

## I. Being Christian Comes First

- Salvation comes through **faith in Jesus Christ alone**, not by church membership
- Different churches shape how we **talk about, live out, and share** that faith

## II. Lutheran Theology as a “Lens”

- Illustration: Rose-colored sunglasses
- Being Lutheran means reading Scripture and life through a **distinct theological lens**
- That lens shapes how we understand God’s work in the world

## III. The Augsburg Confession and Article IV

- The Augsburg Confession summarizes biblical Christian faith
- Article IV: **Justification** — “the article on which the church stands or falls”
- Lutherans are united with the historic church on core beliefs, but distinct in how justification is taught

## IV. Justification by Faith Alone

- We are **not made right with God** by our strength, merit, or works
- Romans 5: Christ died for sinners, the powerless, the ungodly
- Justification means being made right **before God**, not before people
- Civil righteousness is valuable—but it cannot save

## V. Freely Justified for Christ’s Sake

- God is not influenced or persuaded by human effort
- Salvation is a **gift**, received only by faith in Jesus’ forgiveness
- Faith trusts the promise that sins are forgiven because of Christ

## VI. Why This Matters at St. John’s

- A Lutheran church is committed to preaching Christ crucified for sinners
- No matter how good or bad you look, the focus remains on Jesus
- This doctrine brings **freedom, peace, and assurance**

## VII. The Promise That Changes Everything

- We can do nothing to save ourselves
  - Faith receives Christ’s promise of forgiveness
  - God’s final word to sinners in Christ:  
    **“You are pleasing in my sight.”**
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## Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important to remember that being a Christian comes before belonging to any particular church?
2. What does the “lens” metaphor help you understand about how theology shapes the way we read the Bible?
3. How does justification by faith alone challenge the idea that being a “good person” is enough before God?
4. What is the difference between being righteous in the eyes of other people and being righteous before God?
5. Read Romans 5:1-11. How does Romans 5 describe who Christ died for—and why is that good news?
6. Why do you think people struggle with the idea that salvation is completely free?
7. How does justification by faith alone bring freedom rather than encouraging careless living?
8. In what ways does this teaching shape how a Lutheran church preaches, teaches, and welcomes people?
9. What difference might it make in your daily life to truly believe that God says, “*You are pleasing in my sight*”?