



# Christian Certainty

by Pastor Glenn Huebel

"Nothing is certain but death and taxes" the saying goes. Today, more than ever before, certainty is considered an impossible quest in any field. Even scientific "laws" are rendered obsolete by further investigation. Newtonian laws yielded to Einstein's theory of relativity. Today it seems that uncertainty is the only certainty, though death and taxes are still solid contenders for exceptions to the "rule". Morality has become relative. Truth itself has become relative. Nothing is sure. Nothing is absolutely stable. Nothing is unchangeable. This is a psychologically and spiritually terrifying place to live. Welcome to chaos, the devil's playground.

Even Christians have had their battles with this concept of certainty. Before the age of Enlightenment, Christians found certainty in the Bible, which they confessed to be God's inerrant Word, revealed through the prophets and apostles. The Bible was the source and norm of all doctrine. It was considered to be the very voice of God. That confidence was undermined by rationalism, which denied the supernatural realm and the very possibility of Divine revelation. In many churches today the Bible has been reduced to an ancient religious book that has little more than figurehead status. In these churches, doctrine and morality are evolving rapidly. Some are even saying that God evolves, since our perception of the Divine is always in flux.

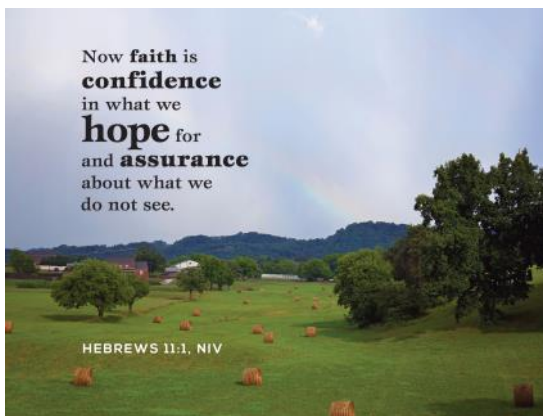
Even before the age of Enlightenment, many in the church denied the certainty of forgiveness of sins. Specifically, the Medieval Church made the quality of one's

contrition a condition for the forgiveness of sins. First, it was stated that only formally confessed sin was forgiven, leaving the poor sinner in doubt about whether he or she had confessed every single sin, or had forgotten a few. Secondly, true contrition had to be motivated by love of God, not fear of wrath, leaving poor sinners to find certainty in their sincerity and motivations rather than in the explicit promises of God. Lutherans strongly condemned these errors because they caused Christians to lose their assurance of forgiveness in Christ. That does not seem to be a problem with many even today who think it strange - even arrogant - that a believer could be certain of forgiveness or of any other teaching of Scripture. Many who call themselves Christian today think that certainty of truth is an archaic relic of past ages. They consider the Apostle Thomas to be the hero of John's post-resurrection's story recounting his doubt. The need for certainty is perceived to be a weakness. Doubt is raised to a virtue.

Does God want us to be certain of more than death and taxes? He surely does. This certainty is called FAITH, which the writer of Hebrews defines as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Doubt of God's Word and promises is never considered a virtue in Scripture. Jesus always rebukes the apostles for their doubts and commends people for their faith. Yes, even John's story of "doubting Thomas" includes a gentle rebuke by Jesus: "Do not disbelieve but believe.....Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:27, 29). John's Gospel, and all of Scripture, was inspired by the Spirit to dispel doubt and create faith. John writes, "these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Christians find their certainty of forgiveness and eternal life in the miracle of the incarnation, and the obedient life and

*(Continued on page 2)*



**Inside this issue:**

Miscellany	2
Christian View of "Race"	3

*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

## Certainty, cont..

---

atonement death of God's eternal Son, Jesus. But how do we know that God's Son became a man? How do we know that Jesus paid for all our sins and that God Himself declares us forgiven and righteous in His sight? How do we know that the Scriptures are God's revelation and absolutely trustworthy for faith and life? All of this certainty is grounded and anchored to the resurrection of Christ. St. Paul writes that Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4). Jesus Himself offers the resurrection as the single event confirming all His claims of authority: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). St. Paul acknowledges that without the resurrection his teaching is vain and our faith is vain" (1 Cor.

15:14) If (logical "if") Jesus is the Son of God descended from heaven, we may be sure that His teaching is Divine truth, for God is truth. His teaching centers in His own person and work. He came to seek and to save the lost by offering His life as the ransom for many (Matt 20:28). He is the one who instituted the Church's absolution and gave the assurance that when the Church forgives sin on earth they are forgiven in heaven (John 20:23). He is the one who instituted the Lord's Supper in which He gives His body and blood "for the forgiveness of sins." He is the one who instituted baptism for the forgiveness of sins. He is the one who sent forth the Apostles with the assurance that Spirit will guide them and give them the words to teach, calling all believers to hear their Word as

Jesus' own word. He is also the one who affirms the writings of the Old Testament prophets as God's own Word. Jesus Himself submitted wholly to the authority and veracity of these sacred writings.

