

Martin Luther's Tower Experience
How the Gate to Paradise Was Opened

"Then I felt as if I had been completely reborn and had entered Paradise through widely opened doors." Martin Luther made this comment in connection with what is called his "Tower Experience." What exactly was that experience? How did it impact Luther and shape the Reformation? Those questions will be addressed in this writing. But first, a brief word on what led up to this moment for Luther.

Christian Life in 1400s Germany

Think of the story of Rapunzel, the princess who was locked away in a tower for much of her life. She was cared for but kept from knowing anything of the outside world. This was the state of Christians in Martin Luther's day. Christians had been taught to believe many things about the Christian faith. They were led to believe that Jesus had suffered and died for their sins, but that his chief position was to sit in judgment over mankind. Jesus would view each sin committed as ingratitude for his work of salvation and his wrath would grow. Christians like Luther were frightened away from going directly to Jesus for grace and forgiveness.

Young Martin Luther had been instructed to turn to the saints instead. These saints could present sinners' requests more purely so as to not anger the Christ. Jesus' own mother was the closest saint to him, Christians were taught. Praying to Mary and other saints became a common practice for Christians. While they were also informed that they had received grace in Baptism, it was not enough to keep them in God's favor their whole life through. It did, however, grant them the potential for meriting further grace through their good works of faith and devotion.

Holy relics were located throughout the Roman empire and Christians were encouraged to pray over and venerate these items for further grace. Such items were claimed to be twigs from the burning bush of Moses, thorns from the crown placed on Christ's head, and hair from the virgin Mary. Indulgences were also brought into practice by popes and archbishops. These were pieces of paper that could be earned or purchased and would grant release from purgatory, the place of suffering for Christians before they could enter heaven. Luther merited one such indulgence in Rome for his dead grandfather by praying the Lord's Prayer on each step claimed to have been climbed by Christ.

These religious practices were the tower that held Christians. Most Christians had their own earthly worries to occupy their time, so they gave little thought to these practices and simply did them. They trusted that the church was being truthful with them, so they had no reason to doubt. Luther was devoted to these practices as well and depended on them for peace with God.

That is what Luther craved the most as a young man and into his years as a monk. Martin Luther knew his sins and his own mortality. He feared that if he were to die that he would not be ready to stand before God. He dreaded the Word of God that spoke of God's righteousness. Luther had been taught by the church that the righteousness of God was synonymous with his wrath. And God would have much wrath over Luther because he was far from being righteous before God.

The Experience that Changed Everything

Wrestling with these issues, Luther was given the task of teaching the Bible at the University of Wittenburg. While teaching, Luther was also studying and earned his Doctor of Theology degree in 1512. Martin Luther had been tasked with teaching specific books of the Bible, including Genesis, Psalms, Romans, and Galatians. In his studies, Luther had begun to trust the Word of God more and more and the writings of the church and early church fathers less and less. His breakthrough moment occurred as he was studying in his "office" on the second floor of a tower at the "black cloister" where he lived in Wittenburg. Here is what Luther experienced, in his own words:

I had begun to lecture on the Psalms again, believing that with my classroom experience in lecturing on the letters of Paul to the Romans, to the Galatians, and on the Letter to the Hebrews, I was now better prepared. All the while I was aglow with the desire to understand Paul in his Letter to the Romans. But...the one expression in chapter one concerning the "righteousness of God" blocked the way for me. I hated the expression "righteousness of God," since I had been instructed...to understand it...as the "formal or active righteousness" in which God proves Himself righteous by punishing sinners and the unjust...

Finally, after days and nights of wrestling with the difficulty, God had mercy on me, and then I was able to note the connection of the words "the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel" and "the just shall live by faith." Then I began to understand that the "righteousness of God" is that through which the righteous lives by the gift of God, that is, through faith, and that the meaning is this: The Gospel reveals the righteousness of God in a passive sense, that righteousness through which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The just shall live by faith." Then I felt as if I had been completely reborn and had entered Paradise through widely opened doors. Instantly all Scripture looked different to me. I passed through the Holy Scriptures, so far as I was able to recall them from memory, and gathered a similar sense from other expressions.

That was Luther's so called "tower experience." One might compare that with other Christians who have had revelations from God, except that this truly came through the Word of God and was supported by the full Word of God in the Bible. In meditation on the Word of God and the usage of words by God himself, the Spirit opened Luther's eyes to the truth of the Gospel. Righteousness was not about the sinner trying to become righteous. Sinners cannot change themselves. It would be like a bad piece of fruit suddenly becoming ripe. Or a sheep lost in a ravine guiding itself back to the fold. What Luther came to understand, based on Romans 1:17, was that the righteousness of God could only be obtained by the sinner as a gift. It must be given by God. Christ Jesus is that righteousness of God. He took on our unrighteousness on the cross and won for us and gives to us his own righteousness.

