

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! That is, now that it's been uncovered from the snow we got at the end of last month. Some things you never know when to expect; but others come consistently, time after time, like this next newsletter!



Continuing Luther's writings on the First Commandment, we hear again that to have a god is nothing other than to put our trust in something or someone. While we should only have the one true God as our god, so often, we put other things in place of Him: success, wealth, prosperity, etc. In New Testament times, and even perhaps in Luther's day, many worshipped false gods and goddesses such as Hercules/Mercury, Venus/Aphrodite, Diana/Artemis, and so on; each of which was to have a particular specialty. But as Luther wrote "(t)he trouble is that their trust is false and wrong, for it is not placed in the one God, apart from whom there truly is no god in heaven or on earth (Book of Concord (BoC), p.388)."

"There is, moreover, another false worship. This is the greatest idolatry that we have practiced up until now, and it is still rampant in the world. All the religious orders are founded on it. It involves only the conscience that seeks help, comfort, and salvation in its own works and presumes to wrest heaven from God. It keeps track of how often it has made endowments, fasted, celebrated Mass, etc. It relies on such things and boasts of them, unwilling to receive anything as a gift from God, but desiring to earn everything by itself or to merit

everything...What is this but to have made God into an idol...and to have set ourselves up as God (BoC, p.389)?”

In other words, and especially now at Lent, do you boast of your good works as though they were your own? And not as gifts from God through His Holy Spirit? Do you, in this way, try to earn heaven for yourself? (Which is impossible both because you are a sinner, and because Christ has already earned it for you and there’s no need to add to what He has done or to do it again.) At all times, especially now at Lent, we are to see just how worthless and sinful we really are—nothing more than ash returning to ash—if it were not for what God has done for us in sending His Son to be our Savior, to be your Savior. Because of Christ’s work of redemption, of saving us from the condemnation we rightly deserve by going to the cross of Calvary in your place and mine, “(w)e are to (and can) trust in God alone, to look to him alone, and to expect him to give us only good things; for it is he who gives us body, life, food, drink, nourishment, health, protection, peace, and all necessary temporal and eternal blessings (BoC, p.389).”

I urge you to keep these things in mind—that your focus this Lenten season (and always)—on Christ Jesus and what He has done for you, that you might be His Father’s child, and His sibling. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh

*Friendly Reminder*

If you are going into the hospital for surgery or in an emergency, I’m just a phone call away for giving you support in Word, Sacrament, and prayer. *Please* let me know so I may be of service to you! Thanks!