

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! Wrapping up the holiday season, we might stop to ponder: another cycle completed. Christmas trees decorated and taken down; New Year's Eve parties prepared and enjoyed with family and friends; and now to another January. We might even see this circulation in smaller times of our lives: washing the dishes only to use them and have to wash them again, vacuuming only to tread the same carpets and have to vacuum them again, so on and so forth. It may seem meaningless, or even that everything is meaningless. And yes, many things in this life are meaningless as the writer of Ecclesiastes points out to us, BUT not with God. At the end of the book, the writer acknowledges that in God, things are not so meaningless. We find that to be even more so in Jesus the Christ, God made Immanuel for us. So take a few minutes with me now and let's dig into some more of God's Word through the Book of Concord!

Happy New Year in Christ Jesus!!!!

With entrance to a New Year, we are also entering a new section: The First Part: The Ten Commandments. Luther writes that "You are to have no other gods" is none other than to say "you are to regard me alone as your God (BoC, p.386)." Obviously neither Luther nor I are saying we are God, or even a god, but we write this as though from the mouth of God Himself. "What (then) does 'to have a god' mean, or what is God? Answer: A 'god' is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart (p.386)."

When life circulates in those ways I mentioned above, and the time of hardship rolls around, even for the third, fourth, or millionth time in a row—then who or what is it that you trust? That you fly to? That you cling to? “The intention of this commandment...is to require true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone (BoC, pp.386-387).” Then let me ask: Who do you fly to in case of a fire? Who do you cling to in the death of a loved one? Who do you look to to provide for you? If it is anyone or anything—even yourself—rather than the Triune God, you have sinned against this first and greatest commandment.

Thanks be to God that He forgives us in His Son Jesus Christ, even for failing to always and perfectly complete this first commandment. In His Son Jesus, given for us so many years ago as a babe who would grow into the man who would die for your sins and mine, we can hear God telling us as our Heavenly Father: ““See to it that you let me alone be your God, and never search for another...Whatever good thing you lack, look to me for it and seek it from me, and whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, crawl to me and cling to me. I, I myself, will give you what you need and help you out of every danger. Only do not let your heart cling to or rest in anyone else (BoC, p.387).”

May God give you and I the Spirit to do this as brothers and sisters in Christ His Son, this new year and always! Amen!

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh