

Sermon for March 18, 2012 – Christian Education Sunday

Proverbs 4:13

**Theme: Christian education gives life.**

- 1) *It prepares us for our life in heaven.*
- 2) *It preserves us through this life on earth*

*Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.*

Why do you send your kids to school? Is it merely because the state requires it? Is it to get your kids out of the house so that you can go to work? No, it's so that they can learn. We want our children to be ready to pursue whatever career they are led to pursue and be self-sufficient when it comes to providing for themselves as adults. We want them to be healthy and know enough to make wise choices.

Let me ask you another question: if we send our children to school to prepare them for life, what do we expect a school to teach our children? Math, Science, History, Physical Education, Reading and Writing – these are skills public and Lutheran schools can teach equally well. But are these skills enough to prepare your children for life? How will they help your sons when they are faced with friends who want them to experiment with drugs? How will they protect your daughters from those predators who just want to use them for a good time? How will these skills direct your children to what's truly important – not making money and getting a lot of toys, but our relationships with God, family and our community. Where do these skills come from?

For the Christian, they can only come from God's Word. And here is where the difference lies between public and Christian schools: public schools – no matter how wonderful they are – are not allowed to teach these skills from the Bible.

“But,” someone might say, “don't public schools teach ethics?” Yes, they do, but that's also part of the problem. The ethics they teach are not from Scripture; in fact they often fight against Scripture claiming that truth is relative or the Bible can't be trusted. Some of the very things God tells us are sin and harmful our public school system promotes as acceptable. Most importantly, public schools are not allowed to teach about Christ. My faith in Christ ought to be the basis and foundation of every decision I make in life, decisions from what song I listen to on the radio to what career I want to pursue. Christ needs to be the basis of every single one of those decisions, or those decisions will end up harming my faith, and possibly my salvation.

Now, understand me correctly – this sermon is not about how Christian schools will save your children and give them eternal life. They won't. Only the Gospel does that. Rather this sermon is about the Gospel itself – how instruction in the Gospel will prepare us for eternal life and also preserves us for life on this earth. This is Christian education in its proper sense. It was for this purpose our Lutheran Day and High Schools were created – to teach Christ and train us to base our entire lives on Him and His Word.

Let us then consider the importance of Christian education, under the theme: **Christian education gives life.** 1) *It prepares us for our life in heaven.* 2) *It preserves us through this life on earth.*

Part One: *It prepares us for our life in heaven.*

Our sermon text for this morning is from Proverbs - a wonderful book of the Bible that every parent should read with his child. Proverbs is written from the aspect of a father giving his son advice for life. He warns his son of the evil that will entice him away from faith; from the spiritual dangers that will destroy his soul. He also encourages his son to gain godly wisdom – wisdom that can only come from a proper reverence of the LORD and His instruction. He tells his son to spare no cost to gain this wisdom and, once he has it, to keep it at all costs. Why? Because, as our sermon text says: This instruction, this wisdom, is *your life*.

The wisdom of God spoken about in Proverbs is Christ – as Jesus himself testifies: “*These are the Scriptures that testify about me<sup>a</sup>.*” Christ Jesus is our life, as He himself says: “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me<sup>b</sup>,*” and, “*I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life<sup>c</sup>.*” And this last quote of Jesus tells us exactly what kind of life we have when we hold on to the teachings of Christ: eternal life in heaven.

And we need this life. Why? Because we, according to our sinful nature, are spiritually dead. Our sins have separated us from God. They anger him. Our sinful nature is selfish– trying to be its own god, and master of its own fate. Our sinful natures hate God and don’t want to have anything to with him.

This truth is played out day after day in our world, as people live selfishly, making selfish decision that hurt even their closest family members. But we don’t have to turn on the 5 o’clock news to see this. All we have to do is look in our own hearts, and evaluate our own actions. We are sinfully selfish, and this has separated us from God and His love.

But God did not want us lost in hell for all eternity. He loved us. This is why He sent His Son into the world to win our salvation. He lived the perfect, unselfish life we all failed to live. He took our sins upon himself and died for them – thereby winning our forgiveness. He rose back to life in order to show that God’s justice had been satisfied, that our sins have been paid for in full.

And then, He sent His Holy Spirit with His Word to call, gather and enlighten us to this truth. Through the preaching of God’s holy law, we have been led to see how desperate our situation was – that we are indeed sinners, who have offended our holy God. We were led to be sorry for our sins, confess them to God, and ask him to forgive us. And what gave us hope that He would forgive us? The Gospel, the good news that Christ has paid for our sins in full. By means of this good news the Holy Spirit created trust in our hearts towards Jesus. We believe that God loves us and that Jesus saved us. And with this faith came love. Because of the love God has for us we began to love God back. He became the sole focus of our life. Our future glory with Him in paradise became our greatest hope and goal. He, through the preaching of the Gospel by Christian parents, pastors and teachers, awakened and strengthened faith in our hearts.

Christian education is all about Christ. It is about showing us our sin and then showing us our Savior. And Christian education can come in a variety of forms like Sunday worship, Bible classes and Sunday school, family devotions, confirmation class and Lutheran day schools. Because Christian education is the proclamation of the Gospel it offers us eternal life. But this is not only thing it does. Christian education also preserves us for life on this earth.

#### Part Two: It preserves us through this life on earth

God not only saved us from something, he saved us for something. And for what did God save us? Listen to what St. Paul says in His letter to the Ephesians: *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.<sup>d</sup>*

God saved us so that we could live for him on this earth – glorifying his name through both our words and actions. He wants other people to know about his love and salvation. He wants us to grow in our love to Him. And to do these things we need to grow in Christ. The more we learn about Christ and his love for us, the more we grow in our love towards Him. St. Paul puts it this way: *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.<sup>e</sup>*

And this is where Christian education comes in. As we read and study God’s word we grow in our faith and love towards God. And this will impact every aspect of our life. Love for Christ will guide all our decisions from what TV shows we watch to whom we should marry. As we grow in the Gospel – learning and meditating on it - we begin to see how following Christ's teachings keeps us safe from many dangers and blesses us in many godly ways. It does the same for our children. It prepares them to live for God, and not themselves. It prepares them to find refuge from temptation, be guarded evil and pursue the rich blessings God wants to give them in Christ.

And this is where our Lutheran schools come in – for as long of Christianity has existed, Christians have seen the value of educating children in God’s Word to give them the skills necessary to live a God-pleasing life. Martin Luther himself was a strong proponent of Christian Education and had many sharp things to say to the parent who sacrificed Christian instruction in order to teach children a trade or business. You see, business, trade, sports – these things might get your

child money and glory, but they will not prepare him for the battle over his soul that will be waged day in and day out from the devil, this evil world and his sinful nature. They will not train your children to discern between good and evil.

Jesus once asked the question: *What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?*<sup>f</sup> If you have the opportunity and means to provide your child a Christian education, but you don't because you feel that he could make more money or excel in sports by attending a public school . . . what good is that if he loses his faith in the process?

This is not to say that everyone who goes to public school loses faith, or everyone who goes to a Lutheran school will keep it. I went to public school my entire life all the way up to college, and – by God's grace – I certainly did not lose my faith.

But I do know what it is like for a Christian kid in a public school. My classmates would sneak alcohol and experiment with drugs. I remember how sex was a constant topic of conversation, and how I was teased for being a virgin and holding on to the idea that sex is reserved for marriage – as the Bible teaches. I remember how I was constantly tempted to compromise my faith, how a science teacher failed me on a test because I refused to accept evolution as fact. I was called a “nazi” for believing homosexuality is a sin. I was tested daily and tempted to hide my faith.

To be sure, every student in a Lutheran School will also be tempted to sin and unbelief, because the devil hates Christian education and will stop at nothing to destroy it. But there is one difference – the child at a Lutheran school will receive – at school - encouragement from the Gospel to remain in Christ. It will be a lot easier for him to grow in His knowledge of Christ and apply God's word to his decision-making in life. This support is not there in a public school.

Christian education is all about Christ and the Gospel. Recognize this fact, and thank God for all the opportunities He gives us to receive instruction in His Word like worship, Bible class, Sunday school and, last but not least, our Lutheran schools.

May the LORD then grant that we treasure our Lutheran schools, contending to preserve them more strongly than the devil wants to destroy them. May we support their work with our prayers, offerings, and help. And may the Holy Spirit lead us to use these wonderful gifts by sending our children to them to learn. Why? Because Christian instruction is our life. It preserves us for life on earth, and prepares us for life in heaven. Amen.

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#### References

<sup>a</sup> John 5:39

<sup>b</sup> John 14:6

<sup>c</sup> John 6:47

<sup>d</sup> Ephesians 2:10

<sup>e</sup> Galatians 2:20

<sup>f</sup> Mark 8:36