

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE



Rev. Justin Panzer | District President



Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

There is an old quip that goes something like this: *in the beginning God created man, and ever since man has been returning the favor.* There is some truth to this. We are tempted to fashion God after ourselves, to have a god that suits us.

Time and time again we identify the problem and then craft God into the solution. We are tired and unsuccessful, so Joel Osteen and countless others tell us about a god who will make our dreams come true and give us our best life now. I think much of the preaching in the church assumes that our biggest problem is not having meaning in our lives. So, a god is preached who gives our lives meaning, who makes us part of something bigger than ourselves. Or, it is assumed that our biggest problem is alienation, so it is preached that we are in a personal relationship with a god who will make everything better.

These ideas are not what is taught in the Scriptures. Instead of promising us success, the Lord Jesus promises us trouble;

"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33b)

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. 16:24)

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:10)

Instead of talking about giving meaning to our lives, the Scriptures talk of humility and service; **"So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"** (Luke 17:10)

For anyone struggling with answers or meaning-to-life questions, we point them to Jesus. As Christians we possess the hope and certainty that the Lord has our lives in His hands. He loves, protects and forgives us, and has prepared a place for us in the life to come. Vocation lifts our eyes to our neighbor. Hope lifts our eyes to Jesus, the cross, His

promises and the forgiveness of sins delivered to us in Word and Sacrament.

The Scriptures talk of us being united with Christ and being one with Him. He is the head, we are the body. He is the vine, we are the branches. He is the Groom, and we the Bride. Christ is in us, and we are in Christ.

The Father sends the Son to bear the sin of humanity and God's own wrath for us. On the cross we see God's love for us. God suffers, bleeds and dies for us. God Himself is the solution to our problems. He is our Savior, Redeemer, Creator, Justifier and Sanctifier. He is love, and His love is your hope and life, now and forever.

So, what do the baptized do in response? In joyful obedience, we show that love to our neighbor through our words and deeds. We talk of the Savior who has died and rose for us. We extend an invitation to our neighbor to attend church.

In doing these things, others may possess the same forgiveness, hope, peace, joy and eternal life that is ours right now!