The Impact of Luther's Tower Experience

This became the foundation for the whole Reformation and is the core of all of Christianity. It flows beautifully from Ephesians 2:8 and 9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Words like that, connected with Romans 1:17—"For in [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith'"—drove the Reformation and was the truth the Reformers were not willing to let go. And that last part of Romans 1:17 was quoted from Habakkuk chapter 2, showing that the Old Testament faithful lived by this same doctrine of grace and faith.

For Luther, everything in the church must now be governed by this sacred teaching, that the righteousness of God is always received as a gift of grace through faith. Nothing in the church could be allowed to detract from the teaching. Anything that impeded that clear statement of Gospel must be removed. Genuine Lutherans have made their stand on that article of doctrine and continue to do so today. That is the blessed inheritance we have received and are privileged to share with the world and pass down to those who follow. This Gospel of grace will endure through the end of time, until Christ's most glorious return.

Until then, celebrate the grace that God has given you in Christ Jesus through Word and Sacrament. This Gospel set Luther free from the tower that hid Christ from him as his loving Savior. This Gospel does the same for you.

In Christ's service,
Pastor Caithamer

Let Us Pray

For our Missionaries: Pastor Randrianasolo Dembiniana Havanjanakary and the Madagascar Lutheran Seminary, Pastor Magnus Bengston and Lielsalaca Lutheran Church in Latvia, Pastor Obot Ite and the Lutheran Mission in Kingston, Jamaica

For Peace and Comfort: The family of Gaylord at his death, Jackie and family at the death of husband Jim, Dave & Karen and family at the death of Karen's mother Lila Moss

Following Surgery: Nicholas -cousin of Sara and Ryan

For Healing and Recovery: Judy, Steve, Rod, Jim -brother of Karla, Kaylianna -great granddaughter of Bob & Joan , Rev. Doug Evenson, Robin, Karla, Charlene, Brian, Teresa - godchild of Bob & Joan , Barbara -family friend of Bob & Joan , John, Hendricks-grandson of Dan & Joanie , Maria, Merv , Rebecca -daughter of Marvin & Esther, Roy - father of Anne , Todd -grandson of Harold, Brett -cousin of the Kindts'

For Successful Treatments: Susan, Dan, Nancy, Barb, Luke, Earl, Linda, Joan, Jeanette, Nancy

For our Military: Nick , Nick , Andy, Brandon, Zachary, David



Trunk or Treat – Our annual Trunk or Treat will be held on Sunday, October 29 from 2:30-4:30. Sign-up sheets and donation slips are located on the bulletin board by the fellowship hall. We need volunteers to decorate their trunks and pass out candy. We also need members to donate candy or treats. Donations can be placed in the coat room. If you have any questions, please contact Faith

LWML Meeting will take place on October 17th at 6:30pm. We will be making plans for the Cookie Walk.

LWML Happenings

- October 6 & 7— Retreat at Camp CILCA [for more information, email Linda K at
- October 8— LWML Sunday
- November 26— Collection for Empty Tomb begins [more information will follow]
- December 2— Cookie Walk [more information will follow]

LWML is again collecting school supplies for the Orphan Grain Train. Needed items are: crayons, new pens and pencils, loose leaf paper and notebooks, spiral notebooks, glue sticks, construction paper, 12 inch rulers, scissors, washable markers, and new coloring books. All supplies are given individually. Please place your items in the box located in the coat room by Sunday, October 8, 2023. For further information, please contact Donna or Jean . Many thanks for your help in supporting kids around the world with LWML!



October Music Notes



Rehearsals for our Alleluia Ringers (Wednesdays at 6:00 pm) and Adult Choirs (Thursdays at 6:00 pm) have resumed and continue. Our instrumentalists play for us as available on Sunday mornings. All are welcome to take part! Our Woodwind Quartet (flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet and horn) is getting ready to join the other ensembles who enhance our worship.

Schedule for Sundays in October is as follows:

Sunday, October 1	Instrumentalists		
Sunday, October 8	Mixed Choir	8:00am	
Sunday, October 15	Day School Chimes	10:45am	
Sunday, October 22	Alleluia Ringers	8:00am	
Sunday, October 29	Brass & Choirs	8:00am & 10:45am	[Reformation]

Our Reformation Sunday services are an important occasion where we celebrate our Lutheran heritage. This year among the pieces that will be performed will be a selection from Felix Mendelssohn's "Reformation" Symphony. This work was written in 1830 in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession, one of the seminal documents of the Lutheran faith. The selection will be performed with horn and organ.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) was one of the most important Romantic composers, whose music is still admired and regularly performed today. His Six Sonatas for organ include one which is based on Martin Luther's chorale "Vater unser im Himmelreich" (Our Father, who art in Heaven- LSB 766). Also in our LSB, we find several arrangements of Mendelssohn's music, most famously "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!"

