

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church • Adult Forum: October 11, 2009

Lutheran Buzzwords:

Four Things You Often Hear Lutherans Say about the Bible

Presenter: Dr. Mark Allan Powell

[These unofficial notes were taken during the presentation. These are meant only as a guide while listening to the audio recording.]

Lutherans believe not everyone needs to be TYPICAL or TRADITIONAL. Four phrases are commonly heard within the Lutheran community, often interpreted differently – because not all Lutherans are “typical” or “traditional”.

Four things you often hear Lutherans say about the Bible:

1. LAW AND GOSPEL

- ❖ These do not mean “Old Testament” and “New Testament”
- ❖ These are not “commandments” and “promises”
- ❖ Scripture REVEALS to us Law and Gospel:
 - Luther: Scripture accuses and judges/comforts and forgives
 - Scripture REVEALS our brokenness and FORGIVES & HEALS our brokenness
 - “WORD OF GOD” – God speaks to us through this Book
 - In spite of our brokenness (sinfulness) God forgives me, loves me, heals me.
 - Luther in the Catechism uses the phrase, “We are to fear and love God so that...”
 - God will do what is BEST for me, but it won’t always be pleasant (C.S. Lewis)

2. SOLA SCRIPTURA (Latin: “Scripture alone” or “only Scripture”)

- ❖ Does not mean that the Bible is the ONLY source of truth (we also look to experience, science, etc.)
- ❖ But – ONLY the Bible is the source of DIVINE REVELATION
 - This was used in the Reformation as anti-Pope, anti-“Councils”
 - We reject other sources of Divine Revelation

3. "PLAIN SENSE" – Scripture is to be interpreted in light of its "plain sense" (Luther)

- ❖ Scripture should be read in light of how its original readers would have interpreted it
- ❖ Scripture should be read with the question: "How would its original readers understand it?"
- ❖ Then, we ask, "What does this mean for us today?"
- ❖ Reference to modern "overlay" on Scripture (Hal Lindsay, The Late Great Planet Earth, which re-interpreted Revelation, Zachariah, Daniel and other Books with modern-day events)
- ❖ Scripture should be read AS IT WAS INTENDED, not as map to current events (e.g., "Left Behind" series)
- ❖ How did Scripture speak to people in the First Century?

4. PUBLIC INTERPRETATION of Scripture

- ❖ The meaning of the Bible to individuals should not be completely different than it is to all people
- ❖ The Bible is God's Word to ME, but fundamentally it is God's Word to ALL people
- ❖ The Bible does not give private meanings to individuals
 - Do not spend your day expecting God (in the Bible) to tell you to go to the bank or grocery store, etc.
 - Rather, read a passage with understanding ("plain sense") of what it mean for those in the original readers' day

Life is like a long book – We've taken a peek at the ending, but we don't know how we'll get there. Wholeness, no death, healing, fullness are PROMISES for us.

FROM THE DISCUSSION PERIOD:

Dr. Powell encouraged us to read the Bible WITH other people and studying the Ancient Era.

To a question that some ask, "Why should I go to church, I don't get anything out of it", Dr. Powell gave this answer:

- ✓ We go to church to worship God – to give thanks. God deserves our thanks; it is not there for YOU to "get anything out of it". Ask, "Does God deserve our praise?"
- ✓ Other people get more out of it when we're there – we are the **Body** of Christ, a **Community** of Faith
- ✓ You DO get "something out of it" even if you don't know it – including receiving the Body and Blood of Christ and hearing the Word