

## Transcript for Friday Message from Pastor Poock, January 22, 2021

Hello, everyone. It is the 22nd of January, and this is the weekly message. Today, I want to do a little bit of reflection on something that I've been reading recently. It's called Christian Dogmatics by Francis Pieper. This is what we had to study in seminary as our core classes on systematic theology, of understanding what it is that we believe and teach in the Lutheran church, and why we teach that. And so a lot of people get a little weird with the word dogmatics. It sounds old and uncompromising and old-fashioned even. And to a large degree, it is. Dogmatics though is simply the Greek or the Latin way of saying teachings. So Christian teachings. This is what the Christian Church teaches. This is our dogma. This is what we stand firm on. This is what we do not compromise on. And it's interesting. The first page, I just want to read a little bit, maybe even just the first sentence.

“We take the position that Holy Scripture, in contradistinction to all other books in the world, is God's own infallible Word, and therefore the only source and norm of Christian doctrine. Prevailing conditions in the church make it necessary for the author of *A Treatise on Christian Dogmatics* to state clearly and emphatically where he stands on the question of the source and nature of Christian theology. Until about 1750, Protestant dogmatists were quite generally agreed that nothing but what Scripture teaches should have a place in Christian dogmatics. But today the situation has changed completely. The representative theologians of modern Protestantism with, but a few exceptions, deny that Holy Scripture is by inspiration, the very Word of God. Accordingly, they refuse to regard and employ Holy Scripture as a sole source and standard of theology. A mass movement away from Holy Scripture has set in. The human ego, euphemistically called the Christian conscience, the regenerate eye, experience, et cetera, has been made the norm with theology.”

Now, this was written originally in 1950. And already in 1950, he felt it was necessary to state the fact that we believe that the Bible, the Holy Scriptures are indeed the infallible Word of God. And even Christians and even Biblical scholars do not confess that today, at least not all of them. And actually, a majority of them probably are on the other side of saying that it is not the infallible Word of God. Now there are still churches that stand firm and believe that the Word of God is indeed God's infallible Word, without error, and that all of our doctrine comes from that. Now there are times when we disagree on its interpretation and its application, but we thank God that there are still churches out there who believe that God's Word is indeed God's Word.

But we are finding ourselves in a time in history when our culture is really moving away, and has been really since 1750, away from this standard of believing that the Word of God is good and that it has something to teach us. As our culture is really pushing an agenda that is going to make it more and more challenging for those of us who believe in God's Word to stand firm on it, but we need to hold fast to this. Because everything else, the ego or our own conscience, or the regenerate self, or my Christian experience, all of those things are not equal to the Word of God, because all of them can be influenced and are influenced by our own thoughts, which are indeed sinful. And so we always have to take every thought captive to the Word of God, as it says.

And so it struck me how very important it is to remember that the Word of God is something different than any other word, any other book out there. In fact, Christianity itself is different than any other religion out there. There has been a movement in society, that you might see the co-exist a bumper stickers, or other themes like that. The idea that, "Hey, we all worship God and we all want the same things. We all have a strong belief in something greater than ourselves." And to many degrees that is true. However, the way that we have a relationship with God, and the way that we connect with God, and what we place our hope in is completely different. With all what we would call the multitude of religions out there, it really actually boils down to just two religions. There are only two religions in the entire world. There is the religion of Gospel, of gift, and there is the religion of law, or works.

Christianity, in its truest and best form, is a religion of Gospel, of gift. That God created the world without our input, that God placed us in the world without our input, that God saved us without our input, and he redeems us without our input. That He gives us our salvation as a free and pure gift and adopts us as His children in our baptisms. We may not remember our baptisms, but that's okay. It happened. It was an historic event. We don't really remember our first birth when we came into this world, and yet we know it happened, and we celebrated because our parents and whoever else was around remind us of, "Hey, this is the day you were born." It's the same thing in baptism. We don't remember it necessarily, but our sponsors and our parents do. And they can tell us, "Yes, you were baptized." And in that, we were born again, made alive in Christ.

Now every other religion out there, it does not matter what it is, be it Muslim, Islam, Hindu, you name it, every other religion except Christianity has a system of these things you must do in order to gain whatever the end goal is. And so the focus is not upon what God has done for us. Rather, the focus is upon what we are supposed to do for "fill in the blank of whatever name of god you want." So, we do believe that Christianity is unique in the world, because it is the only religion that is based on God having done something for us and our putting faith in that action by Him.

He sent His Son to die on the cross to forgive our sins. While we were yet sinners, Christ came and died for us. While we were in rebellion against him, God saved us. So it's just important for us to stand firm in this, and knowing this helps us not to be concerned or worried about what course this life is going to take. Because God is with us. He already loves us. He already has given us His gift of salvation. He has already claimed us as His very own children. So, we do not need to be afraid of what may come. We can trust that our heavenly Father will take care of us, even when things get [inaudible], we can trust that He will provide a way through the struggles that come.

And ultimately, when it comes time for us to die, we know that we will be welcomed with loving arms into His eternal kingdom. So, we need not fear. Even if that death comes from persecution and torture and becoming a martyr for the church. Now, a year or two ago, I would've never thought that could happen in our lifetime. Now, I'm not so sure. But even if it does, we know our Lord is with us, and He will give us the strength and the words when the time comes to defend our faith. So, we can trust Him in all things.

May His grace, mercy, and peace be with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.