

*What Does "Lutheran" Mean?* with Pastor Ruud  
Session 1 Study Guide  
April 2021 - Mount Olivet Adult Education

**Faith Alone: There's Nothing for You to Do... No, but Seriously... There's Nothing for You to Do... Seriously**

The title of this course is *What Does "Lutheran" Mean?* – playing off of Martin Luther's basic question in his Small Catechism, "What does this mean?" – but it could perhaps just as easily have been titled *What Does the Gospel Mean?*. This is to say the course focuses on the basic and yet sometimes extremely difficult truths of what scripture and the event of Christ proclaim about us and God. Neither Martin Luther nor any who have become associated with his name have a monopoly on Jesus. Yet to say one is "Lutheran" is perhaps to center on particular assertions, truths, and/or ways of thinking and understanding the proclamation of Jesus in the world.

First and foremost is the assertion of faith alone. In other words, there is neither a human work, achievement, virtue, nor even a good decision which makes people holy, righteous, and/or worthy as creatures and beloved children of God. Hence the subtitle, "There's nothing for you to do...no, but seriously...there's nothing for you to do...seriously."

**Two central texts:**

1. **Romans 1:17** - For in [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."

-A key statement from the Apostle Paul's letter quoting [Genesis 15:6](#), and the key passage of breakthrough for Martin Luther in his understanding of Christ and faithful life.

2. **Article IV of the Augsburg Confession (1531) – "Concerning Justification"**

It is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in [Romans 3:21-26](#) and [4:5](#)

**Questions:**

1. If someone were to ask you "What does 'Lutheran' mean?" how would you answer it? What would those unfamiliar or unassociated with "Lutheran" think of it? Is there anything confusing about it? Anything helpful?
2. In the presentation, Pastor Ruud used the image of a ladder for what is often conceived, taught, or implied of the relationship and action between God and humanity. Do you see evidence of this articulation present in the world, in particular churches, or people, or even yourself?
3. Pastor Ruud articulated that Jesus' cross and resurrection and the scriptural witness of faith alone destroy any ladders between us and God. What do you think of this?

4. The question, “Are you saved?”, is prevalent in many articulations of Christianity. Have you encountered this question? When, where, or by whom? How did it make you feel? Instead of answering it in ourselves, what happens when we allow Christ, the Savior, to answer it?
5. In Martin Luther’s explanation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Article of the Apostles’ Creed concerning the Holy he begins it by saying, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him...” Think about that. How do you describe “faith”? Is it something you do or decide, or is it a state of being, or both? Faith might be well described as trust. What’s trust? How does trust come about?

**Extra Credit** (for which there really is none, because this course is about faith and grace alone!)

Read [Ephesians 2:1-10](#). Think about the nature and relationship of faith, grace, and good works. According to this scripture, how are we made righteous? Who does the work of making people holy? When, or in what state of being does it say we are, in being made holy? For what has God created us?

Become familiar with some of the scriptures Pastor Ruud noted in the presentation. Note who is the subject of the verbs in the scripture (who’s doing the acting in these scriptures? To whom does faith and righteousness belong? Who does faith?)

- [Romans 3:21-28](#)
- [Philippians 3:8-9](#)
- [Titus 3:4-8](#)
- [1 Peter 1:3-5](#)
- [John 8:31-36](#)
- [John 15:15-16](#)
- [2 Corinthians 5:16-21](#)

Please send any questions for Pastor Ruud to Katie Stevenson: [katies@mtolivet.org](mailto:katies@mtolivet.org)