

Ministers Message

Mission Department Newsletter



Noteworthy

Upcoming Events

- LLC Phoenix Winter Services, March 17-20, 2022
- LLC Ministers Camp April 1-3, 2022
- LLC Board Members Workshop April 29-May 1, 2022
- LLC Summer Services June 30-July 1, 2022

Reminders

- Remember that your input on the Bible translations is due by March 1, 2022

FYI

The LLC website was recently reconstructed, and a the new ministers webpage can be found here:

llchurch.org/minister-resources

Password: ministerLLC2202

A New Look!

As servants of the Word, we recognize that we need to be students of God's Word. It is important to us as travelers on the narrow way of life and, as Paul says, to those that hear us (1 Tim. 4:16). We often feel challenged to find time to devote to the reading and study of the Bible. One of our goals with this reworked version of Ministers Message is to make helpful Bible study material available to you in small bites and in a variety of media types that may help you fit them into a busy life. It will contain articles in print and audio format that fit into the short slots we all have in our schedules, for example, during a work commute, a trip to the grocery store, or a few minutes before bedtime. The material will be comprised of new material as well as repackaged material that is already available.

This is not a finished product. We expect to learn along the way and we welcome your suggestions for content as well as suggestions for the best ways to give you the material.

Ministers Message will include the following regular features:

- **Biblical Topic**

We'll begin with articles on Jesus' conversations.

- **Epistle Postil**

This article will explain a lectionary epistle text.

- **Message from the Mission Department**

This feature will share news and thoughts from the Mission Department.

- **Noteworthy**

This feature will notify of upcoming events, occasional reminders about relevant items, and other miscellany.

May God bless this little publication and your labors in His vineyard.

The Spring of the Water of Life

Esa Tuomaala

“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” (John 4:10)

“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:13, 14).

We all know of the necessity of water for human life. We Finns have not experienced the lack of water as the same kind of threat to life



JESUS CONVERSES

The gospels present us with a rich picture of Jesus’ public ministry. There we find His works and miracles, teachings, parables, and also some of His conversations. Some of those conversations were with adversaries, some with the curious, and others with the downcast or seeking. Some of the conversations were with individuals and others were with groups.

In these conversations we can see how Jesus approached people and responded to their questions. His teaching, methods, and manner offer us valuable lessons. We can apply them in our own lives and in our work as servants of the Word. The articles in this series will examine some of the enlightening conversations that took place between the Son of God and His contemporaries.

as it is experienced in the Middle East. Thirst during hot periods sometimes causes great suffering for animals and people. The value of water rises above the value of many other things in people’s awareness.

The Jews valued so-called “living water” the most. It seeped into a well from groundwater reservoirs or bubbled from a spring. Rainwater was not as highly valued. Although it was often necessary to collect it as well. Water was collected during rainy periods into tanks hewn in the earth or stone and coated with cement to make them watertight, i.e., cisterns. These too were called wells in the language of the Bible.

A conversation about water arose between Jesus and a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob. This well, which according to a tradition preserved by the Samaritans, had been used by the patriarch Jacob, can still be found in the Holy Lands. Nowadays it is about 25 meters deep. It was about the sixth hour, or the hottest most scorching time of the day. Generally, people were not on the move at that time, but most rested in the shade. A solitary Jewish man, Jesus of

Nazareth, sat however resting by the well. A woman came from the city carrying a water pot. The situation was unusual.

The woman arriving at the well to draw water experienced a surprise. The man sitting there, who was a Jew, asked her for a drink. Because the Samaritans were a despised mixed people, something like this did not usually happen. Jesus did not begin to more precisely explain the reasons for His norm breaking behavior. Instead, he with his new response wished to inspire the Samaritan woman's interest in continuing the conversation. Therein He indicated that He was not an ordinary Jewish man: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee," and that He has with him the gift of God, the gift of the water of life. Thus speaking, Jesus meant the water of life, which satisfies man's thirst for eternity. More burning than Jesus' bodily thirst was His desire to be able to give the one that had come to the well a portion of the water of life that cleanses from sin.

The Samaritan woman did not seem to understand Jesus' intention. She remained firmly in everyday reality. She alluded to the fact that Jesus did not have a container with which He could have drawn living water, that is, groundwater, from the depths of Jacob's well: "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep" (John 4:11). When Jesus has introduced the mysterious statement touching His own person: "If thou knewest...who it is that saith to thee," the woman weighed in on this as well asking Jesus whether He was greater than the patriarch Jacob. At this point, the woman would not yet have believed that.

Jesus now moved more clearly and further from the temporal metaphor to the eternal reality. He doesn't anymore speak of living water, which could be understood as only temporal well water. Instead, He speaks of water that gushes to eternal life. These are the most important words that Jesus spoke in the entire discussion. To begin with, in His response He entirely separates the water of Jacob's well by stating that that whoever drinks of that water will return to his former state. On the other hand, He, Jesus, has a different kind of water. Whoever drinks it will never again thirst. It will thus quench the human thirst of death and satisfy their longing for eternity.

But in addition, Jesus assures her that the heart of the person into which this water flows will become a spring. He or she will become a human source. The water that Jesus gives will become in him or her a spring of water. This is a clear picture, first, that Jesus was able to do a miracle for this Samaritan woman, to help her from under sin and death into the freedom of God's children. But Jesus' words aimed further. Everyone who experienced this new birth becomes a channel of God's grace. One who has received God's help can help others. One who has received the forgiveness of sin can proclaim divine forgiveness to others.

It is revealed in the Samaritan woman's next response that she still did not understand or did not want to understand the implication of Jesus' words. Namely, she said: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." At this stage, Jesus' conversation partner was not able or did not consent to rise to the eternal level of Jesus' teaching.

The conversation continued for a long time. We won't explain its entirety in this writing. Instead, we can on the basis of many experiences assert: We have found the stream that gushes unto eternal life. We have been able to live amid the springs. In ourselves we are entirely dry. The day has almost burned us to the ground. But in the kingdom of God is the stream of reconciliation and forgiveness that flows pure from the wounds of Christ. We rest beside it, we drink its water, we wash in it. This happens when we believe our trespasses forgiven in Jesus' name and blood.

We have often been able to confirm the great difference there is when comparing the proclamation offered by the world and the sermon of God's kingdom. An intelligent, animated, formally beautiful, and logically progressing speech can be kept without the Holy Spirit. They can even in a certain way be firmly connected to some Bible text. But their irremovable weakness is that they don't contain even a drop of living water. When listening to them, the thirsting remains thirsty, and the burning of the conscience remains unextinguished. But the simple message of God's kingdom removes the thirst of the soul and refreshes the weary. We thank God for the fortunate lot of a child of God.

Romans 1:16,17

The Righteousness of Faith is God's Gift

Leo Väyrynen

PAUL IS NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

At the beginning of the Letter to the Romans, Paul reveals that he wishes to travel to Rome. He is obligated to proclaim the gospel in that world capital. The sermon's theme is clear: The gospel is the message of the righteousness which comes from God, which a person can accept as a gift through faith.

Paul is not ashamed of the gospel, even though it is foolishness to the Greeks and an offence to the Jews. As a teacher of the law named Saul, he had resisted the sermon of the gospel himself and taught that a person is saved by fulfilling God's righteous will, which is revealed in the Law of Moses and the traditions of the forefathers. After receiving the grace of repentance he taught that a person is not able to fulfill God's will. Still the law's demand remains in effect, but in this way, that it awakens the knowledge of sin in an unbelieving person and drives him to Christ to beg for grace. Paul had experienced this himself while travelling to Damascus to

Jesus Awakens Faith

Third Sunday after Epiphany

The festive half of the church year is built around the Savior's life and salvation work. During the period between Epiphany and Shrovetide, we follow Jesus' prophetic work and its significance for us. The Third Sunday after Epiphany has the theme: Jesus Awakens Faith. Jesus' public ministry has begun. He manifests His godly glory by teaching people and healing the sick. His miracles and the testimony of the people who had experienced His power, awaken faith in Him regardless of nationality. Jesus is believed upon as a Savior, not only as an earthly helper. The Sunday gospel texts especially reveal this theme.

The nature and significance of faith in human salvation illuminates the Sunday epistle texts in a remarkable way. Paul's message concerning the righteousness of faith is condensed in the letter to the Romans. That text had an earth-shaking effect on Martin Luther and his activities in the recently begun Reformation. The text of the Letter to the Hebrews is an introduction to the entire Old Testament history. In the text of the letter to the Corinthians, Paul examines the difficult problem of suffering. From the perspective of faith, he finds a touching and rarely evident explanation for it.



persecute the Christians. In Damascus, under the blessing hand of Ananias, he experienced that the gospel is, in fact, God's power. It gives the gift of faith and gives the strength to live as a child of God.

Martin Luther's road to believing the gospel was similar to Paul's. Amazingly, it was in fact the Letter to the Romans which was teaching him what the gospel is. God's righteousness appears in the gospel. It was exactly the content of this text of ours that gave the impetus for the Reformation. It clarified to Luther that God's righteousness appears in the gospel, as merciful, not demanding.

A PERSON'S OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

While lecturing in university on the Letter to the Romans, Luther pondered the meaning of God's righteousness. He had personally experienced that he would never be able to attain the righteousness that God demanded. As a biblical scholar he noticed that the Letter to the Romans becomes incomprehensible if by righteousness is meant the good demanded by God, which a person must do to become His child. Then it dawned on Luther that God's righteousness may linguistically mean something else, namely the righteousness coming from God, bestowed by Him. Then it became possible to understand the Letter to the Romans. Thus, Luther had found the key to the gospel. In the gospel, God's righteousness is bestowed through the forgiveness of sins. Luther valued the Letter to the Romans so highly that he encouraged Christians to memorize it and to relish it as if it was daily bread.

Righteousness is that which we receive as a gift through grace. It is the righteousness of Christ. Christ has fulfilled all of God's righteous, legitimate demands and atoned for everything which we have violated. Our salvation is this that we can own that righteousness which God prepared for us through His Son. We accept this righteousness through faith. Joining with the Prophet Habakkuk, Paul says, the just shall live by faith.

GOD JUSTIFIES THE UNGODLY

Faith signifies that we become members of Christ's congregation body and become partakers of His works. Paul explains this later in his letter in more detail. Faith comes by hearing the sermon of the gospel, which comes from God's Word (Rom. 10:17). The gospel of the atonement work of Christ is proclaimed from God's kingdom, and the Holy Spirit gives it power. Faith is not a merit rather it is a gift under which we are proclaimed righteous. Through Faith we own the perfect righteousness of Christ.



The Letter to the Romans teaches that God justifies the ungodly without the works of the law. Nevertheless, it is difficult for us to position ourselves in the place of the ungodly. Self-righteousness and the idea of merit is so firmly implanted in us that we would want to do something on behalf of our salvation. It is difficult for us to accept salvation as a gift and through grace, even though there is no other possibility.

Why does Paul use the phrase "from faith to faith?" The question is of this that faith is transmitted from one person to another by the sermon of the gospel. By moving from faith to faith, God's prepared righteousness has also reached us. We are also justified by grace alone, by faith alone, by the merit work of Christ alone, as the content principle of the Reformation indicates. We have the same desire as Paul had: to live of the power of the gospel each day and to proclaim the gospel which we have received as a gift to all.

Joulujakso Postilla, pp. 145–148

Contact Information

Jon Bloomquist, Mission Director
jbloomquist@llchurch.org
218.255.0173

Adrian Pirness, Mission Director
apirness@llchurch.org
763.360.0820

Adeline Moll, Mission Dept. Asst.
amoll@llchurch.org
928.499.8079