

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! It seems like we just left winter behind and yet the humidity has already gotten here! Lord willing we will have a few more days of comfortable weather before the temperature begins to exceed ninety degrees. Hopefully one of those comfortable days will also include our outside service, this month, on June 8th. Be sure to come out and hear God's Word in His creation!



Over the last two newsletters, we've covered the two parts of confession found in the Lord's Prayer—namely, the common confession to God and to our neighbor. This month we hear of another place where we make confession: in secret to our neighbor. We should do this not with fear, but, rather, expecting to hear God's absolution from them. After all, we each pray "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." We pray this way because we recognize that we are just as guilty before God as our brother or sister in Christ. As one might hope that a public speaker would do well so that when it is his or her turn to give a public speech, we should desire to speak that word of absolution to our neighbor, so that when it is our turn to be forgiven, we will be, too. None of us is righteous, all of us have failed and fallen short of the glory of God; but out of His great mercy, God forgives each of us through His Son's death on the cross of Calvary without any merit in us.

So we go to confession, both in secret and in the common way at church. When we do, we should be like poor, miserable beggars who have just learned where to find food. No one needs to compel beggars to go to a place handing out free food. Their own need causes them to "run there as fast as they (can) so as not to miss the gift (BoC, pp.478-479)." And so we run to confession, knowing our need to hear God's forgiving absolution.

“Thus we teach what a wonderful, precious, and comforting thing confession is, and we urge that such a precious blessing should not be despised, especially when we consider our great need. If you are a Christian, you need neither my (Luther’s, but that goes for me, Pastor Josh, as well) compulsion nor the pope’s command at any point, but you will force yourself to go and ask me that you may share in it. However, if you despise (the gift of confession and absolution) and proudly stay away from (it), then we must come to the conclusion that you are not a Christian and that you also ought not receive the sacrament. For you despise what no Christian ought to despise, and you show thereby that you can have no forgiveness of sin. And this is a sure sign that you also despise the gospel (BoC, p.479).”

“Therefore, when I exhort you to go to confession, I am doing nothing but exhorting you to be a Christian...For those who really want to be upright Christians and free from their sins, and who want to have a joyful conscience truly hunger and thirst already.” Dear friends in Christ, you’ve heard—or will hear—me speak of the wonderful gift we have in the Lord’s Supper, and of the special gift that we have in Baptism. Though Confession and Absolution is not named as a Sacrament because there is no physical element (like the water in baptism and the bread and wine in Communion), you can see how Luther and I highly prize this gift of confession as well. Jesus came to feed the hungry, but only those who are aware they are hungry will come for food, so it is my sincere hope that you will come—come to the feast of not only the Lord’s Supper at the altar, but also to the feast of God’s Word, given to you through the lectionary, the sermon, and through the absolution I pronounce in the stead of God each Sunday morning. It is not my absolution, but God’s, that you may have sure knowledge and sincere joy that you are forgiven. This we have in God’s Son, our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Joshⁱ

ⁱ Image from http://clipart.christiansunite.com/1400755261/Preachers_Clipart/Preachers009.gif