



Key Components: Part 2

# LUTHERAN IDENTITY



# Quick Review

Law and Gospel



# Word of God

- The Word of God is God's communication to us about God's nature, desires, plans, promises
- It comes to us as a demand for how to live so that this world is a blessing to all (law)
- It comes to us as a promise of God's forgiving and loving nature (gospel)
- We trust the promise (faith) through the Holy Spirit, and through the Spirit we are empowered to participate in God's love for the world (transformation)

# Identifying Law and Gospel

- Law – What does God demand/command? What are the human actions? What sign to we see of human separation from God's intention (sin)
- Gospel – What does God promise? In what way does God bring healing, forgiveness, grace
- Transformation – What new possibilities are opened for our response through God's action?

# Law and Gospel in the text

- Mark 9:30-37
- <sup>30</sup>They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it, <sup>31</sup>for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." <sup>32</sup>But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.
- <sup>33</sup>Then they came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" <sup>34</sup>But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup>He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." <sup>36</sup>Then he took a little child and put it among them, and taking it in his arms he said to them, <sup>37</sup>"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

# Discuss in Groups

- What is the law in this passage?
- What is the gospel in this passage?
- If time, you can discuss what transformation might be found in this text.
- Look for gospel that corresponds to the law.  
In other words:
  - How does human action in the text reveal human sin?
  - How does the divine action promise hope in the face of the specific sin seen in this text?

# Law and Gospel in the text

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# Other pillars of Lutheran theology



# 4 pillars

- Law and Gospel - ways that the Word comes to us
- Theology of the Cross – God “breaks us open”
- Communication of Attributes – the presence of Christ
- Two Kinds of Righteousness – being justified



# Justification

- Justification means to be made right with God. What allows us to stand before God and receive grace?

# Saved by grace

- The church in Martin Luther's time taught that it is only by grace that we are saved
- The question is whether we can do anything to prepare ourselves to receive that grace or be worthy of it
- Luther was taught that God is gracious to us; we simply need to do what is within us to be good.
- "Do your best and let Jesus do the rest."

# How much is enough?

- Luther's issue: how do I know if I have done what I am capable of doing?
- Isn't there always something more that I could do?
- Are things that I do to prepare myself for grace things done out of love, or are they done out of self-interest?
- Result: life of anxiety wondering if what I have done is enough. **Am I good enough?**

# Free Will

- The problem with doing what is within us for Luther is that it assumes our will is free.
- Augustinian tradition: our will was created to be free, but in its fallen state it is bound
- *We are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against God in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.*

# Bound Will

- We have free will to make the choices that are available to us in this world
- The problem is that in the world we are born into all choices available to us are sinful ones
- The best options we have are ambiguous or mixed.
- Reality of original or structural sin

# How can I be justified?

- If all of my choices are sinful, then no matter what I do I am sinful.
- All sin is a separation from God that we cannot overcome
- The realization of the depth of our predicament ought to be complete despair.
- God seems to be hidden from us.

# Theology of the cross

- “My God my God, why have you forsaken me?”
- This is our cry in our despair.
- But we find that this is also Jesus’ cry from the cross.
- In the seeming absence of God, the cross reveals that God is most powerfully present



# God is other than our expectations

- Humans like power and wealth. We think of heaven having streets paved with gold. We pay attention to kings and powerful people.
  - We transfer this to God, but the theology of the cross says that misses where God is.
  - God is found in the manger, as a weak baby from a poor family. God is found on the cross.
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# Death and Resurrection

- In my experience of God's absence, I find that God is already there in Christ on the cross
- The suffering of Christ on the historical cross becomes the presence of Christ in my spiritual suffering in the present.
- In my despair I encounter the crucified Christ

# Kenotic Christ

- The crucified Christ comes to me. Christ does more than comfort me. Christ gives me his righteousness.
- Christ alone is righteous. Christ lives without sin. Yet Christ gives that up, entering into suffering the absence of God that I experience.
- This is called *kenosis*.
  - *Philippians 2*

# Saint/Sinner

- this righteousness is not mine, it belongs to Christ. It is *alien* righteousness.
- I am still a sinful person, but I now also have Christ's righteousness.
- Therefore, I am both a sinner and a saint at the same time. *Simul iustus et peccator*.
- In justification, Christ does not make me righteous. Christ gives me **his** righteousness.

# Forensic Justification

- When we have that faith, we give ourselves over to Christ fully – AND – Christ gives himself to us fully.
- It is like a marriage. Everything that is ours is given to Christ and everything that belongs to Christ is given to us.
- All we have is sin, but Christ takes that and makes it his own. Christ has righteousness and gives it to us to be our own. All is shared.
- The basis of our salvation, then, is Christ's righteousness. Through it we are saved, not through our own work. This is forensic justification.



# *theosis*

- if we put on Christ every day it will begin to shape us into being more and more like Christ.
  - *Theosis* means “becoming divine.” Christ becomes more and more present inside of us, living in us.
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# The Paradox of Righteousness

- Yet there is a catch: if we think we are righteous, then we are not trusting Christ for our righteousness and therefore it is not Christ living within us.
- Here is the key: when we trust in Christ we no longer need to worry about whether we are righteous or not. We simply trust in Christ.
- once we are justified, no need to be concerned with our own righteousness and so can focus on the needs of others – yet in doing so we become righteous

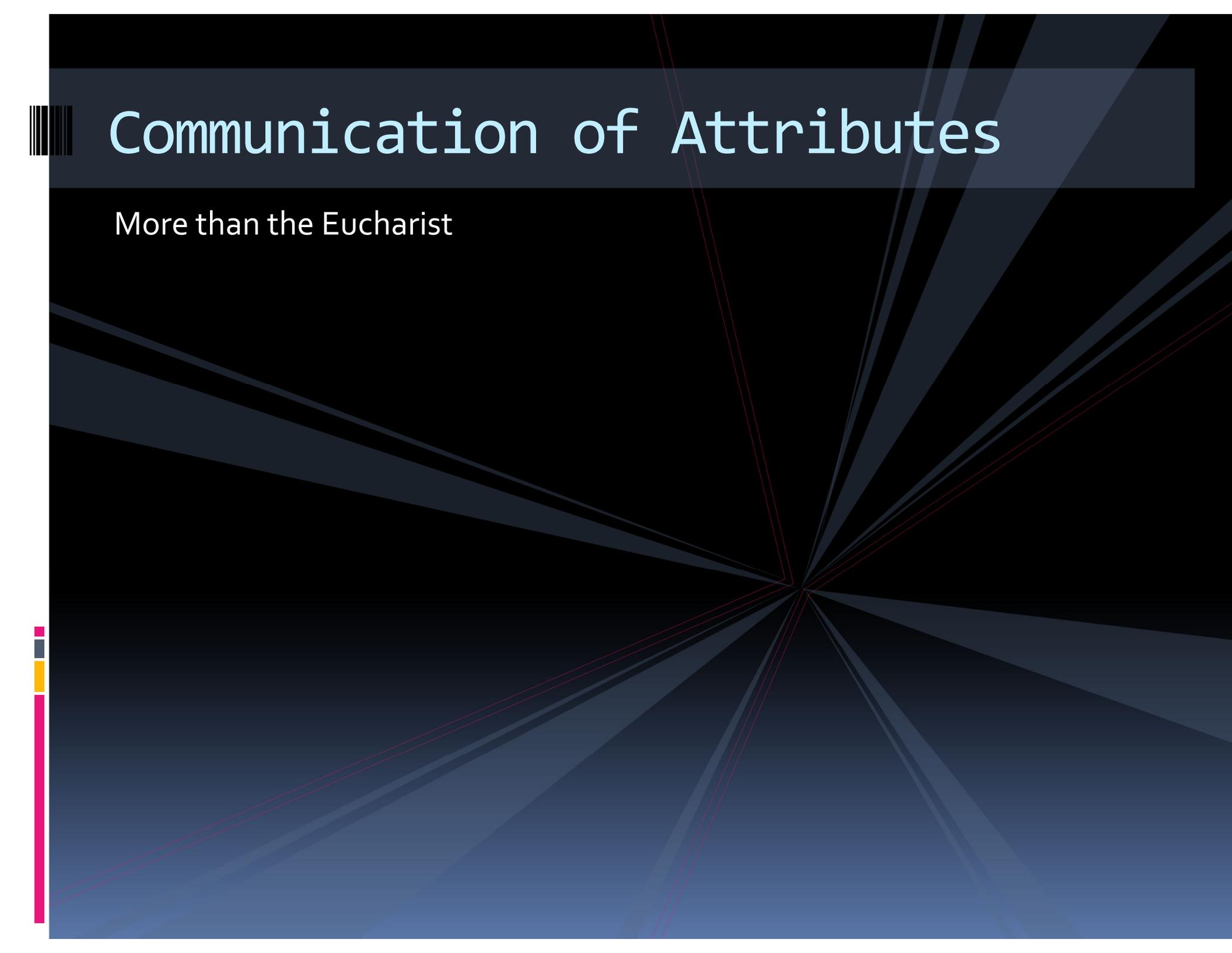
# Two Kinds of Righteousness

- Righteousness means to have right relationships.
- In the physical realm, we have right relationships when we follow the first use of the law, seeking the common good.
- This is civic or communal righteousness. It is external action within our power to achieve.
- Right relationship with God requires a right heart that comes only from Christ's righteousness. Righteousness before God is received by grace alone through Christ alone.



# Communication of Attributes

More than the Eucharist





# Right Hand of God

- If we are met on the cross by the crucified Christ, we live anew through the risen Christ
- The risen Christ is found at the right hand of God.
- Where is the right hand of God?

