

## What Does This Mean? The Continuing Importance of Luther's Small Catechism



### **Lesson 5. Keys, Baptism, and Communion** What does the Catechism mean for our church life?

#### **Prayer and Introduction.**

With the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed we confess that we believe in the "holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins." The last three parts of Luther's Small Catechism teach us about Baptism, the Keys and Confession, and the Sacrament of Holy Communion. These three things we use most regularly when Christians gather for worship. What are they and why do they appear so frequently in our worship together?

Luther comments: "So, until the Last Day, the Holy Spirit abides with the holy congregation or Christendom. Through this congregation he brings us to Christ and he teaches and preaches to us the Word. By the Word he works and promotes sanctification, causing this congregation daily to grow and to become strong in the faith and its fruit, which he produces" (LC 2, 53).

"You see, all this is the Holy Spirit's office and work. He begins and daily increases holiness upon earth through these two things: the Christian church and the forgiveness of sins" (LC 2, 59).

#### **1. Baptism is such a simple thing—just water and words—give three reasons why it is so much more.**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

**2. In your own words explain what it meant to claim that Baptism is a means of grace.**

**3. Some churches have placed the Baptismal font in front of the church. Identify three reasons why this can correctly teach the value of Baptism.**

1)

2)

3)

**Comparison of Beliefs on Baptism:**

| <b>Roman Catholic</b> | <b>Lutheran</b> | <b>Reformed</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                       |                 |                 |

**4. Luther wrote, “So a truly Christian life is nothing other than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever to be continued” (LC 4, 65). Give two reasons why Baptism is valuable for Your daily life as a Christian in this world.**

1)

2)

- 5. List three situations in your Christian journey when you might turn to your baptism for comfort or strength.**
- 1)
  - 2)
  - 3)
- 6. In most of our worship services, we confess our sins together publicly in a common confession. Some find this uncomfortable. Suggest two reasons why you think that our churches continue to make such a confession part of our worship?**
- 1)
  - 2)
- 7. List two additional ways in which you can receive the assurance of forgiveness for those sins that especially trouble you.**
- 1)
  - 2)
- 8. Explain how this drowns the *old Sinful Flesh* and causes the *New Person* to arise with us.**

**9. Comparison of Teachings on the Sacrament of the Altar:**

| Roman Catholic | Lutheran | Reformed |
|----------------|----------|----------|
|                |          |          |

**10. We are insistent that the Word of God is essential to the sacraments. Without the Word there is no sacrament. Explain how an emphasis on faith, our worthiness, or the faith and life of the pastor who administers the sacraments could distort the comfort of the sacraments.**

**Faith:**

**Then what is the role of *faith* in the sacraments?**

**Our worthiness to receive the Sacrament:**

**But explain why then it is important *to receive the Sacrament in a worthy manner* as Paul reminds us (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).**

## **The faith and life of the pastor:**

### **11. List five reasons Christians should come to the Lord's Supper often.**

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

#### **The Catechism for Christian Life**

We use the Ten Commandments to diagnose the problem in our relationship with God: We are sinners. (The Law as a Mirror)

We find the cure for our sin in the deep love of God for us which we confess in the Apostles' Creed. (The Gospel)

As we live in this world knowing both our sin and its cure, we turn to God in prayer with our heartfelt needs seeking his remedy and help.

God also prescribes the ongoing remedy for our problem by providing a regular dose of the cure in the Word and Sacrament.

### **12. TAKE IT HOME: The next time you attend worship, note how many times you are assured of God's love for you. List each occurrence and the words that communicated that comfort.**

In preparation for next week's session read through Luther's Small Catechism (The Enchiridion) and consider how you have used the Small Catechism, perhaps even without knowing it, and how you might use it regularly in the future.

## Something to think about:

Everything, therefore, in the Christian church is ordered toward this goal: we shall daily receive in the church nothing but the forgiveness of sin through the Word and sacraments, to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. So even though we have sins, the grace of the Holy Spirit does not allow them to harm us. For we are in the Christian church, where there is nothing but continuous, uninterrupted forgiveness of sins (LC 2, 55).

The treasure, indeed, is open and placed at everyone's door, yes, upon his table. But it is necessary that you also claim it and confidently view it as the words tell you. This is the entire Christian preparation for receiving this Sacrament worthily (LC 5, 35,36)

My faith does not make the baptism but rather received the baptism, no matter whether the person being baptized believes or not; for baptism is not dependent upon my faith but upon the Word of God (AE 51:186).

In Baptism there is freely brought to everyone's door such a treasure and medicine that it utterly destroys death and preserves all people alive (LC 4, 43)

Repentance, therefore is nothing other than a return and approach to baptism. We repeat and do what we began before, but abandoned (LC 4, 79)

So a truly Christian life is nothing other than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever to be continued (LC 4, 65)