

Vacation Bible School
July 1-3
9am-Noon
July 5th BBQ Block Party
5:30 pm



Bethany Free Lutheran Church
451 34th St.
Astoria, OR 97103

Doesn't God love all people?

Sometimes when we read the Bible it appears that God is really cruel or mean spirited. Why does God kill people, or allow people to be killed so often? Especially in the Old Testament it can appear that God is an egomaniac who has a heavy hand with discipline. Even the New Testament paints a harsh picture of God at times. In Mark chapter 9 we read of Jesus explaining how Hell is like an open garbage dump where fires never cease popping up and where worms and maggots feaster and multiply. Why would God send humans, the crown of His creation, to a place that was created to be punishment for fallen angels who we know are now called demons?

If God is love, as the Bible says God is, wouldn't God just forgive all humans their sins, and allow all into heaven because of His love, mercy, and kindness? The concept of God sending humans to Hell is something that people have struggled with over the years. There is a belief called universalism that describes Heaven as a place for all people, regardless of belief, faith in Jesus, or any other factor. Universalism is the belief that God allows all humans into heaven no matter what they did, what they believed, or anything else. It is a belief that has a surprisingly large amount of followers.

Most funerals have people speaking about the deceased and their firm understanding that they know this person is in heaven. And their reason is because the deceased was a good person (at least from their perspective). And if you press most people, they will tell you that all people get to heaven. It is increasingly becoming more and more rare to hear a funeral sermon that explains that we go to either Heaven or Hell. In fact, most pastors and speakers rarely if ever mention the word Hell in any message, let alone a funeral message. One man that attended seminary with me from the AFLC seminary in Plymouth MN, who had all the same professors and training that I did, changed his belief system sometime after his internship and became a universalist. He believes that all people will be redeemed by God's grace and mercy, not just those who place their faith and trust in Jesus. Basically, he would argue that all people do go to heaven, regardless of their belief system. Does God allow all humans to enter Heaven? Maybe only the really bad people go to Hell?

Part of me would love to believe as so many do. I hear some celebrities talk, or look at what they get involved in and find myself liking what I hear and see. In my mind these people are really good people, and I would like to believe that one day I will see

these people in Heaven. Perhaps you find yourself like me, and want to believe that all roads lead to heaven, and that God's love covers all people regardless of what we believe, or have faith in.

As I have shared many times it doesn't matter what we think. It doesn't even matter what we feel, or understand. The only thing that matters is the truth. And the source of truth is God's Word the Bible. Regardless of being uncomfortable with it at times, or even disagreeing with it, the Bible is our source of truth on matters of spiritual guidance, and we must submit to it. So that being said, what does the Bible say regarding this issue? The beginning of 1st Corinthians 6:9 says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (ESV) It doesn't get more clear than this verse. God does not allow the unrighteous entrance into His kingdom. This means that universalism, or the belief that all humans will enter into heaven is wrong.

Many take another wrong turn theologically when they realize that universalism is wrong, by saying that we are righteous by being good people. When we do good things, and be good people, then we will be righteous. For many their understanding of being good is following God's laws well. It was and is a central belief among many Jews that they are considered righteous in God's eyes because of their ability to follow God's laws. This is as flawed as universalism. For Romans chapter three breaks this faulty belief down as well. No amount of being good, or following rules will make us right in God's eyes. Romans 3:21-23 says, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (ESV) God's Law doesn't help us be righteous, but it does show us our need to be made righteous. It acts as a mirror showing us our sins, our failures, and our inability to be good. The works that we do will never make us good enough.

Jesus said in John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (ESV) Only through faith in Jesus can we be righteous. Only through faith in Jesus can we go to see God. Only through faith in Jesus can we go to Heaven. Through God's love demonstrated by the sacrifice made by Jesus, all who have faith in Christ will be made right.

Pastor Rich Carr

Worship With Us

8:45 A.M. Glad Tidings Radio 1370 A.M.
11:00 A.M. Worship Services

Live Stream

We live stream our 11:00 A.M. Sunday worship services on Subsplash. If you prefer Facebook we are still there. Sunday sermons are also posted the same day on our YouTube channel
<https://www.youtube.com/@bethanyfreelutheranastoria3012/featured>



You can find links to all of these on our website at www.bethanyfree.com

Men's Prayer Breakfast

Will be July 6th 8:00 A.M. Cooking starts around 7:15am if you would like to help. We would love to have more men join us.



Deacons & Trustees Meeting

Will be Tuesday, June 9th at 5:30 P.M.



Bethany Sewing Ministry

Watch the weekly Sunday bulletin for which Thursdays this summer. All sewing skills are welcome. A lunch is provided. We work on quilts that are mostly sent to AFLC Alaska Missions in Naknek, AK

Brown Bag Ministry

Every Tuesday, 1:30 P.M. Weekly our Brown Bag Ministry prepares brown bag lunches that are distributed in the community, we are always grateful for any volunteers.



Opportunities to Serve

Check out the sign up sheets on the bulletin board July and August! You can sign up to provide after church treats, flowers for the altar, greet and hand out bulletins before church or read the scriptures during church. If any of these sound like something you would like to do, sign up! Thank you!

WMF Meeting

Women's Missionary Federation will be a potluck lunch held at Leslie Selven's home, Thursday, July 11th at 11am. We will be leaving the church at 10:45am to carpool if you would like to do that. All Ladies are Welcome!
1201 Alameda Ave, Astoria, OR

Women's Bible Study

Brenda Carr is hosting a women's Bible study and fellowship time on the 4th Tuesday of every month at the parsonage. It will be July 30th, 7pm.

All women are welcome.

Vacation Bible School

Join us for a great VBS !!!

Dates: Monday July 1-
Wednesday July 3

No VBS on July 4th

Time: 9am-12pm

Ages: Kindergarten –
5th grade



BBQ Block Party



Friday July 5th will be a family event with food, games and fun.

Invite a neighbor, bring a friend!

Quarterly Meeting

July 21st, following the church service, 12:30 P.M.

Upcoming Dates

Annual Picnic

Will be August 18th at Cullably Lake

