

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! This month begins my second year of service to our Lord Jesus Christ with you, and receiving His gifts each Sunday morning as He serves us. It has been a long and event-filled year, with Romans and Christians, bowling, candlelight Christmas Eve service, Lent rotation, Easter egg hunting, and so much more I can't even list it all! I look forward to continuing to serve you this year and to the good which God can and will work through us here in Augsburg and Vandalia, Illinois, and beyond.

Year Two: Back to the Basics!

“It is not for trivial reasons that we constantly treat the catechism and exhort and implore others to do the same, for we see that unfortunately many preachers and pastors are very negligent in doing so and thus despise both their office and this teaching (BoC, p.379).” Here in this preface to Luther’s Large Catechism (the preface also having been written by him) you learn why I sometimes add things to the sermon like the Ten Commandments (like last weekend, June 15th). I do not want you to think I’m being negligent of our catechetical materials in teaching you, dear brother or sister in Christ. Even in the Editor’s Introduction to the Large Catechism, we learn how Luther employed teachings on the parts of the Large Catechism in his own sermons. So while we started halfway through the Large Catechism at Baptism last autumn, and having just heard about the Ten Commandments, I felt it was appropriate to return to the beginning of the Large Catechism and work our way back to Baptism since we completed our brief study of Confession last month.

Luther himself continued in his preface that while he is “a doctor and a preacher, just as learned and experienced as all of them who are so high and mighty, nevertheless, each morning, and whenever else (he has) time, (he does) as a child who is being taught the catechism and (he reads and recites) word for word the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms, etc.” He wrote that he “must still read and study the catechism daily, and yet (he) cannot master it as (he wishes), but must remain a child and pupil of the catechism—and (he) also (does) so gladly (BoC, p.380).”

Indeed, Luther wrote that for the preachers and pastors of his day to know the catechism perfectly “(... is impossible in this life).” But should that stop us from studying it? By no means! Luther also wrote that “(n)othing is so powerfully effective against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts as to occupy one’s self with God’s Word, to speak about it and meditate upon it (BoC, p.381).”

I had hoped to finish this brief study of Luther’s Preface in one newsletter article, but there is just too much good there to be missed if I do! Suffice it to say, the study of the catechism does not stop with confirmation—it is a lifelong, even an eternally long, joyous study which we do as those redeemed by our Lord the Christ. Though some do not believe it, the devil is still out there scouring as a lion looking for a meal. Because of this I, like Luther, urge you to be so well fed in the study of the catechism and the Scriptures that Satan cannot bear to devour you. Until next time, dear brother or sister in Christ, keep in that Word which will daily remind you that you are saved through your Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh