

Christians in a Post-Christian Society

Pastor Kevin Wilson - privilege to serve as District President.

Bring greetings from 160-plus sister churches in Ohio , West Virginia and northern Kentucky

Pastors _____ I bring greetings from some 450 fellow rostered church workers in Ohio District.

The term of a district president lasts three years.

I endeavor visit all 157 churches and mission congregations during that time.

I want to bring a message that is each and every church in the Ohio District.

That's a challenge

The Ohio District is blessed with urban churches and rural churches, small town churches and suburban churches.

Today we'll have congregations with eight people gathered to worship and congregations with 800 gathered for worship

In the Ohio District this weekend worship services will be led in six different languages

In the midst of such diversity, what message will be applicable to all our congregations?

You know what, I think I topic that impacts all of us, regardless of whether church in Ohio, WV or KY.

You will, of course, determine whether applicable to you as members.

My message this Triennium starts with with one of God's expectations for us:

: God expects our relationship with God is the single highest priority in our lives.

God expects our relationship with God is the most important relationship with our lives.

God expects us to view our faith and life through the prism of his will.

This comes from Scripture:

First commandment: **You shall have no other gods before me.**

In Matthew 22 when Jesus summarizes the 10 commandments he says we are to **"love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind. And love our neighbor as ourself.**

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Christians in the city of Corinth, said:[2] **For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)**

Revelation: the letter to the church in Ephesus says to the Ephesian Christians **"have abandoned your first love."** As in, abandoned Jesus.

Here's the challenge that faces all the members of all of our churches in all three states:

Every corner of our society gives us a message diametrically opposed to God's will.

Our culture says that we are the center of the universe.

In a post-modern, post-Christian culture we are told we have the agency to be self-determining.

There is no universal truth - we are to define our own truth

There is not universal moral code - we are to define our own morality

There is no singular faith or religion – we are free to decide whqt to believ, or not believe, on our own.

According to society, we can believe what we want, but can't expect someone else to believe the same.

We can foist our values or beliefs or behaviors on our neighbor.

This a problem from a Biblical perspective.

We must be able to share God's law with others – how else will they know they are cut off from God by their sin?

We must be able to share Jesus with our neighbor – his death and resurrection on behalf of all people – for their salvation.

Modern American is practicing a form of Humanism – it places us as individuals as the center of our own worlds

We can't avoid this influence within our culture.

We hear this message from the media – I'm a former journalist, gives me a lens

We hear this message from public schools – my heart goes out to Christian teachers and administrators

We hear this message from local, state and federal government – sanctity of life issues

We hear this message from the entertainment industry-

Thanks to the internet, this influence can be 24 – 7

I get it, this is daunting. Understand, we've faced this from the beginning...I mean the beginning:

Genesis 3:1–7 [1] **Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" [2] And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, [3] but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the**

garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.” [4] But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. [5] For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” [6] So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. [7] Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

If the 10 commandments existed, broke all sorts of commands.

Satan is twisting what God said – “giving false testimony” – 8th

6th Do not steal – Eve takes the fruit she is not allowed to take

4th Commandment – honor Father and Mother – denies God the Father’s authority. God said no

The greatest sin: First commandment: Have no other gods before me.

Satan said you will be “like God,” knowing good and evil.

What Satan is really offering: “You will be gods, because he can define for yourselves good and evil.

You choose to eat the forbidden fruit, you are gods.

You will be your own god. You will determine right and wrong, moral and immoral

Here’s my heart-felt concern:

As Christians our beliefs and behaviors are being formed more than the culture than Christ, shaped more by society than Scripture.

In fact, I’m concerned that our beliefs and behaviors are so intertwined with society’s that we might now even realize we’re being influenced.

Many of us here today remember a time when children were inexplicably being born with...

developmental delays

learning difficulties

Sometimes with symptoms such as...

Weight loss

Irritability

Sluggishness

This became an increasingly serious problem.

Finally – it was discovered that this was lead poisoning – often from paint.

Lead slowly, invisibly impacted children’s health and well-being.

My concern is that we’re being impacted in a similar way by society. Let’s test it.

Where are you finding your identity?

Identity often demonstrated by what’s most important to us. It where we find our personal worth or value.

God’s expectation is that our identity is in Christ...in is found in our relationship with God. Could say in baptism.

Society says we can pick and choose our own identity: Our identity could be in our career or work (at one time this was my form of idolatry), identity could in family, could be political ideology, or could be sexual identity

If your identity is not in Christ – in being a child of God – maybe society is shaping your identity.

Another litmus test for whether God we embrace the “whole council of God.”

“Belief Buffet”

Is there a buffet restaurant in this area

Imagine a buffet of food.

Now replace the food with biblical beliefs and doctrines.

It could start with creation, cover God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and wrap up with Christ’s return.

God would have us embrace the entire buffet.

Society says that we can pick and choose what we want to believe or not to believe.

Go through belief buffet, take a number of helpings of grace in Christ and hope through salvation.

But choose not to take Jesus coming in judgement or eternal separation from God.

Picking and choosing what to believe reflects society’s practice, not Biblical teaching.

A final test: what is our motivation for serving?

Society says serve if the opportunity is personally meaningful to you.

In and of itself, nothing wrong with serving something personally meaningful

Unless it keeps from serving for another motivation: selflessness.

If you have identified a form of personal idolatry this in this message, then it's important to confess that sin.
It's even more important that you hear more from Genesis chapter 3.

After the fall from grace, God addressed Adam and Eve and the serpent/Satan.

He said to Satan:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^[e] and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15

This is the first prophecy of the Messiah. It is the first mention of Jesus as Savior.

Just earned forgiveness of all sins, including those violating the First Commandment.

How does God help us face this challenge?

How shall we respond to this challenge?

We can't circle the wagons

We can't take the Beechy Amish option, protecting ourselves from the outside world

God would not have us withdraw from society.

God call us to love our neighbor

God has sent us to be salt and light for those around us, which Gospel reading next week.

God has given us vocations. We're vitally important to society in our vocations.

God has graciously allowed us to participate in His mission to see all people become disciples of Jesus

God has provided a means to confront the erosive effective of humanism

A resource for which God has made promises

A tool that is available 24-7.

This gift of God is the Bible.

Daily reception of the Word is the single most effective way to address the corrosive effect of society.

In Isaiah 55 we're told that God's Word will accomplish what God desires it to accomplish.

When Satan tempted Jesus, one of Jesus' responds; "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

There is a reason the Apostle Paul exhorts the Colossian Christians: **"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and administrating each other with all wisdom..."**

The Word, daily intake, strengthens our faith to defend us from the impact of society.

The Word, daily intake, prepare us to defend the faith

The Word, daily intake, equips us to share the faith

LCMS churches spent the past generation and a half raising the importance of the Lord's Supper

At one time we received Communion four times a year

Then monthly

Then weekly

Now often every worship service.

Given the changes in society, I think this generation LCMS Christians will start to also raise respect for receiving Word of God on daily basis

In 20 years, when we go to God's house we will expect to receive Holy Communion, and when we are at home we will expect to read the Word of God on a daily basis.

Another illustration

Maybe...

I'm from Kansas – grew up with prairie – think "Little House on the Prairie" without the hills.

Flat – few trees.

I've stood in wheatfields where you could nonly see wheat farthest horizon.

No trees. No power lines. No vehicles. No homes.

*In addition, we average 15 mph wind a wday back home.
Finalhy, plant fields 20 square blokcs. 640 acre squares - 400 city blocks*

*Plant 3 three inches deep in ground in the fall.
Herbecide kill off all other plant.
Wheat comes jup in spring.
Only sometimes...it doesn't entire field 640 cts*

*Draught – not rain or snow, no ice storms.
Wind blowsing – see some dust kicking up off the field
Drive by the first once a week or eveyr three weeks, don't' notice.
Four monts....wind erasin blow four inches of top soil and the wehqat seeds with it.
Wake up on day, realize that erroiion ihas changed our life.
Andyou dind'et see it cominbg.*

Opening Hymn: 578 v. 1-3. Thy Strong Word

Hymn of the Day: 577 Almighty God, Your Word is Cast

Offering Hymn: 584 Faith and Truth and Life Bestowing

Communion Hymn: 606 I Lay My Sins on Jesus

Communion Hymn: 632 O Jesus, Blessed Lord, to Thee

Closing Hymn: 578 v. 4-6. Thy Strong Word