

The Valley Evangel

Serving the Members and Friends of Redeemer Lutheran Church
in Scottsdale, Arizona



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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

The very first verse of the Book of Revelation tells us that this book was “sent and signified” by God to John the apostle. “Signified” indicates that it was revealed in the form of signs or symbols. So, when we are trying to figure out the meaning of any particular section of the book, the one approach that we would usually want to eliminate at the outset would be to follow a strictly literal interpretation. The Book of Revelation is not a straightforward account of events - whether past, present, or future. Pretty much everything in the book is a sign, or a symbolic picture, that points to a deeper reality. This is the “decoding key,” as it were, that the first verse of the book gives us.

Over the centuries people with vivid imaginations have had a lot of fun with this book, suggesting various interpretations of its imagery that tended to inter-

sect with the events of the interpreter’s own age. Revelation 14:6 is one passage that has been decoded in more than one way: “Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth...’” (ESV)

Several years ago I heard a Christian television broadcaster say that he thought this passage was describing Christian radio and television. The technology of the twentieth century made it possible for the Gospel to “fly directly overhead,” by means of broadcast signals going through the air, all over the world. At the time of

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WORSHIP AND BIBLE STUDY TIMES

Editor:
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Sunday Divine Service: 9:00 a.m.
Refreshments after the Service
Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 10:30am

Thursday Internet Study Group:
6:30 p.m. (see Pastor Webber for log-on information for this group, or attend in person at his residence)

Friday Bible Study:
10:00am at the Church

A LETTER TO REDEEMER

Greetings to the People of Redeemer Lutheran Church.

I would like to share briefly with you how the ministry of your congregation, via the Internet, has reached out to and blessed me, even here in Europe.

The Sunday sermons, as well as the Theological website established by Pastor Webber, have proven invaluable to me over the last 6+ years. I live in a country where the sad spiritual reality is aptly described in the words of a sermon I heard some years ago, “it is so dark that it does not matter whether you walk with your eyes open or closed.” Although I live in a country which has the historical marks of Roman Catholicism everywhere, the Gospel is by and large alien – foolishness – to the majority in this generation. All around, though, people trust in themselves, plowing all their time, energy, and resources into temporal things. Indeed the saying holds true that “in every man there lies hidden a self-righteous Pharisee.”

It is truly a relief and a comfort to know that there is a source to which I can go where invariably I can find sound teaching and counsel, whether in the form of a theological paper, or a Sunday sermon.

I am an ex-Roman Catholic. I spent many years searching – consciously, and at times unconsciously – for the pure doctrine of the Gospel. I was involved in the Charismatic Movement within the Catholic Church. I endeavored to study and understand the teaching of the Roman Church as embodied in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. My experience within the Roman Church was always akin to hearing a symphony, and just as one was about to be captivated by the melody, there would be notes “out of tune.” (The analogy is not mine, but the experience certainly is!) It was only later, when studying the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, that I realized that the “out of tune” notes were the awful mingling of Law and Gospel – the root of all error within the papal system, and the cause of much personal suffering.

Indeed, the sound Confessional teaching available in the Sunday sermons given in your parish, as well as in numerous essays available on the web site, have brought reassurance to me in the knowledge of God’s promise: He has forgiven our sins completely, and therefore we are able to love Him because He loved us first! He looks on us and sees not our [own] righteousness (which is no righteousness at all in His sight), but the very righteousness of His Son. Or, to put it another way, in the words of C. F. W.

Walther, we are justified in order that we may be sanctified; not the other way around! We are *not* sanctified in order that we may be justified. What a relief! This is surely Good News. On this truth we stand or fall.

Many a sermon or paper has brought home to me the truth that in the traditional Lutheran Liturgy we have an invaluable source of sound Biblical teaching. In our hymns, lectionary, prayers, and liturgical responses, the Word of God is rightly divided, clearly distinguishing between Law and Gospel, i.e., between what God in Christ has done, and is doing for us; and the response this evokes. God, laying my sins bare again and again, reassures me in my helplessness of His unfailing love and forgiveness. Happy is the man whose sins are forgiven, and to whom the Lord imputes no guilt!

In the small pockets of Christianity here in Europe, and sadly even in the Lutheran communion, there is a dangerous temptation to want to “modernize” the Liturgy, to be more “contemporary,” so as to be “all things to all people” – and even to do away with all Liturgical structure, when this is perceived as appropriate and necessary in the pursuit of church growth. I think St. Paul would remind us of the fact that to be “all things to all people” is not to become *like* all people – to become people who are of this world. Rather, recognizing himself to be the greatest of sinners, Paul loved much, because he was forgiven much. He was crucified to the world, and the world was crucified to him. The Gospel he proclaimed in simplicity was foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews. The catholic and apostolic [Lutheran] Divine Service is timeless, and is not of this world.

