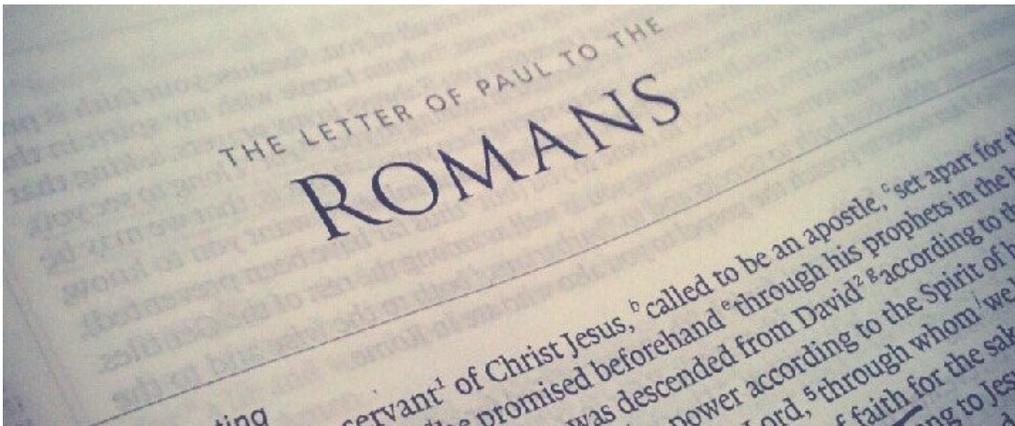


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 Rev. Dr. John Rickert, Pastor

OUR REDEEMER'S VOICE
May 2020

Romans

There is hardly a book of the Bible that has been more influential in the Western Church than the letter of Saint Paul to the Church at Rome. It certainly is generally recognized as the greatest of Paul's epistles, followed by his first letter to the Corinthians and his letter to the Galatians. It is also his longest letter. More has been written about this letter over the centuries than even the most dedicated scholar can read. Shoot, recently a scholar published an "introduction" to the book of Romans that was well over 600 pages long!



For those of us who are theological descendants of the Reformation, Romans has an even more special position because of the prominence it had for the Reformers. That was because of the clear teaching Paul gave in explaining justification. So, it is appropriate that we take time to study Romans, but that we approach it in all humility. After all, the greatest and brightest theologians the Church has ever produced have all written about Romans. That doesn't even count all those who have written about it who

were solid and faithful commentators, but not exactly at the same theological level as people like Ambrosiaster, Augustine, Luther, Calov, and so forth.

During this time of social distancing due to the novel coronavirus, activity at our church building has been drastically reduced. That includes gathering for Bible study. However, our online presence has increased. This is one way we can remain in touch with each other. Thus, we begin a new, live-streamed, Bible study (it began on Wednesday, April 22). The difference between a "live" streamed presentation and a "streamed" one is that a "streamed" presentation is prepared beforehand and released as a specific time. That is what we are doing with our Sunday morning worship services. A "live" streamed presentation is just that: live. Those who participate at home can ask questions and give feedback. We tried this once before, on Maundy Thursday. We did have some problems, but finally got them solved. God willing, we will remember all the "solves" and not have any significant issues as we begin our study of Romans! To help get the feel of a regular Bible study, which certainly has a social aspect, we will go "live" at 6:45 PM. This will allow those who sign in early to "chat" with each other. We will also continue "live" for ten or fifteen minutes after our "hour" is over. During this time, I can answer additional questions (as I am able) or we can again "chat." By "chat" I mean type in comments. One thing to remember is that this will be recorded and available "forever" on the internet. DO NOT TYPE ANYTHING that you do not want visible for as long as the internet survives!