# Communication of Attributes

- is the claim coming out of the Christological councils that Christ is one person with two natures: human and divine.
- These two natures can neither be separated from one another nor mixed with each other.
- Rather, because the two natures subsist in one person there is a communication or exchange of essential characteristics between the two natures.

# John of Damascus

- “fire communicates itself totally, with all its attributes, to heated iron” Of course, fire does not in some sense transmute the metal into fire. Heated metal retains all its essential properties as metal. Nonetheless, when considered in itself, the glow and the heat become real qualities of the metal when united with the fire. Similarly, the human nature participates in divine attributes of the person of the Logos without abrogating its essential human qualities.



# What does that mean?

- Where is God? Everywhere!
  - Where then is the right hand of God? Everywhere!
  - This world is saturated with God.
  - God is present in every molecule, every location, every event.
  - We fail to see this because we are too focused on ourselves to see it.
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# Communication of Attributes and the Word of God

- If the world is saturated with God, then it is also saturated with the presence of Christ.
- In every act of renewal, new life, reconciliation, and grace we see the work of Christ.
- This is not limited to spiritual things: because of the incarnation Christ is also fully present physically within the material of the world.

# Incarnation – God with us

- for divinity and humanity to constitute a single person it was necessary for Christ to be present according to his divinity and humanity at all places and at all times. If one could point to a place where Christ was only present according to his divine or human natures, the unity of the person would be compromised
- "That is the high article, that we, like the angels, perceive in a glance the two persons and not divide what is mutually held in one person. . . . You cannot bake anything as closely together as these two natures in Christ." Martin Luther

# 3 modes of God's presence

- **local** - This is the mode of presence which is natural to the substance of Christ's humanity.
- **Definitive** - This term is used to describe Jesus' presence after his resurrection. According to this mode, the man Jesus walked through walls and disappeared and appeared at will during the forty days with his disciples. In this mode of presence, Christ transcended the normal modes of circumscribed human reality, while at the same time manifesting himself at specific times and places.
- The third mode of presence is Christ's "**repletive**" presence. This is the presence whereby Christ is present to all creatures in an incomprehensible manner.



# So what?

- In the Eucharist, we receive the promise that the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ
- This is not rhetoric, it is a promise
- Christ really is present in the bread and wine just as Christ is really present in all things
- Our sin prevents our experience of Christ's presence
- Our trust in the promise of the Eucharist allows us to see that in the bread and wine Christ is really present



# New eyes to see

- Trusting that promise, we experience the bread and wine and body and blood
  - This in turns allows us to see Christ's presence in the rest of the world
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# Preaching Brings Salvation

- Preaching is the real place in which the *communicatio idiomatum* between God and the human is set in motion in the form of a verbal communication.
- In preaching, the Word and the thing coincide, since the sermon, like the Word of the Creator, is an active Word that does what it says and says what it does.

# Law/Gospel preaching

- it is about the contemporary situation, not historical. Uses what God has done to proclaim what God is doing right now in the world and in the hearts of those listening
- preaching must give at least as much attention to God's grace as to the law; the law is only to set up the problem that grace answers
- the goal of the sermon is conversion – the conversion that each of us needs daily

# Preaching and the 4 pillars

- Theology of the Cross – recognition of our sin, distance from God
- Communication of Attributes – Christ on the cross is present with us in our suffering; the risen Christ leads us into new life
- Justification – we are given Christ's righteousness as we are opened to Christ dwelling within us
- Law/Gospel – leads us to recognize our sin and God's promise of incarnation and salvation
- Preaching proclaims these realities: in the speaking, hearing, and faithful reception the reality of God becomes real *for us in our lives.*

# Worship as Participation in the Word

- Worship is first of all the time that God comes to us as a church through God's Word.
- Worship happens when we hear and experience God's presence as a church community and our response of thanks and praise.
- God is not only active in worship. God is active in the world. However, worship is the time when God's people gather together expected to be filled with the presence of God.

# Worship as Reconciliation

- The Word of God always brings grace to those who hear it and believe.
- Such an experience of receiving God's grace is the source of our human response of thanks and praise to God.
- Therefore an essential component of worship is hearing the gospel of our salvation.

# Role of the Law in Worship

- we cannot hear in faith the good news of reconciliation if we do not recognize our need for grace.
- For this reason, the Word of God also comes to us as Law.
- We need to hear that we have sin and are separated from God.
- When we know our sin, then we will want to repent of it.
- Because it is important to recognize our sin, it is important to include some form of confession as part of our worship.

# Worship as Holy Community

- Worship is not a personal activity. It is always done as part of the church community.
- When God is present in the community through Word and Sacrament, the community becomes holy. It becomes the church.
- The congregation is filled by God's grace in order to become salt and light for the world.
- When the time of worship is finished, the congregation is then called to become the presence of Christ for those in need in the world.