It is not just a question of presentation. My experience is that more often than not, the “contemporary” material – musical or otherwise – is imported from other denominations. Worship songs especially are chosen on the basis of what is perceived to be appealing. But repetitive verses describing what we are doing for God shift our focus away from what God has done, and is doing, for us. Instead of hearing His external word of promise, we begin to look within ourselves. Slowly but surely, we become *enculturated*, as it were, by the material we’ve adopted. The poor theological content overflows into the teaching and prayers, and the clear distinction between Law and Gospel becomes blurred.

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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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the Reformation, however, and for quite a while afterwards, a different interpretation of this passage was commonly advocated among Lutherans. The angel who had an eternal gospel to proclaim was interpreted as none other than Martin Luther! In fact, that's why this lesson is appointed to be read on the festival of the Reformation.

Quite honestly, I don't know if this passage refers to religious broadcasting, or to Martin Luther, or to something or someone else. But I do know that it is possible to have confidence in our understanding of at least *one* aspect of this passage. There's one phrase that we *can* interpret literally, and from which we can draw spiritual strength and encouragement. What I'm talking about is the reference to the "eternal gospel" that is, in one way or another, proclaimed to all nations and people.

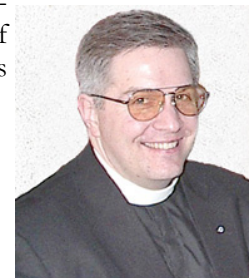
The Gospel is eternal. It doesn't change.

Humanity's deepest problem is its sinful rebellion against God and his law, together with the alienation from God

and man that sin causes. That *problem* doesn't change. Generation after generation is born in the same fallen condition, with the same selfish and destructive impulses. But God's *solution* to that problem doesn't change either! His solution is still encapsulated in the simple yet profound message of the Gospel – the good news about God's love; the good news about God's incarnation in the person of his Son Jesus Christ; the good news about Jesus' perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection; and the good news about the forgiveness and restoration that God's Spirit offers to all people in his Word and Sacrament.

This is the eternal Gospel. This message will never change for as long as this world lasts. And in the next world, those who will spend eternity with God, in the joy of heaven, will do so because of this eternal Gospel.

-- Pastor Webber



A LETTER TO REDEEMER

(Continued from page 2)

The wealth of teaching available in this regard on your congregation's website has been a great comfort to me, and has helped me immeasurably in discerning God's will for me and my family with regard to our local church participation.

God in his mercy preserves Lutheran congregations such as yours, where there is Confessional Lutheran orthodoxy. Be encouraged in the knowledge that the highest form of worship is to be found in receiving the forgiveness of sins. The Gospel is the power unto salvation. Ponder deeply the word of truth as it is proclaimed in your Divine Service. Do not listen to the old Adam within you that wants to be entertained or amused. Know instead that familiarity breeds *contemplation*. Contemplate, and deeply embrace, the prayer of the church of all ages in the *Kyrie Eleison*, the *Gloria in Excelsis*, the Collects and Graduals, the Creeds, the Lord's Prayer, etc. Listen deeply to the preaching of both Law and Gospel as it comes to you in the homily,

and hear the words of the Baptist as he points you to the Lamb of God who takes away your sins – and who places on your tongue His very Flesh and Blood that was sacrificed on the cross in your place.

It is true that God's Word never goes out in vain, but will in time produce life. Be encouraged by this, and lean not on your own understanding. Do not measure your effectiveness as a congregation by your numbers. Rather be encouraged, and continue in faithfulness to your mission to "preach the Word of God, both Law and Gospel, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church." Know that as you remain faithful to this mission, God blesses your ministry far beyond your horizons, and without your knowing.

