

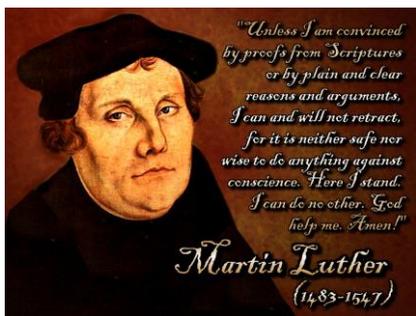
Darling Downs Parish of the AELC

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Lutheran or Christian: Is There a Difference?

Organisations come and go, but the Church of Jesus Christ shall remain forever. That is because Jesus Christ is actively calling people to be His disciples in every age and generation. The Church remains because it holds to Christ's teaching above all other things.

When we celebrate the Reformation, it is not a time for boasting about ourselves. It is not about how Lutherans got it right and everyone else got it



wrong. Reformation is a time to look back and ask ourselves, how did we get here, and how are we going to remain here? Sometimes we hear people say, "I'm a Christian first and a Lutheran second." Perhaps what they mean is that they follow Christ above all other things. But be careful. Is there a difference between being a Christian and being a

Lutheran? Let us examine this for a moment.

You know what makes a person a Christian. A Christian is someone God has led to believe that sin separates them from their Creator, and that the Son of God has brought salvation to the world through the sacrifice of His own body for the sins of the world. This faith is what makes someone a Christian. God plants this faith in His people wherever and whenever He wishes through the message of the Scriptures. Their sins are forgiven and they are united with God. Jesus expects His people to remain in this teaching.

You also know enough about church history to be aware that Christians have often compromised the teaching of Jesus. They have not always remained in the Lord's teaching as they should. Today there are Christians who repent of their sin and receive God's forgiveness, but at the same time do not accept all of the Lord's teaching. For instance, some Christians are unwilling to remain in Christ's teaching in how they live their lives. Their relationships are immoral, and they refuse to be guided by God's Word. I am speaking about the

sexually immoral, those who run after sex without the blessing of marriage, those who teach that homosexuality is an option for disciples of Christ.

There are Christians who believe that killing human beings because they are unwanted or unproductive, even taking one's own life, is an acceptable option before God. These people know the commandments which say You shall not commit adultery and You shalt not kill, but they say these are outdated and must be understood by the times in which God gave them. These people call themselves Christians, but they have not remained in the teaching of Jesus Christ. The Lutheran role is to call for reform. We promote a call back to the clear understanding of God's Word with no compromises.

Even more tragically, there are Christians who do not believe the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was totally sufficient to forgive the sins of the world. For them Christ on the cross is not enough. They teach that we must complete the sacrifice by adding to it our obedience to God and whatever else we can offer. They know that the last words of Jesus were before He died, *It is finished*, but they continue to teach a salvation which comes not only by faith in the work of Jesus, but that we must obey God in order be saved.

At times we ourselves may confess this false hope. For instance, if we are asked why we believe God will take us into heaven on our last day, we may have answered saying something like, "I'm a good person, I go to church, I read the Bible," or claiming for ourselves some other good deed. Even Lutherans need reforming from time to time.

Perhaps an illustration would clarify the seriousness of this situation. If you won a sweepstakes which gave you a brand new home, you would certainly be elated. But if after you moved in you got a bill in the mail saying the home was yours, but the ground had to be rented for \$1,000 a month, you would quickly perceive that the house you were given was not really free. You had been lied to.

Everyone who is sorry for their sins and calls out to Jesus, "Lord, have mercy on me," is a Christian and will be saved if they continue in that confession. But because there are Christians who have not remained in the teaching of Jesus and teach false things as these, who have compromised the Christian faith in order to keep peace with the world, there are Lutherans who

call for reform. As Lutherans we recognise that works will never save us. It is by God's grace we are saved, not by works. We call for all Christians to continue in the teaching God gave to us in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, and in the words of Jesus Himself recorded for us in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Lutherans confess that we can know the will of God not by putting our heads together, by traditions that imply that God would never let us make a mistake, or by our inner feelings as if we had a compass inside us that always points to the truth. If that were the case, we would have no need for a Bible. Lutherans point to Scripture alone as the judge of what God's will is for us. Lutherans know that faith in the mercy of God given in Jesus Christ is the answer for all that ails us. Grace alone, faith alone, as revealed in scripture alone. Lutherans have been saying this for 500 years.

