

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! Sometimes it's easy to get so wrapped up in how many things you need to do that you lose focus. With Christmas and New Year's approaching, it is especially easy to get that way. To help keep your focus where it needs to be, we'll turn once again to Luther's Large Catechism.



This Season Pray that God's Name may be Hallowed!

“(Y)ou see that in this petition that we pray for exactly the same thing that God demands in the Second Commandment: that his name should not be taken in vain by swearing, cursing, deceiving, etc., but used rightly to the praise and glory of God. Whoever uses God's name for any sort of wrong profanes and desecrates this holy name, as in the past a church was said to be desecrated when a murder or other crime had been committed in it, or when a monstrance or relic was profaned, thus rendering unholy by misuse that which is holy in itself. This petition, then, is simple and clear if we only understand the language, namely, that to ‘hallow’ means the same as in our idiom ‘to praise, extol, and honor’ both in word and deed (BoC, p.446).”

As we recalled before, God's Name is already holy—we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us as well. We are ones who bear God's Name as Christians. So we do not want to do those things which would tarnish His precious Name. For this reason, we keep watch on both our living and our doctrine.

We can plainly see what need there is for such a prayer. “Because we see that the world is full of sects and false teachers, all of whom wear the holy name as a cloak and warrant for their devilish doctrine, we ought constantly to shout and cry out against all who preach and believe falsely and against those who want to attack, persecute, and suppress our gospel and pure doctrine, as the bishops, tyrants, fanatics, and others do. Likewise, this petition is for ourselves who have the Word of God but are ungrateful for it and fail to live according to it as we ought (BoC, p.446).”

Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther was successful in speaking out against the false doctrines of the Catholic Church. Prior to him, others had tried. Jan Hus, in particular, taught that all should be able to read the Word of God in his or her own language. He was guaranteed

safe passage to and from a council, but on his return home, he was stopped and burned at the stake. Hus did not have the technology that Luther did: the Guttenberg Printing Press. With the Printing Press, Luther's peers could read the Word for themselves and see that what Luther said was indeed in the Scriptures.

Why the history lesson? Well, consider: How often do you read the Word yourself? How often do you come to hear God's Word at church? Are you any better off than those who could not read the Scriptures at Luther's time because it had been written in a foreign language? Are you living in a way which is ungrateful for the Word of God?

This season we celebrate Advent, when God, out of His great love for us, sent His Son to be born into this world and, ultimately, to die in our places so that we would not suffer the punishment we rightly deserve for not living as we ought. This morning in Chapel, we looked at the Third Article of the Creed. In it was the question, "What moves God to forgive sins?" It was and is His great love for us found in the death and resurrection of His Son. One of the proof texts for this section was John 3:16—the same verse we will be studying in our Mid-Week Advent series this month. As you prepare for Jesus' Coming through this season of Advent, remember that God loves you and keep His Name hallowed! If you are having trouble, pray the prayer we've been studying, the Lord's Prayer, because "(i)f you ask for such things from your heart, you can be sure that God is pleased. For there is nothing that he would rather hear than to have his glory and praise exalted above everything else and his Word taught in its purity, cherished and treasured (BoC, p.446)." In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you
and your family!!!*