

Clippings

Newsletter of Good Shepherd
Lutheran Church
August 2010



You've probably heard this one:

Harvey, bless his heart, wasn't the brightest bulb on the ol' Christmas tree. At work, he had the same lunch break as Seth. One day Seth saw Harvey come into the break room lugging a big new shiny Thermos bottle.

"Hey, Harv, whatcha got there?" Seth inquired.

Harvey beamed. "It's my new Thermos! Pretty snazzy, huh? Saw this at Wal-Mart and just had to have it for my lunch! The label said it 'Keeps Cold Liquids Cold, And Keeps Hot Liquids Hot!'"

"That's snazzy alright," Seth agreed. "So whatcha got in there today?"

"Today, it's chicken soup and iced tea!"

Some things aren't meant to be mixed! One of the things that's different about the Lutheran understanding of Christianity, is that in the Bible we hear God speaking to us in two very different ways,

| Law | Gospel |
|---|---|
| A word from God that <i>threatens</i> or <i>demands</i> | A word from God that <i>promises</i> or <i>comforts</i> |
| Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ The Ten Commandments◆ anything that says, "You should do..." | Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ John 3:16◆ anything that says, "God has done..." |

These are both words from God. We Lutherans are very fussy that these two messages not get mixed. We learned that from the apostle Paul: *It is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast* (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV). Want to talk about how we can be saved? Leave what we do out of the picture entirely. It is the free gift of God. Want to talk about Christian living? Now we have left off talking about God's free gift, and have started in on the topic of how we can tell God 'Thank You' for it—and that's a different subject entirely!

If a mom says to her eight-year-old boy, "I love you son, especially when you clean your room without me having to ask you," she's giving a confused message. She has mixed up two very different messages: "I love you" and "It pleases me when you clean your room". It would be better if she would get clear, for herself and for her son, that her love for him is unconditional: that she loves him even when she has to ask him to do his chores. It's the same way with our work of sharing God's Law message and His Gospel message. They each need to be proclaimed, in their proper situation. Sometimes it's our joy to say, "Look at this wonderful thing God has done for you!" Other times it's our duty to say, "You need to improve the way you live under God." But God forbid that we should ever be caught saying, "God loves you, especially when you are living right," or "God did His 99%, now you have to do your 1%", or anything else so fuzzy and mixed up! Some things shouldn't be put in the same container! Ick!

Pastor Joe