

## **Bethlehem Lutheran Church // July Confirmation Gathering**

**Head** - please watch the video welcome from Pastor Kevin

- *Justification by faith* are defining word for Christians—it's God talk— and especially important for Lutherans. Where have you heard the word “justified” used before?
- Watch this clip from the movie *The Mission*. <https://youtu.be/CYTRQAY2o4E>  
What was your key takeaway from the video? Write it here.
  
- Work together with your mentor. Write every detail that comes to when you think about things we can do and things that God can do. Make two columns, if that helps.
- Open up Luther's Small Catechism to the Apostle's Creed (the Third Part on the Holy Spirit) and summarize Luther's explanation here. Use the app or google it.
  
- Read John 11:17-44 out loud together. Yes, out loud.  
What stands out? What is Jesus doing? What is Jesus saying?  
What do you think Jesus wants us to know about God from this story?  
What things we can do? What things can God alone do?

### **Heart**

- Tell about a time someone died whose memory truly stays with you. Why? Why do you think Jesus cried? Today, this moment which character are you in the story?
- Read Romans 5:1-5 together. What does faith in Jesus Christ give us? What does that even mean? How else is faith described in Romans 5? What catches your attention?

### **Hands**

- Being “saved” includes a vibrant life now, forgiveness of sin and eternal life. What does God save us from? What kinds of things in life does God save us for (or to do)? Tell about someone who keeps promises in your life. We trust God will do these things because God's Word (Jesus, the Bible) has promised to do so.
- Read the definition of justification on the back. What is something that stands out? Write it here. Who is someone that this definition of justification would be good news for today? Write their name here, too.

## justification \JUHHS-tih-fih-KA-shuhn\ n.

The teaching about how we get on God's good side, about how we get "right with God." The "article by which the church stands or falls," meaning that when we don't get this teaching right . . . timber!

Take a look at how the text of this paragraph is laid out. What do you find most noteworthy? No, it's not the type size or line spacing (although those *are* pretty cool). No, we're talking about the fact that

this paragraph is "fully justified." The text is lined up along the left-hand margin of the page and along the right-hand margin of the page. Neato! In the typographical sense justification has to do with the alignment of text. In the theological sense justification has to do with God's alignment of you.

"A person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law" (Romans 3:28). Talk about crazy talk! That's about the craziest talk there is, because at the heart of justification is the word *justice*. Now usually when you think about justice, you think about the LAW. So you'd think that justification would be all about the law, or measuring up to some legal standard.

But noooo. Instead right there, smack in the middle of the New Testament, there's this crazy talk of a new, *non-legal* standard for justice—for "gettin' right" with God. What's that you say? You're having a hard time understanding how you can have justice without law? Well, you're not the only one.

Duh: Okay, God, tell me again which rules I have to obey to get on your good side.

God: *You want to get on my good side? Well, then, the first thing you have to do is give up the idea that following rules is going to get you on my good side.*

Duh: But that's just crazy.

God: *Look, you're going to have to trust me on this one . . .*

"Justification by faith apart from works." It's a pretty simple (yet crazy) idea. It's also the most important idea, as far as Christianity is concerned. Many Christians have argued that this crazy talk about justification is the top-dog doctrine of the Christian faith. It's "the article by which the church stands or falls" (or as they say in fancy-schmancy Latin: *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesia*).

Why is justification the chief article? Because if you get this one right and keep this one right, you're gonna be okay, no matter what else you screw up. (And trust us, you will screw up.) So let's say it again: Ephesians 2:8–9 says that we are saved by grace through faith. Furthermore, this faith is not our own doing. This faith is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast about how they were able to work up enough faith to get on God's good side.

Now remind yourself of that every day for the rest of your life. Go ahead and start now, we'll wait.

See also: baptism; Christ (Messiah); faith; free will; gospel; Jesus; law; works, good

***CHECK IN***

On (date) \_\_\_\_\_, we completed a caring conversation on this month's topic.

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Student Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Mentor Signature

Please sign, screenshot or email and send to Beth at [bkopecky@bethlehemaberdeen.org](mailto:bkopecky@bethlehemaberdeen.org)

Bless your adventure together!