

Reformation 500 Bible Camp – Stony Lake

We Became Familiar with Luther's Life

RESEARCHING ABOUT LUTHER took much time, but was actually fun, Dan Wuollet related at the Reformation 500 Bible Camp at Stony Lake Camp in northern Minnesota.

Wuollet's presentation started the weekend course, held October 20-22. Its theme was Luther's life and an overview of the events of the Reformation were mirrored in the political and ecclesiastical situation of Germany of that time.

Dan Wuollet related that he was given the duty a little less than a year ago to prepare a Bible class lesson on Luther. Inspired by this, he started researching Luther's life and confessional writings more broadly. "Researching history has always been interesting, it has actually been a passion," Wuollet said.

Material for the research on Luther was found from the library, among other places, for example from biographies and historical works. In addition, Wuollet became familiar with Luther's own writings and confessional writings.

Christ Freed from the Power of Sin and Death

Antti Paananen presented on the theme, *The Christian's Christ Freedom*, among other things. "God's Son frees a person unto true freedom. Christ's followers are free from the power of sin and death," he said.

The presenter pointed out that in the continual changes in time, customs and culture, God's people battle against sin with the power of the gospel and ask for the light of the Holy Spirit in their lives. "Christ came to free His followers from the slavery of (unrighteous) men (their thoughts, speech, and writings). This freedom is in owning God's righteousness."

Battling against Sin with the Power of the Gospel

Juhani Liukkonen stated in his second presentation, *Inherited Sin and Actual Sin*, that with the fall into sin which occurred in Paradise, people inherited the corruption of sin and death.

"Because of the fall, every child born into this earth is completely corrupted in his flesh and blood and cannot be acceptable to God. At the same time, through faith, he is also a partaker of Christ's righteousness."

The presenter pointed out that God himself prepared redemption and salvation through His Son, because no one can atone for his sins through his works and avoid the punishment of sin. "Christ's perfect reconciliation affects all of mankind in the same way as the fall into sin does," Liukkonen said. "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the

Faith of the heart gives a goal for a believer's life and the desire to battle against sin with the power of the gospel. The gospel is the power of God to salvation for all who believe.

Answers to Questions

The course schedule contained several presentations especially concerning faith life as well as two presentations dealing with Martin Luther. During the weekend we heard, among other things, Randy Herrala's presentation on the topic, Confession.

David Niemi had flown from Toronto, Canada for the weekend camp. Although life as the father of a big family is busy, he considered the topics of the camp so important that he arranged his trip. Niemi related that he is interested in Luther and has read his books. He has experienced that Luther is not just an individual from the past, but a precious brother in faith. "The many doctrinal presentations strengthened my faith to endure everyday life," Niemi said.

We also met Karen Kariniemi, Rockford congregation member, at the camp. She is the mother of a large family who intended to stay home because she is so busy, but she came encouraged by a friend. She was

happy that she came to the camp and experienced that she received answers to many questions of this time. She was convinced that faith is the same regardless of the time period or dwelling place.

Returning from the camp, we yet asked Jon Bloomquist about his experiences from the weekend. He felt that that the camp gave more than he could have expected. The course topics dealt with core matters of the doctrine of faith.

As Jim Frantti stated in his final speaking turn, we experienced that God abundantly blessed our camp. All presentations strengthened our mutual understanding of faith. We had open discussions in spiritual agreement and mutual love. We experienced that faith is the same regardless of the time and place.

Leena Liukkonen and Aino Paananen

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A Study of Reformation History and Doctrine

Luther and the Reformation—an Overview, presented by Dan Wuollet

Luther's early writings make apparent that he had a troubled conscience, although we are not sure when he came into faith. The church's doctrine had strayed from being based on the Bible to being based on the written tradition of the church fathers. One offensive practice to Luther was the selling of indulgences, a statement on paper authorized by the Pope that forgave punishment from sins.

As a result, Luther posted the 95 Theses condemning corruption in the church, primarily selling of indulgences, but also that we are saved by faith—not by works. He appeared before Cardinal Cajetan, who demanded that Luther recant his writings. Luther was given sixty days to retract them. He responded by rejecting it by using Christian doctrine and the Bible. Later when again asked to retract, he responded, "Unless shown to be in error by the word of God, I cannot and will not retract." This presentation provided assurance that our faith and doctrine is based on the unchanging Word of God, not on man's traditions.

