

“Love what you command ~ desire what you promise”

The two-fold shape of the Christian life is FAITH toward God, and LOVE toward your neighbor. It's how you live – not just for an hour on Sunday morning, but from the font to the grave. And this FAITH and LOVE forms your prayers – as you pray to the God in whom you trust – and for the people you love.

In the Collect today, the Church prays for all believers, all Christians. We pray: O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what you have commanded and desire what you promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are to be found ...

Who says the Church isn't relevant? We know we live in a world full of change – and therefore – we look to God for help. With all the changes we are dealing with – our prayer is that the Lord would make our minds to be of one will.

Imagine that! One will for parents and children. One will for all the people of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. One will for Lutherans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, and so on.

Of course, this is not just any will – it's not a will that each person chooses for themselves – it's the Lord's will. And what is His will? That we may love what He has commanded and desire what He promises.

This is why Jesus teaches all of His followers to pray – “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” And how is God's will done? “God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die. This is His good and gracious will.”

Amongst all the changes in life – you can be sure that the constant attacks of your three great enemies will not change. The devil, the world, and your own sinful nature will continually try to lead you away from Christ – luring you to follow other ways – other truths – other lifestyles --- anything, just as long as you do not love and desire the will of your heavenly Father.

Jesus says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." NO ONE comes to the Father – NO ONE is reconciled, redeemed, saved – NO ONE enters the kingdom of heaven – EXCEPT through Jesus Christ.

THAT is exclusive language! There are no other options! And the world doesn't like it one bit – and neither does our sinful nature --- and the devil knows it! This teaching – that there is no salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ – is simply, scandalous!

Amongst the many changes of this world – you will hear in some Christian churches – that there are other ways of salvation. Faith in Jesus Christ isn't "the way" – just be a good person. But that's not what the Father has taught us, through His Son.

Among the politically-correct changes of this world – you will hear many references to "God" – but if you listen closely, you'll notice that it can be just about any "God" – whether Allah, or the "God" of the Jehovah's Witnesses – or any "God" that you design, or chose.

That approach is taken so as not to offend anyone. Just say "God" and let everyone define who that "God" is – and what His will is. But the politically correct gurus do not want you to use specific and particular language like Jesus does.

Amongst the many changes of this world, the post-modern thinkers say – "Let not your hearts be troubled" – if you don't love what God has commanded, change it to whatever fits best with your lifestyle. If you don't like what God has promised – then follow your own desires, they're as good as "God."

Dearly beloved – this is not the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus IS the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus says – "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." Notice where Jesus directs our hearts and minds – to the one true God – where we are united in one will – in His exclusive, and life-giving Word.

When Jesus says that He is going “to prepare a place for you” – He speaks these words on the night in which He was betrayed – when He would soon make His way to Calvary, to shed His blood, and give His life – to prepare a place for you in God’s kingdom.

He ALONE is the sacrifice which pays the price for all sin. The giving of His life into death ALONE atones for the sin of the whole world. He ALONE has done all that is necessary – “it is finished” – there is nothing left for you to finish.

Therefore, He ALONE is the way, and the truth, and the life – He ALONE is the source of forgiveness, life and salvation. And these treasures He freely gives to you, and to all who believe.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ – may the Lord grant you to be of one will – so that as you encounter all the changes and turmoil of life – you will love what Jesus commands, and desire what He promises --- for God’s good and gracious will does not change.

Jesus, who has prepared a place for you – comes to you here and now – to sooth your hearts and minds with His gracious forgiveness. He who has prepared a place for you in heaven, now sets His Table for you here on earth – that your hunger and thirst for life might be satisfied – so that you may live in faith toward God, and be strengthened in your love for one another.

Indeed, Jesus, who has prepared a place for you – will come back and take you to be with Him – that you may live with Him and the Father and the Holy Spirit, for all eternity. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.