

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.
- ◆ Dcs. Rhein is in Ethiopia this week (returning 7 September), continuing her work on the Lutheran Hymnal Project there. Please remember her in your prayers and intercessions as she is serving the Church at large in this way.
- ◆ Following coffee & refreshments this morning, Pr. Stuckwisch will continue the discussion of stewardship that we've recently been having. One and all, including youth and young adults, are encouraged to attend and participate. Summer catechesis class for the younger children will meet the same time.
- ◆ While Dcs. Rhein is in Ethiopia, and as the summer is drawing to a close, we'll be taking a break from our usual Monday evening Vespers. We will resume our usual schedule in September, as the new academic year begins.
- ◆ Notice from the Food Bank of Northern Indiana: September is Stamp Out Hunger Month. The Food Bank is encouraging agencies to spend some time volunteering as individuals or groups, and to consider touring the facility. If anyone is interested in a tour of the food bank, let Betty Shankle know and she will make the arrangements.
- ◆ **COLLECTIONS FOR 13 AUGUST 2017: \$ 1,599.00**
In order to meet our financial obligations and commitments, an average of \$2400 is needed each week.
- ◆ The flowers on the Altar this morning have been provided by Pat Nering to the glory of God, in celebration of her grandson's birthday and her goddaughter Rebecca Tribble's birthday.
- ◆ **IN THE LORD'S SERVICE THIS LORD'S DAY: (ELDER) Robert Rhein; (USHERS) Nathan Jindra & Nicholai Stuckwisch; (ACOLYTE) Frederick Stuckwisch; (ORGANIST) Dcs. Sarah Osburn; (GREETER) Pat Nering.**
- ◆ Rev. D. Richard Stuckwisch, Pastor Home Phone: (574) 233 – 0574

On the Epistle to the Galatians

“Human reason would like sin to have no greater force and power than it itself dreams of. Although hypocrites, who do not know Christ, may feel sorry for sin, they still suppose that they can get rid of it easily by their works and merits. And in the privacy of their own hearts they wish that these words, ‘who gave Himself for our sins,’ were merely an expression of humility, and that their sins were not serious and real at all but mere trifles and figments. In short, human reason would like to present to God an imitation and counterfeit sinner, who is afraid of nothing and has no sense of sin. It would like to bring one who is well, not one who has need of a physician (Matt. 9:12); and when it has no sense of sin, only then would it like to believe that Christ was given for our sins.

“The whole world feels this way, especially those who want a greater reputation for goodness and holiness than others, such as monks and all self-righteous people. With their mouths they confess that they are sinners; they confess also that they sin daily, though not so much that they cannot remove their sins by their own works. Besides all this, they want to bring their righteousness and merit before the judgment seat of Christ and demand that the Judge reward them with eternal life. Meanwhile, since they give the appearance of being very humble friars, they do not claim that they are completely free of sin. Therefore they pretend to be guilty of certain sins, and for the forgiveness of these they pray fervently with the tax collector: ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ (Luke 18:13) To them these words of St. Paul, ‘for our sins,’ seem to be empty and false. Therefore they do not understand them. What is more, in temptation, when they really become conscious of sin, they cannot take any comfort in these words but must fall into utter desperation.

“The main knowledge and true wisdom of Christians is to regard as very serious and true that Christ was given over to death, not for our righteousness or holiness but for our sins, which are real sins—great, many, in fact, infinite and invincible. You must not think of them as minor or suppose that your own works can remove them. Nor must you despair on account of their gravity if you feel them oppressing you either in life or in death. But you must learn to believe that Christ was given, not for sham or counterfeit sins, nor yet for small sins, but for great and huge sins; not for one or two sins but for all sins; not for sins that have been overcome — for neither man nor angel is able to overcome even the tiniest sin — but for invincible sins. And unless you are part of the company of those who say ‘for our sins,’ that is, who have this doctrine of faith and who teach, hear, learn, love, and believe it, there is no salvation for you.

“Therefore you must make thorough preparations not only for the time of temptation but also for the time and struggle of death. Then your conscience will be terrified by the recollection of your past sins. The devil will attack you vigorously and will try to swamp you with piles, floods, and whole oceans of sins, in order to frighten you, draw you away from Christ, and plunge you into despair. Then you must be able to say with confident assurance: ‘Christ, the Son of God, was given, not for righteousness and for saints but for unrighteousness and for sinners. If I were righteous and without sin, I would have no need of Christ as my Propitiator. Satan, you cantankerous saint, why do you try to make me feel holy and look for righteousness in myself, when in fact there is nothing in me but sins, and real and serious sins at that? These are not counterfeit or trivial sins; they are sins against the First Table, namely, unfaithfulness, doubt, despair, contempt for God, hatred, ignorance, blasphemy, ingratitude, the abuse of the name of God, neglect, loathing, and contempt for the Word of God, and the like. In addition, there are sins of the flesh against the Second Table: failure to honor my parents, disobedience to rulers, coveting another man’s property, wife, etc., although these vices are less grave than those against the First Table. Of course, I have not been guilty of murder, adultery, theft, and other sins like those against the Second Table. Nevertheless, I have committed them in my heart; therefore I have broken every one of God’s Commandments, and the number of my sins is so great that an ox’s hide would not hold them; they are innumerable. ‘For the sins I have committed are more in number than the sands of the sea.’ The devil is such a clever trickster that he can make great sins out of my righteousness and good works. Because my sins are so grave, so real, so great, so infinite, so horrible, and so invincible that my righteousness does me no good but rather puts me at a disadvantage before God, therefore Christ, the Son of God, was given into death for my sins, to abolish them and thus to save all men who believe.

“The meaning of eternal salvation, then, consists in taking these words to be serious and true. I am not speaking empty words. I have often experienced, and still do every day, how difficult it is to believe, especially amid struggles of conscience, that Christ was given, not for the holy, righteous, and deserving, or for those who were His friends, but for the godless, sinful, and undeserving, for those who were His enemies, who deserved the wrath of God and eternal death. Therefore let us fortify ourselves with these and similar statements of Paul, that ‘Christ gave Himself for our sins’ (Galatians 1:4). When the devil accuses us and says: ‘You are a sinner, therefore you are damned,’ then we can answer him and say: ‘Because you say that I am a sinner, therefore I shall be righteous and be saved.’”

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