A Friend of Redeemer Lutheran Church

Namur, Belgium

10 September 2010

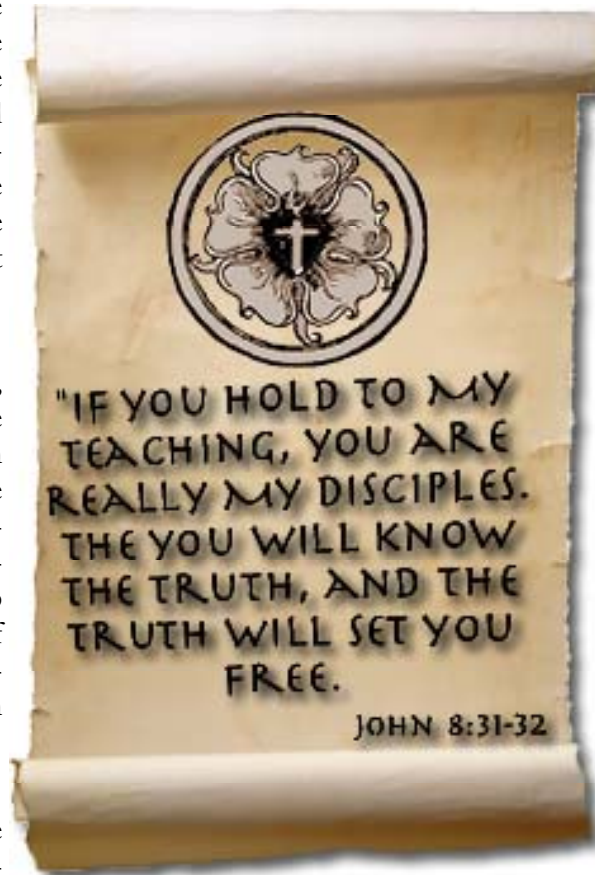
LIVING FOR CHRIST: IN LIGHT OF GOD'S REFORMATION BLESSINGS

On October 31st every year the Lutheran Church commemorates the anniversary of the Reformation, which began in 1517 when Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. The 95 theses were written by Martin Luther and they addressed several problems in the church that he wanted to discuss with the other priests and professors at Wittenberg.

Through the Reformation, Luther ended up leaving the Catholic Church and began what became known as the Lutheran Church. In the Lutheran Church, we also celebrate the freedom to worship and live led by the Word of God, a freedom that we consider as our Reformation blessing.

This blessing affords us the opportunity to enjoy the forgiveness of sins, live at peace with God the Father and the promise of eternal salvation. To be sure, the work of Martin Luther and the Reformation is important to the Lutheran Church and we thank God the blessings of his work.

However, it is not Luther or the Reformation that we worship. It is God! He called us out of the darkness of sin into the wonderful light of salvation through the life, death and resurrection of His only beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus lived a sin free life and when the time was right he exchanged His sinless life for the sins of the world. He took them to the cross where He died to make full satisfaction for their guilt. While He walked on earth, He taught many lessons that have been recorded in the Bible.



In one of those lessons He said, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* (John 8:31-32) Jesus makes us free. What a blessing! It is God's desire that all of us come to the knowledge of this freedom while we live here on earth so that we will spend eternity with Him in heaven. Hold on to Jesus. He forgives your sins. He sets you free.

Produced by the ELS Board for Evangelism

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A regional Reformation Day service, sponsored by the Phoenix area churches of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, will be held on Sunday, October 31, at 4 p.m., at Arizona Lutheran Academy (6036 S. 27th Ave., Phoenix, 85041). Choristers from Redeemer who would like to participate in the joint choir that will

sing at this service are invited to participate. An arrangement of the classic Lutheran chorale, "Salvation unto Us Has Come," will be sung. Anyone who is interested should speak with Carol Webber. The choir will gather at ALA an hour early, at 3 p.m., to rehearse.

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH
OCTOBER 2010

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3 Pentecost 19 Service of the Word 9:00am SW with spoken Communion 10:30am AC/SS Guest preacher Rev. Paul Siegler Pastor out of town **	4 Pastor out of town **	5 Pastor out of town **	6 Pastor out of town **	7 Internet Study Group Canceled Pastor out of town **	1 Pastor out of town ** Bible study canceled <hr/> 8 10:00am Bible study at the church	2 Pastor out of town ** <hr/> 9
10 Pentecost 20 Service of the Word 9:00am SW with spoken Communion 10:30am SS/Congregational Forum	11	12 7:00pm Voter's Meeting	13	14 6:30 pm Internet Study Group at Pastor's residence	15 10:00am Bible study at the church	16
17 Pentecost 21 Divine Service 9:00am DS Ladies guild after the service 10:30am AC/SS	18	19	20 Bible study at Arizona Lutheran Retirement Center led by Pr. Webber	21 6:30 pm Internet Study Group at Pastor's residence	22 Bible study canceled	23 Conference on Christianity and Culture in Escondido CA
24 Pentecost 22 Service of the Word 9:00am SW with spoken Communion 10:30am AC/SS Elders meeting after the adult class	25	26	27	28 6:30 pm Internet Study Group at Pastor's residence	29 10:00am Bible study at the church	30
31 Reformation Day Divine Service 9:00am DS 10:30am AC/SS 11:30am Oktoberfest luncheon 4:00pm WELS regional Reformation Service at Arizona Lutheran Academy						

Abbreviations:

DS—Divine Service (SW) Service of the Word SS/AC = Sunday School / Adult Bible Class

Divine Service—Full Word and Sacrament Service with Communion on 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays

Service of the Word—a brief spoken order of Holy Communion follows the public service on the 2nd and 4th Sundays

Refreshments are served after the Sunday morning services

** Pastor out of town Oct. 1-7 to speak at his hometown's 300th anniversary celebration in Germantown NY, and to attend the ELS General Pastoral Conference in Mankato MN

**Redeemer Lutheran
Church**

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First Class Mail

We're on the Internet!
redeemer.vze.com

Notice!

Audio recordings of
Pastor Webber's sermons are
posted on the Internet
weekly and are linked
through the church website.

They are published
courtesy of
lutheransource.net



ABOUT REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH

Our mission is to preach the Word of God, both Law and Gospel, faithfully in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; correctly to administer the Holy Sacraments for the forgiveness of sins; and to reach out to those who have not yet come to faith in Christ Jesus.

