

## ***“The Good Teacher”***

The prophet Amos says hits the nail on the head for us this morning when he says: “They hate him who reproveth in the gate and they abhor him who speaks the truth.” Amen to that. How true that is. You’ve probably experienced this with your own children (or others you love) – when you correct them, when you tell them the truth – and they want nothing of it.

We see these words of Amos played out with Jesus and the man who comes to Him to have eternal life. He hates what Jesus has to say – because Jesus reproveth him – tells him the truth. And in the end, the man walks away from Jesus – he walks away from eternal life.

Why does he hate what Jesus has to say? For two reasons really – because he is confused – and he is deceived. Or, to say it another way, he is believing false things.

As Lutherans we hammer the biblical truth that we are saved by God’s grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, totally on account of the work that Christ alone has done for our salvation. And yet – we are sinners – whose default position (or belief) is one of self or works-righteousness.

We see that with this man. He asks, “What must I DO to inherit eternal life?” You see, we’re always trying to DO something – to merit God’s grace – to be responsible (even if it is in the least bit) for our salvation.

That is confusing God’s word of Law with His word of Gospel. Both are God’s Word to us – both are true – both are good – and He speaks both Law and Gospel to us, because He loves us. More on that in just a bit.

Secondly, the man is deceived. “All these I have kept from my youth.” Oh really? What does God have to say about that? He says in 1 John 1 – “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

The truth is not in this man. He is deceiving himself – lying to himself. And that’s dangerous. It’s deadly. Why? Because, as St. John writes – “If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

You are gathered to Jesus here today. Why are you here? Are you here to HEAR – to listen to God – to learn from Him – to receive and believe?

This man comes to Jesus and calls Him “Good Teacher” – and right away, Jesus questions him. “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.” Do you call me good because you believe that I am God? Are you here to be taught – to hear and believe my word as truth – to hang on to every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord?

Or are you here because you want me to put a stamp of approval on your self and works-righteousness – to say, “you’re good, eternal life if yours already”?

Jesus diagnoses the man’s problem by setting before him the Second Table of the Law – those commandments which God gives so that we love our neighbor as ourselves – living as God desires us to live. “You know the commandments ...” Jesus says – and lays them out before him. And this man reveals his faith, his deception, saying – “all these I have kept. Wrong. False. Lie.

When we are gathered to Jesus here in the Divine Service – right out of the blocks we stand before Him and confess that we have NOT kept all of these commandments – that we have not lived as God our Father desires – that we have sinned against God, and our fellow man.

But did you notice what Jesus does to this man? He LOVED him! How? By not letting him – AND US – live in denial, living a lie, believing falsely – and dying, eternally!

Love means speaking the truth. Or, as Amos says – reproof in the gate – God stopping you dead in your tracks before you enter the Temple, to confess your sins, before you come into His holy place.

“You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” The man’s problem is our problem – that we have false gods – that which we fear, love, and trust above God. For him, it was his possessions that he couldn’t let go of. For us ... well ... sometimes its our children.

Sometimes we fail to speak God’s truth to them because we “fear” losing them – we “trust” that our way of handling the sinful situation (often by sweeping sin under the rug) will work out alright – we say that we “love” them, but we let them go on deceiving themselves. In essence, we lead them away from Jesus.

Jesus confronts us today – precisely because He LOVES us. He pierces our hearts with His Law – so that we don’t look to our self, to our works – but rather, see our unworthiness, cry out to Him for mercy, and trust that in Jesus God is gracious to us – He loves us undeservingly.

This man came to Jesus for eternal life. Why are you here? Will you hear? Will you confess your sins? Will you look to Jesus Christ alone? Will you believe and receive – His forgiveness in His Absolution – His cleansing you from all unrighteousness in Holy Baptism – His grace and mercy fed to you with His Body and Blood?

Jesus Christ has come here – for you – to be for you, your eternal life. “Come, follow me,” He says – in the way that leads to eternal life. Amen.

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