

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! No joke, Easter has come and Jesus is risen! Yes, Easter fell on April Fools' Day this year, but the fact that our Lord has saved us is as true today as it was on April Fools' Day, and every other day of every other year since He rose from the dead. For Jesus' sake, our Heavenly Father has adopted us, lavishes His love on us, and promises to hear our prayers, just as we'll learn about in our study of the Large Catechism.



Last month we concluded that *“By this commandment (God) makes it clear that he will not cast us out or drive us away, even though we are sinners; he wishes rather to draw us to himself so that we may humble ourselves before him, lament our misery and plight, and pray for grace and help (BoC, p.442).”* Luther continues: *“From the fact that prayer is so urgently commanded, you ought to conclude that we should by no means despise our prayers, but rather prize them highly... We should regard the words of our prayers and their purpose as something demanded by God and done in obedience to him. We should think, ‘On my account this prayer would not amount to anything; but it is important because God has commanded it.’ So, no matter what he or she has to pray for, everybody should always approach God in obedience to this commandment (BoC, p.442).”*

Luther is correct in writing that on “my account” “prayer would not amount to anything.” Of myself, of ourselves, we were lost sinners who desired only that our own wills be accomplished. We wanted nothing to do with God, let alone to pray to Him. We had no points with God according to our own accounts. Rather, we had a HUGE debt where God was concerned. Our debt was so large that no amount of praying—no matter how piously—would have ever sufficed. So God did not, and does not listen to our prayers on our accounts. Yet He does listen to them.

God listens to our prayers because He has paid the debt that we owed through His Son's death and resurrection. Today, He continues to command us to pray so that He may answer us as a parent answers his children, with good gifts and with the child's best interests always at heart.

“We therefore urgently beg and exhort everyone to take these words to heart and in no case to despise prayer. Prayer used to be taught in the devil's name, in such a way that no one paid any attention to it, and people supposed it was enough if the act was performed, whether God heard it or not. But that is to stake prayer on luck and to mumble aimlessly. Such a prayer is worthless (BoC, p.442).”

Such faith would also conclude that because Easter falls on April's Fools' Day that our Lord may not have actually risen from the dead. Rather than taking into account the facts of the Scripture, such faith would let idle superstitions control it. But our faith is based on fact—the facts of Jesus' birth, life, death, and especially resurrection. It sounds like foolishness to the world, and if Jesus hadn't rise from the dead, it would truly be nothing but foolishness. But Jesus did rise from the dead. We have the eyewitness of the apostles which bears validity to this great event. And these men and women did not just *say* Jesus was risen—they were willing to stake their very lives on it. And many did die for believing it. Why would anyone die for a fabrication or fictional story? No, they believed because they had seen Jesus risen from the dead themselves and because they trusted the accounts of the apostles.

Faith that does not stand on the truth of the Gospel is worthless, just as prayer which does not take God's command seriously is also worthless. Again, we pray not to justify ourselves or to prove anything to God; we pray because our God has commanded us to and has promised to hear us. That is His Word. The same Word which proclaims that our sins are forgiven for the sake of God's crucified and risen Son, Jesus Christ.

Blessings to you and your family as you continue to celebrate the joyful resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In Jesus' Name. Amen!

*He's Risen! He's Risen, Indeed! Alleluia!!!*

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh