

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! As I look out my windows, I see the crops that have been planted around the parsonage. Each year that I've been here, I've seen planting, growth, and harvesting—the Lord always brings the farmers around here through, no matter how wet, dry, or just right the weather has been. So, too, does the Lord always bring us through whatever's going on in our lives, whether good, bad, or in-between. Just look! We're at the end of the Table of Duties!

The Conclusion of the Table of Duties

Luther quotes the Lord's Word for all of you youth reading this article from 1 Peter 5:5-6. "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time (Small Catechism, p.39)." Life always seems to be a race we can never win. Wanting to hurry up and learn to ride a bike to be like the big kids. Wanting to play sports with the big kids. Wanting to learn to drive to have the independence of your peers. Wanting what is not yet yours to have. In due time, God will bless you in the ways which are proper for you. In the meantime, do not covet what is not yet available but be content with what you have. There may even be those times when God will speak through you in such a way that those older than you will recognize that you have spoken better than they. (I know that from experience! There have been times here and other places that those younger than me have shown great faith, especially at times when I should have known better or been more faithful myself!)

God had it written in the book of Job that "Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days (12:12)." If there are problems that you are dealing with, whether ones tainted by sin or not, don't be afraid to go to those who are older for advice. They have likely seen what you are

dealing with before, or something like it. Even to younger pastors, Paul wrote to Timothy and them “Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity (1 Timothy 5:1-2).” In other words, even pastors are called to show respect to those who are older than them, whether men or women—though at the same time not permitting sin to abound.

To widows, Paul wrote the Word of God to Timothy yet again: “The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives 1 Tim. 5:5-6 (Small Catechism, p.39).” Often Scripture refers to female widows, but there are both men and women who are left widowed by their spouses. The Lord has not forgotten you! There may be a time when you may get remarried, or you may not. In either circumstance, you are called to put your trust in God. It is the same for those who are single (before or without marriage) and those who get married. All of us are called to put our hope and our trust in God. We are also called to love one another, and to be respectful of the situations of our brothers and sisters in Christ, whether they are single and trying to live in chastity, married and living in chastity—while also having children when and where possible—or for you who have been widowed. Our Old Testament text for this Sunday reminds us as it did Elijah that when we feel like “I, Even I Only, Am Left,” we are never alone. The world has many other believing Christians in it, and, more than that, Jesus Christ is the Immanuel, God with us. He has taken away our sin and is for us. If God is for us, who can be against us—as Paul wrote in his letters.

Even though I’ve already jumped into how we are all called to act, there is still one last section in the Table of Duties which is labeled To Everyone. “The commandments...are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Romans 13:9 I urge...that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. 1 Tim. 2:1 (Small Catechism, p.39)”

Underneath these Scripture verses, it is written: “Let each his lesson learn with care and all the household well shall fare.”

It is known by all, even those in secular society, that if you do well, things will go well for you. Even my supervisor at Staunton, Pastor Fritsche, who some of you met, would counsel his children, saying, “Are things going well for you? Why not?” So it is that Jesus said to the lawyer in Luke 10 the same thing. The lawyer had asked, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (And Jesus) said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? How do you read it?’ (And when the lawyer had correctly answered to fulfill the Law both toward God and his neighbor, Jesus responded,) ‘You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.’”

Yes, if we were able to do the Law, we would have no need of a Savior because we would be able to save ourselves. Sadly, that is not the case; we are sinners by birth. That is why Jesus Christ took the condemnation of our sins to the cross and paid for them there. Now you and I have been freed from the punishment of the Law we rightly deserve—but the Law is still there. Why? Because it is a Law which teaches us how to love one another. That’s why John wrote in his first letter, chapter two, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” So you also, go and heed these writings that you may not sin. But if you do sin, know by faith that you have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh

I’ll be on vacation from July 1st through July 9th; if you need pastoral care, you may contact Pastor Emrick from St. Peter or the elders for assistance. See you when I return!