

Sunday, September 20th 2026

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost



Mailing Address:

**Epiphany Lutheran Church
489 Agnes
Suite 112, Box 117
Bastrop, TX 78602**

Physical Address:

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WELCOME TO EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH!

“How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!”
(Psalm 84:1) We are thankful that God has brought you here with us this morning to hear His Word and receive His gifts! You’ll find everything you need for the worship service in this bulletin and in *Lutheran Service Book*, our hymnal. If you have any questions about our worship service, our congregation, or what we believe, please ask our pastor or any of our members.



OUR COMMUNION POLICY:

The Lord’s Supper is celebrated at this congregation by baptized believers in the confession and glad confidence that, as he says, our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but his very body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with him and with one another. Our Lord invites to his table those who trust his words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as he forgives and loves us, that they may show forth his death until he comes.

If you are not a member of a congregation in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, and yet desire to receive Communion, we kindly request that you first speak with our pastor.

SERVANTS DURING WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

Pastor – Rev. E.B. Holschuh
Lay Reader – Deb Layland
Assisting Elder – Dave Layland
Usher – Harlan Robb
Acolyte – Madeline Robb

We are using the Church Music Solutions Church Organist Service, an iPad application that provides us with accompaniment for our worship service. **There is a brief introduction to the musical parts of the liturgy unless otherwise noted.**

AS WE PREPARE FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

Disciples Live in Their Vocations by Grace through Faith in Christ

Those who are sent as “*laborers for his vineyard*” (Matt. 20:1) depict the wide diversity of vocations to which the disciples of Christ Jesus are called. Whatever our particular stations in life may be, we are called to live and serve by faith in His promises. Our labors do not merit anything before Him, for He is already generous to one and all without partiality. In mercy, He has chosen to bear “*the burden of the day and the scorching heat*” on our behalf, to make us equal to Himself and to give us what belongs to Him, that is, the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 20:12–15). This way of the Lord is foolishness to the world and foreign to our thoughts, but He draws near, so that “*he may be found*” (Is. 55:6), “*have compassion*” and “*abundantly pardon*” (Is. 55:7). So it is that we are found in Christ Jesus, and He is honored in our bodies, “*whether by life or by death*” (Phil. 1:20), by “*fruitful labor*” (Phil. 1:22) or by suffering. It is by faith in His forgiveness that our works are “*worthy of the gospel*” (Phil. 1:27).

DIVINE SERVICE SETTING FOUR

Prelude

Selected Music

Welcome and Greeting

Pastor

Announcements

Opening Hymn

“By Grace I’m Saved”

LSB 566

(stand)

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

The sign of the cross ✠ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

☐ In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

☑ Amen.

Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]

☐ Our help is in the name of the Lord,

☑ who made heaven and earth.

Psalms 124:8

☐ If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. *Ps. 130:3-4*

P Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.
[Luke 18:13]

C Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

P Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen. *[John 20:19-23]*

SERVICE OF THE WORD

Introit

Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16

P What shall I render to the Lord
for all his benefits to me?

**C I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD.**

P Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his saints.

**C O LORD, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed
my bonds.**

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.*

Kyrie

Mark 10:47



C Lord, have mer - cy; Christ, have mer - cy; Lord, have mer - cy.

Gloria in Excelsis (no intro)

Luke 2:14; John 1:29



C 1 To God on high be glo - ry And peace to all the earth;
2 To You, O sole - be - got - ten, The Fa - ther's Son, we pray;
3 For You a - lone are ho - ly; You on - ly are the Lord.



Good-will from God in heav - en Pro - claimed at Je - sus' birth!
O Lamb of God, our Sav - ior, You take our sins a - way.
For - ev - er and for - ev - er, Be wor - shiped and a - dored;



We praise and bless You, Fa - ther; Your ho - ly name, we sing—
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus; Re - ceive our heart - felt cry,
You with the Ho - ly Spir - it A - lone are Lord Most High,



Our thanks for Your great glo - ry, Lord God, our heav'n - ly King.
Where You in pow'r are seat - ed At God's right hand on high—
In God the Fa - ther's glo - ry. "A - men!" our glad re - ply.

