

**BULLETIN FOR TRINITY MARBURG, ST JOHN'S MINDEN,
OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD**

6th Sunday of Easter 21st April 2017

Closed Communion

The A.E.L.C upholds the historical, biblical and Lutheran practice of closed communion. Therefore we ask that only A.E.L.C members come forward for communion.

John 14:15-21.

Hymns: 645, 556 Vs 5-10, 655, 490, 625, 816.

Introit: Psalm 66:8-20

P Bless our God, you peoples, and cause the sound of His praise to be heard!

C **He is keeping our souls among the living, and has not allowed our feet to slide.**

P For You have tested us, O God. You have refined us as silver is refined.

C **You have brought us into the net. You have laid hardship on our backs.**

P You have let men ride over our heads. We have gone through fire and through water.

C **Nevertheless. You have brought us out to abundance.**

P I shall go into Your temple with burnt offerings. I shall fulfil to You my vows,

C **which my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble.**

P I shall sacrifice fat animals to You with the sacrificial smoke of rams.

C **I shall prepare bulls and goats.**

P Come and listen, all you who fear God, that I may declare what He has done for my soul!

C **I cried to Him with my mouth, and my tongue has given high praise.**

P If I had been aware of injustice in my heart, the Lord would not have listened,

C **but God has certainly heard me. He has paid attention to the sound of my prayer.**

All **Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer, or turned His mercy away from me!**

Collect: O God, the giver of all that is good, by Your holy inspiration grant that we may think those things that are right and by Your merciful guiding accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

1st Reading Acts 17:16-31

Epistle: 1st Peter 3:13-22

Gospel John 14:15-21

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

An excerpt from Michael A. Lockwood's book THE UNHOLY TRINITY.

The idol of the self and love.

As C. S. Lewis points out, once people no longer have a sense of their own sinfulness, they start to act as if God is on trial and not them. They start to think that they are entitled to God's blessings, so that they lose all gratitude for the good things God gives them. Instead of being grateful, they act as if God has done them a great injustice when he fails to bless them the way they think they deserve. Then, instead of feeling any need for God's forgiveness, they act as if they hold the high moral ground, and lose all gratitude for Christ.

On the one hand, the response the church needs to make to this is quite simple. We need to proclaim God's true Law, that exposes us as sinners, rather than a law that we have altered to justify ourselves. Then we need to proclaim the true Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, not a false gospel that excuses our sin as if it is okay.

On the other hand, this is a difficult art. In particular, we need to avoid a simplistic preaching of Law and Gospel that people can co-opt for the purpose of justifying themselves. Instead, we need to be able to challenge the idolatry of self-justification head on through a focused proclamation of Law and Gospel. This means that we need to be alert to how this idolatry manifests itself in our society, so that we can expose it for what it is.

One contemporary theologian who has thought through the practical implications of this better than most is Timothy Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan and professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Keller, like Luther, identifies two strategies for self-justification. He characterizes these as the paths of religious legalism, and irreligious rebellion. He then argues that at essence the two are the same, since both are idolatrous attempts at self-salvation. Religious legalists try to keep all the rules, hoping that God will bless them.

Irreligious rebels try to write their own rules, hoping to bless themselves. In the process they end up as legalists, just with a different law. Keller says that people in New York City today are every bit as legalistic as the Pharisees, since they all live for their achievements and seek in them their sense of self-worth. One pursues money. Another pursues artistic expression. Still another pursues relationships and family. Since they turn these into ultimate things and, seek their ultimate validation in them, they become enslaved to serving them and the laws that govern them. This puts enormous demands on them, and punishes them without mercy if they do not measure up.

Keller contends. that such an understanding of idolatry is critical in proclaiming Law and Gospel, or judgment and salvation, in society today. This is for two reasons. The first is that the more that moral relativism permeates our society, the less people respond when the Law is preached in moral terms. When Keller first went to Manhattan as a church planter in 1989, he attempted to use the evangelism tools he had been trained in such as D. James Kennedy's Evangelism Explosion. These tools all basically followed the same approach. They began by telling people they were sinners who broke God's rules, and therefore needed Jesus. He found this approach had little impact on most people. They were far more likely to say, "Well, I don't have the same view of the rules as you do," than to acknowledge their sin. Yet as soon as he started talking about sin using the conceptual structure of idolatry he started getting

traction. Once he started telling people that sin is not so much about doing bad things as it is about taking good things and making them ultimate things, they could see that what he said applied to them. He could then show them that they had become enslaved to something that could never give them the satisfaction and validation they sought, and how Christ could set them free.

