

2016 • A Symposium on Hermeneutics



“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,” Paul says in 2 Timothy, “a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” The practice of hermeneutics, or biblical interpretation, has always been a vital skill for Christian pastors. How much more so in our 21st century world where words and their meanings are constantly being bent, ignored or challenged? Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary’s 2016 Symposium on Hermeneutics will focus on this vital issue in the work of a pastor. This year’s symposium will be held on Monday and Tuesday, September 19 and 20 in the WLS auditorium. It is available for streaming at <http://livestream.com/WLSLive>.

The Value of Hermeneutics

Pastor Steven Lange (WLS 1997)
Hope Lutheran Church
Louisville, Kentucky
Prof. Kenneth Cherney, reactor

The first essay will focus on hermeneutics in its more theoretical aspects. While many modern and postmodern interpreters approach the text of Scripture with a “hermeneutic of suspicion,” the essay will focus on how the believing interpreter sees himself as a servant of the text, wishing above all to understand it in its plain sense, not to “overstand” it. The believing interpreter reads the text with the presupposition of faith, recognizing what the Scriptures say about themselves—that they are the divinely inspired Word of God at whose center is Christ and justification by grace alone through faith. The essay will point out the strength of our Wauwatosa heritage, which puts a premium on the historical and literary context of the Scriptures.

Hermeneutics and the Confessions

Pastor Benjamin Tomczak (WLS 2006)
Bethel Lutheran Church
Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Prof. John Brenner, reactor

The second essay will focus on the relationship of the confessions to the Holy Scriptures. The essayist will explore such questions as: Are we, as Lutherans committed to a quia subscription to the 16th century confessions, to view the confessions as a hermeneutical lens through which to interpret the Scriptures? We honor the Reformation’s principle of sola Scriptura; but are we also obliged to adhere to the Reformers exegetical moves in all of the passages that they cite in the confessions? The upcoming 500th anniversary of the Reformation provides a good opportunity to reexamine the hermeneutical approach used by the Reformers in the confessions.

The Hermeneutics of the New Perspective on Paul

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt (WLS 2012)
St. John Lutheran Church
Burlington, Wisconsin
Prof. Paul Wendland, reactor

For the past three decades, New Testament scholars from virtually every denomination (both conservative and liberal) have championed or been influenced by the so-called New Perspective on Paul. This movement has brought a new interpretation to several key elements of Paul’s theology. Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt of Burlington, Wisconsin, will speak in the third essay on what is meant by the New Perspective. He will point out why it is not the result of proper biblical interpretation and will show how it undermines Scripture’s chief teaching of justification by faith alone. As WELS pastors minister in an American theological context that continues to wander farther from justification by faith alone, it is important for our pastors to be aware of what a gem we still possess in this teaching so that we may highlight it in all its pristine beauty to a world that is increasingly unfamiliar with it.

Schedule

Symposium sessions begin in the campus auditorium at 1:00 p.m. on Monday; two essays are presented. The evening affords an opportunity for fellowship. Tuesday’s sessions begin with worship at 8:00 a.m. after which the third essay is read. The symposium adjourns at 12:30 p.m.