

Sermon 7-28-19
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W. Hempstead, NY

Martin Luther's Small Catechism Sermon #5. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Commandments

Worthy Of Our Praise

Steve Turner is a career journalist who interviewed and wrote books about many of the prominent rock musicians and cultural figures of the 1970's. From the titles of his books he appears to be a Christian or at least influenced by Christianity.

He's also a poet and wrote the following poem satirizing the absurdity of the Naturalistic worldview. It's entitled:

Creed

We believe in Marxfreudanddarwin.
We believe everything is OK
as long as you don't hurt anyone,
to the best of your definition of hurt,
and to the best of your knowledge.

We believe in sex before during
and after marriage.
We believe in the therapy of sin.
We believe that adultery is fun.
We believe that sodomy's OK
We believe that taboos are taboo.

We believe that everything's getting better
despite evidence to the contrary.
The evidence must be investigated.
You can prove anything with evidence.

We believe there's something in horoscopes,
UFO's and bent spoons;
Jesus was a good man just like Buddha
Mohammed and ourselves.
He was a good moral teacher although we think
his good morals were bad.

We believe that all religions are basically the same,
at least the one that we read was.
They all believe in love and goodness.
They only differ on matters of

creation sin heaven hell God and salvation.

We believe that after death comes The Nothing
because when you ask the dead what happens
they say Nothing.
If death is not the end, if the dead have lied,
then it's compulsory heaven for all
excepting perhaps Hitler, Stalin and Genghis Khan.

We believe in Masters and Johnson.
What's selected is average.
What's average is normal.
What's normal is good.

We believe in total disarmament.
We believe there are direct links between
warfare and bloodshed.
Americans should beat their guns into tractors
and the Russians would be sure to follow.

We believe that man is essentially good.
It's only his behaviour that lets him down.
This is the fault of society.
Society is the fault of conditions.
Conditions are the fault of society.

We believe that each man must find the truth
that is right for him.
Reality will adapt accordingly.
The universe will readjust. History will alter.
We believe that there is no absolute truth
excepting the truth that there is no absolute truth.

We believe in the rejection of creeds.

Postscript – If chance be the father of all flesh, then disaster is his rainbow in the sky.
And when you hear, “State of emergency, sniper kills ten, troops on a rampage,
youths go looting, bomb blasts school,” it is but the sound of man worshipping his
maker.

The postscript is devastating. If an infinite eternal, uncreated universe of time
and chance is the creator of all things, then all the horrors we see caused either by
nature or by humans are no horrors at all. They are blind chance working out its
glories. And when people go berserk from the nihilism that atheism spawns, they're
merely worshipping the creator atheism proclaims – blind time and chance.

Nihilism, violence, despair and vicious utopia building are what naturally come out of us when we abandon the first commandment and have as our god something or someone other than Yahweh – the righteous, infinite, eternal, true uncreated Creator God.

But the rest of the poem is no less devastating. Because of original sin we call evil what God calls good, and good what He calls evil. Thus, the foundation of our daily existence is horribly corrupt. Yet, we deny it. Our civilization is bankrupt, headed for destruction. Yet, we pretend that we can't tell.

Certainly, then, this poem acts as a mirror because it's an appeal to conscience. Behind it, unwritten and unseen, is our true Creator and His law. As we've said, one function of God's Law is as a mirror in which we see our wretched unlovely reflections. Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the most ungodly and wicked of all? I hope it isn't me! But it doesn't matter. All have fallen short of our Creator's glorious total righteousness. And God cannot be mocked. Therefore, it is me.

Our rebellion against Yahweh's definitions of good and evil is so complete that we cannot heal ourselves and there is no hope apart from Jesus, the Word of God. It doesn't matter if we're only a tiny smidge short of our Creator's righteousness. It still means that we have fallen short of the glory of God and are therefore condemned in His sight as spiritually and morally defective creatures.

Therefore, Jesus provided the only way out. He had to come to atone for and heal our rebellion. His holy sacrificial death was the justification of our unholy and ungodly lives before our Creator. There's a section of Romans in which Paul explains this. It begins at Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ..." This we have already explained.

But the next verse tells of what God has done about the situation, Romans 3:24, "24 and [all] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." The Son of God came to earth, incarnate in human flesh, born of a virgin, in order to justify our lives before God as a free gift. We did not deserve this grace. Nevertheless, Yahweh worked redemption for us through His only begotten Son, so that our lives might be redeemed from the sinful nature, death, and the devil's power to lure into sin.

The next verse tells us how Yahweh did it. Romans 3:25, "God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement...." Atonement may be defined as a payment for sin or evil that completely satisfies the party sinned against so that sin is forgiven.

Our rebellion against our Creator is most grievous to Him. Therefore, what can satisfy our Creator's outrage over our rebellion and unrighteous actions?

Yahweh has specified that only a sacrifice of blood can atone for rebellion and sin. Indeed, there are many commandments in the Old Testament pertaining to the justification of sinners by animal sacrifice and the sprinkling of the animal's blood upon the offenders. These are summarized in the New Testament in Hebrews 9:22, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

However, contained in the Old Testament and made explicit in the New Testament is that Yahweh has satisfied His justice on account of us rebels, not with the sacrificial blood of bulls and goats, but with the shed blood of His only begotten Son. And so Romans 3:25 declares that we have atonement, "through faith in his

[Christ's] blood." Understand that this is why discerning the body and blood of Jesus Christ is so important in Holy Communion. Faith unequivocally declares that Jesus' blood was shed for me so that my sin has been atoned for.

Finally we hear in Romans 3:25-26, "He [God] did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

God is just. He doesn't wink His eye at sin. All rebellion and sin must be punished. But wherever God has satisfied His own justice on behalf of sinners, there lives can be justified before Him. So, since Jesus sacrificed Himself to satisfy God's justice, we can by faith in Jesus have our lives justified before God and not be condemned.

Therefore, the good news of the gospel is for those who have said, enough – enough of my own way. Enough of original sin and deciding good and evil for myself. I'm ready to submit to my Creator's way for me. I'm ready for His Jesus. I'm ready for His life, not some life I make for myself. Those who have had this repentance given to them by God's Holy Spirit can then receive faith by the same Spirit to believe that their sins are forgiven and that they have had a new birth in Jesus Christ.

And so, those graciously given faith in Jesus enter a new realm. It's the realm of having things the Spirit's way. Christians live in the Spirit. As it says in Romans 8:5, "... those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."

How can we know what the Spirit desires for us? The commandments tell us. They are the guide the Spirit uses to engender righteous living in us.

And so far we've seen that the Spirit desires we use the great Name of the Lord rightly as we are admonished by the second commandment. Therefore, we are to humble ourselves before the Lord by praising His great Name and thanking Him. Another thing the Spirit desires is that we take time to hear and respond to God's Word as we keep the Sabbath Day holy.

But it's not just the Sabbath that is made for worship. All of life is. Years ago, Christian artist, [Lenny LeBlanc](#), wrote a praise song that has these words as part of its chorus: "Just one thing I'm sure of: I was born. You were born. Everything was made to worship Him." – meaning the Lord. These simple words not only summarize vast portions of Scripture, including the commandments, they speak deeply of the purpose of life itself. And note the stark contrast between LeBlanc's song and Steven Turner's poem. The difference is having the only true living God.

So is everything created to worship Yahweh? Are we born to worship Him? We read in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." This means that everything in the creation including sun, moon, planets, stars and galaxies proclaim the handiwork of our Creator. By their very existence, the heavens worship their Creator. That's powerful.

We also read in Psalm 104:24-25, "24 How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. 25 There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number – living things both large and small." Under every rock there's an amazing small world of life. This earth teems

with living things. There may be bacteria or viruses on the other planets of this solar system. But there's nothing like the surface of the earth.

I planted some cucumbers in May. They've grown fantastically and the marvel of the harvest is just beginning. These cucumbers from nothing but a seed are the work of a super intelligent being. He is worthy of my worship and praise.

We read in Psalm 8:3-8, "3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? 5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: 7 all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea...." This is quite a difference from Steve Turner's poem, isn't it? It was and is our Creator's plan to crown us with glory and honor at the resurrection of the dead in Christ. That's why we were born to worship Him.

Also compare Turner's poem to Psalm 19:7-10, "7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. 10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb." We find these words to be true when we walk in the ways of Lord Holy Spirit, the giver of Christ's righteousness. Life has difficulties, certainly. And there is always the mocking of those who scoff at the existence of God. But, the heart and soul of a Christian can be at peace under the righteous ways of the Lord. I was born, you were born, everything was made to worship Yahweh!

Jesus Himself is most worthy of our praise. Indeed, the only true way we can worship Yahweh, our Creator, is through our Savior, Jesus Christ. For, it is Jesus alone who has ever perfectly kept the great commandment to love Yahweh our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Therefore, we're told that in the heavenly places the angels and the souls of the redeemed sing this song about Jesus in Revelation 5:9-10, 12-13, "9... 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.'.... 12, 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!'.... 13 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!'" We worship the King, the Lamb who was slain in payment for our rebellion! I was born. You were born to worship Him. And by faith we join the heavenly chorus.

Worship of our Creator is more than a song or two on Sunday morning. It's a way of life. It's our daily work. It's our approach to life. We are in Christ, and Christ is in us. Worship is an eternally valuable way of life. It's the beginning of the holy life all who are resurrected in Christ will live on the new earth with their Creator God.

Therefore, I was born, you were born, everything was created to worship our Creator. This is what the first three commandments tell us. We are to love the Lord our God with everything we have. Amen.

All Bible quotes are from the NIV.