

Week 3: Sin and the Creed

Human Sinfulness (or, why the law cannot save)

- Sin and Costco
- The law as mirror
- Relationships ruptured
 - How is this understanding of law and sin different from other ways of talking about law and sin? Are these differences helpful? Why or why not?

The Creed

- General Observations
 - “The Creed properly follows, which sets forth all that we must *expect* and *receive* from God; in short, it teaches us to know him perfectly.”¹
 - Relationship to the law
 - “It is given in order to help us do what the Ten Commandments require of us.”²
 - Trinitarian ordering (as opposed to a previous 12 articles of the Creed understanding)
 - Fundamental piety (in the old sense)/relationships
 - The relationship between the three articles Holy Spirit→Christ→The Father
- The First Article: the Father and Creation
 - “What kind of person is God? How can we praise or portray or describe him in such away so that we may know him?”³
 - Knowledge here is linked to praise, right relationship. Hence the importance of Father language.
 - “I am God’s creature.”⁴
 - A long list of goods
 - “daily guards and defends”⁵
 - How we relate to our earthly goods
 - When have you been able to practice the sort of gratitude named in this article? When have you not? How has this practice of gratitude changed the way you relate to your life?
- The Second Article: The Son and Redemption
 - “what we have from God over and above the temporal goods mentioned above, namely, how he has given himself completely to us, withholding nothing.”⁶

¹ Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000, p. 431. Italics mine.

² Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” p. 431.

³ Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” p. 432.

⁴ Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” p. 432.

⁵ Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” p. 433.

⁶ Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” p. 433.

- Concentration on these words: “in Jesus Christ, our Lord.”
- Our status as sinners, deserving of divine punishment/this is distinct from those who enjoy the gifts of creation (cf. Mt. 5:45).
- What is it to become a Lord? Luther asks.
 - “It means that (Jesus) has redeemed and released me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all misfortune.”⁷
 - “He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father’s favor and grace. *As his own possession* he has taken us under his protection and shelter in order that he may rule us by his righteousness, wisdom, power, life and blessedness.”⁸
- For Lutheran theology, we need rescue from powers stronger than ourselves. What are the benefits of thinking this way? What feels like risk? There is a strong account of human sinfulness and God’s just judgment of that sinfulness in this explanation. How does this language strike you?
- The Third Article: The Spirit and Sanctification
 - The Spirit is holy, who makes us holy
 - Start with human limitation and sinfulness:
 - “I believe that by my own understanding or strength, I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him.”⁹
 - Connection to the 1st commandment
 - “But instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel.”¹⁰
 - A whole different approach to faith and the Christian life
 - Called, but how?
 - “just as the Son obtains dominion . . . so the Holy Spirit effects our being made holy through the following: the community of saints or the Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.”¹¹
 - Placed in the church’s lap
 - Through these two means: the Christian church and the forgiveness of sin
 - Holiness in time/at the end of time
 - “because holiness has begun and is growing daily, we await the time when our flesh will be put to death . . . and will come forth gloriously.”¹²
 - Lutheran theology holds that faith must be a gift from the Holy Spirit. How is this similar to or different from other accounts with which you are familiar? Is

⁷ Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” p. 434.

⁸ Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” p. 434.

⁹ Martin Luther, “Small Catechism,” p. 355.

¹⁰ Martin Luther, “Small Catechism,” p. 355.

¹¹ Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” p. 435

¹² Martin Luther, “Large Catechism,” p. 438.

this a comfort or something else? Why? Lutheran theology holds that the Spirit works primarily through means (Word, sacrament, the church). What are some implications of this claim for our faith life?