

September 13, 2009 Psalm 14:1

You have heard it said, “There are no atheists in foxholes.” You don’t get into a lengthy philosophical discussion about the existence of God when you may soon enter eternity! You cry out to God for help. As we begin our sermon series on the Ten Commandments titled, “You are the Light of the World. Let Your Light Shine,” we want to introduce it with this thought. “Only the fool would say there is no God.”

Look at a beautiful sunset. Gaze upon a star-studded sky. You know in your heart of hearts you are not pondering an accident. You are seeing the handiwork of God. **“The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands,”** Psalm 19 acknowledges. The animals, plants, and insects each fit into an ecosystem, each reproducing after its own kind. Think of your body, fearfully and wonderfully made with its complexity of nerves, organs, blood vessels, and systems. Someone had to design and make all these things.

Just think of the incredible design of our own planet earth. Quoting from a book titled, “It Couldn’t Just Happen – Fascinating Facts about God’s World” by Lawrence Richards, “Earth is not a large planet, yet its size is exactly and essential. If it were too small, Earth’s weakened gravity could not hold either our air or water. If Earth were twice as large, the atmosphere would be pulled closer to its surface. Everything would weigh eight times as much, and that weight would crush most living things. If Earth were farther from the sun, living things would freeze. If it were closer, its surface would become a burning desert. If Earth did not have a large moon revolving around it, there would be no tides in the sea. Waters of the oceans would grow stagnant, unable to provide the oxygen that fish need to live.” (p. 27). An accident? Of course not! Only a fool would say there is no God.

God has also revealed Himself in the heart of every person born into the world. He created humans with an in-born knowledge of His holy Law. The voice that commends you if you live by it and condemns you if you don’t is your conscience. Due to the fall into sin our natural knowledge of God’s law is fuzzy. Yet the conscience remains. It doggedly reminds us we are accountable to God for the way we live.

The atheist lives in a constant battle against what he wants to not believe – and what his conscience tells him he ought to believe! We all ask those questions, “Who am I, why am I here? Where am I going?” Without God, the only answers that come back are terrible: “You are an accidental by-product of nature, a result of matter plus time plus chance. There is no reason for your existence. It’s survival of the fittest for 70 or 80 years, and then all you face is death and eternal darkness.” Atheists try to get rid of God, thinking they can free themselves from all that makes them feel guilty. Instead they discover that without God, their life is pointless and absurd. Only a fool would say there is no God.

OK – nature and conscience tell us there is a God. But how can we be at peace with Him? How can we have eternal life with Him? God has chosen to come down to us to answer that question. Jesus, true God and true Man in one person, has revealed all we need to know about God this side of eternity. He gave the Holy Spirit to His eye-witnesses to give the world that truth, the Bible, God’s Holy Word. In it God reveals Himself as one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God’s Law tells you your conscience is correct to accuse you. God repeated His holy will in a special form to the Israelites, the Ten Commandments. He impressed, **“I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to**

**the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.”** Our second lesson warns, **“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God”** (Galatians 5:19-21).

Yet “God is love,” His Word emphasizes. In His love God rescued us from our sin and its curse. Jesus lived the perfect life God expected of each of us. Imagine - His conscience never bothered Him. Then Jesus suffered the curse of all our sin in His cruel, bloody suffering and death. By raising Jesus from the dead, God declared us forgiven of all our sin for Jesus’ sake. You know those secret sins your conscience still may cry out about - the words you said in hatred to tear someone down, the indecent way you acted when you let your lust control you, the time you stole something or lied, the time you did something you regret still today because you had allowed alcohol to weaken you, the way you arrogantly felt God loves you because you seem better than others, or the worry you allow to fester in your heart because you just can’t quite trust God above all things – God punished His own Son for them all. He offers His forgiveness to you by the gospel in Word and Sacrament, and by that same powerful record of God’s love, He gives you faith to believe it. What a joy and comfort to know by belief in Jesus we sinners receive the free gift of eternal life He won for us.

As God’s forgiven children, how will we show our love for Him? In the holy Gospel we learn of Jesus healing ten men of leprosy. Only one returns to thank Him. Be that one. Though the entire world returns to God blind unbelief and ingratitude – you be that one who worships Jesus, thanking Him as you live by His commands. In giving the Ten Commandments God also described Himself as **“showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”** As you grow in your faith in Jesus and love for God by hearing his Word and receiving Holy Communion, the Holy Spirit will bring forth His fruit in your life, fruit our second lesson describes as **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.**

While guilt undermines happiness for so many, with God’s forgiveness we have peace with God. Being kind and considerate of others, being truthful and honest, refraining from gossip, being content – we’ll have true friends, respect of others and satisfaction in life. Think of the happy family where spouses live pure and decent lives and honor and love each other, where parents bring their children up in God’s love and truth, and children honor, serve and obey their parents in love and respect!

You can live without very much money, without fame, and even without education. You can live without health, without freedom, without the pursuit of happiness. But you can’t live forever without faith in the one true God as He has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus. And yet by faith in the true God, we can face anything that may arise in this life knowing God is with us and at the end of our lives He will take us to Himself in heaven. Thank God He has shined the light of His grace and truth into your heart. Now as we review the Ten Commandments, knowing they are God’s will for us as we live in His love, you, who are the light of the world let your light shine! Amen.