



Reading scripture with Five Lutheran Lenses

Consider these insights when you engage scripture alone or with others.

Law & Gospel

Look for messages throughout the Bible of both *law* (that which accuses and judges us; commandments) and *gospel* (that which comforts and saves us; promises). Texts may function as either or both.

What Shows Forth Christ

The whole of the Bible points to Jesus Christ and his saving message to us. Lutherans are Jesus people and the Bible is a Jesus book. We worship Jesus not the Bible.

Scripture Interprets Scripture

Individual scripture passages (some difficult, even contradictory) are interpreted in the light of the whole Bible's central messages and themes. We avoid isolating passages as narrow proof texts. Some scripture is more important than other scripture.

The Plain Meaning of the Text

Scripture is understood in the sense that would seem obvious to their original readers. It respects their context and how they would have heard and experienced the passage.

Public Interpretation

Passages should first seek the public meaning of the text—what it would mean to all people. Listening to folks from cultures and generations other than our own ensures that our sense of public is not too narrow. Then we can ask what it means for us—consistent with what it means for everyone.

***For a lengthier discussion of these Lutheran insights see Mark Allan Powell's article in the Lutheran Study Bible, pp. 1535-1543.

***These descriptions have been adapted by Rev. Luther Dale, Saint Paul Area Synod, Book of Faith Leadership Team.

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“The Bible opens the very heart of God to us. It shows us what God has done for us-what God still does for us-what God always will do for us.

“That’s the first and the last thing we Lutherans want to say about the Bible: the Bible is the Word of God.”

Mark Allan Powell
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