

The Church's Mission and Evangelism: What It Is and What It Is Not

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I. First, it is important to understand the difference between the Theology of Glory and the Theology of the Cross.

- A. The **Theology of the Cross** is entirely about what Christ has done and accomplished for us through His life, suffering, death, and resurrection.
1. The Theology of the Cross always centers on the person and work of Christ both in the past and in the present.
 - a. Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ is still actively engaged in the work of His Church and the only souls that will be converted will be converted by God Himself working through His Word and Sacraments.
 - b. His gifts to the Church are His means of grace and they are completely sufficient to accomplish what God intends to accomplish.
 - c. These means of grace require no augmentation, no gimmicks, and no artificial propping up.
 2. The work of the Church is the work of Christ through these means of grace.
 - a. The means of grace is all the Church has to work with, and it is all that we need.
 - b. This is how we came to faith and it is how anyone comes to faith in Christ crucified and risen.

The Third Article: Sanctification (*Luther's Small Catechism*)

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.



What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

- B. The **Theology of Glory** is all about what man does and what he accomplishes through his efforts.
1. Such errant theology focuses on human achievement to enlarge the Kingdom of God:
 - a) Glory is all concerned about numerical growth and how to achieve it.
 - b) Glory seeks to find human means to grow the church:
 - 1) Conform the Church to the expectations of the world so that more of the world will be attracted to the Church.
 - 2) Being more tolerant of some false doctrine and questionable practice in order not to “turn off” potential members.
 - 3) Redesigning the Church's worship in order to make it more centered on evangelism rather than feeding God's sheep on the means of grace.
 2. The theology of glory has a very strong appeal to our Old Adam because it appeals to our human, sinful pride to do what God alone accomplishes and takes credit for it.
 - a) We want to look “successful” as individual Christians and as a Christian congregation and we judge our success by the standards of the theology of glory:
 - 1) The attendance numbers at our worship services.
 - 2) The size and impressiveness of our church facilities.
 - 3) The amount of money in the offerings.
 - b) If our divinely called pastor doesn't make these things happen, then there must be something wrong with him! Sadly, any number of congregations (yes, even in the LCMS) have removed the pastors that God called and gave to them when the theology of glory drives the “mission” of the church.

II. Second, we need to understand why and how people end up in heaven or hell.

A. How do people end up in heaven?

1. Only by the work of the Holy Spirit acting through His Word and Sacraments. This is exactly how you ended up as a citizen of heaven when you were baptized!

Acts 2:38-39

38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

John 1:12-13

12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— **13** children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

John 15:16

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

2. People do NOT get into heaven because they:
 - a. Made a decision to believe in Jesus.
 - b. Are a good enough person to please God.
 - c. Passed their final confirmation exam.
3. People DO get into heaven because God has called them to faith (that is complete trust) in what Jesus has done to save them through His life, suffering, death, and resurrection.
 - a. We are saved only because our sins have been forgiven through Jesus' suffering our eternal punishment for them.
 - b. We are saved because we have been given Christ's perfect righteousness.
 - c. We are saved only because Christ's suffering and death only was sufficient payment for the forgiveness of our sins.

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article XI, 43-44

Thus far is the mystery of predestination revealed to us in God's Word, and if we abide thereby and cleave thereto, it is a very useful, salutary, consolatory doctrine; for it establishes very effectually the article that we are justified and saved without all works and merits of ours, purely out of grace alone, for Christ's sake.

For before the time of the world, before we existed, yea, before the foundation of the world was laid, when, of course, we could do nothing good, we were according to God's purpose chosen by grace in Christ to salvation, Rom. 9:11; 2 Tim. 1:9. 44] Moreover, all *opiniones* (opinions) and erroneous doctrines concerning the powers of our natural will are thereby overthrown, because God in His counsel, before the time of the world, decided and ordained that He Himself, by the power of His Holy Ghost, would produce and work in us, through the Word, everything that pertains to our conversion. (Triglott)



4. God knew and knows His elect since before the foundations of the world were laid and He will not misplace any of us!

John 10:27-30

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **30** I and the Father are one.”

Ephesians 1:3-6

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, **4** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

B. How do people end up in hell?

People end up in hell simply because they do not believe (trust in) what Jesus has done to forgive them.

Matthew 23:37

37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

Acts 7:51

51 “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

The Word and Sacraments are the means through which the Holy Spirit works to change stoney, unbelieving hearts into believing ones but some (many) will not hear the Holy Spirit speak to them.

III. What, then, is the Mission of the Church?

A. Our Lord's charge to the Church is to be about the business of making disciples.

Matthew 28:18

18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”



1. But exactly how does the Church go about making disciples?...By following our Lord's directions!
 - a. “...baptizing them... ’
 - b. “...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”
2. This is Word and Sacrament!
 - a. To teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you is to teach pure doctrine.
 - b. Our Lord could not teach or reveal any teaching that wasn't pure or He simply wouldn't be God!

B. Believers come together for worship (the primary activity of the Church) in order to be fed and nourished on God's Word and Sacraments.

John 21:15-17

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” **16** He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” **17** He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”



1. Worship, then is primarily, the feeding of the sheep, not entertainment for the “goats.”
2. Then, God's well-fed people leave worship and Bible study to enter into their own God-given vocations which are the primary venue for them to give witness to their faith and thus, engage in “evangelism.”

C. God has given every last one of His Children multiple vocations in which to both live out our faith and to give witness to our faith.

1. God literally “hides” Himself in us in our God-given vocations so that He can act through us.
 - a. God acts through our parenthood, our employment, our recreational pursuits not only to serve our neighbor on God's behalf, but also to give witness to our faith.
 - b. It is in our vocations where we give a Christian witness in already existing, credible relationships.
2. Here is the primary venue for evangelism and mission outreach!
 - a. This is vastly more advantageous than making “cold calls” during supper time on people who simply don't want to be bothered.
 - b. It is precisely how the early Christians went about in their daily lives as God grew the Church through their lives and ultimately their words!

D. It should also be kept in mind that all witness to Christ is aimed at bringing people into the fellowship of His Church.

1. It is not just “carving one more notch in our Bibles” because we witnessed to another person. (That is the theology of glory!)
 - a. Faith, which is begun by a Christian witness must be fed on Word and Sacrament or it will soon wither and die.

Mark 4:13-20

13 Then Jesus said to them, “Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? **14** The farmer sows the word. **15** Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. **16** Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. **17** But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. **18** Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; **19** but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. **20** Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

- b. The Church is where God still speaks and acts and the notion that someone may come to faith and purposely refrain from fellowship in the Church is utter foolishness and dangerous to the faith.
2. Once the interest is kindled by the power of God's Word, then the essential next step is to help our neighbor come into the fellowship of the Church.
 - a. God established Christian congregations as the model for the early Church through the God-driven efforts of the Apostles.
 - b. All Christians need to be in a flock and under the authority and care of a shepherd of the flock...this is God's design, not a human invention.



Titus 1:5

5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

IV. Conclusion.

Calling people to faith is God's doing. He does this through the power of His Word and in the action of His Sacraments. If people end up in Heaven, then God alone receives the credit. If others end up in Hell, then this is due alone to their own unbelief. The mission of the Church is to proclaim the pure doctrine of the Word of God and to lead them to the Sacraments and to fellowship in Christ's Church. The primary venue for Christian witness is in the very God-given vocations that God has provided each and every one of us. What an honor and privilege to be His conduit to His grace for others!

