may be, even if an Apostle or an angel from heaven (Gal. 1:18).

“This was one of the strongest arguments that the false apostles used. The Apostles, they said, had close association with Christ for three years. They heard all His sermons and saw all His miracles. Besides, they themselves preached and performed miracles while Christ was still living in the world, long before Paul, who never saw Christ and was not converted until several years later. Therefore the Galatians should now consider whom of these they should believe more — Paul, who was all by himself, a disciple, to be sure, but only one and one of the last, or the most important and most excellent Apostles, who had been sent out and confirmed by Christ Himself long before Paul. Paul replies: ‘So what? This argument does not prove anything. Let the Apostles be ever so great; let them even be angels from heaven — that makes no difference to me. The issue in this controversy is the Word of God and the truth of the Gospel.’ ”

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

