



The Olive Branch

Loving Christ in Worship, Fellowship, Education and Service

September 2024

THE DIVINE MIRROR RESTORED

It's true that we Lutherans certainly believe that the Lutheran branch of the Christian Faith has many wonderful gifts to offer to the whole of Christianity and indeed to the entire world, but we Lutherans also recognize that we do not have a monopoly on all theological and spiritual truths. And it's true that we as Christians proclaim that the good news of Jesus Christ provides direct access to the fullness of God's grace and truth, but we do not say that we have a monopoly on God's eternal grace and truth. So if members of the Church of Jesus Christ consider those of other religions to be completely ignorant of all theological and spiritual truths, then this is just plain wrong. And if non-Christians assume that we Christians claim to be the sole purveyors of truth, then they're wrong too.

Nevertheless, we Christians do profess and confess that Christ is "the Way and the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6), and so we earnestly proclaim the good news of his redeeming life, death and resurrection for the sake of the world. In fact, the Holy Scriptures exhort us to always be ready to share the grace and truth of Jesus Christ with our neighbors:

"So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth [of Christ] to our neighbors, for we are members of one another." – (Ephesians 4:25)

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander." – (First Peter 3:15-16)

However, we do this proclamation of Jesus' good news within the multicultural context of human civilization. For we see throughout the history of salvation (from

ancient times unto today) that there is a certain universal pattern we sinful human beings (of all times and places) seem to follow. It's the pattern of faithfulness and apostasy, and it should be very familiar to us within the Christian Faith because the Holy Bible is filled with this pattern.

The cycle of faithfulness and apostasy is the historical pattern of civilization all over the world throughout the ages. From the very genesis of humanity, over and over again, God calls us, gathers us, instructs us and blesses us. But over and over again, people begin to reject and fall away from God's revealed truth and grace. Therefore, God decided to send us the exact reflection of the glory of the fullness of himself — Christ Jesus our Lord, the Eternal Son of God and Bread of Heaven.

Let's imagine that the revelation of God is one great Divine Mirror. And let's imagine that the pattern of faithfulness and apostasy within human civilization is that Mirror breaking into a thousand pieces and scattering throughout the world. And then, after each shattering of this Mirror, a faithful remnant of believers were left to salvage as many pieces of God's truth and grace as they could, resulting in a great diversity of faiths and spiritual traditions over time. So each time this shattering would happen in history, a group of like-minded believers would gather their particular shards of the Divine Mirror, and they would follow God's Light reflected in these shards as best they knew how. And thousands of other groups did the same thing with the shards of truth they had collected.

But then, at the right time in human history, God revealed the fullness of his truth and grace for all people through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the entire Divine Mirror restored to humanity — for he is the clear-as-glass Living Mirror of Heaven. And it might sound presumptuous to claim that the faith, hope and love of Jesus constitute the complete Divine Mirror reflecting the fullness of God's Heart for humanity, but that is indeed what we have been granted in Jesus Christ our Lord. Thanks be to God!

However, while we have amazing access to the entire

Divine Mirror of God (in all its clarity) through Jesus our Savior, this should not by any means negate the importance of the shards of God's grace and truth that other religions have access to. In fact, the shards of Divine Truth within non-Christian religions (although incomplete) are nevertheless reflective of God's saving truth. Consequently, the great non-Christian religious leaders of the world such as Buddha, Krishna, Muhammad, Confucius, and Lao-Tzu (as well as philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and others) have all received pieces of God's complete Mirror. All of them have received a portion of God's True Light — morsels of the Bread of Heaven (so to speak). So let's genuinely appreciate the Truth of God from whichever direction it's coming at us, even from non-Christian sources.

As we Christians share with others the fullness of God's grace and truth in Christ Jesus our Lord, let's remember the great Divine Mirror that every compassionate religion has pieces of — precious pieces of the universal reality and saving grace of God. Yet, our evangelical mission is to always uplift how all those shards of God's Truth fit into the wholeness of God's pure reflection in Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. And even if a certain non-Christian belief seems to be contrary to the gospel of Jesus, it just might be that this belief is still somehow based upon an eternal principle of God (if we look deeply enough). So maybe that shard of belief that seems to contradict Jesus simply needs a little *gospel windex* to clarify it a bit.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we're not here to trash the pieces of the Mirror (or the portions of the Bread of Heaven) that people of other belief systems possess. We are simply here to do as it says in Ephesians 4 and First Peter 3, where it says: "let all of us speak the truth [of Christ] to our neighbors, for we are members of one another" and "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect..."