Lutherans have never said that only they enjoy the favour of God. But Lutherans have always pointed out to the world what the clear teaching of Jesus is, and expected all Christians to receive it openly. If they have other teachings which conflict with God's Word, those teachings must be removed, for it is revealed to be false teaching. There is to be no false teaching in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Lutherans not only reform the church around them, but they must always reform themselves. We must daily examine our lives in light of Christ's teachings. Where we sin against God and His Word we must repent. That means to stop doing wrong and seek God's forgiveness. And what work there is to do here! O that the Lord would send His Spirit to us to reform our lives!

It is such a blessing to know that we can be forgiven. For without forgiveness heaven would be an empty place. But forgiveness should never be an excuse to compromise the faith delivered to us by Jesus Christ. God keep us from doing this!

God calls us to be different. Just as the salmon swims upstream in the lakes and the rivers to return to the brook where it first spawned, Jesus calls every one of His disciples to walk against the flow of worldly traffic, allowing no compromise in His teaching. There are many perils and dangers along the

way, but the promise of Jesus is that He will be with us always, even to the end of the age. God's truth makes true disciples, and the truth will set us free.

We are so accustomed to making compromises in everyday life. A husband and wife have to compromise their personal plans in order to build a life together. An employee must compromise his freedom and submit to his employer in order to hold a job. These are fair and right. But with God's Word there is to be no compromise whatsoever. Jesus said, "The heavens and the earth will pass away, but the Word of God will never pass away." Only as we remain in Christ's teachings, we will remain His true disciples, and we will endure when all things fail.

It is true that all who call on the name of Jesus will be saved. That is precisely what we must uphold. This is how gracious God is. But at the same time, the believer in Jesus will honour His words, "If you remain in My teaching, you will be My true disciples." The Christian is to remain in the teaching of Jesus above all things.

Are you a Lutheran or a Christian? This is the wrong question. It is better to say, "I am a Christian, but because Christians have not always remained in the teaching of Christ, I am a Lutheran." This is the role of being a Lutheran in the world today.

God's Old and New Covenant

From the ashes of the ruined city and temple would rise a new Jerusalem. From the disruption and shattering of the old covenant would rise a new and more glorious covenant. It is that covenant which lay at the heart of Israel's hope, that covenant about which Jeremiah wrote:

³¹ *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them,*



and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people, (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

The way of salvation in both covenants, the old and the new, is the same. A person is saved by faith in Christ. The believer under the old covenant looked ahead to Christ as the fulfilment of all the types and pictures of the old covenant. The believer under the new covenant looks back to the accomplished work of Christ. Because the Lord understands human nature and its weakness for sinning, the Lord provided many ways under the old covenant for the believer to receive forgiveness. Through many offerings and various sacrifices, the penitent sinner was assured he had been reconciled with God.

The old covenant pointed to Christ as its fulfilment. By its very nature, then, it was temporary and passing. Many of its activities - the repeated animal sacrifices, for example - emphasised its transitory nature. The old covenant, announced at Mount Sinai, also served to keep the Jewish people separate from the surrounding heathen, a unique nation, preserved intact by the regulations laid upon them by the old covenant. Their separation ensured that they would remain a people until the promised Messiah would come.

Paul described this purpose of the old covenant in Galatians 3:23-25: *“Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”*

The old covenant imposed many rules upon the Jews, rules they found impossible to observe. Hence the old covenant certainly proved that no one could be saved by keeping it. For that reason the Lord says of their fathers, “They broke my covenant.” We would say, “Before the ink was dry, they broke the covenant with the sin of the golden calf.”

The covenant of Sinai left no doubt in the minds of those who tried to observe it, who tried to keep all its rules and regulations, that no one could be saved by observing the law. Of course, that was never the purpose of the old covenant. Paul underscored that truth when he wrote to the Galatians, *“We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in*

Christ ... and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified,” (2:15-16).

At the first council of the Christian church, held at Jerusalem, Peter pleaded with his fellow Jews not to lay the burden of the regulations of the Sinaitic law upon gentile believers: *“Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are,”* (Acts 15:10-11).

The old covenant had several distinctive marks. It set out in the minutest detail how life was to be lived. Almost every aspect of Jewish life was regulated, from the kind of food one could eat to the touching of dead bodies. Two of the most prominent regulations were the Sabbath laws and the rite of circumcision. The old covenant required endless animal sacrifices, day after day and year after year, showing that it was not God’s final word to the human race. The old covenant established a hereditary priesthood based on membership in one family (the family of Aaron) from one particular tribe (the tribe of Levi). No one else could minister at the Lord’s altar. The old covenant conferred privileges on and was limited to only one people, or nationality, the Jews.

In contrast, the new covenant is far different. *“It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers,”* (Jer. 31:32). It contains no laws, rules, or regulations that have to be kept. It has no external mark. It invites all, regardless of nationality, to believe. It sets aside ethnic, racial, and other boundaries. The invitation is to all the world; Pentecost demonstrated that. The new covenant urges all to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth - *“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts,”* (Jer. 31:33). This is the miracle of conversion. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, *“A time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks,”* (John 4:23-24).

