

Text: Small Catechism Intro

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is actually not a book of the Bible. Rather, as we will be doing on the fifth (5th) Sundays, a portion of the Small Catechism. Today we will be looking at the introduction to the Small Catechism.

Boys and Girls, How are you doing this morning? Good. What do I have here? I have a small little book! This book we call the Small Catechism. What is a Catechism and why do we have it? We will look at these questions today. Ponder them as we hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

Professor Timothy Wengert of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, often tells of a Tanzanian teacher who walked five hours to be able to buy a copy of Luther's Small Catechism in his own language. Would you walk this far for so small a books? Rev. Wengert, myself, and many other pastors, have dealt with members who suffer the ravages of Alzheimer's disease, could not recognize their own sons but could correct them when they recited passages from the Small Catechism at their bedside.

What is SC?

So, what is a Catechism? A catechism is a summary of the principles of Christian religion in the form of questions and answers, used for the instruction of Christians. The Small

Catechism was written by the blessed Doctor Martin Luther. It is a series of questions and answers written as a handbook and basic guide for Christian daily life, as a simple way to teach the basic tenants of what we believe teach and confess. Martin Luther did this because he saw that the people needed to be educated. Martin Luther says this in his own words. He said, “The deplorable, miserable conditions which I recently observed when visiting the parishes have constrained and pressed me to put this Catechism of Christian doctrine into this brief, plain, and simple form. How pitiable, so help me God, were the things I saw: the common man, especially in the villages, knows practically nothing of the Christian doctrine, and many of the pastors are almost entirely incompetent and unable to teach. Yet all the people are supposed to be Christians, have been baptized, and receive the Holy Sacrament even though they do not know the Our Father, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments and live like poor animals of the barnyard and pigpen. What these people have mastered, however, is the fine art of tearing all Christian liberty to shreds.”

Why Have?

That is why Luther wrote both the Small Catechism and well as the Large Catechism. They are an excellent summary of what is written for us in Scripture. Luther takes this and applies it to our Christian life. He breaks it down into easy to understand questions and answers, as well as individual parts. He takes the Christian Life and makes it easy to understand. The shape of the Catechism is the shape of the Christian life: Repentance (Ten Commandments), Faith (Creed), Prayer (Our Father),

Forgiveness of Sins (Baptism, Absolution, Lord's Supper), then daily prayer and our daily work. Luther Points us to Jesus Christ, His life, suffering, death, and resurrection for us and then to what this means for our daily lives.

Use in Daily life

The Catechism is written in such a way as to be used in our daily lives. As Luther writes, as the head of the household should teach his children. Luther even provided prayers for families to pray and the beginning and end of meals, and for each member to pray when they wake up and when they go to sleep. Families can pray together the Lord's Prayer, confess the Creed, work together, as we will as a congregation, on the explanations of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism, Confession and Holy Communion. Gradually, we will learn, memorize, and discuss together. The head of the house should lead the rest of the family in speaking the various parts of the Catechism and so, slowly but surely, learning the Catechism by heart. One week, for instance, the family can work on the First Commandment and its meaning, or the First Article of the Creed and its meaning, and so forth.

This is something that we can do even from a young age. Sure, we may not understand every word. That is ok! Understanding will come in time, but learning the words must begin right away. Just as with learning any language, you do not wait until you can understand the word to learn the language. Rather, you begin with the basics, build upon them, and understanding comes later. The same is true when it comes to the church. We need to learn to speak the language of our faith

before we can understand it. Families might be surprised how quickly children can memorize the words of the Catechism then learn to understand them. After all, even as adults, we cannot explain everything we believe, it is impossible to expect children to do it. Yet, we can give a simple explanation thanks to the writings of the blessed doctor Martin Luther, who points us to Christ and what He has done for us.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.