

Jurong Christian Church

The Vine



For Internal Circulation Only



SOLI DEO GLORIA

by John Lee



DIALECT @ JEWEL

by Peggy Tan



FAITH, NOT THE PEOPLE

by Alicia Wong



The Vine This Month

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HOM Editorial

Have you ever wondered why Halloween, known as a time of witches, ghouls and goblins, is celebrated by millions of people in multiple countries as a fun time for kids? Last Saturday night, we were walking to the hawker centre for dinner when I saw a number of parents with their children coming out of the CC. The children were in various costumes and some of the adults were wearing witches' hats. They comprise of local Chinese and Malays and a number of China and Indian nationals. The universality of this event boggles the mind when you think of the many excuses you hear of Christianity being a "Western" religion. Isn't Halloween a Western celebration?

The word Halloween is derived from the term, "All Hallows Eve," which falls on Oct. 31. Halloween is the eve of All Saints Day which falls on the next day, Nov. 1st. Some say that the origins of Halloween can be traced back to ancient Ireland and Scotland. On Oct. 31st the Celts celebrated the day, the time of the crop harvests and the annual change of season. There was much superstition associated with this time of change, including the belief in fairies and that the spirits of the dead wandered around looking for bodies to inhabit.

Later, around the 5th century, as the Catholic Church developed, it took over the celebration. Nov. 1st became "All Hallows Eve" where all the saints of the Catholic church were honored. So, it appears that the origins of Halloween are a mixture of old Celtic pagan rituals superstition and early Catholic traditions.

The above short history of Halloween was extracted from a website: *Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry CARM.org*.

Do Christians celebrate Halloween? *"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak."* (1 Corinthians 8:9) However for Lutherans, we have something more important to celebrate on Oct 31st – REFORMATION DAY.

Martin Cheah

SOLI DEO GLORIA

for The Reformation

Sundays after Sundays, we go to church and hear a preacher preach a sermon. Have you ever wondered whether the preacher is often enjoying himself at the pulpit, or trembling in his lips and wishing that he is not being forced to preach? If you do wonder, go ask the preachers. 😊

Well, this month (October), we are remembering the Protestant Reformation, and the name “Martin Luther” comes to mind. So, we might also want to hear what Martin Luther once said about his aversion towards preaching:



“I feared the pulpit perhaps as greatly as you do; yet I had to do it; I was forced to preach.... Ah, how I feared the pulpit! Under this pear tree I advanced fifteen arguments to Dr. Staupitz; with them I declined my call. But they did me no good.”

Of course, Luther’s fear of the pulpit as a preacher was eventually overcome and he became a prolific preacher for decades.

To understand more of Martin Luther’s thinking, we can do more than remembering the famous 95 Theses that he nailed on a church door in Germany, setting off a no-turning-back tide of the Reformation. In a particular year (1528) alone, he preached about 200 sermons. Many of his sermons are now freely available online. By going through these sermons, we do not only

gain a better understanding of the man and his belief, but also gain a lot of valuable spiritual insight aligned with the Gospel Truth.

While there may be variances of theological opinions among denominational distinctives, both the Lutheran and Reformed branches of Protestantism uphold the same foundational principles of the five solas which Luther called the “doctrine by which the church stands or falls”:



- Sola Scriptura, by Scripture alone.
- Sola Gratia, by grace alone.
- Sola Fide, by faith alone.
- Solus Christus, through Christ alone.
- Soli Deo Gloria, glory to God alone.

Sola scriptura



The Bible alone is the highest authority on truth. Although church tradition has its authority, this authority is still subordinate to the authority of Scriptures; viz., the 66 books in the Bible. (Ref. Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19)

John Wesley said, “The Church is to be judged by the Scriptures, not the Scriptures by the Church.”

John Chrysostom (304 – 407), a Christian bishop humbly said, “You have Scripture for a master instead of me; from there you can learn whatever you would know.”

Sola gratia

Our salvation is effected by God's grace through Jesus Christ; not justified by human works which will always be inadequate due to our sinful nature. Our righteousness is not based on human merit but on the unmerited favour of our Lord Jesus Christ.



“Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.” – 1 Pet. 1:13

We can also “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” – Heb. 4:16

We reject what the Roman Church taught about righteousness being credited to us by both God’s grace and human virtue.

Sola fide

The Augsburg Confession says, “It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God **by grace**, for Christ’s sake, **through faith**, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21–26 and 4:5.”

Solus Christus

We discover from **Scripture alone** that we are justified by **grace alone** through **faith alone** because of **Christ alone**.

