

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! It feels like winter is here already. I just got done switching my t-shirts out for my long sleeve shirts. We haven't had any snow yet, but only time will tell if we'll get some this year. Up at Saginaw, MI, my brother-in-law, sister, niece, and nephew had snow even before Reformation/Halloween. As the seasons continue to run as God has set in motion, we turn to Luther's Large Catechism to learn more about the First Article.

Advent Blessings!

With elections over, we move from Luther's discussion concerning government as God's good gift to how "we also confess that God the Father has given us not only all that we have and what we see before our eyes, but also that he daily guards and defends us against every evil and misfortune, warding off all sorts of danger and disaster (BoC, p.433)." In a barbershop at Beardstown, a sign was posted which read something like the following: "The surgeon general warns that doing just about anything, anytime, anywhere could be hazardous to your health." Laughing aside, how many dangers do we face on a daily basis? Living in a two-story parsonage—and not always being renowned for being the most graceful person in the world—I'm always afraid I'm going to make a misstep and take a tumble down the stairs from the second floor to the first. It makes me wonder how many times God has guided my feet away from certain injury. Or what about driving? It has been said that most accidents occur close to home. I live fifteen minutes from Vandalia and generally need to drive into town for a meal or something on a daily basis. How many accidents has God prevented in those twenty minutes from home? And that's just my life. What about yours?

On top of that, Satan and his invisible demons are always poised for attack. How many times has God sent His angels to defend us in that regard? More times than we know, I'm sure. But why should God do that for me and for you? "All this he does out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a kind father who cares for us so that no evil may befall us (BoC, p.433)."

This month we celebrate the coming of God's Son, Jesus Christ—both His first coming, when He was born as that babe in the manger, and His Second Coming, when He will judge. Through the work Jesus did in His first coming, namely going to the cross and dying for our sins, we have all been made God's dear children, who He protects and loves dearly. Apart from Christ Jesus and His work, we would have no cause for hope or joy. But in and through our Lord, God is the God of both hope and joy for us and for all who have been called into faith in Jesus. He is our protecting God and loving Heavenly Father.

For that reason, this season of Advent and every season, we can give thanks to God our Father through His Spirit on account of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh

**...And a blessed Christmas and
New Year's to you and yours!**