



THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Galatians 1:6-10 Luke 24:36-49

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Pastor Dave Bolte

There are **66 books** in the Bible, it has over **1,000 chapters** and over **31,000 verses**. There are **stories, poems, prayers, songs, commands, proverbs, letters, and prophecy** in the Bible. There are **46 parables** and **37 miracles** in the Gospels alone. Out of all of this inspired material, what is the **most important** thing that God wants you to know?

What is the **central teaching** of the Bible?

What is of **“first importance”**?

Thankfully, we don't have to figure it out by ourselves! **Jesus Himself teaches us what is most important and its all wrapped up in the Easter story!**

It was Easter evening, throughout the day there was a flurry of activity as the Apostles and the women reported what they had seen and heard:

- † the strange earthquake,
- † the empty tomb;
- † the Roman guards fleeing,
- † the grave clothes were lying there, folded up, by themselves,
- † there were sightings of angels;
- † Mary Magdalene claimed to have even seen Jesus!
- † the message that was repeated over and over again was that **Jesus was alive!**

On that very first Easter night, as things looked to be settling down, and the disciples had gathered together in the the upper room in Jerusalem, **suddenly** Cleopas bursts through the doors! He reports that he had seen the Risen Lord Jesus on the road to Emmaus! As he was telling the story of recognizing Jesus in the breaking of the bread, **suddenly Jesus Himself appears in the midst of them!** The Disciples were scared to death; they thought it was a ghost; but Jesus assures them that it is He Himself! **HE GIVES THEM PEACE** as they gather around Him, touch His body, see His scars, and watch Him eat supper.

It was in this context, on the **very night** of the Resurrection, during a **resurrection appearance**, when Jesus told His disciples what the **most important thing** is: He told them what the message of the Holy Christian Church would be.

Then Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will **suffer and rise from the dead on the third day**, and **repentance for the forgiveness of sins** will be preached in his name to all nations. Luke 24:45-47

Jesus' death and resurrection for repentance and the forgiveness of sins is the most important teaching in the Kingdom of God

† it is the message that the Holy Christian Church is to take to all nations,

† it is what all of Scripture, both Old Testament and New Testament, points to.

Jesus' death and resurrection for repentance and the forgiveness of sins! That has always been the message of God's Kingdom! Remember, the Old Testament points to Christ:

THE OLD TESTAMENT WITNESS

All the **prophets** testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name." Acts 10:43

AND the New Testament confirms that Christ's death and resurrection for repentance and the forgiveness of sins is the most important teaching in the Kingdom of God:

NEW TESTAMENT WITNESS

For what I received I passed on to you as of **FIRST IMPORTANCE** : that Christ **died** for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was **buried**, that he was **raised** on the third day according to the Scriptures .
1 Corinthians 15:3-4

As **LUTHERAN CHRISTIANS**, we confess the same thing; we confess to the world that **Christ's death and resurrection for repentance and the forgiveness of sins is the most important teaching of Christianity!**

The **FIRST AND CHIEF ARTICLE** is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "was put to **DEATH** for our trespasses and **RAISED AGAIN** for our justification." He alone is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" THE BOOK OF CONCORD, SMALCALD ARTICLES, II.I

If this is the most important teaching in the Kingdom of God and all of Holy Scripture, then every one of us needs to thoroughly know, believe, and understand it!

† This is the GOSPEL!

† This is the GOOD NEWS!

† This is the most important teaching in all of Holy Scripture!

IT STARTS WITH REPENTANCE!

By God's grace, patience, and kindness, when the Word of God is preached, the Holy Spirit leads you to **REPENTANCE**. Repentance is turning away from sin; **it is renouncing the devil, and all of his evil works and all of his wicked ways**. God works through His Law to convict you of sin and show you where you have sinned against Him or against others. The Ten Commandments teach you right and wrong -- and when you break a commandment in your thoughts, words or actions, then you are guilty of sin. The Law of God condemns you; your conscience condemns you as well.

Repentance means that you listen to God's Law, you pay attention to your conscience, and YOU STOP SINNING! You confess your sins and throw yourself on the mercy of God. You know that if God does not intervene in your wayward life, you will be condemned and lost forever.

Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! **Take words with you** and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips." Hosea 14:1-2

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. if we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9

On Easter night, Jesus taught that the most important message of the One, Holy, Christian and Apostolic Church was that His death and resurrection would bring you to repentance and the forgiveness of sins!

Today repent of your sins!

Turn away from them!

***Renounce the devil, and all of his evil works
and all of his wicked ways.***

Turn from evil and turn to God in faith!

God promises to forgive your sins! **FORGIVENESS** is the core of the Christian faith.

God sent His Son Jesus to die on a cross for every single person, so that every single person ever conceived is forgiven in God's eyes. Faith makes it personal and brings it into your own life; you yourself know, believe and trust in God's love, patience, and kindness to you. Jesus suffered and died on a cross in your place and for your sins as your **substitute**. God the Father accepts that **substitute** on your behalf, and proves it by raising Jesus from the dead!

In the Resurrection, you are declared "not guilty!" and you are forgiven all of your sins! It is in Jesus' death, burial and resurrection that God gives you His love, mercy, and grace! **There is no other place where you will ever find salvation!** No wonder this is good news! This "gospel" is the **first and chief** doctrine of the Christian faith!

The Apostles echoes this in many ways:

† Christ died for sins, once and for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God! ¹ Peter 3:18

† God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not counting men's sins against them! ² Corinthians 5:19 (Paul)

† Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! John 1:29

First Importance, St. Paul says, is Christ's death, burial and resurrection that brings salvation! Believe it! Believe that Jesus is your Savior who's death, burial and resurrection brings you God's love, mercy and grace! In Christ, you have forgiveness, life and salvation!

It is also **FIRST IMPORTANCE** for us as Lutheran Christians! **The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for repentance and the forgiveness of sins affects everything for us as Lutheran Christians!**

- ✓ It is the **cornerstone** of our faith
- ✓ It is the **center** of our preaching, teaching and doctrinal beliefs
- ✓ It **stands behind** both Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion
- ✓ It is the **emphasis** of our worship services
- ✓ It is why we send **missionaries** to "all nations"
- ✓ It is why Bibles are **translated** into the many languages of the world
- ✓ It is the **norm** by which all Teachers and Pastors in the Church are to be **evaluated**

Christ's death and resurrection for repentance and the forgiveness of sins is also the **FIRST IMPORTANCE** in our individual Christian lives

- ✓ It is the **focus** of your daily life in Christ as His disciples
- ✓ It is the **content** of your witness to your friends, family, and neighbors
- ✓ It is why we send our **children** to Trinity Lutheran School, and Sunday School, Oasis, Confirmation, Youth Groups, and Sunday School.

**Make sure you know, believe and understand
the FIRST PRIORITY of the Christian faith:
The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
for repentance and the forgiveness of sins!**

It affects everything for us: it is the core teaching of Holy Scripture, it is the vital message of the Holy Christian Church, and it is the most important doctrine in the Kingdom of God! Make sure it is the very center of your faith and life in Jesus Christ!

AS ST. PAUL SAYS, (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

For what I received I passed on to you as of FIRST IMPORTANCE :
that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
that He was buried,
that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. Amen!