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.” – 1 Tim. 2:5-6

We should hold fast our confession that Christ alone is our only great high priest (Heb. 4:14), our Redeemer (Gal. 3:13), the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

Since our salvation is achieved wholly through the work of Christ, we reject the Roman Church's preaching on purgatory and prayers to saints.

Soli Deo Gloria

Referencing Rev. 5:13 and 7:10, we can say, "To God alone be the glory!"

Scripture comes from God; **grace** is His unmerited favour of forgiveness to us; and even our **faith** is granted by Him to connect us to the Cross where our sin is propitiated by no one but **Christ** alone.

Our life is entirely under the sovereign rule of God. Is there need for any other reason to attribute all **glory to God?**

By acknowledging the theological principle of Soli Deo Gloria, we should be better placed to:

- disabuse ourselves of any inclination towards seeking self-esteem in our service;
- expound a clearer exegesis of the Gospel legacy of the Reformation vs. the Law under the Old Covenant.

John Lee



Dialect Outing to Jewel Changi Airport

Where Jewel met Jewels on 2 Oct 2019

The Dialect Group comprised of pioneer citizens and senior citizens. Though in their golden years, these dialect members were still filled with vim and vigour for an outing to explore Jewel Changi Airport.

“Even in old age they will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green.” ~ Psalm 92:14

This can be attested to by their faithfulness in regularly attending worship in church, playing their valuable part in growing the fellowship among themselves and extending friendship to newcomers. Through their faithfulness, God has blessed the Dialect Ministry with visible growth.

The excursion to Jewel Changi Airport was an extension of their fellowship beyond the walls of the church. A warm spirit pervaded the atmosphere as they had their lunch together in comfortable surroundings. Taking photos for keepsakes with the cool backdrop of a gushing fountain banished any sense of tiredness.



The faithfuls of God are like the jewels of a crown. (Zech 9:16) We do not underestimate the preciousness of our elderly folk in the Dialect congregation. Being described as jewels also means that they are beautiful and

special in many ways compared to others.

The website of Jewel Changi Airport says, “Explore *Jewel*. Discover a wondrous world where nature meets retail.”

On 2 Oct 2019, from morning to afternoon, Jewel Changi Airport was more like a wondrous excursion spot where Jewel met Jewels.

And the Jewels (*plural*) extended their presence to T1, T2, T3 and T4 of the airport to let their golden-age activeness and cheerful faces shine forth the evidence of God’s blessings upon them.

Continue to pray and give thanks to God for blessings upon the Dialect Ministry!

Peggy Tan

Faith, not the people

Recently, my ballet instructor made a startling statement.

“It’s not the faith but the people that fail.”

Somehow, this statement keeps ringing in my ears. It is only when I dwell into the book of Job did I understand why that statement stayed in my mind for so long.

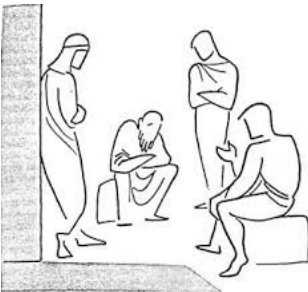
What did the Bible say?

The first of Job’s friends to speak was Eliphaz (Job 4:7–8). He declared,

“Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished?

Where were the upright ever destroyed?

As I have observed, those who plow evil
and those who sow trouble reap it.”



Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar were sure that Job must have some dirty secret at the root of his newfound troubles. They ‘knew’ there had to be a reason so they badgered him to confess this suspected secret sin. Job knew there was no great hidden scandal in his life (Job 1: 1 - This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil). He was

defensive in the face of his accusers but he also wondered—why? One of the difficult things for us to accept is that many of the sufferings we go through simply cannot be neatly categorised. The ‘why’ is often elusive. Bad things do not only happen to bad people. Job recognised

that many times the wicked live to reach a ripe old age and even appear to prosper (21:7–13).

Seek Growth, Not Vindication

There are many ‘whys’ that we will never know in this life. In trying to explain everything, sometimes we miss the point. Job wanted God to vindicate him in the eyes of his friends. People ridiculed him (30:1, 9) and that is a hard thing for anyone to take. When Elihu began to answer Job on behalf of God in chapters 32 - 37, he pointed out that Job had been focusing on the wrong thing for much of his trials. Elihu explained that God instructs and chastens in various ways. He has His reasons for how He deals with us and sometimes, things are beyond our understanding.

In our trials and tests, James encourages us to ask God for wisdom (James 1:5). If we do so in faith, He will surely give it. Whatever the trial or test, there is always growth that can be achieved. Even Jesus Christ Himself learned by the things He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). God wants us to grow. Therefore, we must undergo periodic pruning to stimulate that growth (John 15:2).



