

“Salvation is Faith”

Luke 13:22-30

Salvation is faith. At first hearing this, your ears having heard the Word of God and trained in Luther’s Catechism tell you that such a statement needs more clarification. Salvation is faith? Having faith in faith, leads to a very weak faith. That is not what I am talking about.

The past two weeks, we read all the statements in Hebrews 11 of how the saints of old lived and acted “by faith.” Go back and read Hebrews 11 and count the number of times that phrase shows up. Salvation is faith. That is the thing we lost. That is the thing Adam and Eve rejected. And that is what must be put back in you by God.

Salvation is faith. This may sound like an odd statement and I do not want you to misunderstand me, but salvation is not simply the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting; it is not simply being out from under the tyranny of the devil or the curses of the thorns and thistles since Adam’s fall. That is the curse of sin. Sin is the cause of damnation. For salvation to happen for you, what first must be fixed is unbelief – a lack of faith.

As I said last week, unbelief is not just the public denial of atheists. Unbelief is manifested when God’s Word is treated as being cheap or common; when hearing the Word of God is not a high priority. Unbelief happens when the promises of God are treated as having little or no value.

If I promise to give you \$1000 and I give you a valid check for \$1000

with all the proper data and signature, it is a promise to you, a promissory note, having real value; if you choose to throw it in your desk drawer and ignore it because you really don't think I would give you a gift like that – or, more likely, you don't believe I have that kind of gift to offer. And you don't want to go through the embarrassment of trying to cash the check and being told it is no good. How could you be so gullible? If it seems too good to be true, it probably isn't.

Or you just tear it up and throw it away because you are convinced that I am nothing more than a scam artist. Either way, you don't get the benefit of the check, because you did not believe that this promise has any value. You did not believe that it is what I promised it is. If you do this and then grumble that I promised to give you \$1000 and all I gave you was this check; the problem was not with the check or with the one who gave it to you.

God has given you a promise worth much more than \$1000. He has promised that your sins were washed clean in Baptism. He has promised that the blood of Jesus poured out on the cross has paid for the guilt of Adam's sin and all the guilt of everything you have ever done – every thought, word, or deed. And He promises that He will blot it out of His memory. He will not hold it against you.

That promise is valid. But it has no value to you without the Holy Spirit creating faith in your heart. You must have faith in the promise. Only then will you receive the benefit of that promise – the forgiveness of sin; the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

You gather to hear that message of promise in His Word; you are invited to come to the Lord's Table to receive the broken body and shed

blood that saves you; we call upon the name of the Lord and confess our faith in what He has done. He has rescued you from the place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth for all eternity. He has welcomed you and invited you to “recline at table in the kingdom of God” for all eternity.

If you truly believe this promise and have saving faith in what Christ has done, with knowing what we have been rescued from; there is no way God’s Word of promise could be viewed as being cheap, common, or a low priority. It has to be your highest priority. Any other response should be viewed as insanity.

If I gave you a check for \$1000 and your spouse took it and tore it up, what would your response be? You would think they had gone insane. What if they said, “We won’t cash it. We will just put it in the desk drawer. We know it is there, and we can look at it again if we need it.”? There would probably be some serious discussions within the household.

Yet, when the promise in question is the promise of eternal life in Christ, a great many people are content to throw it in the desk drawer and come back to it when something happens and God becomes “needed.”

Jesus says, it is a narrow door through which the children of God must enter. It is much easier to hang out in the streets and party with the pagans. As I mentioned last week, as we send our young people off to school, especially for our college students, it is painful and difficult to be laughed at and ridiculed by the crowd for having faith – being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see.

They may laugh at you, but remember that their laughter is the laughter of a fool. Only fools or the insane would take a check and tear it up. However, as I said, it is easier to hang out in the streets with these

fools, especially when they make you think that you get to have more freedom or more stuff – whether that is additional material things or sinful experiences – the guilty pleasures of life. You get to live as a free individual. Oh, how our world loves that concept. However, their idea of freedom is actually slavery to sin.

Jesus says, “Strive to enter through the narrow door.” A narrow door does not let you carry anything with you. It requires you to come before the Lord empty-handed. There is a reason we confess again and again, “I am a poor miserable sinner.” I have nothing to offer that will rescue me from that place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Which is why we gather and rejoice having real freedom: freedom found in God’s Word of promise that Baptism now saves you [1Pt. 3:21]. This is why we repeatedly come to hear the Word of God and how the promise made to Adam is fulfilled in Christ. This is why our Lord invites us to His Table and says, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” In this body and blood broken and shed for you is the promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Have faith.

Those sinful experiences and ungodly pleasures that the pagan fools in the street trumpet as the best part of life cannot coexist with Christ. So He forgives you and invites you into His kingdom. Strive to enter through the narrow door. Your Father in heaven has never given you a gift that is cheap or common. Have faith. There is no salvation without faith. Be sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see. Amen.