Under the new covenant the Holy Spirit, who has led us to call God “Abba, Father,” can make our response to His will a child’s glad “I can! I will!” This is something the message announced from Mount Sinai could not do. All it could do was to force us to admit “I must!”

God's new covenant is new also because the One who mediates it is one greater than Moses. The priests under the old covenant could offer only the blood of bulls and goats, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. But Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, offers the supreme sacrifice. He offers the sacrifice that matters. He offers the once-and-for-all sacrifice that pleases God and removes sin and guilt. He offers Himself. Freely and willingly, He sheds His blood and by the shedding of His blood takes away sin forever. By His sacrifice He opens the way to heaven. Nothing bars



the way. The one who trusts Him has a wide-open approach to God. At Christ's triumphant words "*It is finished,*" the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, showing that a new and better way to God had been opened.

This new covenant proclaims a salvation complete, finished, and, above all, free for the asking. It is a salvation won in and through Christ. "*God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in*

Him shall not perish but have eternal life," (John 3:16).

There is no question as to how God saves. To see Christ is to know God's salvation. Hence "no longer will a man teach his neighbour ... saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know Me." The promise is that through the proclamation about Christ, those who hear and believe will know for themselves the salvation of God. The Samaritans who first heard the message about Christ from the woman at the well confessed, "*Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this Man really is the Saviour of the world,*" (John 4:42).

This new covenant is sealed to us at our baptism. For in and through Baptism, God makes this new covenant with each of us. Through Baptism He seals and gives to us His very Spirit and the forgiveness of our sins and the faith to believe it. In our baptism we hear God's continuing promise to each of us: "*I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more,*" (Jer. 31:34).

But the marvel of the new covenant does not stop there. Heaping grace upon grace, in an equally wondrous and marvellous way, our Lord shares the meal of the new covenant with us. In that Communion meal, He draws us to Himself. He gives us the supreme gift: with the bread, His body given on the cross; with the wine, His blood poured out on the cross. With these sacred gifts, He gives to us the forgiveness of sins. With them He removes all doubts that might linger in our hearts. He comes to each of us personally and gives. We are sure. We belong to Him. We are one with Him. All that is His is ours.

We are united and bonded to Him. But this bond goes much further. Because we all eat of the one bread and are with Him through faith, so we are joined to one another in the body of Christ, the Church.

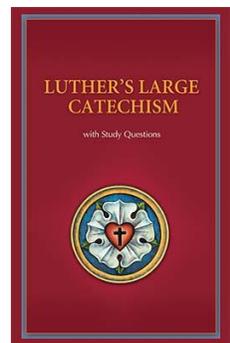
The Importance of Going through the Motions

Pastor Eric Andersen (edited)

Any musician will tell you there's nothing particularly exciting about practicing scales. It can be one of the most boring and repetitious aspects of a musician's routine, but the path to virtuosity requires every aspiring student to go through the motions (*ad nauseam!*) until they become second nature. Whether it's the novice student learning the correct fingering for the C Major scale or the professional playing advanced variations, musicians never outgrow their need to stay grounded in the basics.

The same goes for Christians. As Luther said with respect to the Catechism:

“But for myself I say this: I am also a doctor and preacher, yea, as learned and experienced as all those may be who have such presumption and security; yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism, and every morning, and whenever I have time, I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Psalms, etc. And I must still read and study daily, and yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and am glad so to remain,” (*Large Catechism, Introduction, 7–8*).



One of the major complaints about the liturgy is that it's too repetitious, a boring and useless going through of the motions. As it turns out, that's actually one of the liturgy's greatest strengths. Like an aspiring piano student, the liturgy keeps us grounded in the essentials of the Christian faith, teaching us who God is, how we stand in relation to Him, and how to confess, pray, and receive His gifts, so that these things become second nature. Like scales to the musician, the liturgy is essential to Christian maturity.