Together in Christ,
Pastor Tim

Pam's Pearls of Prayer

Scripture of the Month: John 6:35

³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away, ³⁸ for I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him

may have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day."

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Thought for the Month

As we enter the last few month of this year (it's hard to believe we're getting ready for fall already), I think it's important to hear Jesus' words and how they affect us. We rely on God to provide us with all that we have physically but we often forget about the spiritual gifts He has given us. Jesus is the Bread of Life, but not the bread to physically sustain us, but *The Bread* that we need for our spiritual hunger. The disciples didn't understand that at first so Jesus had to explain it to them. Let's not be like them and recognize that God provides the spiritual Bread of Heaven that we need through the life and death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

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Prayer for the Month

Father, please keep reminding us of all the gifts that You have given us, not only the physical but the spiritual. May we always remember the ultimate sacrifice that Your Son made for us. You are a loving and gracious God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Mt. Olive Preschool Update

We can hardly believe how quickly Summer has gone by! We had an amazing summer learning about a bunch of different animals and where they live, playing with our friends and splashing in water and in mud. We were very grateful to have installed our new backyard shade, it really helped to shade us from the summer sun. We wish these fun summer days could last forever.

Next week we will be beginning our Academic year. We cannot wait to meet all of our new friends! We are looking forward to learning all about each student, what they look like, who the people are in their family, and how God made them special. It is a really special first couple weeks of school that we look forward to every year.

We are praying for an amazing school year where we can be a light to these students and to their families. And we look forward to all this year has in store for us.

Blessings

Mrs. Ashley, Mrs. Amanda, Mrs. Robyn, Ms. Hannah

Bailey Center Food Donations

The Bailey Center is desperately in need of groceries. It provides bags of groceries to the needy in our midst. It's a small way to make a difference for Christ by donating bags and/or non-perishable groceries. **To help with this, we are designating the third Sunday of the month as our Bailey Center Food Donation Sunday!**

**FROM: MT. OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH
3561 FOOTHILL BLVD.
LA CRESCENTA, CA 91214**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:

DATED MATERIAL – DO NOT HOLD

BIRTHDAYS IN SEPTEMBER

4 – Bill Reardon 15 – Cristina Fallis
5 – Dona Thanstrom 19 – Heather Pinchbeck
9 – Cynthia Bitz

ANNIVERSARIES IN SEPTEMBER

1 – Mickey & Don Meeker No. 64
26 – Kenny & Louanna Kurtz No. 43
30 – Joel & Karla Ness No. 8

MEETINGS & EVENTS FOR SEPTEMBER

8 – Mt. Olive Dodger Game 12:00 pm
9 – Threads of Hope 9:00 am
10 – Church Council 7:00 pm
15 – Bailey Center Food Donation Sunday 9:30 am
15 – Annual Picnic 12:00 pm
21 – Breakfast Bible Study at Panera 8:30 am
24 – Greece Tour Group Meeting at LCIF 7:00 pm
26-29 – Via de Cristo Retreat

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR OCTOBER

1 – Worship & Music Committee 7:30 pm
9 – Community Luncheon 12:00 pm
26 – Trunk or Treat 1-3 pm

Annual Church Picnic

SAVE THE DATE: September 15, 2024

Our annual church picnic is coming up on Sunday, September 15th at noon. Joining us will be the Korean Presbyterian Church (VRIM) and the Armenian Pentecostal Church (CAM) that meet on our property, as well as our MOLC Preschool. Games will be provided for the children and the young at heart! Hope to see you there!

Community Luncheons are coming

Our community luncheons will be starting up again on October 9th. They continue to be on the second Wednesday of the month. Our entertainment this month will be provided by our own Sean Paxton. Please join us for fabulous food, fellowship and entertainment!



Vacation Bible School

Once again we had a very successful Vacation Bible School. We had thirty children registered. Each year we have enthusiastic participation. We look forward to doing it again next year!

