

For the Sake of the Gospel

Merciful Lord, in a world with many competing voices help us to hear Your voice clearly through the Holy Scriptures. Teach us to correctly handle Your word of truth. Enable us to follow Christ as our Good Shepherd and make us bold and vibrant witnesses to the gospel; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

1 The gospel is central. How many times and in how many ways have you heard that? Lutherans have always understood salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ to be the central teaching of the Bible. Read Rom 3:21-28, what theme does Paul keep emphasizing here? How would you define the gospel?

2 The author of *'For the sake of the Gospel'* says the gospel is totally inclusive. What does he mean by this? See Gal 3:26-29. What qualifications do people need to be baptised? See Matt 28:19-20. Does one person's relative lack of sin make them a better candidate for baptism or hearing the gospel? See Rom 3:23.

3 The author says, "...we men and women are *equally* created and loved by God, *equally* sinful and in need of God's grace and forgiveness, and most of all, *equally* having that forgiveness in Christ." But does equality mean sameness in our Christian callings? Read Rom 12:3-8; how many categories does Paul list here? What does verse 5 emphasize? Why is this important?

4 Discuss the distinction between equality and unity. Read 1 Cor 12:12-31. Read carefully verse 25 and then verses 29 & 30, is there any contradiction here? What does Eph 4:1-13 add to the picture?

5 The charge of legalism is often made against those who hold to the biblical teaching of the male-only pastorate. What is the difference between following God's law and legalism? Why are Christians obedient to God's law? See John 8:31 and John 15:14. Believers cannot always understand all of God's commands or the reasons for them. But lack of understanding doesn't mean we're free to transgress or ignore them; see Rom 11:33-35.

6 The proclamation of the gospel flourishes within God's orderly design. The commands of God do not compete with the gospel but help to serve the greater stability of Christ's kingdom. It's not a matter of either/or, but of both/and so that God's rule in the world is maintained and the kingdom of grace is served. Baptism makes all Christians, men and women beneficiaries and participants in the saving gospel; see again Gal 3:26-29.

We have a sure prophetic Word
by inspiration of the Lord;
And though assailed on every hand,
The Word of God shall ever stand.
(LHS 273, stanza 1)
'Ordained By God'—6

