

Dear Friends in Christ,

Every year, our sister church, Redeemer Lutheran in St. Cloud, hosts a class where a smart fella comes in and gives a 3 day class on his expertise. I've gone all 3 years I've been here (where has the time gone?) and I've benefited every time, and I hope that the members of our congregations benefit from the time their pastor gets to spend learning. Academics for the pure sake of making the head bigger will break the neck, but applied knowledge benefits the whole body.

This year's course was taught by Rev. Dr. Gregory Schulz, who (kind of) is a professor at Concordia in Mequon, WI. Google his name if you want the full story of the kind of. It's a lesson in how these philosophical matters really do trickle into our everyday lives, and we should be praying for him and all of our Concordia Universities, that they would not be held captive by worldly philosophy and would repent and turn to Christ.

Philosophy may seem pretentious and heady, and often it is. Woe to those pretentious philosophers! Paul warns us against this kind of philosophy - **“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col 2:8).**

There is such a thing as good and godly philosophy, however. *Philos* is a Greek word for love (you can see it in Philadelphia, which means the city of brotherly love) and *sophia* is the Greek word for wisdom, so philosophy is the love of wisdom. Compliance with rules only goes so far - parents should instill a love for God's Commandments and wisdom in their children.

What's true wisdom? Let's ask the 2nd wisest guy who ever lived, Solomon - **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 9:10).**

The question is not whether or not you're a philosopher (lover of wisdom) - the question is which wisdom do you love? Do you love God's wisdom or the (sinful) world's wisdom? And these wisdoms always clash - Jesus is the Word (John 1) and the world has rejected Jesus, so they've rejected the Word, and a rejection of the Word means a rejection of all words.

The real battle is a battle for the dictionary. Whoever defines the terms will win. Bill Clinton knew this - it depends what the definition of “is” is! It's hard to have a good faith debate with someone who is constantly changing the definitions. It's not fair. It wasn't fair when the Devil was manipulating the Word when he tempted Jesus, and the devil is still manipulating the Word today. It's rather brilliant on the devil's part - to get the world to stay away from the Word of God, the devil has instilled a distrust in words in general. Nothing is stable. The definition of diversity, equity, inclusion, racism, gender, etc. are always being manipulated, and the devil is watching as chaos and confusion reigns.

How to combat it? We have to be a people of the Word. We have to be steeped in it Sunday after Sunday (has anybody told you that God expects His people to be in church *every* Sunday? Here's your reminder. People who complain about the state of the world but then are missing from the pews are a part of the problem.). We have to be steeped in His Word every day through devotion. And then we have to take what God says seriously and live it out.

Thankfully, we don't fight this battle alone. The Word fights for us. The Word became flesh. They killed the Word once, but Jesus knows His way out of a grave. They can kill the Word and words again, but our God can die. He will win this and every battle - the question is which side will you be on?

Yours in Christ,

Pastor