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

2 Timothy 4:22

C And also with you.

P Let us pray.

Lord God, heavenly Father, since we cannot stand before You relying on anything we have done, help us trust in Your abiding grace and live according to Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

(sit)

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 55:6-9

⁶“Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
⁷let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Epistle Reading

Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30

¹²I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. . . .

¹⁹for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰as it is my eager expectation and

hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

²⁷Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

(stand)

Alleluia and Verse



C Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



C These things are writ - ten that you may be - lieve that



Je - sus is the Christ, the Son of God.

John 20:31



Holy Gospel Reading

Matthew 20:1-16

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twentieth chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹[Jesus said:] “The kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ ⁵So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ ⁸And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ ⁹And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, ¹²saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first last.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

(sit)

Hymn of the Day

“How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord”

LSB 853

Sermon *Giving yourself the horse (to get to The Good Place)...* Matthew 20:1-16

(stand)

Nicene Creed

C I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.

And 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.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and
glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life ✝ of the world to come. Amen.

Passing of the Peace

(sit)

Prayer of the Church

P Lord, in Your mercy

C hear our prayer.

Offering

Usher

(stand)

SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

Preface

P The Lord be with you.

2 Timothy 4:22

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

[Colossians 3:1]

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

[Psalm 136]

P It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

Sanctus (no intro)

Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth a - dored;



Heav'n and earth with full ac-claim shout the glo-ry of Your name.



Sing ho - san - na in the high-est, sing ho - san - na to the Lord;



Tru - ly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

Prayer of Thanksgiving

P Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. By His death, He has redeemed us from bondage to sin and death, and by His resurrection, He has delivered us into new life in Him.

Grant us to keep the Feast in sincerity and truth, faithfully eating His body given into death and drinking His life's blood poured out for our salvation until we pass through death to the promised land of life eternal.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

**☩ Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

The Words of Our Lord

*Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24
Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25*

- ☐** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My ✙ body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."
- ☐** In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new covenant in My ✙ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

