

Dear Saints,

If you have been reading along in Luther's Small Catechism, you may have noticed that there is a lot of time devoted to the Ten Commandments. If you read it straight through, it can be quite heavy. I know I am so ready for the Gospel in the Apostle's Creed by the time I get there! But in this is a key to true comfort.

There's a lot of false comfort out there. A Christian example of false comfort would be someone participating in any kind of sexual activity outside of marriage and thinking that everything is okay with God. The last thing that you want to say to this unrepentant person is "It's okay, your sins are forgiven." That is a false comfort. It would be like telling someone with cancer, "That's okay, you don't need treatment!"

Cancer is a good analogy to the sin that plagues us. I have read many testimonies of people who have had cancer signs and just ignored them until they did not have a choice. If cancer is caught early, treatment is much more successful than when it is ignored and caught late. And I do know that sometimes there is just nothing you can do because no treatment will be successful.

Sin, if left untreated, becomes much worse and is harder to treat as well. It seems to me that a little untreated sin usually turns into bigger and bigger sins. It is like what Jesus says about the unclean spirit that has been cast out of a person: "It goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first." (Luke 11:26) Demons have no power over you unless you give them entry with untreated sin.

Lent is a period where we spend more time meditating upon the Law and the condition of sin that we are in. God does not want you to meditate upon sin. He wants you to meditate on His Law and be honest and confess your sin. Then you are prepared for true comfort.

The cancer analogy is bad in a way because not all treatments for cancer are successful. But the cure for sin is always successful. When Christ says, "It is finished" on the cross, He meant that all His work to pay for sin was accomplished. (John 19:30) In other words, all sin of all time of all people is paid for by the blood of Christ. This is technically called "universal atonement," or "objective justification," and it is the comfort of the Christian. The confidence of your standing with God is based on the universal atonement. You know your sin is paid for. This is why the resurrection of Jesus is so precious to us.

You also need "subjective justification." That is, you need to know that the work of Christ on the cross applied to you personally! This is where the gift of the means of Grace is so important and precious to the Christian. In the preached Word, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Lord's Supper, you know that the grace and mercy of God have come to you personally. The hearing of the Word and Holy Baptism are foundational to your faith. (Romans 10:17, Mark 16:16) Hearing the Word, Holy Absolution, and the Lord's Supper are foundational to the *continuation* of your faith. (1 Corinthians 4:7) And these wonderful gifts of God give true comfort. A comfort that lasts unto eternal life.

Let us continue to enjoy God's awesome gifts of grace and remain steadfast in the true comfort they provide. Then you will be able to stand no matter what the devil, the world, and your old sinful nature throw at you. (Ephesians 5:10-20)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:3-6)

In Christ,  
Pastor Maggard