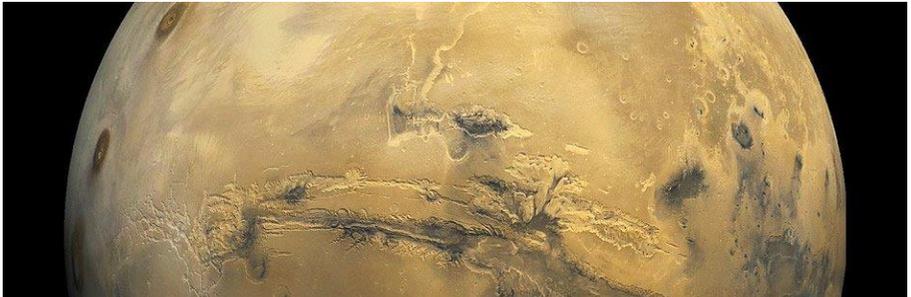
This is an area where contemporary worship falls flat on its face. For all of the emphasis contemporary worship leaders put on prayer & praise, their services don't actually teach or do those things very well. They provide no consistent model for prayer since the liturgies are always changing. Prayers are almost exclusively *ex corde* (the Lord's Prayer being the major exception) and tend to be long-winded and theologically shallow. The emphasis of praise songs is often on the one doing the praising instead of on the one (allegedly) being praised. As a result, very little praise typically takes place in these services.

By contrast, the liturgy provides us with theologically substantive, orthodox prayers and hymns. They actually get the job done (by confessing the objective truth He has revealed to us about who He is and what He has done for us) and at the same time provide a model for emulation. Apparently Jesus Himself thought highly of repetitious prayer, especially commending to us the Our Father and book of Psalms. The Psalms, in particular, serve as a language training manual - an affective, embodied means of training our speech, which challenge us to practice forms of faithful speech to God that we are not likely to try on our own.

Related to this is the common complaint that the liturgy is too foreign, too inaccessible to the modern Christian. Contemporary worship, it is alleged, makes the Christian faith much more accessible. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is true that contemporary worship will likely be very comfortable and accessible to the total stranger. This is because it waters down the Christian faith, strips it of essential nutrients, and presents us with little more than a 'Jesufied' version of secular culture. *Nothing needs to be learned because nothing is taught.* Contemporary worship may "meet you where you are," but it will also leave you there.

It is precisely that which strikes the uncatechised as foreign which makes the liturgy so valuable. Since our language and thought patterns *need to be trained* (*Romans 12:2*), there is something terribly wrong with any liturgy that makes the first time visitor feel entirely at home. Some things will be necessarily peculiar at first. Fortunately, like learning a C major scale, the liturgy becomes quite familiar after a short period of time. Nothing influences our understanding of the Christian faith and life more than the way we worship, for better or worse. As a liturgical catechism, nothing does this better than the Divine Service.

Students don't sit down at the piano and know how to play scales immediately; they need to be taught. Boring though the repetition may be, they never outgrow their need to keep going through the motions. Likewise, Christians require catechesis when it comes to worship and prayer (*Luke 11:1*). But unlike scales which are made up of nothing more than (boring) notes on a staff, the liturgy is comprised of the Word of God. It's true that the repetition can dull us to the wonder of what's going on, but even when that happens, at least the liturgy keeps us going through the *right* motions.



Mars Water: Much Ado About Very Little

Dr. Danny Faulkner, Answers in Genesis

In the search for life elsewhere in the universe, liquid water is the Holy Grail. Liquid water is absolutely essential for life, so in the estimation of many scientists, the presence of liquid water on another planet at the very least opens the door to the possibility of life there. While water is a common substance in the universe, the earth is the only place that we know for certain where liquid water exists. That is, until Monday, September 28, 2015, when NASA officials

announced in a press conference the discovery of evidence of liquid water on the surface of Mars. Or, maybe not.

In a brief paper published the same day, a team of eight scientists claimed spectral evidence for hydrated salts in recurring slope lineae (RSL) on Mars. What are RSL? They are narrow, dark streaks on some slopes that appear in the Martian spring, intensify in summer, and then fade in autumn. Being very thin, RSL show up only in the highest resolution images of the Martian surface, such as those supplied by the High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE) aboard the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (RSO).

RSL have been known for a few years. The most popular explanation for them has been that they are deposits left behind by brine solutions. That is, they are the result of the flow of liquid water, but there was no evidence of this. A major problem is that liquid water normally cannot exist on the Martian surface. The air pressure and temperature are so low on Mars that any liquid water rapidly boils or freezes. However, the presence of certain salts can simultaneously lower the temperature at which water freezes and raise the temperature at which water boils. With an increase in the temperature range at which liquid water can exist even in the very low pressure of the Martian atmosphere, it may be possible for minute amounts of liquid water to exist on the surface of Mars. Hydrated salts incorporate liquid water into their chemical structure.

Also aboard the RSO orbiting Mars is the Compact Reconnaissance Imaging Spectrometer for Mars (CRISM), which the team used to take infrared (IR) spectra of several regions with RSL. In four of the regions where RSL have been seen, the team found IR spectral features that are consistent with magnesium perchlorate, magnesium chlorate, and sodium perchlorate. At least at one site, the spectral features were stronger when the RSL were most pronounced. Keep in mind that while the IR spectral features are consistent with certain hydrated salts, this is not definitive proof that that is actually what is present - other substances could account for these spectral features as well. While the data are not direct evidence for liquid water, it is indirect evidence for liquid water. So, for now many scientists are convinced that at least small traces of liquid water seasonally exist on the Martian surface.

Where would this water come from? There are at least three suggestions, though each one has difficulties. One possibility is the melting of surface or subsurface ice, but that would seem very unlikely in the equatorial regions where some RSL have been found. A second possibility is discharge from local aquifers, but that seems unlikely for RSL extending to the tops of local peaks. A third possibility, the one apparently favoured by the authors of the study, is deliquescence, the absorption of water vapour from the atmosphere, but it is unclear if there is enough water vapour in the Martian atmosphere to do this. The authors of the paper pointed out that deliquescence of hygroscopic salts provides the only known refuge for active microbial communities in the driest portion of the Atacama Desert. This is an obvious pitch for the possibility of bacterial life on Mars today.

In many respects, this is not a new story. We have known for decades that water once was abundant on the Martian surface. At one time, there was a northern hemisphere ocean as much as a mile deep. Planetary scientists now agree that there was a global or near-global flood on Mars, where liquid water, if it exists at all, is extremely rare today. Yet these same scientists would scoff at the idea that there once was a global Flood on Earth, a planet awash in water.

Given that liquid water once was abundant on Mars, it should be no surprise that at least a few vestiges of that largess may still exist in cloistered corners of Mars. At least such a thing is possible in a worldview where Mars is only thousands of years old, not billions of years. Planetary scientists generally think that Mars has been dry for two billion years or more. The question is, could significant liquid water have survived since this time?

Even if remnants of liquid water exist on Mars today, that does not prove that life once existed or exists on Mars today. Furthermore, even if bacteria were found on Mars today or it were shown that bacteria existed on Mars in the past, that would not prove that evolution occurred there, any more than the existence of bacteria on the earth proves that evolution has occurred here. All such a discovery would prove is that bacteria either existed in the past or now exist on Mars. No one has ever observed the spontaneous generation of bacteria or the evolution of bacteria into something else. Besides, bacteria are a long way from conscious, intelligent life. The continued hype about water and

possible life on Mars is all wishful thinking of evolutionists desperate for some evidence that the evolution of life has occurred somewhere.

Stewardship of the Land

How an individual views the origins of the earth will affect how he views the use of it. We know that God has created all things and that the earth and its environment are gifts from Him. Because this truth is so widely discounted



and rejected, we can expect many errant perspectives concerning the earth. You can be sure that there is some false thinking afoot when a society champions the preservation of animals at the same time it champions the killing of human babies. We'll briefly consider a few misguided views concerning the earth and then also God's view.

The “Mother Earth” view: Some individuals who reject the truth of God's creation look to “Mother Earth” as the source of life. In this case, the earth itself must be protected at all costs. Furthermore, the things in the earth - plants, animals, mankind - are all equally part of what the earth has given us and should be accorded equal status with one another. Under this perspective, we are brothers and sisters with the plants and animals. God's Word refutes this false thinking when it says, *“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things...[who] worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator,”* (Romans 1:22-23, 25).

The “Me First” view: Another approach to the environment is one that simply looks at “what's in it for me?” Some people show virtually no care for the resources God has placed in the world. They pursue whatever course will bring profit or prestige to themselves with no regard for the earth's well-being. Poachers are an example of those who operate with this view. Those who view the environment in this way forget that there is nothing in the earth that is theirs. Rather, the earth and everything in it belongs to God. He is the owner and we are answerable to Him for its use. *“The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters,”* (Psalm 24:1-2).

The “Sky is Falling” view: Environmental issues are sometimes presented in a way that produces fear: “If we do this or don’t do that, the world as we know it will cease to exist!” It is important to understand that this view grows out of evolutionary belief. If someone believes that our existence is by random happenings and evolutionary process and that there is no eternal God who created all things and is preserving all things, then it is a fearful prospect to see anything change. If one relies on the earth as his god, then a change in the pattern of weather, the diminishing supply of a particular resource, and many other things will send you into unbelievable fear. But true hope and confidence aren’t in the durability of the earth. They are found in the faithfulness of the Creator who sustains the earth. Confidence in God’s preservation does not lead to a cavalier attitude concerning the environment. But living as stewards in the earth we do not need to be afraid that the earth will fail to support our life and well-being. God will preserve the earth until Judgment Day. *“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease”* (Genesis 8:22).

Genesis 1:28:

And God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’

God’s View: A proper view toward the stewardship of our environment begins with Creation. *“God blessed [Adam and Eve], and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the*

earth” (Genesis 1:28). God created mankind as the crown of all creation. He created the earth and everything in it to serve mankind and his needs. The earth and its resources are ours to dominate and use as a gift from God.

When we remember that everything on the earth belongs to the Almighty God and that we are His stewards – caretakers - it will be a reminder to use what is His wisely. It is neither wise nor faithful stewardship to carelessly use the resources that God has given us by polluting and destroying them. It is neither wise nor faithful stewardship of the resources God has given us to use them wastefully with no regard to their limitations. It is neither wise nor faithful stewardship of the resources God has given us to disregard alternative ways of meeting our needs that would have a lesser negative impact on our

environment. It is neither wise nor faithful stewardship of the resources God has given us to sacrifice the quality of the earth for self-indulgence and luxury when our needs could be met in a less destructive way.

As Christians we seek to be wise and faithful stewards of the resources God has given us. At the same time we should not be afraid to use those things which God has given us to use. A proper and God-pleasing approach uses the gifts He has given, but does so with care and wisdom as wise stewards of a beautiful gift given to us for our time of grace. *“O Lord, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings,”* (Psalm 36:6-7).

The following article was written days after Kim Davis, a clerk for the State of Kentucky, was gaoled for refusing to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

Kim in the Christians' Den

Pastor Mark Preus

Let's just set aside whether, according to the Constitution, Kim Davis may ignore the Supreme Court's legislation from the bench concerning gay "marriage."

The issue today is how Christians view a person's role in the government when the government tells him to enact or participate in laws that are contrary to nature, that is, unjust.



Christians have no problem obeying the civil authorities when it comes to anything not harming their faith. So the drinking age is basically mandated to be 21 by US Congress through a kind of blackmail of funding. But this doesn't bother the Christian, since it doesn't harm his faith not to drink.

But when it comes to being told to disobey God, well, no one should disobey God, neither a Christian nor a heathen. God forbids everyone to disobey Him, not just Christians. The Scriptures also teach that the rulers of the earth are to be instructed by God (Psalm 2).

Now, imagine that God actually exists. I mean, I know you all believe God exists, but half the time most people don't actually think that means anything. If God exists, then He is actually working, not merely alongside the government and other institutions, but *through* them. This means that, for example, when a country wages a just war, it is God who is waging that war for the country with a righteous cause. Similarly, when an executioner puts a murderer to death, God is not merely a spectator watching alongside something he set up but has no part of anymore. God is swinging the axe. God is injecting the needle. God turns on the electric chair. The government is an agent, a servant (Romans 13) of God, who actually is the one punishing the criminal.

Now let's look at marriage. God marries people. He joins a man and a woman in marriage. "What God has joined together..." (Mark 10:9). But just as God works through agents, through means in accomplishing our salvation, so also He works through means in governing our bodies and His institution of marriage. What agents does He choose? He chooses those who have authority over the man and wife who want to get married. This has in time past been the parents of the couple, while the government ruled to protect the man's and wife's rights as husband and wife. Over time, the government's protection of marriage took on the sanctioning of marriage. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, though the lack of parental rights in marriage is a sad thing, in my opinion. In fact, it is good for the government to act as God's agent in joining a man and a wife together.

Along comes the Supreme Court and legislates that a man can marry a man and a woman can marry a woman, and that the Constitution guarantees them this right. Now, again, let's just forget for a moment that the Constitution obviously doesn't guarantee them such an absurdity. Let's pretend that it's actually legitimate.

This is what we call the "positive law." The positive laws are the laws that governments make. They should generally reflect the natural law, since that is the law that God actually wants government to enforce. In fact, the entire reason God institutes governments among men is so that the natural law can be defended and protected. So all of our states and our country have laws against

murder. Here the positive law reflects the natural law. But all of our states and our country allow abortion. Here the positive law rejects the natural law.

What happens when you are a Christian who is working for the government and are told to enforce a positive law that is contrary to the natural law? In other words, what happens when you are told to disobey God? Whom should you obey? Let's put it another way. God tells you to obey the government. The government tells you to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. God and natural law both say, "Wait, what? No, that's silly, no, not silly, gross, and...why? Stop that! Icky!" So whom should you obey?

I think most Christians would say with the apostles, "We should obey God rather than man," (Acts 5:29). Nevertheless, there are many who say, "It's just a piece of paper. It doesn't mean anything. Gay marriage doesn't exist, so they're just playing along with the charade." This, my friends, is the outgrowth of Gnosticism. Gnosticism believes that the body is bad, or doesn't matter, and the spirit is good. In fact, many Gnostics even deny that the body is real. Do you see the connection? Saying, "It doesn't matter" in this situation is saying our actions and what we do with our bodies ultimately have no bearing on anything. But God governs our bodies, and He wants the government to govern our bodies, to restrain us from evil and encourage us to do good.

It's really simple. God doesn't give any government the authority to marry a man to a man or a woman to a woman; therefore, they have no authority to do it. God is actually real! He actually instructs Kim Davis not to give a marriage license to two men or two women because it's wrong. It matters. In the same way, if an executioner knows a man on death row is innocent, he may not execute the man. He can't say, "The government told me to do it." Even Americans understand that from the Nuremberg Trials, where soldiers weren't allowed to claim innocence on the basis of their obedience to the positive law.

But here is where the enlightened Christian thinker comes along, who understands things just a little bit better than some hick Pentecostal from Kentucky, and sagely and soberly advises the executioner to resign from his job rather than put the innocent man to death. That way, he can save his conscience, and someone else can do the dastardly deed. Now wait just a cotton-picking minute. In order to save his conscience, the executioner leaves his job. So he saves himself from doing something bad, right? Wrong. The

Law doesn't just require that we refrain from evil, but that we do good. It is as we Lutherans teach in the meaning to the 5th commandment, "You shall not murder. *What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbour in his body, but help and support him in every physical need." So the task of the executioner is not merely to step aside for someone else to murder an innocent man. It is to put himself between the innocent man and the intent to murder.

This is exactly what these Christians are doing when they tell Kim Davis that she should resign. They are denying the requirements of the law of love written in nature and on men's hearts. It is her duty not only to refuse to do evil, but also, insofar as she has been placed by God through the government into her position, to resist evil and oppose it. I have heard people actually impugn her with the motive of wanting to keep her nice job instead of resigning so that someone else can do what is a flagrant mockery of marriage.

Those Christians who criticize Kim Davis need to stop and consider why it is they are doing so. Is it because they actually believe that Christians should obey a law that is contrary to natural Law? Is it because they believe that a Christian shouldn't participate in the government, as the Anabaptist sects in Europe and America taught (Richard Nixon notwithstanding)? Is it because they think a Christian shouldn't resist evil when he is in the position to do so? Is it because they believe the government has the right to enforce unjust laws that defy the very One who gave them their authority in the first place? Is it because they believe that Psalm 2 doesn't apply to our "secular" government, when David writes,

"Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish in the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."

I honestly don't know. In any case, those pastors and other Christians who do not defend Kim Davis have, whether they know it or not, joined with the lions in the den to which she has been thrown. I pray God would close their mouths.

Here's a prayer to pray in this situation:

6. Thy truth defend, O God, and stay This evil generation; And from the error of their way Keep Thine own congregation. The wicked everywhere abound And would Thy little flock confound; But Thou art our Salvation. Amen.

From Dr. Luther's "O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold"

With Angels and Archangels and All the Heavenly Host

The angel said to me, "Come, I will show the bride, the wife of the Lamb," (Revelation 21:9).

When we commemorate All Saints Day, we thank God for the lives of those who have died and now live at the throne of God in heaven. We learn that our worship is connected to that scene in heaven, and, therefore, we need to be cleansed of all sin as we enter into the presence of God.

When someone we love dies, it is a tremendous shock. We witness the funeral, the burial, and the good wishes from friends. Then we are numb. How can we go on living without that person? They may have been to us a spouse, father, mother, child or sibling. An adjustment has to take place in our lives, in our habits, emotions, right down to the very thoughts of the day. Some people are able to make this adjustment more quickly than others. For most of us this adjustment comes slow and hard. Agonising loss and doubt fill many days. We can never make this adjustment by ourselves. We must come to a sense of presence of our loved ones. We can do this is we realise the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we find the presence of the resurrected and living Jesus Christ, we will find our loved ones there with Him. The Saints are part of the Church, and the church is gathered around Jesus, either in heaven or here on earth.

St. John was fortunate enough to have eye-witnessed the worship of heaven, and we are fortunate to read what he saw. He saw heaven as the Holy City of Jerusalem, where all the dead in Christ will live. You can read and see for yourself the details of this heavenly city in Revelation 21. We especially note that there is no church or temple in this city.



That is because Jesus, the Lamb of God, and the Lord almighty live there. There they serve God continually in worship and praise.

Here the angels praise God, as John and Isaiah both heard the angels around the throne of God sing, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty.” The saints of heaven bow down to Him and worship.

