

“Walking in Faith and Witness”
Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

Christ Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Nebraska
Adult Bible Study, Summer, 2020, Week I
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Our Goals for this experience:

- That our faith in Christ is strengthened as we see again and in-depth the person and work of the Lord Jesus and the way God the Holy Spirit wraps the person and work of Jesus around us in Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper
- That our witness to the Lord Jesus is sharpened as we live in a world that does not know him

It is our plan to study and understand better the sacraments—baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

But we must have some context for our understanding

Background:

- We live in two realms—nature and history...
 - Nature is the stage and history is the drama
 - And we are constantly trying to find language to understand and express this experience
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- In nature and history, we live with two dynamics—
 - Individuality (our unique existence)
 - Encounter with others (our yearning to associate, to connect)
 - And we are ultimately isolated, alone, uncertain and untrusting

Here is an extremely important question for our study!

What is the source of that “understanding” we seek as we live in nature and history?
(What is the source of our language and framework for interpreting nature and history?)

- Is it from us? Our reason? Our experience? Our culture?
- Is it embedded in nature or history and discoverable?
- Does someone or something speak the understanding to us?

So what is this effort at “history”?

- History is the interaction of culture and society.
 - Culture is our creative ferment
 - Society is our effort to hold us together in safety and care
- All efforts at culture and society are governed by stories

- All of these stories have some validity
- (There is a difference between truth and validity)

And where does the Christian message fit into all this?

Christianity is the Lord's story, for the Lord himself has entered into nature and history at Bethlehem in the person of Jesus of Nazareth to re-write the story and live out the Lord's version...the truth is in Jesus. Only the Lord's voice speaks truth; we can only reflect it and honor it.

- This is the meaning of "the Lord's Name." The Lord's Name is who He is and what He does; these are the same. It is his glory.
- (We will examine this with some emphasis next week as we look at John 1-2)

A key verse for our thinking...

³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; ³¹ therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 (RSV)

- Christ as our—
- Wisdom...the pattern for understanding our lives
- Righteousness...the past is caught up in Christ's righteousness
- Sanctification...the present is our life of service and love
- Redemption...the future is wrapped up in the resurrection

Christ as our "wisdom" becomes our "worldview" Our "worldview" is the "story by which we live"

Christ catches up our story into his story, for he is the essence of history

Living under this story is to live in faith. Living under a different story is evil; it is to live a lie, even when the lie has validity. It is to live under the story of the enemy, the father of lies.

- Sin is separation from the Lord's story and sins are the result of writing our own story outside the context of the voice of the Father...even when actions are morally correct. ("Without faith it is impossible to please God." Hebrews 11:6)
- To separate from the voice of the Father is death for life is found only in association with the Lord and giver of life.
- As valid as any and all elements of human reason and speaking are, apart from faith, they are lies.
- This includes politics, science, economics, psychology, philosophy, etc.

- In the context of faith, they are limited efforts as best we can to reflect the majesty of the Lord's Name.

Christ becomes God's answer to our three spiritual questions—

- Who am I?
- Where am I going?
- Why am I here?
- Faith trusts entirely and explicitly that Jesus Christ is the answer to these questions for our lives

“Faith,” then...

- Flows out of the very nature of the relatedness of the Triune God in his “begetting, giving, receiving, obeying, loving, and proceeding...”
- Can only find its source in this generous love from God
- Is reflected in love of the neighbor that is entirely unique from me and sees me as a gift to my neighbor
- Trusts the Father's giving no matter what
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“Sin,” then, is understood as...

- The failure of trust in the giving of the Father
- A focus on my self and my own advantage as the source of my well-being...My life becomes dominated by fear, power, control, manipulation
- The failure of love for my neighbor
 - My neighbor becomes an thing to control, no longer a person
 - ...and in that I turn myself into a thing ; and I am alone, isolated, angry and hopeless

“Sin” is...

- Separation from the Father as the source of trust in His giving to us...
- Separation from our neighbor as a gift from the Father as a reflection of His love and a U
- The misuse of any and all gifts from the hand of the Father because they are used to serve ourselves instead of our neighbor
- Inherent in human beings because we cannot create faith on our own

BUT...

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

And our definitions are changed...

- When God solves the problem of separation from Himself, He has to answer the problem of sin from the inside out...He must become one of us to answer sin on its own terms
- This flows out of His love for us
- To “perish” (in John 3:16) means now to lose the true source of life—relatedness to God
- “Eternal life” means the relationship with God through entire trust

So the entire Christian faith is based on one question and one announcement

“Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He isn’t here! He is risen, just as he said. Go! See the place where they laid him.”