

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.

- ◆ Today is also **Emmaus Family Day**. We'll have a "baked potato bar" lunch together after Family Bible Class — bring your favorite potato topping! Then we'll make Valentine's Day Cards for our shut-ins and other friends.

- ◆ The Sacred Season of Lent begins this week on Ash Wednesday (14 Feb). There will be opportunities for the imposition of ashes on that day, either in the morning (9:00 a.m.) or shortly before the Divine Service that evening (6:30 p.m.). As in past years, there will be opportunities throughout Lent for the Word of God and prayer, and for the celebration of the Sacrament.

This Friday (16 February), as also on each of the Fridays in Lent, we will be gathered for a Brief Spoken Divine Service at 9:00 a.m.

- ◆ The Altar Flowers this morning have been provided by Pr. Stuckwisch to the glory of God, with thanksgiving for his wife, LaRena, on her birthday.

- ◆ **COLLECTIONS FOR 4 FEBRUARY 2018:** \$ 1,960.00

In order to meet our financial obligations and commitments, an average of \$2400 is needed each week.

- ◆ **IN THE LORD'S SERVICE THIS LORD'S DAY:** (ELDER) Rob Rhein; (USHERS) Erik Horner & Daniel Bliese; (ACOLYTE) Jonah Tomaw; (CRUCIFER) Justinian Stuckwisch; (ORGANIST) Dcs. Sarah Osbun; (GREETER) Pat Nering.

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

On the Epistle to the Galatians

“And I was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea; they only heard it said: He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God because of me’ (Gal. 1:22–24). It is as though Paul were saying: ‘I appeal to the testimony of all the churches, also of those that are in Judea. For the churches testify — not only those in Damascus, Arabia, Syria, and Cilicia but those in Judea as well — that I preached the same faith I once persecuted and opposed. And they glorified God because of me, not because I taught that circumcision and the Law of Moses were to be observed, but because I preached faith and built up the churches by my ministry of the Gospel. Therefore you have the testimony not only of the people of Damascus and Arabia but also of the whole catholic church of Judea.’

“Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem’ (Gal. 2:1). This was the bitter conflict in which Paul was suddenly so deeply involved. Paul taught that the Gentiles were justified by faith alone, without the works of the Law (Rom. 3:28). When he had broadcast this doctrine among the Gentiles, he came to Antioch and told the disciples what he had been doing. Then those who had been reared according to the old traditions of the Law rose up against Paul and declared that it was intolerable for him to preach to the Gentiles about liberty from the slavery of the Law. This gave rise to an outburst in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas took a strong stand and testified: ‘Wherever we preached among the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit came down upon those who hear the Word. This happened throughout all the Gentile churches. But we neither preached circumcision nor required observance of the Law of Moses. All we preached was faith in Christ, and upon this proclamation of faith God gave the Holy Spirit to the hearers. Therefore the Holy Spirit gives His approval to the faith of the Gentiles without the Law or circumcision. For if the preaching of the Gospel and the faith of the Gentiles in Christ had not been pleasing to Him, He would not have descended in a visible form upon the uncircumcised who heard the Word. Since He descended upon them merely through the hearing of faith, it is altogether certain that by this sign the Holy Spirit has given His approval to their faith; for this seems never to have happened through the preaching of the Law.’ This was how Paul and Barnabas argued.

“Then many took the opposite position. They said that the Law had to be observed and that if the Gentiles were not circumcised in accordance with the Law of Moses, they could not be saved. Paul fought back vigorously. And this controversy over the observance of the Law continued for a long time to come. Yet, I do not think that this is the same controversy that Luke describes in Acts 15. For that one seems to have arisen right after the beginning of the Gospel;

but the history that Paul is reciting here seems to have happened much later, because he had already been preaching the Gospel for almost eighteen years.

“Then the Jews, who were very zealous for the Law and very contentious, resisted Paul vigorously for preaching that the Gentiles were justified by faith alone, without the works of the Law. And no wonder, for the very name ‘Law of God’ is very forceful and impressive to the human heart. If a pagan who has never known anything about the Law of God hears someone say: ‘This teaching is the Law of God,’ he will surely be stirred. Then how could the Jews not be stirred to take a strong stand in support of the Law of God, in which they had been trained since infancy and which they had absorbed deeply into their bones and marrow? In our day we see how obstinately the papists defend their traditions and the doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1). So it is much less surprising that the Jews were so vigorous and zealous in support of their Law, which they had received from God Himself. The force of habit strengthens our nature, which has an inclination of itself to observe the Law; thus a habit of long standing and tradition becomes second nature. Therefore it was impossible for the Jews to give up the Law immediately after being converted to Christ. Although they had accepted faith in Christ, they still thought that it was necessary to observe the Law. God tolerated this weakness of theirs for a while, until there would be a clear distinction between the doctrine of the Gospel and the Law. Thus He tolerated the weakness of Israel during the time of Ahab, when the people were undecided between two sides (1 Kings 16:29ff.). He tolerated our weakness too while we were under the papacy, for He is patient and merciful. But we must not abuse this goodness of God or persist in our weakness and error, for now the truth is being revealed to us by the light of the Gospel.

“Those who opposed Paul and claimed that the Gentiles were to be circumcised had on their side first the Law of the land, then also the example of the Apostles, and finally the example of Paul himself, who had circumcised Timothy. Therefore if Paul said that he had done this, not out of compulsion but out of Christian charity and freedom, to keep from offending the weak, who among them would understand him or believe him? The response of all the crowd to this defense would be: ‘Since it is obvious that you have circumcised Timothy, you may say what you please. The fact remains that you did it.’ This was a matter that transcended the understanding of the crowd. Besides, when a man has lost favor with the people and has come under such bitter hatred, no defense is of any avail. Seeing that this controversy and this outcry were increasing every day, and having been warned by a divine revelation, Paul went up to Jerusalem to compare his Gospel with that of the other Apostles, not indeed on his own account but on account of the people.”

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