Soli Deo Gloria,
Keith

Youth News - The Camp CILCA youth retreat was a blast! Highlights were playing Underground Church, archery, and a team building Challenge course. Check out the board in the church hallway to see pictures from the weekend. Coming up in October, we have several events planned. On Friday, Oct. 13 from 6-9pm we will meet at the Ladage family home for a bonfire and weenie roast! Drop off and pickup will be at their home. On Friday, Oct. 27 starting at 6pm - Saturday, Oct. 28 at 7am, SJL Youth will be hosting Lock In with a CYM team from Concordia University! To sign up, go to: <https://forms.gle/kXvWwBca2bhcNhop9>

On Sunday, Oct. 29, join the excitement of the Trunk or Treat in the St. John parking lot.

We will help pass out treat bags and help make this community service event run smoothly. If you have any questions, contact Karen



E.A.T. Night - E.A.T. @ Texas Roadhouse on Monday, October 9th, 4-10pm. Texas Roadhouse is giving back at least 10% of our purchases. We will receive a larger percentage with more Dine to Donate patrons, so spread the word. Bring in the flyer or show it on your phone to make sure that the proceeds will be donated to St. John Lutheran School. Flyers are available on the narthex table and on the school website www.stjohnls.com. This fundraiser applies to dine-in and carry out purchases. Thank you for your continued support of these events.



Shop from hundreds of items from local artists and craftsmen! Get a fresh cup of coffee and purchase bake sale items. The Bake Sale will include individual items to eat on site and also items to take home. Soup, salads, and sandwiches will be available for lunch. Contact the school office with any questions.

How you can help to make this event successful:

- Be a Vendor – are you a crafter or artist and have personal creations to sell? Fill out a vendor application form, found in the school office.
- Be a Shopper – come to the fair and see all the wonderful arts and crafts. Get a head start on Christmas or just buy something for yourself.
- Be a Baker – items will be needed for the bake sale. A sign-up sheet will be posted by the fellowship hall.
- Be a Volunteer – extra hands will be needed to help with this event. A sign-up sheet is posted by the fellowship hall.
- Be an Advertiser – help spread the word! Tell your friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, etc.... Share the flyer on your social media. Post the flyer at your work. Contact the school office to get a paper or electronic copy of the flyer.

Come out for the 2nd Annual St. John Car Show!

Bring your car and enjoy a wonderful fall day with other car enthusiasts!

There is No registration fee but please contact the school office if you plan on attending so we can reserve a spot for you.

*

(Drop-ins are welcome.)



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Dan, Marissa | 23 Selam, Tracy, Greg, Alexa |
| 2 Lauren | 24 Rita, Curt, Kaya, Jeff |
| 3 Lance, Jake, Brandon | 25 Claire, Catherine, Jordan |
| 4 Rebecca, Jean, Connor, Aleace, Annabel | 26 Linda, Alayna |
| 5 Diane, Rachel, Kathy | 28 Patty |
| 6 Gail | 29 Karen, Joe, Trent |
| 7 Daniel | 30 Pat, Ronda, Owen |
| 8 Alexis, Rex, Caroline, Leslie, Michael, John | 31 Sue, Kendra, Max, Robert, Dorothy |
| 9 Terra, Spenser, Ashley, Kara, Walter, Jay | |
| 10 Nathaniel, Tinley, Duane | |
| 11 Bryce, Delores | |
| 12 Sandy | |
| 13 Ben | |
| 14 Randy | |
| 15 Will, Nicholas, Gabriel, Kyle, Julie, Nick | |
| 16 Alex | |
| 17 Jan, Terry, Ryan | |
| 19 Roger, Bailey | |
| 20 Wally, Christina, Anthea, | |
| 21 Ruby, Linda | |
| 22 Geneice, Ethan | |

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Tyler & Rachel (1); Rev. Jeff & Katie Caithamer (18) | 18 Curt & Paula (37) |
| 2 Laran & Erin (13) | 21 Raymond & Judy (56); Mike & Maxine (34) |
| 4 John & Lisa (20) | 24 Steve & Nancee (42); Richard & Barbara (53) |
| 5 Daniel & Laura (10) | 26 Tom & Peggy (55) |
| 6 Lee & Judy (50) | 31 Jon & Susan (25); Alvin & Beverly (54) |
| 7 Rene & Nicole (23) | |
| 8 Rev. Don & Mar Ehlers (63); John & Cheryl (57) | |
| 9 Martin & Beth (29) | |
| 10 Curtis & Lori (42); Gerald & Linda (50) | |
| 11 Ryan & Amy (20); David & Kristina (26) | |
| 13 Derek & Jamie(11) | |
| 14 Chad & Tracy (17); Arnold & Myla (51) | |
| 15 Andy & Cindy (57); John & Marissa (2); Jim & Fawn (7) | |
| 16 Tony & Jennifer (30) | |
| 17 David & Lisa (25); Roger & Norma (25) | |

Our school continues to have two open positions to be filled. If you know someone interested, please have them contact Mrs. Black, cblack—at—stjohnls.com .

Athletic Director – We are looking for an individual interested in serving as a director of our athletics. St. John offers Cross Country, Volleyball, Girls and Boys Basketball and Track and Field. This is a great way to learn more about our other Lutheran schools and see how Christ works through our student athletes.

Art Teacher – St. John Lutheran School is seeking an inspiring K-8 Art Teacher for the 2023-2024 school year. This teacher is responsible for teaching art education and developing in each student an interest in and the ability for creative expression in visual terms, using skills and techniques of artistic expression; to develop aesthetic understandings and appreciations; to discover and develop talents of students in the field of art.



**Sales Begins
October 23!**

Order forms will be available on the narthex table. Return order forms to the school office by Wednesday, November 8th. Dough-livery date is Tuesday, November 17.


Proceeds from this fundraising will go towards the 7th&8th grade class trip.



OCTOBER

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."
Romans 1:17

2023

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat																																																																																																		
1 18th Sunday after Pentecost 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion 1:00 New Member Class	2 5:30 Finance Board	3 5:15 Fellowship Board 6:00 Trustees, School Board	4 5:45 Midweek School, Lifelight 6:00 Handbells 7:15 Holy Communion	5 8:10 Chapel 10:00 Lifelight 6:00 Adult Choir Practice	6 <i>Day School Closed</i>	7																																																																																																		
Central Illinois District Pastors Conference																																																																																																								
8 19th Sunday after Pentecost 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion 1:00 New Member Class	9 Columbus Day 4:00 E.A.T. Night @ Texas Roadhouse	10 6:00 Elders 10:00 Adult Bible Class	11 8:10 Chapel 5:45 Midweek School, Lifelight 6:00 Handbells 7:15 Holy Communion	12 7:00 Men's Prayer Breakfast 10:00 Lifelight 6:00 Adult Choir Practice	13 6:00 Youth Group @ Ladage Home	14 9:00 St. John Arts & Crafts Fair 9:00 Car Show																																																																																																		
15 20th Sunday after Pentecost 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion 1:00 New Member Class	16	17 10:00 Adult Bible Class 6:00 Council 6:30 LWML	18 8:10 Chapel 5:45 Midweek School, Lifelight 6:00 Handbells 7:15 Holy Communion	19 10:00 Lifelight 6:00 Adult Choir Practice	20 <i>Day School Closed</i> <i>Newsletter Deadline</i>	21																																																																																																		
22 21st Sunday after Pentecost 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion 1:00 Voter's Meeting	23	24 10:00 Adult Bible Class 6:00 Parish Ed 7:00 Youth Board	25 8:10 Chapel 5:45 Midweek School, Lifelight 6:00 Handbells 7:15 Holy Communion	26 10:00 Lifelight 6:00 Adult Choir Practice	6:00p-7:00a Youth Group Lock-In																																																																																																			
29 Reformation Day (Obs.) 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion 2:30 Trunk-or-Treat	30 6:00 Bylaws Committee	31 10:00 Adult Bible Class	Church Office: 359-1123 School Office: 359-1714 Pastor Caithamer's day off: Fridays	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">September 2023</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	September 2023							S	M	T	W	T	F	S					1	2		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">November 2023</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	November 2023							S	M	T	W	T	F	S					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
September 2023																																																																																																								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S																																																																																																		
				1	2																																																																																																			
3	4	5	6	7	8	9																																																																																																		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16																																																																																																		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23																																																																																																		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30																																																																																																		
November 2023																																																																																																								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S																																																																																																		
				1	2	3																																																																																																		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10																																																																																																		
11	12	13	14	15	16	17																																																																																																		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24																																																																																																		
25	26	27	28	29	30																																																																																																			