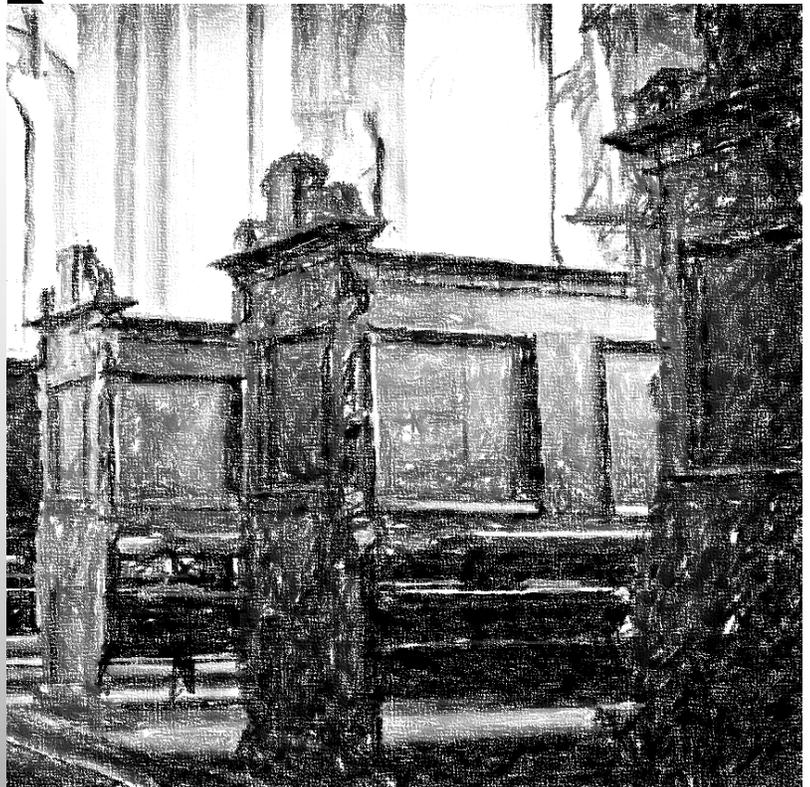




St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Minot, ND
www.anchoredminot.com



The Epistle of First John

Responding to Threats Against The Church's One Foundation

1 John 5:1-12

Faith and Love – they go together like Chocolate Chip Cookies and Milk. They go together like peanut butter and jelly. John returns to this theme of Faith and Love in the selected reading. As mentioned before, where there is faith, there shall be love. And where there is true love, there shall be faith.

Often times, though, Christians attempt to divide Faith and Love from each other. In fact, the old Adam loves to see them divided. Alas! This is what the Epistle of James confronts – where there is faith; there should certainly be love! They can't be divided!

Martin Luther spends much time talking about Faith and Love. He says,

“O, this faith is a living, busy, active, powerful thing! It is impossible that it should not be ceaselessly doing that, which is good. It does not even ask whether good works should be done, but before the question can be asked, it has done them, and it is constantly engaged in doing them.”

Now, speaking of this love that we Christians have because of faith... what does this love look like? John says that this love ‘obeys’ the commands. But, we must be careful not to impose a legalistic reading upon John's words. That is to say, John is not specifically saying that love crosses every ‘T’ and dots every ‘I’ of God's Law. Love, indeed, seeks to do this; however, that is not quite the meaning of what John is saying here. John is saying that love keeps/guards/observes/embrace/watches God's instructions/truth/Word. Love clings to the teachings of the Lord. And so, love does not try to find loopholes with God's Word. Love does not try to excuse God's instruction away to give the old Adam freedom to sin. Love is not flippant with God's truth. Love makes one captive to God's Word (i.e., truth).

In verse 6, John shifts to “water and blood.” While it would be easy to connect “water and blood” solely to the water and blood that flowed from Jesus' side at his crucifixion, it is properly understood that the

water and blood, spoken by John, refers to Jesus' baptism and crucifixion.

While we often give great attention to Jesus' crucifixion, we must not forget His baptism. In other words, there is a great connection between Jesus' baptism *'and'* his crucifixion.

Considering His baptism, Jesus entered into the waters of the Jordan, water that was polluted by Israel's sin. This is shocking! Jesus, who is the sinless Lamb of God, submits Himself to the baptism that sinful Israel was undergoing. It makes perfect sense why John did not want to baptize Jesus. To paraphrase John's objection to baptizing Jesus: *"Why on earth do you Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, need to be baptized by me, a sinner, and especially in a baptism of repentance of sin? What sin do you have to be sorry for Jesus? Jesus, it is not you who should be baptized by me, John the Baptist, but you, Jesus, should baptize me!"*

The baptism of Jesus shows how the kingdom of heaven and God's plan of salvation work. The baptism of Jesus shows us that Christ enacts God's saving plan for mankind when He Himself literally stands with sinners. Jesus is not only standing with sinners, but He begins His ministry where He takes the place of sinners (water) and then continues His whole ministry to the cross where He takes the sinner's place on the cross (blood).

And so, Christ came by water and blood. And He still comes to us by water and blood (*i.e., baptism and communion*). Keep in mind that the water of baptism is bloodless and it certainly is not just plain water! When the Pastor speaks the Word, the water is stained with blood – the blood of Mt. Calvary. And so, through the Water *'and'* the Word, people are buried and resurrected with Jesus – connected to what Jesus did for humanity at the cross. Without the Word, it is just plain water, for the Holy Spirit has chosen to work through the Word.

And so, in Christian baptism, we must have water, the Holy Spirit working through the Word, and the blood. Again, the Holy Spirit (through the Word) brings to us in baptism the shed blood and accomplished forgiveness of Mt. Calvary. No water = no baptism. No Word = no Holy Spirit and no blood and no baptism. Like communion, elements must be present (water), the Word must be spoken (by a Pastor), and the Holy Spirit is present making baptism and communion a divine power to effect salvation and strengthen faith.



