

WYOMING DISTRICT

ROUND-UP

Wyoming District—LCMS
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The Christian in Community: Community of Faith

When your unchurched or mainline-denomination friend says he believes in God, it might be prudent to ask, Which god? And what exactly do you believe about your god? Faith is no better than its object—the God or idol that is believed and trusted. True and saving faith holds fast only to the true and saving God revealed in Holy Scriptures.

Faith in the true God is not vague or abstract. Faith in God is not created by the believer himself. The true and only God is the God who speaks to us in His Bible. He is the triune God, the God we come to know in the crucified Christ. He says and does specific things—real promises and real works for true and lasting forgiveness and comfort. All His promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, true God and true man. This is what true faith believes.

The Holy Spirit teaches us this faith beautifully in Genesis 21–22, the birth and sacrifice of Isaac, the son of promise. God had promised Abraham and Sarah a son. When Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 they received the fulfillment of God’s promise. Isaac, “laughter,” was born to Sarah and was circumcised on the eighth day as God had commanded. “God has made laughter for me” (21:6).

“Faith in the true God is not vague or abstract...He says and does specific things – real promises and real work...All His promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ...”

Yet the faith of Abraham and Sarah was faith not in Isaac but in the promised Descendant of Isaac. When Isaac was weaned, Abraham held a great feast to thank God for fulfilling His promise of a son. But Ishmael, the older half-brother, scoffed at Isaac—the laughter of mockery and scorn. He did not believe God’s promise of the Savior. Sarah, our mother in the faith, said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac” (21:10). Sarah was not speaking of Isaac inheriting mere earthly wealth, but an eternal inheritance, the promise of the Savior.

Sarah demonstrated that the grace and promise of God cannot tolerate Ishmael’s unbelief or a false faith in a false doctrine. The true church of God, represented by Sarah (see Galatians 4:21–31), casts out the slavery of sin and death, hell and unbelief. God’s household is a community of faith, not works; of promise, not merits of the flesh. God affirmed the promise He gave to His little holy community: “through Isaac shall your Offspring be named.”

In Genesis 22 God tested this faith in Abraham by commanding him to offer Isaac as a whole burnt offering. This command appeared to violate all natural and divine law, even though it was practiced by the pagans (much like the pagan holocaust of unborn infants by abortion). But unlike the pagans, Abraham did not believe his son’s death could satisfy God’s wrath or earn His favor. In fact, he believed that God would surely fulfill His promise to give many descendants through Isaac, and especially one Descendant, the Savior.

But how could this promise be fulfilled if Isaac was dead and cremated by the fire of the sacrifice? We read in Hebrews 11:19 that Abraham “considered that God was able even to raise *Isaac* from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.” Abraham believed in the resurrection of the body, of Isaac’s body. He was willing to sacrifice Isaac, believing that God would raise Isaac from the dead and still fulfill the promise through him.

At the point of the sacrifice God withheld Abraham’s hand and provided a substitute sacrifice for Isaac. The ram that he offered as a whole burnt offering instead of Isaac foreshadowed the coming sacrifice of Isaac’s great Descendant, Jesus. He indeed became “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). His blood is the price of our redemption, “like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:19). “He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:4–7).

And like Abraham, we also believe and confess the “resurrection of the body” (Apostles’ Creed). He is the risen Lord, worshipped in heaven as the Lamb of God who stands in the midst of the company of heaven as One who had been slaughtered in sacrifice (Revelation 5:6). The resurrection of the slaughtered Lamb is the occasion for our Easter feast. “For Christ our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7–8).



Dear Pastors,

Greetings to you and a blessed Lententide!

One of the larger tasks needed to be completed this summer is compiling an inventory list of all Wyoming District Camp (Wyoming Lutheran Youth Camp) owned property. Over the years, items have been purchased for camp by various parties and end up elsewhere or property has found itself at your parishes because, frankly, where else was it going to go? This project’s goal is to centralize all District-owned camp property in one location.

To complete this project requires a little of your help. This year, when you send your campers, please also send any and all District-owned camp property along with them. You do not have to burden yourself with the question “is this item worth it?” just send it anyway—we’ll make that call. This notice comes early so that if you happen to stumble across District-owned camp property over the months, you can set it aside to send it in the summer!

Although *this is not a solicitation to donate items to camp* (send only District-owned property), if you happen to have any large, sturdy, and complete plastic storage containers that are looking for a good home then please also send them to camp!

Any and all questions can be sent to me via email, phone, or text.

May God be praised.

Rev. Rene G. Castellero

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REFORMATION 500

On April 7, 1523, Luther received nine nuns who had been delivered from “their captivity” at a convent in Nimbschen. A townsman and merchant from Torgau, Leonhard Koppe, had supplied herring barrels to the convent on the eve of Easter, and surreptitiously took away 12 nuns. Three were delivered to relatives, and the remaining nine were brought to Wittenberg. Luther’s teaching on the Christian life, including his warnings against late medieval monasticism, were bearing fruit in action. Nuns, monks, and priests would soon be getting married, bringing honor to God’s gift of marriage and establishing the Lutheran parsonage. At the time, Luther had no idea that some two years later he would be marrying one of these nuns, Katherine von Bora.