This should be our great comfort when we mourn the dead. Those who die believing in Christ are not dead. They live forever in this happy scene. They live with Him, and we find the reality of their continued life through Him. We worship God with them. They worship the risen Christ face to face, while we worship the same risen Christ under the veil of bread and wine at the altar. This is not merely some empty ritual of old, merely a remembrance of someone who was once present with us but is now gone. When we come to the altar, we are linked with heaven, with the Communion of Saints, with our loved ones. They worship there, we worship here, but we are together with them in worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. The altar is the meeting place between heaven and earth.

How sad it is to go to the cemetery and see those who leave flowers and tears at the grave and have nothing else. All they know is separation and loneliness. How much more they could have! If we could only take them by the hand and lead away from the grave, out of the cemetery, through the church door, down the aisle, and here to the altar itself. Here we could put them in touch with that person they loved so much. Here they would find not a dead body, but a living soul who is with Christ at the altar.

When we see death in the light of the Communion of Saints and the Holy Communion, there is no helpless bereavement. Our loved one is merely away

on a long journey. We are in touch. There is a place where we can meet. It is at the altar. How thrilled we should be when we hear the words of the liturgy, “Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven,” for we know that is where they are, with the company of Heaven, with the Lord Jesus Christ.

What about us? Will we be there one day? We must be on guard. The Lord warns us that “the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars - their place is in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death,” (Rev. 21:8).

Jesus says, “Behold, I am coming soon. My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done,” (Rev. 22:12). If we have only done evil, then evil is what we shall receive. But if we have believed, and this is by God’s doing, we shall receive the good.

We should be on guard in this life that these things do not seduce and overcome us. Each day we should repent of all sins, turning to the Lord of the Church and asking for His forgiveness, inviting His guidance over our lives to keep us from all evil things. Let us know where our true family is. It is here at the altar of our God.

God calls us to wash our clothes if we are to sing with the angels. “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city,” (Rev. 22:14). There won’t be any sneaking into heaven, no second chances to get in by the back door. The twelve gates to Jerusalem have twelve angels guarding them, one at every door. Just as Adam and Eve could not go back to the Garden of Eden because of the angel, so no one will enter heaven who has not repented of all sins and been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

This makes the altar of this church all the more sacred to us. It is here we are washed by Jesus’ blood. Here He comes to visit us in the bread and the wine. When our sense of loss becomes too great, we can go to the meeting place at the altar to receive the body and blood of the Lord who preserves my soul and body, just as it preserves our loved ones unto everlasting life. The blessed sacrament connects us not only to Bethlehem and Mt. Calvary, but also to the whole world behind the grave itself.

How wonderful is the Church of God, where death is overcome, along with grief and pain. How we should cherish this house of God above all other things. No other place on earth has such power as this place, for here the Lord of heaven and earth comes down to meet us. That should make us want to take special care of this sanctuary. In the Old Testament God demanded that a tenth of a person had to be given to the Lord for the care of the temple and the priests. Today God makes no such demand on us. Rather, because what God does here at this altar means so much to us, we are able to respond in even greater ways, bringing the sacrifice of our lives, adorning the altar with holy lives, the labour of our hands, and our gifts of treasure. We do this because of what we see beyond this place, the throne of glory where by grace we will one day take our place.

PARISH NEWS

The end of the Church Year is fast approaching. Soon we will enter the Season of Advent, leading into Christmas. But before that, we have the festivals of Reformation, and All Saints' Day. Also, during the season of Advent, we will hold our congregational Harvest Festivals.

There has not been much more discussion between the AELC and the ULMA (United Lutheran Mission Association). At our end, we have been waiting for ULMA to hold their annual 'synod' this month (October), where they will officially announce fellowship with the AELC.

Roman Turenko from Russia is in regular contact, and still has the desire to study for the ministry. The Seminary Committee will continue to work on a path for Roman to take.

Please take special notice of the calendar for **November**. Pastor will be away from Monday 9 November to Monday 23 November. Unfortunately, there will be numerous LR services across the parish. This cannot be avoided. For members of St. Paul's Greenwood, please note the change of service time on Sunday the 8th of November. This is so that GRN won't have 6 weeks of LR services. For Oakey members, please make the effort to attend services at AUB on the 1st and 29th of November, as there will be no HC services in Oakey for November.

Since the AELC suffers from a shortage of pastors, please continue to pray that the Lord will raise up men for the ministry.

Bible Characters of the N. T.

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| James | Paul | |
| Jesus Christ | Peter | |
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| S | <p>Here's a super fun Bible word game!</p> <p>We've hidden a verse from Proverbs in this shape.</p> <p>To find it, you'll need to start at the correct letter and then read every second letter, going in a clockwise direction.</p> <p>How long will it take you to uncover the wisdom of this proverb?</p> | | | | | | | | | R |
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