

Lutheran Treasures for the Northwest

As identified by Salmon Nation participants and conversation partners

- a) **Theology of the cross:** A theology of the cross opens eyes to see the world's brokenness, but also points to life-giving hope. Facing the unbearable is part of moral discernment; this precisely is where God promises to be. (Jim Norlie)

- b) **Sacramentality:** Luther believed in an in-dwelling Christ, a Christ who invites us to faith in him and also into the faith of him. He is mystically present in us and in "all places even the tiniest leaf" (Luther's Works, 57:37). Thus Eucharist "is less a sacramental meal of an exclusive club and more an apocalyptic event manifesting Christ in solidarity with the whole earth." (Frank Wilson)

- c) **Christ in Creation:** For Luther, "the finite bears the infinite." Creation matters. Earth bears and reveals the Holy. All the earth is to be treasured as revelatory. All things are connected, from the salmon fry to the Douglas fir to the most delicate trillium.

- d) **Grace:** Our freedom as Christ-followers comes not from earning or deserving salvation, but from being loved precisely when we do not deserve it. Unearned gifts surround us. We are thus freed in Lutheran theology not *from* existence but *for* it, freed to be embodied and imperfect as we act, in gratitude, for the love of the neighbor and the world. We are freed from guilt or worry to seek lives of righteousness, or "right relation." (Cynthia Moe-Lobeda)

- e) **Contextual Nature:** Lutheran theology is "by nature contextual" and "inherently self-critiquing." Luther's understanding of the human being as inherently fallible and finite means we steer clear of making claims of universality or infallibility. Thus: Humility. Education. Nuanced, not simplified, theology. God-talk for grown-ups. (Martha Maier)

- f) **Scriptural understanding:** Lutherans understand the Bible not as a rule book to be read literally, but as the Word of God. We read it "seriously but not literally." This Word is understood as coming to us in three forms. 1) the Living Christ 2) the Spoken Word, or gospel and 3) the written word, meant to be secondary, or interpreted through the lens of the other two. As Krister Stendahl would say when scripture was quoted at him, "Yes I understand that this is God's word, but is it God's Word for me?"

- g) Community:** For Lutherans, sacraments never happen independently of community: it is the gathered who bless the bread and wine; the gathered who baptize the new Christian. We ground our lives in the burden and the blessing of being in close relationship with our sisters and brothers in Christ.
- h) Justice which subverts the powers and principalities:** Martin Luther was a faithful rebel in a long line of faithful rebels. “The power of God’s compassionate, justice-making, unquenchable love for creation may live within and among human beings and the rest of nature. Moral agency for living toward the flourishing of creation – which includes subverting economic systems that render death and destruction – may flow from embodied communion in which God incarnate is received and given. The more fully people receive Her love and become it, the more able they are, as communion, to resist economic structures and ideologies that thwart the gift of abundant life for all.” (Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World*, 109).