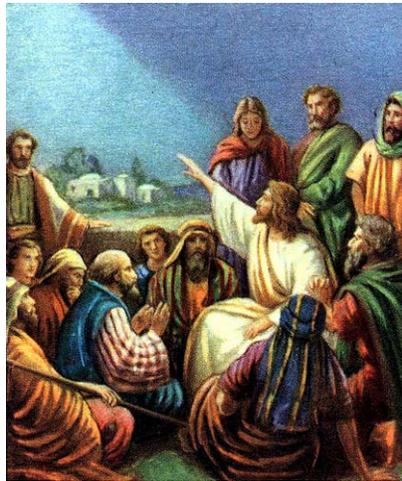


Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! Can you believe that school is just around the corner?! Where has the summer gone? Well, maybe I'm getting a little ahead of things. There are still a couple full weeks left before we get back to classes and school year-related work. Along those same lines, we'll be hearing from Luther's writings on the Apostle's Creed in the Large Catechism in the pastoral newsletters to come. But, before we get ahead of ourselves, we'll start with Luther's introduction to the Second Part: The Creed. (Once again, all references will be from the Book of Concord edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert copyrighted in 2000 by Augsburg Fortress.)



*Jesus teaching—It's always a good time to learn from Him!*

“Thus far we have heard the first part of Christian teaching (the Ten Commandments, as well as the Table of Duties), and in it we have seen all that God wishes us to do and not to do. The Creed properly follows, which sets forth all that we must expect and receive from God; in short, it teaches us to know him perfectly. It is given in order to help us do what the Ten Commandments require of us (Book of Concord (BoC), p.431).”

Wait; what? The Creed was given “to help us do what the Ten Commandments require of us”? How can that be? Are we not still sinners at the same time as saints? In a word, yes. Yet as ones who have been redeemed by Christ—as we'll learn about in the second article—we have been made children of God through the work of the Spirit in calling us by the Gospel and by washing us in the waters of Holy Baptism—as we'll learn in the third article. As ones who have been washed clean, we still fight the Old Man/sinner in us, but at the same time, a New Man has been created in us. We have been born again in faith in Christ Jesus. This New

Man desires to complete God's Law, and the Spirit helps us to do so—even as we live in this world. Yet this work will only be brought to completion when Jesus returns.

We do not do the Ten Commandments to be saved, then, but as children of God who have been saved from our sin already. After all, "(i)f we were able by our own strength to keep the Ten Commandments as they ought to be kept, we would need nothing else, neither the Creed nor the Lord's Prayer." More than that, we would have no need of a Savior. As it is, we do have need of a Savior; and we have received one in Jesus Christ the Lord. And so we have the Creed, which teaches us about our Savior. "But before we explain the (full) usefulness and necessity of the Creed, it is enough, as a first step, for very simple people (like me, Pastor Josh) to learn to grasp and understand the Creed itself (BoC, p.431)."

Apparently the Creed used to be divided into twelve parts, but for the sake of clarity—and for memory (as psychology has shown it is easy to remember things in threes)—we will focus on the three divisions described on p. 432. These three divisions are "according to the three persons of the Godhead, to whom everything that we believe is related. Thus the first article, concerning God the Father, explains creation; the second, concerning the Son, redemption; the third, concerning the Holy Spirit, being made holy. Hence the Creed could be briefly condensed to these few words: 'I believe in God the Father, who created me; I believe in God the Son, who has redeemed me; I believe in the Holy Spirit, who makes me holy.' One God and one faith, but three persons, and therefore also three articles or confessions (BoC, p.432)."

Hopefully this is more or less review for you, but as Luther has said regarding his catechism, it is of use not only for laity, but even for pastors and doctors of theology to continue to review and learn from it, as more can always be learned. Next month, then, we will continue. Our focus will be on God the Father who created us, and later on Jesus who has redeemed us, and, after that, the Spirit, who is making us holy through the hearing of the Word and the receiving of the Sacrament of the Altar so that we can indeed live the Ten Commandments, as God our Father wills. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh