

Text: Psalm 78:1-4

"O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old-- 3 what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done."

In case you haven't noticed, there are some seasonal changes going on these days! We've probably all enjoyed the seasonal changes in the weather -- I've heard many say, "... about time." We're also noticing that today is May 1. School will soon be ending for the season. The college students will be home in several weeks. The high school graduations will soon begin to pop up on our calendars. Next Sunday we will celebrate the ending of the Sunday school year at Trinity.

As the school year nears its end, it's a good time to contemplate the importance of education. It will be the subject of many graduation addresses. I doubt if anyone here today would try to argue that education is not important. Without adequate education, a person is condemned to live life with one proverbial arm tied behind his or her back. But there is room for discussion about the level of education an individual needs to attain. Is a college degree necessary? How about a graduate degree? Can an ambitious high school graduate do as well in business or the job market as a college grad?

But there's another question that screams out to us today. We will soon switch to our summer schedule of no Sunday School and only brief Bible study. Confirmation instructions will soon be finished until fall. We at Trinity Lutheran Church and in the WELS prize our Christian Schools. We maintain a Lutheran Elementary School right here in Kiel. We support a Lutheran High School in Manitowoc -- one of 27 in the WELS. We support Lutheran colleges to train church workers as well as one specifically to train lay people -- WLC. If we are to continue to pour a tremendous amount of financial resources and energy into our all forms of Christian education -- if we are to understand the significance of our LES, we need to ask:

Why Christian Education?

1. **It helps us remember God's remarkable past.**
2. **It prepares us to participate in the Church's exciting future.**

1. It helps us remember God's remarkable past.

Our Psalm for today helps us answer those questions. The first answer to the question, "Why Christian education?" is **It helps us remember God's remarkable past.** The author of the Psalm is a man named Asaph, probably a temple musician at the time of King David. He points worshipers to their past in order to appreciate God's revelation. *"O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old-- 3 what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us."* (Psalms 78:1-3)

That's a pretty good description of what Christian education is about. We learn of the greatness, the love, the mercy, and the forgiveness of our Savior God by looking at His track record -- by looking at history. Beginning in preschool, if not before, we teach our children that our God's saving plan has been revealed in history. We teach it one story, one incident at a time. I wonder if we always realize that. It's not just a matter of a Christian teacher teaching a story. To be true Christian education that teacher must present the story as God's story. It must be carefully taught to an age-appropriate level. It must be taught in the context of the main Bible teachings of Law and Gospel. To put it in simpler terms, in each story the student needs to see that the real problem has to do with mankind's sin and the real solution to every problem in life is the grace of our God.

I hope that this little thumbnail sketch of a Bible lesson gives you a new appreciation for your Christian teachers. They may well be the most under-appreciated group in the Christian church. Whether they do it daily as elementary or secondary teachers, or whether they do it weekly as volunteer Sunday school teachers, teaching God's truth is an important task. Each lesson must be digested, planned, and applied to themselves as Christian teachers. While it most surely is the Holy Spirit who works in hearts through the Word, no teacher would want to do anything that would bring themselves between the student and their Lord. I hope that you'll take an opportunity this morning or this week to thank your Christian teachers -- or your child's Christian teacher. They're vitally important people in your life.

Since Christian education is an ongoing and lifetime process, there is something else that I must point out that is important. And I suspect that every Christian teacher would like to stand up and say, "Amen." To be comprehensive and thorough, all levels of Christian education need to be consistent. That means, in simple terms, that students need to come to class. Even Jesus himself could not competently teach students who didn't come. Our government and public schools recognize the importance of regular attendance. It's a law that you have to go to school. I've always been curious, though, how we can dismiss that principle with Christian education. One out of three times for attending Sunday School is OK. Bible class every other week will do fine. Or better yet, since I can't come every week, I won't come at all. I won't enroll my students at all.

Dear friends, we're talking about **remembering God's remarkable past!** We're talking about knowing the truth about our salvation. We're talking about being clear about what God does and doesn't want. An old saying tells us that **those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat its mistakes.** Tell me now, is it more loving to condemn yourself or your children to repeating the sins of the past in order to learn that they are harmful than it is to take responsibility for their Christian education?

But Christian education doesn't only look back. It also looks forward.

2. It prepares us to participate in the Church's exciting future.

Asaph writes in the Psalm, *"We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done."* (Psalms 78:4) He's looking forward anticipating the continuation of Christian education and the benefits that it will have on *"future generations."*

Some people would summarize the purpose of Christian education with the words of the Apostle Paul who said, *"I want to know Christ . . .,"* (Philippians 3:10) Certainly our life in Christ is about getting to know Him better. But He's also given us some additional marching orders. *"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. . ."* *"Go into all the world and preach the Good News to every creature."* *"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."* That's the church's future, and it's an exciting future. **Christian education prepares us to participate in the Church's exciting future.**

Today each of us who sits in this church as a Christian adult has opportunity to reflect on the value of Christian education in our lives. Our thoughts may go back to a Sunday School teacher, the pastor who confirmed us, a Lutheran Elementary School teacher or two -- or maybe a parent or grandparent who understood well the importance of a child trained in the Word. Maybe that reflection is in regard to our own children who benefited from Christian education. One way or another, I hope that we all feel very grateful to a gracious God for promising that His Word will not return empty.

But I hope that our focus on Christian Education is also future oriented. The future of Christian Education in our congregation and church body is by no means something we can take for granted. Christian Education, particularly full-time Christian education, is expensive. It requires commitment, sacrifice, and effort. Today is as good a day as any to evaluate our collective commitment to that challenge facing us, particularly in our Trinity Lutheran School.

In a couple of weeks we will be considering and approving a congregational budget for the next fiscal year, July 2016 through June 2017. A great amount of that budget will be to support our Trinity Lutheran school. Full time Christian education costs a great deal of money. We've already asked the parents of our school children to bear a portion of that cost. But frankly, if we asked them to bear it all, we might not have any students left to teach. We need to renew our collective commitment to this form of Christian education -- something, by the way, that we pledge before God every time we have a baptism in our church. God promises us that the results will be worth the investment.

Another question that I'd like every one of you to contemplate today is this? Is full time Christian education -- Trinity Lutheran School or Manitowoc Lutheran High School -- for my family. All of us have answered that question already. We've either come down on one side of the question or the other -- maybe we've tried both sides. We could debate various issues of quality and location all day long, but I believe that in the end it comes down to this basic truth. Christian education is the only context in which the whole child -- mental, physical, and spiritual -- can be addressed to make complete education.

Christian schools are the only place where the academic disciplines can be taught in the context of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Any other question is secondary. I encourage every one of you who are parents or who will become parents to carefully and prayerfully consider this option available to you. And for all who are part of our congregation who choose public schools for their children, we must rededicate ourselves as a church to provide the very best supplementary programs of Christian education that we possibly can.

Once again this summer and well into our future, our congregation's education committee and staff will be considering a variety of questions regarding how we can provide the very best Christian education to all the families in our congregation. Pray for us. Give us your input. We're doing it for you, your children, your family, for all of us.

Why Christian Education? 1. It helps us remember God's remarkable past. 2. It prepares us to participate in the Church's exciting future. That's the mission of every Christian. That's the mission of the church. May we move forward with God's motivation and blessing.

Amen.