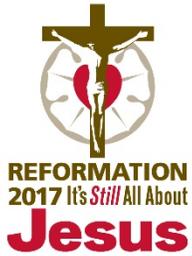


Gift Given, Delivered, and Received

Pr. Andrew Wehling, Grace Lutheran Church, Liberal, Kansas



A friend surprises you on your birthday with exciting news. He's bought you a very nice present—something you'll be delighted to receive, something you want and need. The present is paid for and wrapped. Your name is on the tag. There's just one problem: your gift is currently located in some far off place, thousands of miles away. Having explained all this, your friend walks away. And you're left pondering the harsh reality that a gift, no matter how valuable, is of little benefit unless it is delivered and received.

God has given a gift to the whole world. The gift is His Son, sent to suffer and die for the sins of all people and to rise again in victory over death and hell. By this gift, your sins are paid for and forgiven. By this gift, you have new and eternal life.

But God gave this gift two thousand years ago. Which means there is a great distance between you and the gift. You weren't there when Jesus was crucified. You weren't there to witness the empty tomb or see the risen Jesus in person. So how is this gift of salvation to be delivered to you across such a distance of time and space? How are you to receive and enjoy today this gift that God gave so long ago?

Some would point us to our own human wisdom as the place to find and receive God's gift. Or to our feelings. Or to our decisions or deeds. But all these are insufficient because our sinful nature cannot comprehend the things of God.

Thankfully, God in His mercy has provided not only the gift of salvation, but also the means by which that gift is delivered and applied to you. God delivers His Good News to you through the Word of the Gospel, as it is preached, heard, written, and read. "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John 20:31

The Large Catechism explains it this way: "The work of redemption is done and accomplished. Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, and so on. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew about it, then it would be useless and lost. So that this treasure might not stay buried, but be received and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed. In the Word He has the Holy Spirit bring this treasure home and make it our own." LC 3.38-39

Through the Word, God delivers the gift of Jesus and strengthens Christian faith. Therefore, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly!" Colossians 3:16

Further reading

AC 4, 5, 12, 13; Ap 4, 12; SA 3.3, 3.4, 3.8; SC 1.5-6, 2.5-6; LC 1.50-77; 2.34-70; Ep 2; SD 2

Abbreviations

AC = Unaltered Augsburg Confession
Ap = Apology of the Augsburg Confession
SC = Small Catechism
LC = Large Catechism
SA = Smalcald Articles (exclusive of the Tractate)
Tr = Tractate on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
Ep = The Formula of Concord, Epitome

SD = The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration
Cat = Catalogue of Testimonies

NOTE: Articles and sections/paragraphs in the *Book of Concord* are denoted in Arabic numerals, separated by a period. Please note that the first number in citations of SC and LC points to the Chief Part; any numbers following the period point to the specific section/paragraph. Thus SC 1.8 does not point to the 8th Commandment, but to the explanation of the 4th.