The world is "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7). Reason and natural wisdom will never bring us to certainty. Faith in Christ anchors us to the eternal and unchangeable Creator and Redeemer who loves us and promises us "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Pet 1:4). "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame" (Rom 10:11).

## Miscellany (/ˈmɪsəˌlænē/) noun. —a mixture or collection of different things

---

**New keys:** our security is being upgraded and the locks have changed. Your old key cards will no longer work. We want each of our member families to have access to the church, so new key cards will be distributed during the month.

---

**Our School** will have a float in the Keller Homecoming Parade on September 12. Come see us!

---

**From the Youth:** Higher things was an amazing experience. Each day we attended services, went to breakaway sessions taught by pastors from various congregations and had the chance to be surrounded by hundreds of other Lutherans. The fact that so many people could be joined together in God's name created an incredible atmosphere that was definitely worth the trip. Overall, It was an incredible week and I definitely plan on attending again in the near future. - Christina Buhler

**Youth Confirmation Classes** for grades 6, 7, and 8, will begin on September 13.

---

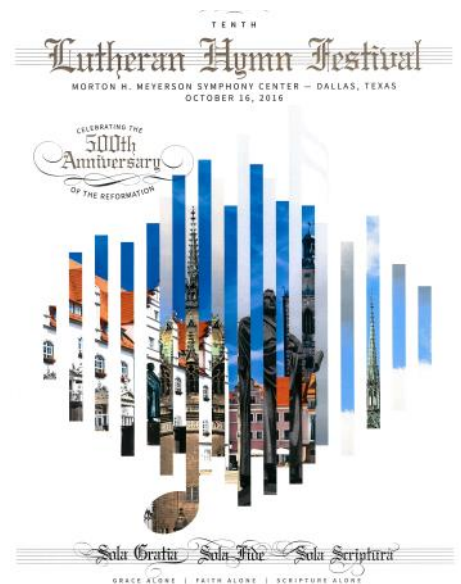
**A new Pastors' Class** begins on Thursday, September 15, at 7:00pm. A nice sized group will be gathering—come join in the fun!

---

**The first Confirmation Outing** of the year will be on Saturday, October 1. 6—8 graders are invited to hike through the Fort Worth Nature Center, enjoy a picnic lunch, and treat themselves to ice cream on the way home. Pastor Huebel will be leading the charge.

---

**35th Anniversary Save the Date:** Messiah turns 35 on October 18! We're going to celebrate with a dinner at the Texas Motor Speedway on Sunday, November 13, from 4:00—6:00pm. Watch the bulletin for more details



**Lutheran Hymn Festival:** October 16 at 7:00pm at the Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas. The theme: *Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone*. Join in singing hymn tunes and texts by Martin Luther! All tickets are reserved. To order, use the ticket form found on the counter by the mailboxes., or order online at [www.lutheranhymnfestival.com](http://www.lutheranhymnfestival.com)

# Toward a Christian View of “Race” — Pastor Tom Chryst

I was catching a flight to Milwaukee for our LCMS national convention this summer the morning after the 5 police officers were shot in Dallas. I remember watching the news with a mixture of feelings – anger, disgust, concern for the world my children are inheriting. But I also wished there was something I could do in what seems like an increasingly polarized and conflicted society. And all the more so, as a Christian.

Many of us who have been around for awhile have watched, sometimes with a feeling of helplessness, as our society has grappled with questions of racism and all the connected issues. There is the “Black Lives Matter” movement. There were riots in the 90’s after the Rodney King incident. The Civil Rights Movement of the 60s saw all sorts of tensions (this, of course, before my time!) But these are questions our American culture has been dealing with, or in some cases avoiding, since our very founding. The bloodiest war in our history – the Civil War - is also part of the story. Whole books have been written, and perhaps libraries could be filled with analyses and opinions and accounts of the matter.

Some thought electing our first black president might make things better. But it’s seemed to have little effect. Some argue “education is the key!” and that we must train our children and young adults in proper attitudes and approaches. Others have established a whole new vocabulary for dealing with these issues with terms unfamiliar to previous generations (i.e. “trigger words” and “coded language”). Some appeal to the teachings of civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. Proposed solutions abound.

I, for one, have no illusions of solving these problems or answering every tough question in a monthly church newsletter article! Nor is it my proper place to comment on the secular or political aspects of these questions on which Christians of good conscience may surely in some cases disagree.

But what does seem pertinent, especially in these times, is to review

some of the basic teachings of Holy Scripture which may bear on this topic. How does a Christian view the topic of race, or racism? Does God’s Word give us a foundation on which to build, as we seek to navigate our world, fulfill our vocations, and love our neighbors? I believe so. So let’s take a crack at it!

## Genesis tells the story



The foundation for our Christian understanding of who we human beings are is found in the book of Genesis. Where on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, God made man from the dust, and the woman from his rib. For us, these events are not mythology but true stories of God’s loving creation. He establishes us as who we are. He gives us our very being. And to understand our nature and place in this world is to understand what He tells us about our origins. Genesis lays the foundation.

What happens when we reject God’s account of how it all began? Nothing good. Confusion and perversion can only follow when we buy into theories of origin that are at odds with God’s Word. Removing the Creator from the equation removes the dignity of His creation, as we will see a little farther down the page.

Yet even secular science can still get it right, or at least come close. For instance, various studies have pointed to a common origin for all “modern humans” in a “genetic Eve”. And science also tells us that the differences between “races” are not a matter of different or incompatible DNA, but mostly of only outward appearance.

Christians ought to be clear in our own minds what Scripture teaches, and take the conclusions of secular science under advisement, but never as judge of Scripture or as some-

thing that could disprove what God has said. We should find our understanding of who we are, first and foremost, from the One who made us and still sustains us. To that end...

## The Image of God

Holy Scripture shows that we humans (and all of us, of every tribe, race and people) are descended from Adam. We are heirs to Adam’s heritage. That includes a sinful fallen nature, with which we struggle every day, but which drowns and dies in baptism as the New Adam arises in Christ.

But Genesis also teaches that man is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). While we’ve lost the original holiness and righteousness because of our fall into sin, man is still the crown of God’s creation. Man is still given stewardship (dominion) of the Earth. And mankind is still of great value to our Creator. The dignity inherent in being created in the image of God is a dignity common to all people. It is thus forbidden by God to kill a man – for even in our fallen condition – this image of God in some sense remains: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image” (Gen. 9:6)

Furthermore, there is a unity of the human race. We have all this in common – being made in God’s image, and suffering the same consequences of the fall into sin. These qualities cut across all distinctions of people.

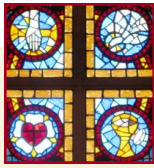
## Sin Divides. Babel much?



There was a time when the nations were united. Though, it was in sinful pride that they worked together to make a name for themselves, building a tower into the heavens. God was displeased. Partly in judgment,

*(Continued on page 4)*





## Messiah Lutheran Church & School

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Glenn Huebel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Associate Pastor

[www.messiahkeller.org](http://www.messiahkeller.org)

and partly to (mercifully) limit the extent of their ability to band together for evil purposes – God confused their languages and dispersed the nations.

Here is, in Genesis 11, the origin of the “races”. The various tribes, nations and languages are all here only because of sin. Sin divided us, as a human race, from our Creator. But it also brings divisions amongst us, between groups of people, small and large.

But this was not the design from the beginning! And it won't be the picture at the end.

### A Multitude in White Robes



Revelation 7 pictures for us the church in glory – a multitude that no one can count – from EVERY tribe, nation and people. There, the unity that was intended by our creator is realized. There, the divisions that sin brought are healed. There and then we will see a perfect reunion not only with our loved ones, but with all the company of heaven.

## Race, cont..

We also got a taste of this on the Day of Pentecost, when 50 days after Jesus' resurrection the Holy Spirit caused the Disciples to proclaim the Gospel in various languages. Thus, what was lost at Babel was being healed, if only in a preliminary way, by the Gospel. The church is established as the New Israel – incorporating all nations. In Christ, by His Spirit, we have unity, and we have a future.

### Peter and Paul

Paul's writings also have something to say to the question. Paul makes it clear that when it comes to the Gospel, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28) In Christ these distinctions are wiped away – for when it comes to salvation, God see us all the same. Equally dead in sin. Equally alive in Christ.

St. Peter also confesses, “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Acts 10:34-35)

### Who is my Neighbor?

And yes, even Jesus weighs in. When asked, “Who is my neighbor?”, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jews and Samaritans were different people, with no love lost between them. But Jesus uses this particular example to show just how strong Christian love can be, to overcome even the fiercest of human divisions. After all, Jesus is the prototype of the Good Samaritan – one who is completely “other” from us, but becomes completely one of us, to save us, restore and renew us.



To reconcile us to the Father in himself, and therefore also to one another.

This informs how we treat those of a different race, nation, or people. We see them as our neighbor. Especially for other Christians, who are not only neighbors but also brothers and sisters in Christ. “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:10)

### So, what?

These basics from Scripture won't dissolve all the problems of racism. Even if everyone was to suddenly embrace Christianity and believe in Jesus, troubles would remain with us as long as the sinful flesh is still kicking. The world is fallen, and passing away. The happy ending only truly comes at the end, when Jesus Christ makes all things new. We long for that day! Still, while we wait, we are given this time and called to live and serve.

We recognize our Father's intentions for those He has created. We see the dignity inherent in all who bear His image. We confess the divisions among us are a result of sin. All this can help frame our thinking. We know the universal call of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that the love He has shown us is the same love He has for all people. This helps us see others as Christ would see them. Therefore we seek to best love the neighbor God has set before us, no matter what tribe or nation or people or language. And this is a good place to start.



The McDermotts are getting settled in Ghana! Check out their adventures and mission work there at [Mcdermottsinghana.wordpress.com](http://Mcdermottsinghana.wordpress.com).