Also, feel free to invite any friends, family members, neighbors, etc., to join. In this time of social distancing, people who otherwise might never consider attending a Bible study might just welcome the opportunity to join, even if they are doing so purely for social reasons. By God's grace, working through the Word, the Holy Spirit just might win them to Christ. (By the way, because I'm thinking of people who do not know me personally, I'm going to begin by introducing myself.) [Having spiritual conversations without leaving your living room! - Kitty]

I look forward to many of us joining online each Wednesday at 7:00 PM and exploring some of the riches of God's wisdom in our study of the book of Romans.

Easter Blessings,
Pastor



Digging In The Nicene Creed Second Article, Part 12

*And [I believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, **God of God**, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.*

Last month we began our look at the phrase "God of God" by reviewing some of the Bible passages that this phrase is based on. This month we will consider a few of the comments made by some of the Church Fathers that relate to the phrase.

The phrase "God of God" actually predates the Nicene Creed and was simply absorbed by the creed as something of a synopsis of the church's generic New Testament confession of the divine status of the Son, as the Word of God sent from the Father's side.

A book I have, *Ancient Christian Doctrine: 2*, gives the following overview of the teaching of some of the Early Church Fathers on this topic:

The Word derives from God without ever being separate from God, just as the radiance is never separated from the light that emits it (Tertullian). The Word and Son is not just like God but is equal to God (Hilary). The whole tenor of New Testament teaching proclaims that the Son is inseparable from the Father (Marcellus). The divine throne is shared from all eternity, as the Word sits on it next to the Father (Cyril of Jerusalem). All Christian sentiment thus recognizes that it is an aberration to separate the Son from the Father by ranking him among the creatures (Athanasius). All that characterizes what we mean by the divinity of the Father is witnessed in the character of the Son of God also (Athanasius). While the Word can be recognized as a distinct person (*hypostasis*) within the deity, the divine nature and status that he possesses is none other than the Father's own Godhead, for there is only one Godhead (Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa). This profound union and coincidence of being between the two is shown in the constant and perfect harmony of action and will between the Father and the Son in all things (Augustine).

I realize that what I'm writing about is really not new to anyone at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church. However, from time to time, traveling proponents of heresy may knock on your door and try to convince you that the Trinity is not biblical, and that Jesus is not truly God. I like the analogies used by Tertullian: "For God produced the Word, as the Paraclete [Helper/Counselor/Comforter/Advocate – referring to the Holy Spirit] also teaches, as a root produces the shoot, a spring the river, the sun a ray: for these manifestations are projections of those substance from which they proceed. ... but the shoot is not detached from the root ... nor is the Word detached from God ..." It isn't a perfect analogy, but one would not expect a perfect analogy because there is nothing in creation that is perfectly analogous to our utterly unique God. Still, they get across the idea of 'distinct without being separate, unique without being different.'

Next month we will start our look at "Light of Light." Until then, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14). Amen.



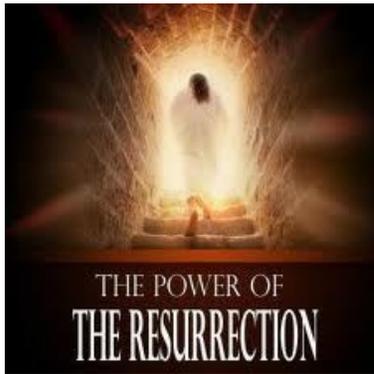
Awake, My Heart, with Gladness

"The foe in triumph shouted, When Christ lay in the tomb; But lo, he now is routed, his boast is turned to gloom, For Christ again is free; In glorious victory, He who is strong to save, Has triumphed o'er the grave." LSB 467 verse 2



"Now hell, its prince, the devil, Of all their pow'r are shorn; Now I am safe from evil, And sin I laugh to scorn. Grim death with all its might, Cannot my soul affright; It is a pow'rless form, Howe'er it rave and storm." LSB 467 verse 4

Jesus' body had been taken down from the cross, prepared for burial, and sealed in a tomb. What was Satan thinking on that first Good Friday? Did the evil one, who was "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44b), rejoice when the Son of God was crucified? From the beginning, from Eden, Satan sought to undermine the Word and then, in time, the Word made flesh. Confronting Jesus in the wilderness, Satan tried unsuccessfully to turn the Savior from the path set before Him. The devil put betrayal into Judas' heart, and the disciple traded his Master for silver coins (see John 13:2). At His arrest in Gethsemane, Jesus, for the sake of our salvation, willingly submitted to His captors and to "the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53b).



But if the ancient serpent thought he had won, he was greatly mistaken. The devil "now is routed," our hymn proclaims, and so he was. On the first Easter morning Jesus rose from the dead "in glorious victory." Jesus took on our flesh and blood so that "through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14b). The innocent Lamb of God carried our sins in His own body to the cross, the sins by which Satan had hoped to separate us from God forever. By His death and resurrection, Jesus took the power of sin and death from Satan's hand. Grim death is now "a pow'rless form, howe'er it rave and storm" against us. Jesus has "triumphed o'er the grave" and, at His return, so will we!

When the sins we have confessed still trouble us, when we doubt that we can ever be forgiven, we look to the cross and empty tomb. For there, Satan, our enemy and accuser, fell in defeat. Thrashing purposefully in his death throes, Satan still seeks to tempt us and turn us from God and His Word, but the weapons of sin and death that the enemy once wielded to such devastating effect have been torn from his grasp. "Now I am safe from evil, and sin I laugh to scorn." Our sins are forgiven, washed away in Jesus' blood. Death and the grave will not hold us because death and the grave could not hold our Lord.

"He who is strong to save has triumphed o'er the grave!"

This Daily Devotion was written by Dr. Carol Geisler

Arlen D. Besel – Ambassador

May — Easter to Pentecost:

The Gospel message for this period begins with an example of the shepherd caring for His sheep. Jesus always pictured Himself as the shepherd. In His role on earth Jesus is comforting His disciples and us. He reminds them that the path to God was through Him. And He promises the Holy Spirit to fill and empower them to spread the Word. His instruction continued to the day of His ascension. As His departure nears Jesus prays for the disciples and all believers.

THROUGH THE WORSHIP WINDOW



The account of Pentecost is recorded in Acts 2 and describes the arrival of the Holy Ghost to fill all those assembled so that they were empowered to share the message of salvation in Christ Jesus.

During this period the First Readings are not OT lessons but come from Acts. We are following the actions of the early believers as they carry the Good News of salvation to the Jews and Gentiles wherever they are. The church was being developed in this period and new roles established to carry out the work of overall ministry. The first group of stewards included Stephen who became the first martyr.

Acts 1 records the event of Jesus' ascension. St. Luke mentions that this book was the continuation of his Gospel account. In those last minutes on earth Jesus was again asked about when He would restore the kingdom of Israel. He reminded them that it was not for them to know the timing of the Father's plans.

This is a very encouraging period in our meditation of the Lord's mission to His Church.

Arlen D. Besel- Worship

Devotional Reflections - Exodus 14:14

Rev. Mark Schroeder, Southeaster District LCMS

"The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still."



I have served most of my ministry in cross-cultural settings. My first Call out of the seminary was to serve in Papua New Guinea as an evangelistic missionary. A very interesting aspect of the Enga people whom I first served was their greeting to each other when passing. Instead of the Western form of greeting such as, "How are you?", they would greet each other with an inquiry about which tribe they belonged to. That difference is significant.

The Enga people were more interested in who you belong to than in what you do. That is unfathomable for us in the West. We define ourselves by what we do. Who we belong to is of minimal importance. "Show me results of the efforts of your life," that is what counts most in the West.

But between the day that Jesus rose from the dead and his ascension, the Lord's focus was not on what the disciples could do for him, but rather on who they belonged to. They were his chosen disciples. Because of that, he chose to appear to them. As far as we can tell from Scripture, all they did was wait around for him to act. To be sure, eventually the Lord had work for them to do. They were commanded to be his witnesses. But there was a season of time when God wanted them just to be still and appreciate that they were chosen by him and that he was acting on their behalf.

Maybe that is helpful for you. In this locked-down season, perhaps the Lord is calling you just to be still. Perhaps he wants you to allow him to work his majestic work in our world while you just watch. That should be no surprise. After all, when it came time for him to pay the price for your sin and your redemption, he took the whole responsibility upon himself and insisted that you just to watch.

So don't fret too much about this time of inactivity or lesser activity. Instead, let it be a reminder to you that sometimes the Lord insists that you allow him to manage the details of life and tells you that you need only be still.



The LWML meeting originally scheduled for May 2 has been cancelled; we will meet in August. Don't forget to spend some of this quarantine time working on things for our auction!

O.R.C.H.A.R.D. Update

We had our first workday of this growing season on Sunday, April 19th. Six people showed up to spread wood chips on the paths and work on the mulch piles! After moving that whole, huge pile of wood chips, some folks still had energy enough to do a little on their own plots! Thank you to all who helped get us going for our springtime planting!



We have submitted a bid for another grant through the New Castle Conservation District; we are purchasing a new, much larger rainwater tank; also, we hope to put in a pump and run PVC out into the yard so we have better water access to the garden space.. Many hours of volunteer labor hours will be needed to accomplish this big task, so look for more details; the 265 gallon rainwater tank is being shipped from Utah, so we'll be able to plan workdays once we know when the tank is arriving by train into Wilmington.

We have seven new gardeners this season—wahoo! There are only three plots unrented, so if you want one, now's the time to get it. We are so blessed to have so many people interested in sharing the love of God in Christ Jesus through this effort—we are connecting with our neighborhood and each other and growing good things together—physical and spiritual! Thank you so much!

May Birthdays

2 Jason Cooley
9 Christina Johnston
9 Dale Allen Streets, Jr.
14 Juliana Johnston
21 Arlen Besel



Anniversaries

4 Walter & Lina Besteder
12 Milton & Mitzi Steltz

If we missed your special day, please call or email the church office with your info so we can celebrate with you! (302) 737-6176; secretary.orcde@outlook.com

Due to our limited activities, no calendar has been produced for May.

A few pics taken this past week—the spring we are mostly missing at Our Redeemer...



MAY BIBLE READINGS

- | | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 Samuel 2:1-10
Titus, Philemon | 16 | Psalm 135
John 5-6 |
| 2 | Psalm 121
Hebrews 1-4 | 17 | Psalm 136
John 7-8 |
| 3 | Psalm 122
Hebrews 5-7 | 18 | Psalm 137
John 9-10 |
| 4 | Psalm 123
Hebrews 8-10 | 19 | Psalm 138
John 11-12 |
| 5 | Psalm 124
Hebrews 11-13 | 20 | Psalm 139
John 13-14 |
| 6 | Psalm 125
James 1-3 | 21 | Psalm 140
John 15-16 |
| 7 | Psalm 126
James 4-5 | 22 | Psalm 141
John 17-18 |
| 8 | Psalm 127
1 Peter 1-2 | 23 | Psalm 142
John 19 |
| 9 | Psalm 128
1 Peter 3-5 | 24 | Psalm 143
John 20-21 |
| 10 | Psalm 129
2 Peter | 25 | Psalm 144
Acts 1-2 |
| 11 | Psalm 130
1 John 1-3 | 26 | Psalm 145
Acts 3-4 |
| 12 | Psalm 131
1 John 4-5 | 27 | Psalm 146
Acts 5-6 |
| 13 | Psalm 132
2 John, 3 John, Jude | 28 | Psalm 147
Acts 7-8 |
| 14 | Psalm 133
John 1-2 | 29 | Psalm 148
Acts 9-10 |
| 15 | Psalm 134
John 3-4 | 30 | Psalm 149
Acts 11-12 |
| | | 31 | 1 Samuel 2:1-10
Acts 13-14 |

