

What do Lutherans believe?

Christianity

To understand Lutherans you must understand at the start that Lutherans are first and foremost Christians. Christians believe that Jesus, the very Son of God, came into this world to be the Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the one who was promised already in the Old Testament. We believe that the death of Jesus and His resurrection reverses the effect of sin, which is death and eternal separation from God, and provides a way for those who believe to spend eternity with God in heaven! That belief is called faith, which is not something that we develop in ourselves, but is rather a gift of God.

God

God is the almighty Creator and owner of all things. He has revealed Himself in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Together these three persons make up One God. This God who reveals Himself in three persons is often referred to as “The Holy Trinity” or the “Triune God.”

God the Father is the Maker and Creator of all things. God the Son is Jesus. Jesus was present and participated in the creation of all things and nothing was made without Him. He took on human flesh as a man in order to die on the cross in payment for our sins. Having risen from the dead on the third day, Jesus now reigns in glory, honor, and power. God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity was also present and participated in creation. He is our teacher, helper, and the source of our faith.

Grace

Grace is God’s undeserved forgiveness for all of our sins. Christians believe that through His death on the cross, Jesus paid off our debt of sin even though we didn’t deserve it. We call that the “Grace of God.” But God’s grace doesn’t end there. In His grace, God continually provides for us and protects us, even though we don’t deserve it.

Faith

Faith is the Christian’s response to what God has done for us in Christ. Jesus suffered, was crucified and died, not because He deserved it, but because we deserved it. Because of God’s love for us, He allowed Himself to bear our punishment. Because of Jesus, we can now approach God with a repentant heart and ask for forgiveness, knowing that God will indeed forgive us. In this way, we can enter back into a relationship with God, a relationship that was once lost because of our sin, and be assured that we are heirs to the glory, and riches of Jesus for all eternity. This is what is meant by faith. Faith is not something that we can offer God on our own volition. Scripture teaches us that “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.” From that we learn that it is in fact

impossible for any of us to believe on our own. The faith it takes to believe comes to us from God through the Holy Spirit. If God did not grant us faith, we could not begin to believe the message of saving grace, the message we call The Gospel.

The Bible

The Bible or “Holy Scriptures” is a compilation of approximately 40 different writers who lived and wrote at different times over a span of about 1500 years. Amazingly, there are no conflicts or disagreements between those authors in what they wrote over such a long period of time. Lutherans believe that this came about because God put the words in the minds and the hearts of the authors as they wrote, an action of God which we call inspiration. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and thus without error and infallible. We also believe that the Bible is still very relevant to our lives today because the God of the Bible is the same yesterday, today and forever..

Sacraments

Lutherans believe in two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. We define sacrament as a sacred act, instituted by God in which God through a physical means, connected with His word offers His people the forgiveness of sins.

Baptism

Baptism is a sacrament, ordained by God, through which people are brought into His kingdom. Lutherans believe that children should be baptized as infants and that adults should be baptized once they believe and are instructed in the faith. Lutherans believe Baptism is a gracious act of God through which God makes a person His own and offers Him the forgiveness of sins. Because of that, Lutherans do not view Baptism as a matter to be trifled with. It is for all as scripture says: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” Matthew 28:19 NIV

Holy Communion

Scripture tells us that “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Matthew 26:26-28

Lutherans take Jesus’ words here as He said them. Therefore we believe that Jesus truly does give Himself to us in this sacrament. One way of expressing this is that we believe that in, with and under the bread and wine we receive the body and blood of Christ. Holy Communion is another way that God bestows His Grace on us. Because we believe that

communion is more than a symbol, Lutherans believe in close communion, that is that we commune only those who share our faith in the Triune God and our belief in communion as the very body and blood of Christ.

Sin

Sin consists of every action by which we as human beings rebel against God and His will. God created man with a free-will. In that free will, the first man and woman rebelled against God. With that, sin entered the world. Ever since then mankind has lived in rebellion against God. All sins are equal before God, equally condemning and equally forgivable. When individuals struggle with guilt over a particular sin, for example homosexual tendencies, past abortions, pornography, alcoholism or any other violation of God's will, God longs to receive, forgive them and empower them with victory over that sin in the future. Where people rebel against God's will and refuse His transforming love, the church is commanded by God to stand firm in speaking against such sin.

Some thoughts on why bad things happen, or better yet, Why do bad things happen to good people?

This is a question that is often asked. Tragedies occur all the time, personal tragedies and tragedies on large scale. A young man, good in every way, loses his life suddenly in an accident, leaving his young family to struggle. People lose all they own because of house fires. Tsunamis occur with little or no warning and thousands of people lose their lives. Homelessness, sickness, such things are everywhere. It all just doesn't seem fair. How can a loving God allow such things?

God does indeed love us. Jesus lived here as one of us and experienced all the hardships and sorrows many of us experience every day. God grieves over all these bad things, just as we do, if not more. We are all His children and He loves each and every one of us. He doesn't want these things to happen and He surely does not cause them.

These things happen because we live in a world full of evil, evil that has been in the world ever since Satan led mankind into sin. But that doesn't tell us why God doesn't intervene and prevent these things from happening? Why doesn't He just fix it so that evil cannot triumph any more.

The answer is that He did! He has fixed it. That's the good news! This life will always bring sorrow, disappointment, and suffering. God knows that. That is why Jesus came into this world. God wants us to live someday with him in Heaven; a place without sorrow, a place without pain, a place where life will be eternally perfect in every way.

How do we get there? There are two things that have to happen before we can go to Heaven. First, we must believe in Jesus. The whole reason why Jesus died on the cross was so that we could go to Heaven. Jesus is there right now getting things ready for our arrival. But to receive this gift one must first receive the Spirit's gift of faith and trust in

Jesus as the only way to Heaven. The other thing we have to do is leave this troublesome life. We have to die. Death is a process that starts the minute we are born. It's the result of the sin in this world. The good news is that those who believe in Jesus will live again some day in Heaven. You see, God didn't just temporarily fix it for this life, He fixed it eternally forever!

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