

2/5/18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have this little game that we like to play with people when we're trying to figure something out. "Don't tell me!" we say. We shut our eyes tight. We sigh. We say it again: "Don't tell me. I've got this." We don't want help, because we want the honor that comes with finding the answer by ourselves. We have a way of playing that same game with God when we are looking for answers in life. "How can I take care of my latest problem, the one that keeps me up at night? How can I be sure God is really on my side? How can I finally find contentment? Don't tell me! I know this one!"

Saul was the same way. He thought he had all the answers. He thought the way to be right with God was to follow all the laws and traditions of the Jews. Then along came Jesus. Jesus claimed that he was the only way to God. Saul couldn't stand the thought of it. And it wasn't just Jesus who offended Saul, it was also the followers of Jesus. Even after Jesus was crucified, his followers were saying he had risen from the dead, and they were gathering regularly to worship him. Saul was a man of action. It was time to put an end to all this talk about Jesus. He made it his life's mission to hunt down anyone who followed Jesus.

By nature, we have something in common with Saul. We all tend to think that when it comes to getting on God's good side, the way to be right is to do right. We take pride in our record of good behavior. There's something offensive about the idea that in God's book, those good things we've done don't save us. Well, they don't. Listen to what God's book says: "All our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

Saul had to learn it the hard way. *As Saul neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul,*

Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. Acts 9:3-5

There was a bright light from heaven, a visit from Jesus, and a bout of blindness. As horrible as it all must have seemed to Saul at the time, clearly God loved Saul. For the three days Saul’s blindness lasted, God gave him time to reflect on things. Jesus had been right all along; he really was the only way to God. Jesus wasn’t dead; he really was alive! Best of all, when the three days were up, Saul was baptized. Jesus had died for Saul’s sins, too. God had forgiven Saul, and Saul knew it.

Go back to that little game we play when we’re struggling to figure something out. After a while, when we’re sure there is no possible way we are going to succeed, we say, “Okay, I give up. Help me out, here.” That’s the right way to think of ourselves every time we read God’s Word, and every time we think about our baptism. We’re not the ones with the answer; God is. And the answer he gives, both in his Word and in baptism, is so amazing and so beautiful that we will never get tired of hearing it. His own Son Jesus paid for all our sins with his life, and then rose from the dead to give us the gift of life forever in heaven. God is on our side.

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, risen Savior, thank you for shining the light of your forgiveness on me, too. Help me to fight the sin of thinking I have all the answers for life’s questions. Bless me with the true peace and joy that comes only through you. Amen.*

(WELS E-Devotion, adapted)

...See you in church.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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