-Summarized by Steve Loukusa

Original and Actual Sin--presented by Juhani Liukkonen

The presentation noted that sin is a destructive force that separates us from God—the only thing that can keep us from our goal of eternal life in heaven. When God created the world, He beheld His work and found it good. But evil entered when the serpent beguiled Eve with a promise of wisdom to become as God. Likewise, the enemy beguiles us today in the same way. The entire creation work of God groans under sin's corruption. This was original sin; of which we all inherit.

Actual sins are those that we have done in disobedience to God's will or in offense to our neighbor. While there is a difference between actual and inherited sin, every sin even against our neighbor, is a sin against God too. This is why, even though we make amends and apologize, we also desire to hear and believe the gospel. It is the power of God to salvation.

-Summarized by Mark Wuollet

The Confessional Writings--presented by Dan Wuollet

The confessional writings, written during the Reformation era, were a testimony of how the believers saw matters of faith. In 1521 at the Diet of Worms Luther was condemned as an outlaw. The decision was overturned in 1526 at the Diet of Speyer and then reversed in 1529 when Luther was once again declared an outlaw. The princes that favored Luther protested the decision hence the origin of the term "protestant."

At the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 Charles V asked the different factions to resolve their differences. They could not. Instead the Augsburg Confession was presented and read aloud in both German and Latin. After Luther died in 1546 two groups formed, the Phillipists and the Gnesio-Lutherans. The Phillipists wanted to accommodate the emperor but the Gnesio-Lutherans couldn't for conscience sake. The two groups developed the formula of Concord which was published in the Book of Concord as a collection of Lutheran movement doctrines.

God's Word remains the highest authority. The Confessional writings were composed by men. They need to be studied with prayerful hearts, since it's difficult to understand the complete context in which they were written. Martin Luther was a dear brother in faith who was granted a crown of righteousness.

-Summarized by Lars Anderson

The Sacraments--presented by Antti Paananen

A sacrament is an important sacred act, both hidden and incomprehensible, which strengthens faith. The sacraments tie God's Word to a visible substance. The Old Testament sacraments were Passover and circumcision.

During the Reformation period, Luther examined the seven sacraments practiced in the Catholic Church and determined that only two were valid: Baptism and Communion. He taught that a sacrament requires a promise and faith that clings to that promise.

Jesus gave the baptismal command shortly before His Ascension (Matt. 28:19,20). God's children endeavor by faith in this grace covenant. Jesus instituted communion. There are seven aspects in communion: It is a meal of: remembrance; the strengthening of faith; unity; love; thanksgiving; confession; and hope. Faith is strengthened when we go to communion believing, but we do not receive forgiveness in the sacrament. Believers often desire to hear the gospel and believe their sins forgiven in Jesus' name and blood before partaking in this meal.

-Summarized by Kevin Moll

The Priesthood of Believers and the Office of the Ministry-- presented by Juhani Liukkonen

The primary message of the Old Testament was "the promise of atonement for sin" as voiced by the prophets (Ps 103:12). The presentation included the section, Call to Gospel Work, and how servants of the Word are selected through prayer and by the congregation. The keys to the kingdom are distributed through the gospel.

The section on *The Office of the Holy Spirit* explained how the priesthood of Christ is the foundation for the general priesthood. This eternal priesthood is of the order of Melchizedek, a picture of Christ. Believers are authorized by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

The section on *Soul Care Is God's Care* dealt with Christ's instruction to love our neighbor. When discussing faith matters, we should do so with respect and kindness. We want to rebuke in love, comfort one another, and understand that the keys to bind are a protection and used only in love. Lack of concern over a sinful condition is dangerous.

From Old Testament times, the manner for selecting servants of the Word has not changed. God guides His congregation and gives His servants gifts which He deems as needed. Servants need to remain faithful to these gifts and need the congregation's support and prayers.

-Summarized by Mike and Peg Glynn

Christian Freedom--presented by Antti Paananen

The presentation, Christian Freedom, contained three subtopics: Freedom in Christ, Freedom in Christian Life, and Freedom and Responsibility. Freedom in Christ is the most important. Christian freedom was purchased at a precious price when Jesus took upon himself all of our sin debt. When sins are forgiven, faith makes a believer free from the bondage of sin. Freedom from sin is not to be misunderstood as freedom to live in sin.

-Summarized by Elaine Nikula