

“God’s Word is a Puzzle”

Hebrews 2:1-13

“We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.” This is why we continually ask the old Lutheran question: What does this mean? This is why we make the confession of faith in the Nicene Creed that Jesus was “begotten, not made;” that He was “the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds”; that He is eternal and “of one substance with the Father.”

There are no contradictions to be found in the different passages of Holy Scripture, or between Holy Scripture and the creeds of the church. They have stood the test of time and have been shown again and again to be faithful.

Interpreting the Bible is a lot like putting together a 1,000,000 piece jigsaw puzzle. Dumping out 1,000,000 pieces would seem like an insurmountable task. Where do you start? This piece of blue; is it sky or is it water? What is the first step? Good luck finding a table. Well, the first step is to look at the cover of the box to see what the one who created this puzzle intends for it to look like when you get done with it.

In Baptism, we are given all 1,000,000 pieces of the puzzle. Our faith is complete. He has given you the picture of your salvation. There is nothing more that we need. We have seen the cover of the box, we just

aren't quite sure how it all fits together yet. The creeds, and confessions of the church like Luther's Catechism, are like the cover of the box; they are guides for seeing how God's Word fits together. It is good to have that basic overview of what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have done for you. And for many generations, these writings have been shown to be in complete harmony with God's Word.

Therefore, if you hear a Bible passage being interpreted in such a way that it contradicts one of the creeds or confessions of faith, then we know that someone may be trying to put that piece of the puzzle in the wrong place. This is your opportunity to help them understand the truth.

Today, we are recognizing the work of the LWML. Mission work is not just sending money overseas. Mission work is speaking the Gospel. It is all about Jesus, the Son of God, taking away your sin through His broken body and shed blood on the cross, and defeating death by rising from the grave. Telling your children about this is mission work. You are a missionary.

Mission work starts here, in our homes, among your friends. To quote the recently departed Yogi Berra: he said, "Wherever you go, there you are." Wherever you go, that is where you are and that is where you do your mission work.

Now, when you are putting a jigsaw puzzle together, different people have different strategies; some start at the bottom, some at the top; but no matter what strategy you use, one thing is necessary: time. Your most effective mission work will be done with those with whom you spend a lot of time. No one is going to put this puzzle together in a matter of minutes.

Annalisa had a question that turned into a deeper conversation the

other night. We talked for over an hour, and she still had questions. So I looked something up in I Corinthians and she still had questions and then it was time for bed.

The sinful part of me thought: “Whew, saved by the bell.” But in reality it frustrates me that there are just no simple answers to hard questions.

There are no quick answers. What we really want is an 8 second sound bite that will answer all of our questions about Jesus so that we can share it with our family and friends. That doesn’t exist. It is going to take time.

All of your questions will not be answered in an 8 second sound bite, an 8 minute discussion, or an 8 hour seminar. Now, if you would give me an 8 hour seminar, we could put a lot of the jigsaw puzzle together.

But how many people give God’s Word more than eight minutes a day, or even eight minutes a week? When you pour out your 1,000,000 piece jigsaw puzzle, how many of you would give up after about eight minutes and say: “I can’t figure this out”? But this is exactly what people do with God’s Word.

How many of you, after giving up on putting the puzzle together, would cut the picture out of the front of the box, frame it, and proudly display this accomplishment? No one would do that, yet this is how we treat God’s Word. We want the easy answer.

God has given us all the pieces of the puzzle. If we do not take the time to work at putting the puzzle together, but put it on a shelf or in closet (donate it for the LWML garage sale next spring), or if we just throw it away while doing our spring cleaning, then we have done what most of the people throughout the history of the world have done. In doing this we take the

most valuable of all our possessions and treat it as something not worthy of our time.

It is my prayer that you spend time with God's Word. Don't say, "It's too confusing to read." Or "I don't have time to come to Bible class, or when I do, then I just keep having more questions than answers." It is true. The simple answers always lead to more questions. You should sit in on confirmation class sometime. I start to answer one question and four more hands go up. Now none of us know all the answers. None of us have all the pieces of the puzzle put together. And we won't so long as we live in this world.

It is the process of working at the puzzle that allows you to grow in your understanding of God and what He has done for you – as the picture is revealed more and more throughout the process. But remember that, in Baptism, you already have everything you need. And remember that all of this is simply about Jesus, the Son of God taking away your sin through His broken body and shed blood on the cross, and defeating death by rising from the grave.

The fullness of God – the complete picture of who He is and what He has done is something no one can fully understand. We make no claim to understanding the fullness of God. No matter how much time you have in this life, you will never be able to put the entire puzzle together. But, in His Word, God has revealed Himself. Spend some time with God's Word. This is where He speaks to you. Pay close attention to what you have heard, "lest you drift away from it." And wherever you go in this life, there you are. Share that Word. He has revealed Himself to you. He has already given you the picture of your salvation. Amen.