
THE LANGUAGE OF HOPE

Every profession and organization has its own language.

- Sports: “Third and long”; “Full count”; “In the paint.”
- Aerospace: “Aerodyne”; “TDZ (touch down zone)”; “mayday.”
- Restaurant: “0”; “13”; “86”?
- Sometimes, terms from one group or organization become language for another:
 - “graveyard shift”>>cemetery>>workplace.
 - “firewall”>>automobiles>>computers.

Even in the church, there is language we use (not to mention many practices) that folks who come with little or no experience in the church may find foreign and confusing.

- Actually, maybe even some who have been active in church for a very long time might find some of these terms unfamiliar and challenging to understand.

Today I want to take some time to break down the language barrier as it relates to things we talk about in here.

- And I’d like to start with the language of the church.

Let’s see how well you do with some of these:

Narthex – Entry to the church.

Chancel – Altar area>>up the steps>>inside the railing>>the “holy of holies.”

Nave – the big area where the congregation sits.

Pulpit – Latin for platform; elevated not so that the people can see the preacher, but follow the tradition of sitting at the feet of the preacher.

Liturgy – “work of the people”>>sit, stand, pray, respond, sing (some call those actions “Lutheran calisthenics”).

People actively involved in glorifying GOD.

Stand to be closer to GOD; sit to receive from GOD; kneel to humble ourselves before GOD.

Kyrie – Latin for “Lord”; “Kyrie eleison”>>“Lord, have mercy.”

Pastor – same root as “pasture”>>one who leads the flock to safe pasture>>lead the congregation where GOD would have it go

Synod – Greek for “journey together”>>an assembly of churches

LCMS; WELS; ELCA 65 synods; Pacifica Synod.

Another area of our life together in the church that can be confusing is in regard to the language of the Bible.

It can be said that the Bible is the first language of faith.

- Yet there are a lot of terms in the Bible that don’t make a lot of sense today.

Leper – someone with leprosy – skin disease; contagious and fatal in biblical times; very treatable today

Trespases – stay off the property>>“forgive us our trespases”-

“But I wasn’t anywhere near your property”>>going someplace you’re not supposed to go; some place GOD doesn’t want you to go>>sin.

Philistine, Samaritan, Israelite, Judean, Roman, Galilean, Nazarene – different nationalities;

Israelites and Judeans are both part of the same nation called Jews; Gentiles are everybody else>non-Jews.

Pharisees – religious lawyers>>judged whether someone else was keeping the religious laws but usually not themselves>>“no fair, you see.”

Sadducees – emphasized strict interpretation of the law; literalists; didn’t believe in heaven>>“so sad, you see.”

Sinners – in the gospels usually prostitutes (church has always needed someone at whom to point fingers).

Sanctified – to be made holy>>not what we do, but what GOD does to us through faith

Love – Greek: “philos”, “eros”, “agape.”

Peace – not “no war”>>sense of wholeness, even rightness in one’s being—even when there is war.

In the first reading today from Romans 5, Paul is using some specific language that can help us understand the concept of peace in the Bible and in Christianity:

- Paul explains it though using the language of hope.

“And we boast in the hope of the glory of GOD.”

As Paul explains this hope, there are three specific terms he uses that we need to understand, and this will be a bit of a review for those who are in one of the Wednesday Bible classes.

Justified

v. 1 *“Since we have been justified through faith.”*

- this is a word Paul takes from the language of a legal court.

- If you are on trial for something that you did, you want to prove that you were *justified* in your actions.

- And if the court felt you were justified, you would be found innocent.

- Found innocent doesn’t mean that you didn’t do it.

- Found innocent doesn’t mean that you’re not guilty.

- It just means that the court considers you innocent.

If you’re following along in a pew Bible or your own, you’ll read in v. 1 that Paul says we are “justified through faith.”

- Paul says we are found innocent of our sins simply because we believe that JESUS died for us.

- It doesn’t mean that we didn’t do it.

- It doesn’t mean that we aren’t guilty.

- It just means that GOD finds us innocent because of faith in JESUS.

There’s a saying that you can’t fix what you don’t admit.

- Perhaps being justified today>>being found innocent>>isn’t that big a deal because we don’t really admit that we’re guilty.

Some years ago, I was talking with some inmates at the Federal Correctional Institution on Terminal Island near Long Beach.

- One of the prisoners said to me, “I didn’t do the thing for which I was convicted, but I did enough other things that I got away with, that I deserve to be in here.”

- This man knew what he had done in his life and he could admit his guilt.

Ever tell a lie?>>What does that make you?>>a liar.

Ever take something that wasn’t yours without permission?>>What does that make you?>>a thief.

Ever looked at someone with lust?>>What does that make you?>>an adulterer.

- Lying, thieving, adulterers.

- And do lying, thieving, adulterers get to go be in the presence of GOD?>>Not a chance!

But Romans 5 tells us that we are “justified”.

- We are found innocent>>not guilty>>not sinful.
 - We are not liars, not thieves, not adulterers.
 - How did that happen?>>through faith.
 - Just by believing we are justified.
 - Sound too easy?
 - Well, this leads us to the next word of the language of hope.
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Grace

v. 2 *“we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand.”*

GRACE can be thought of as an acronym that stands for GOD’s Riches At CHRISt’s Expense – G. R. A. C. E.

- We receive the blessings of GOD and get to come into the presence of GOD (GOD’s riches) simply through faith.
- And Luther always adds “alone”>>grace alone!
 - Some would call this “cheap grace” because it doesn’t cost us a thing.
 - But it is “costly grace” because CHRIST gave His life that we might have it.

We are found innocent (justified) because JESUS who was sinless became sin for us and was found guilty for us,

- so that we might be set free.
 - and because of that, we have peace.
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Peace

v. 1 *“since we have been justified through faith (alone), we have peace with GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST.”*

Peace because

- we don’t have to serve time and pay for our sins;
 - we don’t have to live with the guilt and shame over what we have done or failed to do;
 - we don’t have to suffer the consequences for our failures to be the people GOD created us to be.
 - We are justified, innocent, free, and thus we have peace.
 - And this peace, that comes only through faith in CHRIST, gives us the hope that we can live in the presence and in the glory of GOD,
 - and even boast about this hope that others might know it, too.
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We need to understand the language of hope so that we can live in the freedom,

- and have the peace,
- and explain it to others,
 - so that they will understand as well.

We need to know the language of hope so that we can share the good news:

- that we are free;
- that we are innocent;
- that we are justified...by grace...through faith alone in our LORD JESUS CHRIST,
 - and can boast about that to others who are just as free and innocent and justified as we are, even if they don’t know it or believe it.

Peace with GOD is our hope.

- And it should be the hope of everyone:
 - a hope that doesn’t put us to shame, because GOD’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the HOLY SPIRIT.

That, my friends, is the language of hope. Learn it! Believe it! Share it!