

Session 4: Means of Grace: Word and Baptism

At the end of our third session, we talked about how the Holy Spirit works through means. He doesn't just pounce on you out of nowhere; God uses some ordinary stuff of our world as the means by which He comes to us. In this session and the next, we'll be exploring those means, known as "Word and Sacrament" in the church. In this session we'll look at the Word of God (Scripture) and we'll talk about Baptism. In the next session, our focus turns to the Lord's Supper, Confession and Absolution, and the Church as the body of Christ.

How do we come to faith? The Apostle Paul talks about it in his letter to the church in Rome (what we know as the book of "Romans" in the Bible):

*Romans 10:10-17: ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.***

1. God works through certain means
 - a. The foundation of all of the means of grace is God's _____.
 - b. We know that we can find God in _____, because He said so.
 - c. We believe, teach, and confess that the Bible is the _____, _____ Word of God.
 - d. _____ means that God led men to write what He directed, so we understand the words as coming from God Himself.

- e. _____ means that the original words are without error and are completely correct.
- f. We believe that the Bible _____ the Word of God.

2. Law and Gospel

- a. C.F.W. Walther, a founding father of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, said that “The doctrinal contents of all _____, both of the Old and the New Testament, consist of two _____ that differ fundamentally from each other. These two doctrines are _____ and _____.
- b. _____ shows us how we have failed to love God and to love our neighbor.
- c. The “S.O.S.” acronym for Law is that it _____.
- d. The Law shows us how we haven’t kept the _____, and it always condemns.
- e. _____ shows us that God has taken away the condemnation that we earned.
- f. The “S.O.S.” acronym for Gospel is that it _____.
- g. The Gospel points us to _____ and to His death and resurrection.
- h. Both Law and Gospel are God’s _____; both are good.
- i. The ultimate goal and purpose of the Scriptures is (quoting John): “that you may _____ that Jesus is the _____, the _____ of God, and that by believing you may have _____ in His name.”

3. Means of Grace: The Sacraments

- a. Just like with His Word, we know that we can find God in the Sacraments because He has _____ to be there.
- b. There are three attributes that define a Sacrament:
 - i. _____ by God (that is, God has given it to us as a means through which He will work);
 - ii. Use of a _____ element (God works through the ordinary things of creation: words, water, bread, and wine)
 - iii. Offers _____ of sins (the Sacraments are all about forgiveness, life, and salvation).
- c. Given that definition, the Lutheran Church has _____ (or maybe three) Sacraments:
 - i. _____: A work of God by which He brings us into the family of the church and applies His promise of salvation to us individually, and
 - ii. _____: Jesus' body and blood given to us in, with, and under the bread and wine, which strengthens our faith and forgives our sins
- d. The other possible Sacrament is _____ and _____, but there's not really a visible element (even Luther kind of waffled on this one!)

4. Holy Baptism

- a. Baptism is not just plain _____, but it is the water included in God's _____ and combined with God's _____.
- b. Baptism has many benefits. Included among them:

- i. It _____ disciples
 - ii. It _____ you.
 - iii. It offers _____, washes away _____, and takes away _____.
 - iv. Baptism crucifies the “Old _____,” buries him, and then causes you to be raised up as a new _____ of God.
 - v. In baptism, you become an _____ of the promise.
- c. In all of these things, _____ is the primary actor, and we are merely the recipients.

Conclusion: God comes to us through means. Chief among these is His Word, the Bible, in which God reveals Himself, reveals who we are, and reveals His plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. The Bible is foundational for the other means of grace, or Sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

Assignment: Read and consider the section in the Small Catechism on the Sacrament of Holy Baptism (pages 15-17) in the small booklet titled, “A Simple Explanation of Christianity.” What questions do you have about Baptism?