Text: CQ&A 17-18

Introduction

So we’ve been reading from the Small Catechism the Christian Question and their Answer which are supposed to be a fitting self-examination for receiving communion.

The first cycle was about the simple faith in Jesus Christ.

The second explored that faith a little deeper. Just who was this Jesus Christ, largely pointing at the creed. And asking again do you have faith in this Jesus?

The third cycle – last week – turned to more secondary questions, even if they are the questions of our age: Why should I believe this? What convinces us? And the answer is simply the Word. Or more specifically the Word of the Cross. The reading we have today from John captures this mystic cryptic Jesus. He says things like “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him.” Jesus has come to reveal the Father. And primarily what he means by that is revealing the Love of the Father for all His creation. The greatest revelation of that is the cross. And the results, the body and blood of the cross, the love of God are given to us in the sacrament. Such language is either foolishness or you know. The Word of God is its own power and does not return empty.

Text

Those first cycles answer the who, what, when, where and how of the faith. Being a doctrinal church, we spend a lot of time on these types of questions, and they are appropriate. Because these are the bedrock answers that determine the course of how we then live. Or as Bonhoeffer might say it, they are the constitution of our life together.

But the two questions tonight I think are more toward the heart of any self-examination. They really ask why? What are the motivations? And the simple answer is that the motivation is always love. The only reason anyone ever changed their mind or their direction is love. Now you might object that all my favorite detectives have a line “I like money motives.” And I do like money motives. But money motives are still about love. Misdirected love, but love. Human beings are first creatures that desire. The heart of tonight’s question are what to we desire?

Luther gives us the proper example first? What motivated Christ to die and make full payment for your sins? Why the cross?

And the primary answer is His great love for the Father. Now at some point we are talking about things within the Godhead, which honestly are just beyond us. But it was the love for the Father that lead him to leave heaven and journey with us below. His Father’s creation was broken and the Son was the only one who could fix it. The Father loved the son and loved his broken creation. But that broken creation could no longer stand in the presence of a holy God. But if that creation was bound to the Son? If it shared the love of the Father for the Son? If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him. The Father and humanity reconciled in their love of Christ.

Could the Son have left that creation broken? I suppose so, but it might have broken the heart of the Father. And so it was an impossibility of love.

Now I neglected or downplayed the second part of the example. That great love for the Father also extends to me and other sinners. And this isn’t to be shrugged off lightly. But the love for the Father’s creation is because it is the Father’s. Borrowing a phrase, if we had been the children of some lessor god, I’m not sure the motivation would have been there. But being the Children of the Father unties us in love.

And that example of Christ is then put to us. Why to we wish to go to the Sacrament? What is our motivation for approaching the table?

There are lots of misdirected motivations.

Maybe it is because we are here and everyone else is.

Not as strong anymore, but maybe it is those money reasons. We have good contacts through the church.

Maybe it is secondary family reason. Mom or Dad would like us to.

None of these are in the end valid reasons. Jesus did not come because everyone was here. He came because he loved the Father. He didn’t come because it would bring him wealth or friends. He came because he loved the Father. Jesus didn’t come because Mary asked him to – even if she might have prodded him at Cana. He came because He loved His Father.

And it is this love that the answers tell us is the only valid motivation. That I might believe in this Great Love of Christ. And that I might myself learn from Him to love The Father and my neighbor.

What is our motivation?

That the Great Love of Christ would so fill our hearts that we might desire communion with God and live in his righteousness.

Next week, after visiting the mountaintop of the Love of God this week, we head to the plain of a couple of practical questions, before the pageant of Holy Week. Amen.