

As pastor of this congregation my eye is always toward the call of God given to you. As caretaker of your souls, I rejoice that His word is among us. Most of the things listed above are, after all, temporal things. None of it can be taken with you when God decides to call you out of this life. It is true that we are commanded through the second table of the law to love your neighbor as yourself. Yet, the reality of taking care of your neighbor and all the goods that God grants, stem from a new life created in Christ. Both Christians and heretics can take care of their neighbor but one goes to Heaven and the other to Hell. God has blessed this "Chapel", THIS (THE) Lutheran Chapel of the Cross with those that desire to serve others, ideally not for personal gain or for personal recognition, not for the glory of a plaque on the wall, not for prideful exuberance, but for humble, loving, and faithful service as members of the body of Christ. But that too sometimes waivers. We often get the tables mixed up and place the second table, commandments 4 – 10 before the first table of commandments 1-3. To sum up the commandments is to start by loving the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul and then the second follows, to love your neighbor as yourself.

That is the beauty of God's gracious gifts to us. The God who created Adam and Eve, is the same God that covered over their sin and promised a savior. The God that gave life and breath, body and soul, to man also provided everything needed to support this body and life. He still does. He gives you new life, called out of the darkness of sin and death into His light. He does what we pray for in our confession of sin at the beginning of the service. We pray "For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name." "We are by nature sinful and unclean", "poor miserable sinners". Yet Christ covered over, atoned for your sin by his death on the cross and his resurrection on the third day. He has given you His word, and calls you children of the heavenly Father, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. He has forgiven you your sin and now causes you to walk in His ways, delighting in His will.

This means of course that as God's children your first desire, your first love is not for things temporal, but for things eternal. As God's children you love God and out of His love, you love your neighbor and do what is best not only for him temporally but for him eternally. Each of you are called to examine your life according to the commandments and God's Word and to call sin, sin. You cannot confess one set of sins and say you have no sin while you continue to walk in sin, deceiving yourself so that the truth is not in you. You can not walk by faith in Christ and hold to the sinful desires of this life in the world that leads you away from the Word and will of God. There is no middle ground where you can keep selective items from both God and world. It does not work that way. You either love God or you love mammon but you can not serve both for you will either hate the one and love the other or you will be devoted to one and despise the other. It is always a constant battle for your soul between the love of this world and the love of God. Satan wants to keep your focus away from Christ. Just as he did in the garden when he asked "Did God really say?"

Yet you pray in the Lord's prayer that He lead you not into temptation but deliver you from evil. This church, the bride of Christ, gathers together to hear God's Word, receiving God's gifts of forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus whether blessed with temporal things or not. You have been conformed by the work of the Holy Spirit as you have been given new life through baptism, by water and God's word, and made into a holy priesthood, a holy nation, the children and family of God. The Word of God is not some theological philosophical book for debate. It is living, breathing, and active, justifying and sanctifying you for work in God's Kingdom. It is not easy. There are many crosses to bear. And yet, by faith in Jesus, run the race and press on toward the goal of heavenly life eternal.

Pastor Ficken