

God Uses Knowledge to Spare Us!

Sunday, 6/3 at 8:00 & 10:45 and Monday, 6/4 at 7 PM

Second after Pentecost, First after Trinity – 2018

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: At the time of Hosea, the prophet, the LORD said to the priest, “**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge**” (Hosea 4:6 ESV). The same is true today; therefore, *last December*, we began studying through the 2017 edition of Luther's Small Catechism – *since then, some have gained knowledge and been blessed!* Now, *as we will soon finish the book*, may the H. S. ✦ increase our knowledge, ✦ mature our faith, and ✦ guide our lives in Christ!

1. **Who Is Jesus?** (pages 351-353) *That is the title of the first section of the catechism appendix.* That section gives us a brief overview of ✦ the creeds we confess and, what we call, ✦ our Lutheran Confessions.
 - a. From God's Word we know the answer: Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16 ESV). Now, *since the Holy Spirit has impressed that truth upon us and given us the eternal benefits of Jesus' saving work*, the task of all believers is “**to confess who Jesus is and why He matters**” (Catechism, 351).
 - b. The creeds are helpful in knowing who Jesus is:
 - i. The Apostles' Creed sets Jesus into history with its mention of Pilate; it also tells us about Jesus' crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension.

- ii. The Nicene Creed points to the close relationship between the Father and the Son – especially that the Son is “**of one substance with the Father,**” *thus not inferior to the Father* (Col. 2:9).
 - iii. The Athanasian Creed helps us to understand Jesus’ “**relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit while affirming His divinity and humanity**” (Catechism).
 - c. The Lutheran Confessions are very important: At the time of Luther, “**many held that even though Jesus is God, He alone cannot save us. We need to help Him by doing our part. And so the Lutheran reformers were compelled to build upon Peter’s confession and the Early Church’s creeds by confessing that God declares us righteous and adopts us as His children **by grace alone, for Christ’s sake, through faith alone****” (Catechism). That most important teaching is strongly supported by the 10 key documents in the Book of Concord, all of which, we believe, *are a proper explanation of the Word of God!*
2. **Reading God’s Word** (pages 354-357): “**God wants us to hear, understand, and believe His Word, and His Spirit works through it to enable us to do so. The first challenge... is simply to **open the book****” (Catechism).
- a. The Bible is about forgiveness and life in Jesus: The Bible includes many things, *but let us not miss the main point:* All have sinned and are helpless to save themselves, *so the Bible is about God’s loving action to provide all people with His*

gifts of ✦ forgiveness and ✦ eternal life through Jesus! John made this statement about the signs (miracles) included in His gospel: “...these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (Jn. 20:31 ESV). By God’s action we ✦ believe and ✦ are so blessed!

- b. Scripture interprets Scripture: When we read the Bible, we should not guess on what it means; instead, *let us use other parts of Scripture to help us understand the proper meaning of the part we are reading.* These are some other tips to aid our understanding of God’s Word:
 - i. *Pray*: Ask the H. S. for understanding.
 - ii. *Context*: Read a few verses before and after the verse in question.
 - iii. *Other Sources*: Read the notes in an accurate study Bible or commentary; you can also ask your pastor for assistance.
- c. Testament interprets Testament: **The Bible is all about Jesus** – the OT tells of sin and God’s promise to save; the NT tells of Jesus’ saving work and God’s invitation for all to receive the benefits of Jesus’ saving work. St. Augustine explained the OT and NT connection with this famous statement: “**The Old (Testament) is in the New (Testament) revealed, the New is in the Old concealed**” (<http://www.azquotes.com/quote/662519>). *Both have same info; OT concealed, NT revealed.*
- d. Words do things: In other words, we should not read the Bible *just to gain information*; instead,

the H.S. is working through the Bible to warn us OR encourage us OR humble us OR assure us OR train us! The H.S. works through **God's Law** to *convict us regarding our sins*, and **God's Gospel** to *save us through the finished work of Jesus!*

- e. God the Holy Spirit helps us: His work is gradual and life-long to grow us up in ♦understanding God's Word, ♦knowing Jesus, and ♦living for Him! So gathering for Word and Sacrament each week, reading the Bible each day, are essential!

3. **What Is Worship?** (pages 358-359)

- a. It is Christ-centered: We gather as needy ones to receive God's blessings won for us by the Christ!
- b. It includes our reception of God's gifts: God has given us faith, that faith receives God's gifts!
- c. It includes reading God's Word: We follow the three-year lectionary, so the readings we use correspond with each season of the church year.
- d. It includes the proclamation of Law and Gospel: The H.S. crushes us with the Law – *we are sinners*; then He lifts us up with the Gospel – *we are saved!*
- e. It includes the Lord's Supper: Bread, wine, body, and blood for the forgiveness of our sins! Then, sure of God's forgiveness, we depart in peace!

Let Us Pray: Dear H.S., now that we know more about Jesus, the Bible, and worship, *grow us up and make us faithful!*

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