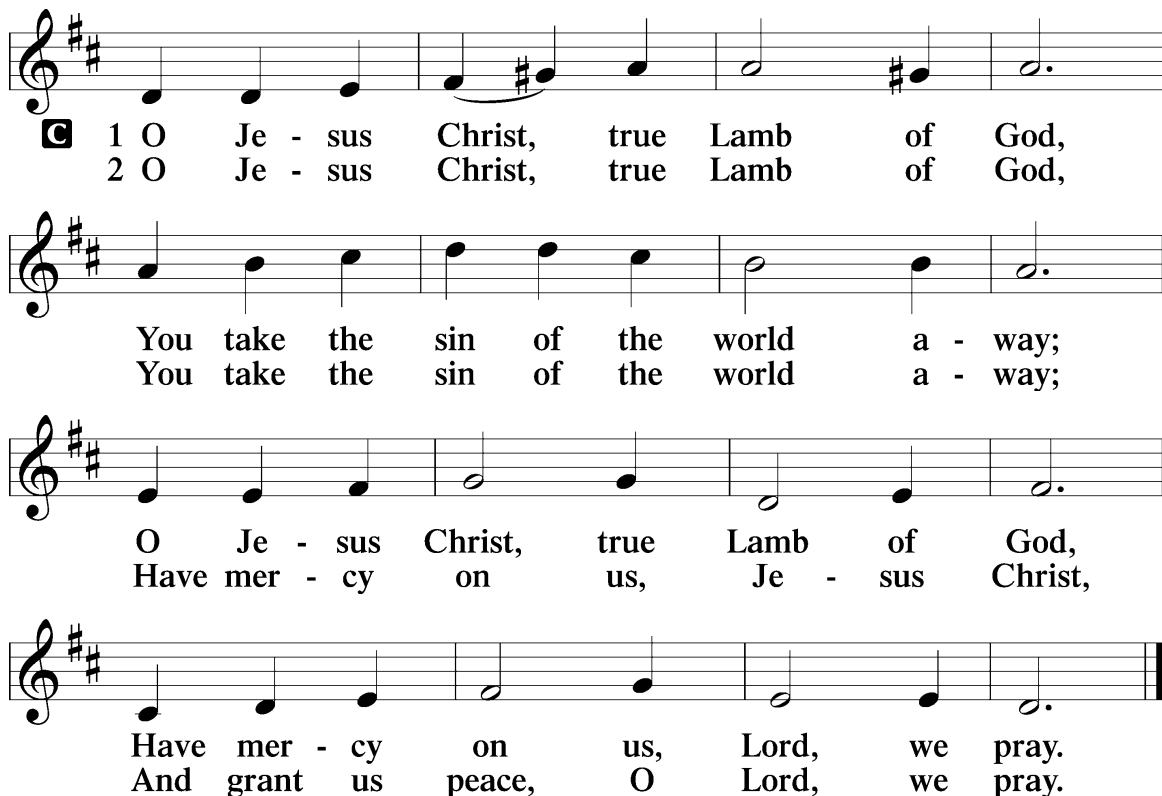
Pax Domini

John 20:19

- ☐** The peace of the Lord be with you always.
- ☩ Amen.**

Agnus Dei

John 1:29



1 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,
2 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,
You take the sin of the world a - way;
You take the sin of the world a - way;
O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus Christ,
Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray.
And grant us peace, O Lord, we pray.

(sit)

Distribution Hymns

"The Gifts Christ Freely Gives"
"Salvation unto Us Has Come"

LSB 602
LSB 555

(stand)

Nunc Dimittis

Luke 2:29-32

1 O Lord, now let Your ser - vant De -
2 All glo - ry to the the Fa - ther, All

part in heav'n - ly peace, For I have seen the
glo - ry to the Son, All glo - ry to the

glo - ry Of Your re - deem - ing grace:
Spir - it, For - ev - er Three in One;

A light to lead the the Gen - tiles Un -
For as in the the be - gin - ning, Is

to Your ho - ly hill, The glo - ry of Your
now, shall ev - er be, God's tri - une name re -

peo - ple, Your cho - sen Is - ra - el.
sound - ing Through all e - ter - ni - ty.

Post-Communion Collect

P Let us pray.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Benedicamus and Benediction

P Let us bless the Lord.

[Psalm 103:1]

C Thanks be to God.

P The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

C Amen.

(sit)

Closing Hymn

“Lord of All Hopefulness”

LSB 738

P Go in Peace!

C Serve the Lord!

Postlude

Selected Music

Initial and ongoing funding for Epiphany Lutheran Church has been received through a grant made possible by the Roy D. and Ingaborg G. Randolph Memorial Endowment Fund.

SERMON NOTES: Matthew 18:21-35

Giving yourself the horse (to get to The Good Place)...

1. God's _____ presents a factual, divine construct of an afterlife for _____ who will never be _____ enough to get in.
2. No form of the word _____ is part of any definition of _____, the free and unmerited _____ of God.
3. The _____ of the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard is that we are all _____ recipients of God's _____.
4. God's _____ is greater than _____ capacity to _____ it.
5. For by _____ you have been _____ through _____...it is the gift of God, not a result of works. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
6. Grace _____ means that our salvation, from beginning to end, is accomplished, no _____ or _____ required.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER?

The first step to becoming a member of our congregation is to speak with our pastor.

We believe, teach, and confess that we are all broken sinners in need of God's salvation, which He freely gives through His Word and Sacrament. Church is not a club for the sinless— it's a hospital for sinners!

You may become a member of Epiphany Lutheran Church by transferring your membership from a sister congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) or you may receive instruction from the pastor and become a communicant member of Epiphany and the LCMS through Adult Instruction Class or through a profession of faith.



Epiphany Lutheran Church has a podcast! Our ***Peace Be With You*** podcast is available on popular podcast apps, but you can always find it at peacebewithyou.podbean.com (or just scan the QR code).



Epiphany Events Calendar: Our congregation calendar is on our website (epiphanybastrop.org); to add an event, please email secretary@epiphanybastrop.org.

Offering: Should you wish to make your regular tithe or offering online, you may do so at <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZKYH/home> or scan this QR code.



SUNDAY SCHOOL CHALLENGE! A couple of weeks ago we began a new 7-week 9am Sunday School series, *Sustaining Connections: Living Life in Community*—and we’re challenging all of our adult members to participate! Gathering around God’s Word is essential to the spiritual health of every Christian and of our congregation as a whole. Together we’ll explore what it means to be “disciple able”—willing to be taught, shaped, encouraged, challenged, and sent by Christ— and how the early Christians lived out their faith through God’s Word, fellowship, worship, prayer, generosity, and witness. We invite *YOU* to make these 7 sessions a priority—come and grow together with your Epiphany family! Then...

... join us for a **Reformation/Oktoberfest Rally Sunday on Oct. 25!** There will be no regular Sunday school that morning. After our 10:30am worship service, we’ll gather for food, fellowship, and fun—BBQ and potluck, quality time together, and maybe some cornhole, horseshoes, or other activities. Hopefully, the weather by then will be much more agreeable to humanoids. If you’d like to help in making the day especially memorable, please contact Fred or Carita Botha.

Another opportunity to get plugged into a Bible study—a **new Wednesday 6:30pm video study began September 9th**. Have you been feeling weighed down by worry? Or caught up in a web of self-critical thoughts? Learn to overcome common thought traps like anxiety, guilt, rejection, dissatisfaction, and more. Join us here at Three Oaks for *Tame Your Thoughts*, a 6-session video series from Max Lucado. No matter who you are or where you come from, progress is possible!

Want to carry Sunday’s message with you into the week? ***Seeing the Light*** is a weekly self-study and discussion guide designed to help you dig a little deeper into the Scripture and sermon, reflect on what God’s Word means for your daily life, and put your faith into practice. Pick up a copy as you come through the door each Sunday for yourself, to use with your family, or share with a friend. Don’t just hear the Word on Sunday—keep growing in it all week long!

A reminder that we have an **Online Epiphany Church Directory**. Go to members.instantchurchdirectory.com and follow the prompts under “Sign In” to “Create a login now.” Please remember, you must confirm your email address before you can sign in. There’s also a free mobile app available—simply search for “Instant Church Directory” to get the download. You will need to use your email address as listed in our directory to create a log-in the first time you use the directory online and via the mobile app. If you need help or have questions, contact Tom Rosser.

Lutheran Radio: Hear The Lutheran Hour each Sunday on station KBUK-FM 104.9 at 7:00 a.m. or on station KANJ-FM 91.5 at 12:30 p.m. or go to lhm.org for a link to listen to the Lutheran Hour live. You can also listen to The Lutheran Hour on the local Austin station KLBJ (590 AM or 99.7 FM) at 7am on Sunday.

KFUO Radio, the broadcast voice of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, shares Christ for you anytime, anywhere on **KFUO.org** via worship services, Bible and theology studies, practical talk programs, and sacred music. Find programs on demand at kfuo.org and wherever you get your podcasts! Find us on social: @KFUOradio on [Facebook](https://facebook.com/kfuoradio), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/kfuoradio), and [Instagram](https://instagram.com/kfuoradio).

RightNow Media: Every person in our Epiphany family has (and can share) free access to over 25,000 biblical video series for adults, youth, and kids—**RightNow Media** has a free app that’s available on all major streaming devices so you and your family can access content anywhere, anytime. Visit app.rightnowmedia.org/join/elcb or scan the QR code.



ChristianBook Giveback Program: Did you know that your purchases at Christianbook can help fund our congregation? Just visit christianbook.com/apps/giveback and enter the Giveback ID for Epiphany Lutheran Church: JQWHTN. After this one-time signup, we’ll be eligible to receive 4% cashback on your purchases.

Answers to Sermon Notes:
1. God’s *Word* presents a factual, divine construct of an afterlife for *people* who will never be *good* enough to get in.
2. No form of the word *fair* is part of any definition of *grace*, the free and unmerited *favor* of God.
3. The *scandal* of the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard is that we are all *equal* recipients of God’s *gifts*.
4. God’s *grace* is greater than *our* capacity to *understand* it.
5. For by *grace* you have been *saved* through *faith*..it is the gift of God, not a result of works. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
6. Grace *alone* means that our salvation, from beginning to end, is accomplished, no *works* or *merit* required.

