

Catechetical Sermon, October 20th, 2024

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 24, "Rewards"

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 25:31-46

Lesson Aim	To understand the place of good works in the Christian life.
Steps to Learning	Read the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 24 and Matthew 25:31-46 . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
Discuss	<p>Discuss as a family: What has been your understanding of the place of good works in the Christian life? Have you thought they are used by God to get you into heaven?</p> <p>In the sermon we discussed that people owe God. What do we mean by that? According to Genesis chapter 2, Adam was in a covenant of works. This meant that he would be blessed for obedience to God's Law and cursed for disobedience to God's Law. Since Adam is the covenant head of all people, his sin for breaking God's Law was imputed to all people making them sinners by nature. All people, then, have the continued obligation to obey God perfectly and to pay for their sin. No one can do this and because that is true, Christ lived and died for sinners to save them.</p> <p>What did Jesus do specifically to save sinners? He obeyed the Law of God perfectly in his thoughts and actions. In this, he was the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world when he died on the cross and then was raised from the dead.</p> <p>When we read Matthew 25:31-46, it seems to teach that people are saved because they do good works. Is that what it is teaching? No. Jesus teaches that those who are saved and go to heaven inherited it; it is a place prepared for them. The good works Jesus praises are those done out of gratitude for being forgiven much. The righteous in this passage don't look to their good works as payment to get into heaven. They are not aware that they have any merit in God's sight.</p> <p>How are we to view our good works done in this life? We don't see them as work to be performed to get us into heaven. We do understand that are good works are rewarded in this life and the life to come not by merit but by grace.</p>
Bible Reading	Psalms 97-103 (Reading through the Psalms)