At the end of April 1523, Luther published another work on the Lord’s Supper, *The Adoration of the Sacrament* (AE 36.275–305). Like the arrival of nuns in Wittenberg, small happenings heralded momentous events in Christendom. Luther addressed here what some have called the “realism” of the Lord’s Supper: that the consecrated bread is the body of Christ, and the blessed cup of wine is the blood of Christ, the very same flesh and blood born of Mary and given to satisfy God’s wrath against sin on the cross. Luther would be deeply engaged in defending this teaching throughout the 1520s, climaxing in a debate with an opponent in Marburg in 1529. This faithful teaching of the Lord’s Supper has always distinguished Lutherans from all other Christian confessions and churches. It is our great treasure!

The occasion of *The Adoration of the Sacrament* was brotherly correspondence with Christians in Bohemia and Moravia (known as the Bohemian Brethren). In fact, the closing pages of this treatise examine briefly some of their teachings as he learned them from a written confession (or *Apologia*). He was concerned about their teaching of Holy Communion, and he also wanted to teach against radical reformers who were rejecting the presence of Christ’s true body and blood in the sacrament. Luther began his discussion of the Lord’s Supper where we Lutherans always begin: “that the chief and foremost thing in the sacrament is the word of Christ... Everything depends on these words” (277). Only the words of Christ’s institu-

tion can tell us what the sacrament is, what benefits it gives, and the like.

Luther proceeded to reject the position of a Dutch jurist (lawyer), Cornelius Honius, who had taught that the bread in the Lord’s Supper *signifies* or symbolizes the body of Christ. Honius treated the bread as a sign or symbol of Christ’s absent body, contrary to the simple and clear words of Jesus. Luther saw that “if we permit such violence to be done in one passage, that without any basis in Scripture a person can say the word ‘is’ means the same as the word ‘signifies,’ then it would be impossible to stop in any other passage. The entire Scripture would be nullified” (230). He then gave a simple rule for reading Scripture: “Every single word should be permitted to stand in its natural meaning; no deviation should be allowed unless faith compels it” (231).

Luther rejected other attempts to spiritualize the words of Jesus in Holy Communion. Christ’s words teach and give more than just a participation in the church, the spiritual body of Christ, even though “it is true that we Christians are the spiritual body of Christ and collectively one loaf, one drink, one spirit. All this is achieved by Christ, who through his own body makes us all to be one spiritual body...” (236).

Nor do we hold to the innovation of the papists, who teach “that in the sacrament no bread remains but only the form of bread. Of course, this error is not very important if only the body and blood of Christ, together with the Word, are not taken away” (287). “The gospel calls the sacrament bread. It says that the bread is the body of Christ” (288). This is the error we call transubstantiation.

Then he address the error that “is the worst and the most heretical. It was invented by the Antichrist, the pope and his followers. This error consists of the fact that they have made of the sacrament a sacrifice and a good work” (288), what we call the ‘sacrifice of the mass.’ A sacrifice or good work is something we give to God. But the Lord’s Supper is a gift that God gives to us. “Just as you cannot make out of the gospel a sacrifice or work, so you cannot make a sacrifice or a work out of this sacrament; for this sacrament is the gospel” (289).

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Here is the deep insight which the Holy Spirit has mercifully taught us in the Lord's Supper, that this blessed and most holy sacrament is the gospel of Jesus Christ, which He gives into our mouths to eat and to drink. "But this sacrament does give life, grace, and blessedness, for it is a fountain of life and of blessedness" (289). We reject the blasphemous teaching that Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice on the cross failed to satisfy all God's wrath against sin, or that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice man offers to God for the sins of the living and the dead.

Having addressed the question of what the Lord's Supper is, Luther applied this teaching to worship. Worship takes place first of all with faith in the heart, and then outwardly with the mouth and body. If worship (or adoration) takes place only outwardly, without faith, "there is downright hypocrisy and actual mockery of God" (291). The worship of faith in man's heart is free regarding external matters, to do or not to do, even when it finds expression in various acts of devotion or of liturgy. But the true worship of faith is a function "of the whole body." Luther explains, "But where worship is offered from the heart, there follows quite properly also that outward bowing, bending, kneeling, and adoration with the body" (293).

Luther then applies this understanding of worship to the Lord's Supper. Faith in Christ's words is the first and main thing. "For I must always confess that Christ is present when his body and blood are present." He concludes, "But he who does believe ... can surely not withhold his adoration of the body and blood without sinning" (294). That is to say, faith that believes Christ is giving His crucified and living body into our mouths must confess this truth with words and actions. But we must not make new laws about this confession. "He gave no command about worshipping him in the sacrament or in believing hearts. Moreover, that is not the reason for his presence there. Nevertheless, one should not withhold from him such worship and adoration either, but freely give it, if the proper time and occasion presents itself, or omit it" (294).