THIS WEEK AT EPIPHANY:

Sunday, September 20th

- 9:00am – Children's Sunday School
- 9:00am – Adult Sunday School
- 10:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 10:30am – Worship Service with Communion

Wednesday, September 23rd

- 7:00pm – Starting Point: *A Conversation About Faith*

Sunday, September 20th

- 9:00am – Children's Sunday School
- 9:00am – Adult Sunday School
- 10:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 10:30am – Worship Service with Communion

PRAYERS AT EPIPHANY

PRAYER REQUESTS: Please share any prayer request on the Prayer Requests sheet as you enter on Sunday. You may also email a prayer request, as well as a request to become a part of Epiphany's prayer chain, to secretary@epiphanybastrop.org.

Please continue to pray for...

- Anika Slayton– missionary in Germany
- Francis Eschberger, Elaine Ottinger, Gert Schriener, and all the residents at Argent Court Assisted Living in Bastrop
- Van Clifton – Jeremy's Dad
- Joan Greenwood



Through Faith Alone

One of the most debated questions among scholars, seekers, and skeptics concerning Christianity over the last 2,000 years is "What is the role of faith in the sinner's salvation?" Or to put it another way, "If Christ died for the sins of the world, why is faith necessary?"

We Lutheran sinners preach, teach, and confess that "we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone"—a biblical doctrine of salvation (referred to as "justification by faith") found in Ephesians 2:8-10. We also believe that justification by faith in Christ alone is the doctrine by which the Church stands or falls. But what, exactly, is meant by "justification?"

Lutherans understand two types of justification—objective and subjective. The need for justification is based on Original Sin and Man's standing before God as sinful and deserving of eternal damnation; because of Adam's transgression, all of humankind is tainted (see Genesis 2, Romans 5). The truth about every human on Earth is that it is Original Sin—this sin that came into the world through one man—that fuels such self-serving and self-gratifying desires as lust and greed.

Out of His love for us God imputed all of our sins to Christ, whom He sacrificed to bear the fullness of divine wrath on the cross for our sin, in our place—we're redeemed and forgiven through Christ's atonement. This is objective justification, by which all sinners are justified—reconciled or "made right"—by God (that is, pronounced righteous by Him).

Subjective justification occurs when God appropriates the objective justification granted to the entire world in Christ to the individual sinner through faith. I've often heard faith described as a "hand" in which the individual receives the objective justification won by Christ on the cross.

Faith—that is, our faith—has absolutely nothing to do with Christ's redemptive work on the cross for our forgiveness, as we are justified objectively by God's grace and Christ's obedience alone. It's been said that faith, however, is where objective and subjective justification meet. It's the open "hand" of that faith, itself a gift of God delivered through the Holy Spirit, which receives the promises of the Gospel. Without objective justification, the "hand" of faith receives nothing. It's this same faith that assures the sinner of God's forgiveness and grace for Christ's sake.

The doctrines of the world we live in, "measuring up" and "making it to the top," leave little wiggle room for failure. And this too often translates into the effort we put into self-justification, convinced that we can make ourselves right(eous) before God. It's sometimes a challenge to convince a fellow sinner that God comes to us, rather than the other way around. In a works-oriented culture, with regard to faith and the need to seek God's approval, conventional wisdom says that Christ's crucifixion is only part of God's plan for our salvation—we still have to do our part; yet it's only through Christ's crucifixion (by God's grace) that we are made right with God.

This is what we mean by "we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone."

It's sometimes all too easy to get bogged down in the details. The Lutheran doctrine of justification is an assurance policy (rather than an insurance policy, which would seem awfully proprietary), that's really no more Lutheran than God Himself. In any ministry aspect, in any language, justification is God's gift of our assurance that because of—and only because of—Jesus Christ can we be worthy of salvation. That gift is received through faith. How comforting (though incredibly hard to comprehend) are the promises of God's love—forgiveness of sins, new life in Jesus Christ, adoption into God's family, eternal life—to the sinner of any account, no strings attached! And how comforting, too, is God's gracious gift of faith!

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9).

By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.