

From the Pastor's Pen: Luther's Small Catechism

A few Reformation Sundays back, I preached a sermon entitled "All I Really Need to Know about the Reformation I Learned in Luther's Small Catechism" and I still stand by that. I won't rehash the 6 points and 20 sub points I made in that sermon, but the overall message was this: the starting point for the way we Lutherans think about God is the Small Catechism. Yes, things quickly get more complex, our initial answers turn into much bigger questions as we move forward, but the way we read scripture, the way we worship together, the way we define church, and even the way we think about who exactly the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is, are all shaped by this relatively small document, which many of us last studied when we were in Junior High School!

Now, this is not how Luther intended things to be. He encouraged "heads of households" to read a portion of the Small Catechism every day to their extended family (and employees) devotionally during a meal. Additionally, he recommended that, four times a year, Congregations hold "Ember Days," in which the entirety of the Small Catechism was explained to the congregation by the Pastor.

So, for the next 6 Sundays we're going to go over the Small Catechism in sermon form, as well as at the Thursday Afternoon Bible Study. In addition, I'll be sending you all home with a Small Catechism and a devotional practice based on the portion of the Catechism that we just went over.

On April 24th we'll look at the 10 commandments, May 1st the Apostle's Creed, May 8th the Lord's Prayer, May 15th The Sacrament of Baptism, May 22nd The Sacrament of the Altar (Communion), and May 29th Confession. You may notice May 15th is also Pentecost, when we ask our second year confirmation students to affirm their baptism! I hope this reminder of what baptism is for Lutherans will help us all to renew and remember again the covenant God makes with us in baptism.

I hope and pray this return to the Catechism, for most of us after years and even decades of inattention, will strengthen our faith and remind us of the great heritage we have as Lutherans. Not only that, I also hope it helps us to pass on our faith in Jesus Christ to our family and share it with those outside the walls of St. Stephen.