Trust in the Face of Anguish

It is relatively easy to trust God when things are going the way we like them. Quite a different story when things turn upside down and inside out. It is in the midst of such perplexity and anguish that faith in God is sorely tested.

One of the things Satan did not understand about Job was his motive. Satan thought Job only served God because it was to his advantage. He was convinced that if God removed blessings and protection, Job would curse and revile Him. However, that did not happen. Job loved God and served Him out of sincere devotion. He trusted God even when he was feeling abandoned. This lesson of **steadfast trust** is one of the most important aspects of character we can gain from any trial.

Through his trials, Job came to **know God deeply**, not simply to know about Him. He became a far more humble and compassionate man as a result of what he went through. Learning these lessons was the key to his emerging out of the dark shadows of life and into the sunlight once again.

Reflections

“It’s not the faith but the people that fail.”

Throughout my life, there are times I seek support from people and was vastly disappointed when I did not get it from them. In the latter parts of my life, I begin to understand that I had been going around it the wrong way. No one can fulfill all our needs. When we expect too much of the people around us—we glorify them and are inevitably disappointed by them.

Our trials can make us bitter or they can make us better. Which will yours do for you?

Alicia Wong

from the pen of Rev Fredric Lee

Praise the Lord! Dorothy and I feel very blessed to return to JCC. It has been a wonderful homecoming as we reconnect with many brothers and sisters. God has blessed JCC abundantly by giving us this land and new building for His Kingdom purposes. I am privileged to join you in this new environment to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in proclaiming His Gospel to the Jurong community together with other tenant churches housed in the same building.

JCC is where I first started in pastoral ministry in 1994. My children are all married now and they serve in Bedok Lutheran Church except for my youngest, Eirene, who is in her husband's church. Dorothy and I are currently enjoying time with our 5 grandchildren who are between 3 months and 5 years old.



(L to R) Front: Arielle, Fredric, Dorothy, Sophie, Eden, Jonathan, Lauren, Amy, Eirene, Isaac. Back: Jing, David, Declan, Charis.

I'm impressed and very encouraged to see many second generation JCCians serving actively and in leadership too. I know your parents are very proud of you!

Many older JCCians remember Dorothy for teaching the Bethel Bible Series. However, over the years, Dorothy has developed her ministry in Church organ music. She continues to serve regularly to play the Church organ in Bedok & Queenstown Lutheran Church and she has been in the Singapore Symphony Chorus for the last 20 years because she loves to sing. Her passion has always been in art and music so I've been very much blessed by her support in the worship music ministry. I support her by enjoying her singing. ☺

As a Pastor of the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS), it has been my privilege to pastor in Bedok Lutheran Church, Yishun Christian Church (Lutheran), and Queenstown Lutheran Church. I have experienced how each congregation is uniquely different. Yet all are united by our distinctive identity as Lutherans of LCS and our common Lutheran Confessions.

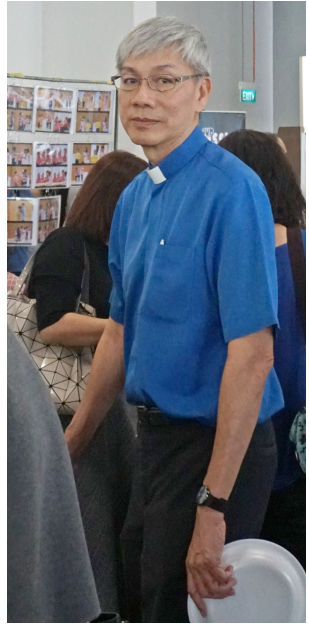
The longer I serve the Lord, the more I appreciate the key feature of our belief which is that we are hopeless sinners who are mercifully saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Jesus saves and keeps you and me through the waters of baptism and in the Eucharist. The longer I carry the cross, the greater is my need for God's grace, the deeper my hunger for the Eucharist, the more grateful I am for the "washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."

⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good." (Titus 3)

Thankfully, God has brought us into His family in JCC so that neither you nor I need to walk alone in this world. Since we are by nature sinful and are easily tempted by the devil, the Holy Spirit gathers us every Sunday in the Divine Worship Service to receive God's grace in the Word and Sacraments. Our treasured Lutheran Liturgy enables us to encounter Christ, to hear Him speak to us in the Gospel read and proclaimed, to be forgiven and renewed in the Eucharist, and thus be empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Good News by our words and our actions. "Let the life God gives us be shared with everyone."

My dear brothers and sisters, "let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:16). Praise the Lord!

Blessings of grace and peace in our Redeemer Jesus Christ,



Pastor Fredric Lee

JCKK Graduation 2019

