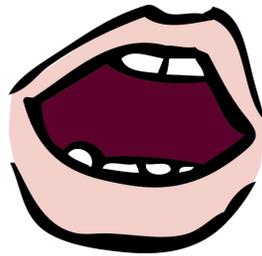


Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! This morning it is raining outside. Earlier in the week, we had a severe storm pass through, and some of the branches in trees around the house were down. It seems spring has finally arrived. Hopefully our farmers have their crops planted using their tractors so this rain will help the seed to start growing. Whether it is an early spring or late, or mild or severe weather, we always have God's Word to turn to, as well as our study of the Large Catechism.



Last month we finished looking at Luther's commentary on the Explanation of the Appendix to the First Commandment, so now we'll begin reading about the Second Commandment. Luther writes: "this commandment leads us outward and directs the lips and tongue into a right relationship with God. For the first things that burst forth and emerge from the heart are words (Book of Concord (BoC), p.392)." Let's stop right there. How often are the words we use demonstrative of our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Are your first words out of bed thanks to God for another day? Do you always remember to pray before eating? What about in a difficult situation: are you more likely to turn to God or curse the problem? Along those lines, I encourage you again that if you have a problem come up, please let my number be at least the second number you call—the first to 911 if need be, and then your second to me so that I may bring you God's Word and His Son's body and blood, as needed. I can't repeat this enough! I *want* to be there, but I have not been blessed with foreknowledge of future events. I

need *you* to tell me! For that reason, I'll be including my contact info at the bottom of our article this month.

No matter what is going on in our lives, our reactions to each situation give a proclamation of what we believe to those around us. Paul sang in prison and the other prisoners listened, and even the jailer and his family were baptized (Acts 16:16-40)! Praying in public before meals can be seen. On my day off at my first vicarage at Council Bluffs, I was dressed casually in jeans a t-shirt and out at a Dairy Queen. As I was eating, a couple came up to me on their way out just to say that they appreciated that I had prayed before my meal. My guess is they didn't know I was the vicar at a church in town.

Sadly, though, more often than not, our first reactions, our first words are not those of faith. Perhaps this is why Jesus told Peter that so long as one part of us is clean, the rest will be clean, too. Jesus knew our hearts—the places where our words originate—were not always in the right place. For this reason, He went to the cross of Calvary. He paid the price for our sins, even those first reaction sins. Even more than that, He has sent us His Holy Spirit at Pentecost that He (the Spirit) may work in us to keep us in the one true faith to life everlasting. Thanks be to God in Christ Jesus our Lord! Amen!

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh