FOUNDATION – Session 1

“Who is God?” and “Who am I?”

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1. SESSION OBJECTIVES

By the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. Explain the difference between **passive righteousness** (before God) and **active righteousness** (before the world).
2. Understand why identity in Christ is *received*, not achieved.
3. See vocation and daily life as expressions of love for neighbor, not attempts to earn God’s favor.
4. Articulate how this doctrine brings freedom, assurance, and purpose.

Lutheran theology says there are two ways of being ‘righteous’—two ways of being a person in the world. One is entirely *gift*, and one is about *service*. Both matter, but they must never be confused.

CORE TEACHING: The Two Kinds of Righteousness

This doctrine answers two questions:

1. **Who am I before God?**
2. **Who am I before the world?**

When we confuse these two questions, we end up anxious, self-righteous, burned out, proud, or despairing.
When we keep them distinct, Christian life becomes free, joyful, and fruitful.

Passive Righteousness (Coram Deo — Before God)

Definition:
Your identity before God is entirely a **gift**, received by faith alone.

Key Features:

- You contribute nothing.
- Christ gives you His righteousness.
- You are fully forgiven, fully accepted, fully beloved.
- You do not earn God's smile—Christ gives you God's smile.

Key Scriptures:

- Ephesians 2:8–9 — "By grace… not by works."
- Romans 3:21–24 — Righteousness from God.
- 2 Corinthians 5:21 — Christ becomes sin; we become righteousness.
- Galatians 2:20 — "Christ lives in me."

What does this mean?

- Freedom from spiritual anxiety.
- Faith is receiving, not doing.
- Passive righteousness is the **foundation** of all Christian life and ethics.

Active Righteousness (Coram Mundo — Before the World)

Definition:
Your righteousness before your neighbor is expressed through **good works**, **service**, and **love**.

Key Features:

- We don't do good works for God (He needs nothing).
- We do them for our neighbor (they need plenty).
- Good works do not save, but they **serve**.

Key Scriptures:

- Ephesians 2:10 — "Created for good works…"
- Galatians 5:13 — "Serve one another in love."
- Matthew 5:16 — Let your light shine.
- James 2:14–26 — Faith active in love.

What does this mean?

- God doesn't need our works; our neighbors do.
- Vocation flows from identity—not vice versa.

Why This Matters:

1. It protects the Gospel.

If we blend the two kinds of righteousness, we turn Christianity into a ladder climbing toward God.
The Gospel becomes advice instead of news.

2. It protects the Christian.

When you know who you are in Christ (passive righteousness), you can serve freely (active righteousness) without fear or pride.

3. It shapes vocation.

Every Christian has multiple vocations: parent, coworker, friend, citizen, church member. These aren't ways to win God over—they are ways to love the people around us.

4. It shapes our church mission.

Chesapeake Community of Hope exists to give the Gospel (passive righteousness) and equip believers for service (active righteousness).

SCRIPTURE CONNECTIONS (Optional Reading)

- Luke 10:25–37 — Good Samaritan (active righteousness toward neighbor)
- Romans 8 — Life in the Spirit (identity as God's children)
- Colossians 3:1–17 — New self in Christ → new life in the world
- 1 John 4:7–12 — Love flows from being loved first

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. **What is one area of your life where you've tried to earn God's approval?**
2. **How does knowing you are righteous before God as a gift change your daily life?**
3. **Where do you sense God calling you to active righteousness—service to neighbor—right now?**
4. **What becomes easier when we separate passive and active righteousness?**
5. **How would your spiritual life change if you stopped mixing the two?**

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A. Personal Life

- Begin daily prayer with:
  "I am righteous before God because of Christ alone."

B. Relationships

- Ask: "What does my neighbor need from me today?"
- Identify one person in your life who needs tangible love this week.

C. Work / Vocation

- See your job not as a spiritual ladder, but as a sacred calling.
- Ask: "How can I love and serve through my work?"

D. Church Life

- Understand that serving in church is not to make God happy—
  it's because God already delights in you.

SESSION SUMMARY

- **Passive Righteousness:**
  - Your identity in Christ, received by faith.
  - You are fully forgiven, accepted, and loved.
- **Active Righteousness:**
  - Your calling to love and serve your neighbor.
  - The fruit of faith, not the root of faith.

Keeping these two distinct brings:

- Freedom
- Assurance
- Purpose
- Joy
- Clarity about mission

This doctrine shapes how Chesapeake Community of Hope teaches, worships, and serves.

HOMEWORK

Read from Luther's Small Catechism:

- **Apostles' Creed**
  Reflect:
  Which part of the Creed speaks most clearly to your "passive righteousness"?

THE APOSTLES' CREED

The First Article: Creation
I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

The Second Article: Redemption

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true.

The Third Article: Sanctification

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.