

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! Planting is under way, especially since rain may be coming tonight (today is Tuesday, May 24th). Hopefully the planting is completed in time for the rain to do the seed some good. In all things, though, God is in control. He continues to take care of us, and will continue to take care of us because He loves us in and through His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. For all this, it is our duty to “thank and praise, serve and obey Him.” Speaking of duties, let’s get back to the duties we’ve been discussing in these newsletter articles.

Under New Management

This month, Luther’s Table of Duties takes us to “Workers of All Kinds” and “Employers and Supervisors (Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation, pp. 38-39).” Luther cites Ephesians chapter six, verses five through eight, in regards to workers. “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.”

Before we can dig into what this means to us (since I don’t believe any of you are slaves, yet the question is bound to come up), let me take you to a couple of other texts in regards to the term “slaves.” As you may have read or seen, the newspaper and television likes to take a term like this and use it against Christianity. They will cite this text, but miss texts like 1 Corinthians 7:21 (“Were you a slave when you were called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can

gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)”) or the letter Philemon where Paul writes to Philemon about a slave of his named Onesimus, who is a fellow believer—that he receives him back “no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother” and that “If he (had) wronged (him) at all, or (owed him) anything, (to) charge that to (Paul’s) account...to say nothing of (Philemon’s) owing (Paul) even (his) own self.” Another quick note is that slavery in biblical times was more like serfdom, where a person sold himself into work to make a payment since he did not have the money to do it—this is as opposed to the slavery we consider when we hear the term (i.e. Civil War/Harriet Tubman times (NOT “Captain America: Civil War”...)).

Nevertheless, we are all slaves—the question is, to whom? Jesus Christ has paid the price for your guilt on the cross of Calvary, making you a fellow son of God with Him, and in that way, a slave of all. Yet if you go after your own desires or fall away from the faith, you will become once more a slave of sin, forsaking the reward of heaven. But if you continue to serve the Lord Christ, you will serve others as employees of one kind or another—since even managers are under someone. So, then, serve as you were called. If as a lawyer, then be a Godly one, doing good and making just cases and avoiding evil; if as a soldier, then by fighting just wars as you are called; if as a teacher, teach that our children may learn to become good citizens of this nation. Serve in the way you have been called as though God were watching you—for one thing, because He always is, but for another, out of the joy of salvation He has given you for free through His Son Jesus Christ, your brother.

To employers and supervisors, Paul cites Ephesians six verse nine. “Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him.” Again, consider Paul’s letter to Philemon. Even though all of your employees may not be fellow Christians, treat them as such.

Treat them fairly and unbiasedly. You never know when you may be serving an angel unawares. And even if they are not angels, God is everywhere and will call you to speak for how you have served in this life. So with the joy of salvation that you have in Christ Jesus, manage lovingly over those you have under you. Consider Matthew chapter eight, where the centurion comes to meet Jesus about his servant. He says to the Lord Jesus, “‘Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes...’ When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, ‘Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith...Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.’ And the servant was healed at that very moment.”

In all things, then, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, whether under authority or in authority (yet still under authority), may you deal with others and each other in love, as you have received love in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen for you.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh