



In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

When is faith not saving faith? If I say I believe that Abraham Lincoln was the greatest president our country has ever had; I express some faith in Lincoln's life, his actions and his death. Is that saving faith?

It is difficult to judge saving faith. When we look at a Christian at worship, we find it almost impossible to judge their faith based on that one encounter. Are there imposters claiming to be Christian saying they believe in Jesus in our worship services? Most likely. This chapter suggests that not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord" is of our faith family. I suggest we have misused that phrase "Faith Family" to include members, spouses, friends and other hangers-on who may occasionally attend services here as part of our family. Is God ok with that? See John 15:1-7. Also see Luther's Small Catechism p. 314- What is the Office of the Keys? Also see Revelation 2:1-7. What was the church at Ephesus commended for?

The pastor, or shepherd who is called to serve the congregation, has a responsibility along with congregational leaders needs to actively manage the flock. As Trinity's elders (and pastors) call on "Lost lambs" they are assessing saving faith. As they are talking with those who are erring by avoiding worship, parents gossiping about the principal, or high school youth bullying others, leadership as called upon to "judge" these people's good works. So it is important that elders and pastors have attendance records at hand and a general knowledge of members' behavior, like Bible class attendance but they also need to be good listeners. They listen for attitudes and confessions sincere or flippant. They listen for family crises and health issues. Often prayers are offered, absolution granted after confession, and even Holy Communion given to home bound members. Instruction may be given in doctrine and Bible verses shared. Law and gospel may be discussed all in love and respect. Something to think about- two weeks ago we agreed that giving a dollar in the offering could be a good work depending on the circumstances. Should the elders know the giving records of Trinity members? Why or why not?

The point I have been leading you to is this; Judging others is indeed something we should be doing to the extent that we are not assigning attitudes. We cannot judge someone as unrepentant. We find it difficult to judge someone that you don't know or have just met. If people have been baptized, attended instruction classes, and sworn to serve Jesus Christ as a disciple in front of the church, they have made some pretty significant moves in declaring a saving faith. We have to hold them to their profession of faith as family would. We have to call them on their outward life that may be signaling unfaithfulness. The biggest sin for these

people is a persistent and unrepentant absence from worship. It is hard to profess to be a disciple of Jesus and not be in worship regularly. A family wouldn't let a member of the family stray from the core principles. "Genuine repentance is produced by God only when the Law is preached in all sternness and man does not willfully resist its influence." C. F. W. Walther

Read the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10

How are Law and Gospel at work in this episode?

Read John 15:1-7. How are we saved according to this parable? Can we do any thing to stay attached to the vine? What happens to disciples who bear little or no fruit? Read John 15: 16 & 17

Read Luke 15: 1-7 What did the lost sheep do to be saved? Can we do anything to be saved or come to faith?

One irreverent person has said: "The world is wonderfully arranged. God loves to forgive and I love to sin." Using 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Romans 6:1-2, how would you answer this claim?