He closes his instruction on the Lord's Supper with an exhortation to hold fast to the words of Christ in faith and thus to eat and drink the body and blood of the Lord. We need not investigate or understand how it can be that the eternal God is present in His body in the sacrament. "For me it is enough to know that the Word which I hear and the body which I receive are truly the Word and body of my Lord and God... The body which you receive, the Word which you hear, are the body and Word of him who holds the whole world in his hand and who inhabits it from the beginning to the end. Let this be sufficient for you" (298).

THE NEXT ROUNDUP

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations after April 20 (May 2023 issue).

"...REMEMBERING YOU IN MY PRAYERS..." (Eph. 1:16)

For **Rev. Ralph Jaeger** (emeritus, Laramie), health.

For our active-duty chaplain, **Rev. Ryan Mills** (Colorado).

PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

Rev. Travis Sherman (Grace, Gordon) is serving **Grace, Merriman, NE** (Nebraska District) while it considers its future.

Prince of Peace, Buffalo (served by **Rev. Rene Castellero, Immanuel, Sheridan**) called **Rev. Daniel Merz** (Emmaus, Livingston, MT) on March 12.

Bethel, Lander (served by **Rev. Gregory Sonnenschein, Wind River Lutheran Mission, Ft. Washakie** and **Mount Calvary, Dubois**) called **Rev. Travis Berg (Trinity, Cheyenne)**. He has accepted the call and will be installed June 25, after the completion of the school year at Trinity.

Our Savior's, Chadron (served by **Rev. Dan Praeuner, emeritus**) has called a seminary candidate.

Trinity, Riverton (Rev. Mark Mumme) called **Rev. Kyle Brown** (Grace, Hobbs and Our Savior, Lovington, NM) on March 12 to be the assistant pastor, headmaster, and teacher.

Immanuel, Burns and **St. John's, Kimball** (served by **Rev. Andrew Dimit**, assistant pastor at **King of Glory, Cheyenne**) called a candidate from the seminaries. Candidate placement takes place April 25 and 26.

Rev. Marcus Baikie (Our Savior's, Cheyenne) received and has returned a divine call to Faith Lutheran Church, Shumway, Illinois.

SAVE THE DATE

Upcoming Events

- ◆ May 8-10: **Pastors Spring Conference**, Our Savior, Cheyenne, WY
- ◆ June 6-7: **LCC Christian Culture Conference**, Wolcott Galleria, Casper, WY (Registration is available on the website at lutherclassical.org and is capped at 250)
- ◆ June 8-10: **Pastors Wives Retreat**, C'Mon Inn, Casper, WY. Rose Adle will be our featured speaker using her book 'Ladylike' to facilitate Bible studies and discussions for the Christian Woman's life. Registration materials will be mailed after Easter. Questions should be directed to Leah Wierschke.
- ◆ June 12-16: **Continuing Education for Pastors**, Fort Robinson, Crawford, NE.
- ◆ June 22-24: **Uinta County Family Retreat**, Fort Bridger, WY. This year's topic is 'Christians in a Woke World.' Registration materials are attached to this roundup.
- ◆ July 11-13: **Homeschool Retreat**, Lions Camp, Casper Mountain. This year's theme is 'The Excellence of the Knowledge of Christ.' Registration materials will be finalized and posted to the District website in the near future.
- ◆ July 28-30: **Fathers Sons Retreat**, Lions Camp, Casper Mountain. This year, Rev. David Petersen will be presenting on 'The Four Flawed Judges and One Gracious God.' Whereas the biblical record records the ordinary world, ancient mythologies celebrate characters like Achillies and half-gods like Hercules. Hollywood and most modern adventure also favor those sorts of characters. Consider, just for a moment, the characters in the Marvel cinematic universe. The Bible is not fantasy. It presents history. It is the story of ordinary, flawed people. Moses is a murderer. He sometimes throw temper tantrums. David betrays his own family and army. Peter, James, and John are too weak to stay awake. Yet God bestows His Spirit upon these people and they display real heroic faith. In this regard there are perhaps no more interesting, flawed, or complicated characters in all of Scripture than the judges Ehud, Barak, Jephthah, and Samson. Our retreat will take a hard look at these difficult accounts to discover the virtue of faith and manliness and God's promises for it. Registration materials will be available on the district website when made public.
- ◆ August 6-10: **Wyoming Lutheran Youth Camp**, Lander, WY. Mark your calendars for fun, excitement, and a time to dig deeper in God's Word. Come enjoy God's beautiful creation and learn from Daniel how to stand tall as a Christian in a pagan world. Our theme's come from the book of Daniel. We will be focusing on important topics such as Christian education in the face of a pagan world; how we obey God when His Word and the world conflict; how God blessed us with good government; how God orders all history toward Jesus. As always, 'It's going to be awesome.' Registration information coming soon and will be available for download on the district event webpage.