



What is the main message of the Holy Christian Church? **What is the most important, central teaching of the One Holy Christian and Apostolic Church?** You would think that all churches would agree on something so easy . . . **but it's not.**

- ➡ There are some churches that believe that the *most important thing* is *social involvement* and *community action*, so their focus is on poverty, literacy, hunger, equality, and racial issues.
- ➡ There are other churches that believe that *the Christian lifestyle* is *most important thing*; and so the focus is on self-help type things like “3 keys to a godly life” or “five steps to a Christian family” or “how to have a happy marriage” and so forth.
- ➡ There are other churches that believe that the *most important thing* is be *tolerant, diverse, and accepting* of all people, regardless of what they believe or how they live.
- ➡ There are still others that believe that the sign of true faith is being *healthy and wealthy*. Quite simply, if you're healthy and wealthy you have faith; if you are sickly and poor your faith is weak or lacking.
- ➡ There's some that think *unity* is the *most important thing*; and so they unite with anyone who claims they have faith and loves a god.
- ➡ And there is a tremendous amount of churches that are *inconsistent* in their preaching and teaching, because their pastors are untrained, and they rely on the internet for their content.

The list could go on and on ... unfortunately, there are many answers to the question “what is the most important message of the Holy Christian Church?”

For us as **conservative Lutherans**, we believe that the *most important thing* is **Jesus, and His death and resurrection**¹. Jesus taught this to us on Easter night, in a post-resurrection appearance:

Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His Name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Luke 24:45-47

St. Paul echoes that when writing to the Corinthians:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 1 Corinthians 1:22-23

Biblically, the Holy Christian Church is about proclaiming eternal salvation, and that eternal salvation is only found in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His life, death, and resurrection². Only in Him do you find life, peace, and the forgiveness of sins!³

1700 years ago, when the Christian Church was battling intense heresies and false teachers, it also clarified the central importance of the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the Nicene Creed, after defending the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and confessing His Incarnation, it immediately goes into His work of salvation for us:

¹ In theology, this is referred to as the "Material Principle" – what a church considers its main focus, content, and emphasis in its preaching, teaching, and confession. For us as conservative Lutherans, our material principle is the Gospel. In Luke 24:46-47 Jesus teaches us that our focus is on His death and resurrection that leads to repentance and the forgiveness of sins. In theology, this is also referred to as the 'kerygma' – the Greek word for 'preach', and it refers to the Jesus' death and resurrection as the main content of a church's teaching and preaching.

² As conservative Lutherans, here is how we echo Scripture: [We believe, teach, and confess that] "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' Rom. 4:25. He alone is 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'" Book Of Concord, Smalcald Articles, II.I Notice the emphasis on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, exactly as Jesus teaches in Luke 24, and the apostle Paul affirms in First Corinthians 15:1-11.

³ "Everything that the church does has to do with forgiving people their sins. Its pastors baptize in the name of the Triune God for the forgiveness of sins. The congregation gathers around the altar to receive the body and blood of Jesus that was "given and shed for the remission of sins." Scripture is studied because its words offer life and forgiveness. The Keys are used to impart the forgiveness of sins to the penitent. Even unrepentant sinners are excluded in the hope that they will repent and be restored. **So all that Jesus taught and that the Church is to do in His Name centers on the forgiveness of sins in one way or another.**" "The Keys: An Identification

[He] was **crucified** also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He **suffered**
and was **buried**. And the third day
He **rose again** according to the Scriptures
and **ascended** into heaven and sits at
the **right hand** of the Father. And
He will **come again** with glory
to **judge** both the living and the dead,
whose **Kingdom** will have no end.

Notice the Nicene Creed doesn't talk about Jesus' miracles, His parables, His transfiguration, or any other event of His life. The focus is on the cross and the things associated with His death and resurrection. This is the *most important thing*, **the central teaching**, of the Holy Christian Church. For us as conservative Lutheran Christians, it **remains** the most important thing.

The reason that this is so important is because Jesus and His death and resurrection is the focus of our faith. That is where God has placed the promise of eternal salvation.

- † Our sin was so great and corrupted us so much that we could never make up for our sins by anything that could do.
- † So God sent His son, Jesus, to do the work of salvation for us. His death and resurrection pays the price required for your sins. Jesus and His death and resurrection reconciles you with the Father, forgives you all of your sins, and gives you eternal life.
- † There is no other way of salvation; there are no other words of eternal life.

The Gospel is the good news that God sent His Son Jesus, God of God, Light of light, very God of very God, to do the work of salvation through His own crucifixion, suffering, burial, and resurrection from the dead. The promise of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins is attached to the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection on the Third Day. The promise of life and forgiveness is not attached to Jesus walking on water, nor the parable of the Good Samaritan. It is not attached to your health, your wealth, the state of your marriage, your level of community involvement, or your political activity. The Promise of salvation is found in Jesus and

His work of salvation for you. **This is the gospel.** This is the *most important message* of the Holy Christian Church.

One of the benefits of being a member of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod is that maintaining this focus is *extremely important* to



us. Our national church body assists us in staying focused on Christ: they train our Pastors, our Lutheran school teachers, and various church work careers. They provide Christ centered resources, such as Hymnals, theological writings, Biblical commentaries, Christian books that all maintain a strong Christ centered focus. There is great value in “walking together” (= Greek word “Synod”) with 6000 other congregations in the US, and thousands of other conservative Lutherans across the world.

**That Christ centered focus
is also your confession of faith!**

By the power of the Holy Spirit, your eyes are open to understand that Jesus died and rose for you on the Third Day; and you were given faith to believe it was for you and your eternal salvation.

Your confession to the world is **Christ crucified and risen**; He is the *only* One who can rescue us from sin, grant us forgiveness, and give us eternal life! Jesus is no mere example, nor political renegade, nor self help guru: He is not your boyfriend, nor a king trying to take over America. **Jesus is the Savior God sent for you, first and foremost above everything else.** Jesus is our Savior from sin, guilt, and death.

For us as conservative Lutherans, **our focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ, and His death and resurrection that brings us eternal salvation.**

We believe, teach, and confess that that is the most important thing in the Christian faith, and it is the content of our congregation’s preaching and teaching, and it is the confession on our lips!

We echo the Nicene Creed; which echoes Holy Scripture itself!

Amen!

God the Father, we thank you for sending Jesus to be our Savior. Today we remember that His work of salvation is the *most important*, central teaching of the Christian faith. Help us to boldly confess that as a congregation, and to bear witness to that in our personal lives. As your Word is proclaimed and confessed, we ask that you send your Holy Spirit to create and nurture faith in people. By your Spirit, work in and through us to make disciples of all nations. We pray this in Jesus our Savior's Name, Amen!

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” 20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Luke 24:36-49

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. 38 And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish,[b] 43 and he took it and ate before them.

44 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”