

*“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you... (Philippians 4:9)*

“What does this mean?” This is a question we all ask at one point or another in our lives, whether out of frustration when we’re looking at a set of directions, trying to understand why our spouse is doing or saying something, or attempting to wrap our minds around the lyrics of our kids’ favorite music. In more difficult times – struggle, sickness, death – we almost certainly ask this question as we seek to know the ‘why’ of what is happening in God’s time and according to his will.

“What does this mean?” This is the question that Martin Luther asks over and over in his Small Catechism. He’s not frustrated because something is too complicated or difficult to understand. He’s not crying out to God in the midst of tragedy or events that don’t make sense. Instead, he’s trying to get us to learn exactly why we do what we do and say what we say as members of the body of Christ. The Catechism, of course, is split into six ‘Chief Parts’: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, Baptism, Confession and Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper. These chief parts are not only what we learn in regards to the faith, but they are often words that we speak privately and publicly. Why do we do this, though? For example, why do we recite the Creed and pray the Lord’s Prayer? Is it simply something that the Church has come up with, and the tradition stuck? This is where “What does this mean?” becomes a very important question for us. It helps us to understand that what we speak – whether in a worship service, family devotions, or private prayer – has meaning for our everyday lives. In fact, these words are so important to our walks of faith that what we learn in the Catechism gives us meaning for our eternal standing with God, whose Word we love.

This year, several of our young members will be beginning their Confirmation studies. They will begin by reading through the Scriptures to get a sense of exactly what the story of salvation is. It’s only then, when they understand God’s greater story of creation, redemption, and eternal salvation that we can begin to understand what it is that we believe, teach, and confess in the Catechism. And when we do, there will be lots of questions. But, the main question will always be, “What does this mean?”

The Catechism, though, is not simply for children. It’s for all of us. Take a moment and open your Catechisms. Look closely at what Luther has to say in answering his own question, “What does this mean?” Yes, the answers will give you insight into specific commandments, articles of the Creed, petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, and the meanings of the Sacraments. Do you notice what holds them all together, though? The answer, of course, is Christ. In the end, everything we do, everything we say, everything we believe finds its meaning and fulfillment in Jesus. Without him, we have nothing!

-Pastor Squire

“Let children hear the mighty deeds which God performed of old, which in our younger days we say, and which our parents told...O teach them with all diligence the truths of God’s own Word, to place in Him their confidence, to fear and trust their Lord.”

(“Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds”, *LSB 867*, vv. 1, 4)