The second reason why an understanding of idolatry is crucial for proclaiming the Gospel today is that only when we deal with sin in terms of idolatry do we have a profound enough view of sin to be able to deal with both irreligious rebellion and legalistic religion at the same time. If we talk about sin in terms of breaking God's rules, it is easy to see why rebellious people like the younger son in the story of the prodigal son stand condemned, but not so easy to see why legalistic people like his brother also stand condemned.

Since the default mode of the human heart is self-justification, when people hear us calling them to repent and believe in Jesus they naturally assume that we are preaching some form of legalistic piety: kiss up to God and do what he says and he will forget your past and bless you. Yet many people in our society have already been burnt by older brother Christianity and want nothing to do with it. Only when we clearly teach that legalistic religion and irreligious rebellion are both futile attempts at self-salvation will many people be able to see that we are preaching a third way, the way of the Gospel.

Such self-salvation projects are futile. They are futile before God, and they are futile at delivering a peaceful conscience on earth. This was driven home for me recently with one of my parishioners, a woman who has been in and out of mental hospital with mood swings so severe that she frequently attempts suicide when she is low. Once when she was down she told me how her psychologists try to treat her depression. Their strategy is to boost her self-esteem. They ask her to identify things she likes about herself, and then repeat these as mantras to prevent her from feeling down about herself. For a short time this strategy will help her to pick up and feel fantastic, but before long something will go wrong that will remind her of her flaws so that she comes crashing down once more. I then explained to her that this is what attempts at boosting self esteem are wont to do.

They produce swings between pride and despair, because we are incapable of providing a stable foundation for our own sense of worth. The only cure is to come to terms with the reality that we are all deeply flawed, and need our worthiness to be grounded not in ourselves but in Christ our Saviour. This immediately made sense to her, and has proven to be a step on the road to healing

500th Anniversary celebrations of the Lutheran Reformation 2017

* AELC MISSION SUNDAY bring/share lunch 2nd July at Minden from 10am Service.

"Reformation trivia" after Service before lunch.

*MOVIE NIGHT FRIDAY 22nd September at Marburg. *Time to be advised.* Feature, "The Luther Movie", bring a friend, bring your neighbour.

*REFORMATION HYMN SINGING SATURDAY 21st of OCTOBER bring/share at Minden arriving at 5pm to start the meal by 5.30pm.

*REFORMATION BRING/SHARE COMBINED SERVICE on the 29th October at 10am
AUGBIGNY Darling Downs. There will not be a local Service here in our Parish as I will be
Preaching there on the day.

> **Thursday 25th May Ascension Day Luke 24:44-53.**

> **Divine Service 28th May (White)**

9am Trinity Marburg

Readings : Psalm 68:1-10

7th Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 1:12-26

Epistle: 1st Peter 4:12-19, 5:6-11

Hymns:352, 113, 392, 109, 286, 169.

Gospel: John 17:1-11

> **Divine Service 4th June (RED)**

9am Trinity Marburg

Readings: Psalm 25:1-15

Pentecost Sunday

1st Reading: Numbers 11:24-30

Jack Richardson's Baptism

Epistle: Acts 2:1-21

Bible study, bring and share, Trivia on Malachi.

Gospel: John 7:37-39.

Hymns: [To be Announced.]

> **Just a reminder to those who have copies of the LSB hymnal to bring them to
all Minden Services to help out with numbers.**

> **Mid week Bible study on June the 15th at Lowood 10am bring and share,
Trivia on the book of 2 Peter .**

> **New re printed copies of God's Eternal Word Bibles are now available for
purchase at \$65 each. Please see Pastor.**

> **For those who have asked for a bank account to place their offerings
electronically:**

Trinity Marburg BSB: 633000. Account No: 146106893.

St John's Minden BSB: 633000. Account No: 135053577.

Our Saviour Lowood BSB 633000. Account No: 159171487.

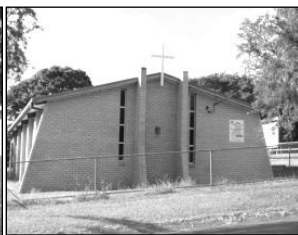
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