



I don't understand...

There's a section on the "Sermon Notes" page the confirmation students use where they can list things they didn't understand about the Bible readings or sermon. Below are some of the things they wrote - and my answers.

"Why do ashes symbolize sin?" (From our Ash Wednesday service)

Since ancient biblical times wearing sackcloth and covering oneself with ashes and/or dust was a sign of humble repentance. When pleading with the LORD to spare the righteous people who lived in Sodom, Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes..." (Genesis 18:27) He was referring to his humble standing before God as a human being whom God had created out of dust, (ashes being a form of dust). The ashes are more a symbol of the result of our sin: We will all die and return to the dust from which we were formed. We apply the ashes to our foreheads in the form of a cross as a reminder that it is only Jesus' death on the cross that saves us from the eternal consequences of our sin and enables us to rise from our graves to live with Him forever!

"Why is Satan trying to tempt Jesus?" (From Luke 4:1-13)

If Satan can entice Jesus to cave in to his temptations, then Jesus would be sinning by disobeying God. If Jesus were to sin, He would be no better than the rest of humanity, and thus unable to take our punishment for sin, since He'd have sin of His own to suffer for. In short, Satan is attempting to totally derail God's plan to save us!

"I can't understand why, when you do something bad, you get something good." (From a sermon on "Mercy" which means "Getting something good when you deserve something bad.")

It's hard for me to understand how God can show us mercy too! But thank God (literally) Mercy is one of His basic character traits! God offers us eternal life in His Kingdom when, because of our sin, what we deserve is a life eternally separated from Him. God is able to do this because, Jesus took the punishment for our sin. We accept that mercy when we put our trust in Jesus.

"It's hard for me to understand that God can be everywhere all the time."

Me too! This highlights one of the important truths about God: Because He is God and we are not, there are naturally going to be things about Him that we just are not capable of understanding. We can't understand his "ever-presence," simply because we can't be everywhere at one time. It's a great reminder for us that God is so much greater than we are that there are always going to be things about Him that we can't grasp. And that's a good thing! If we were able to understand everything about God, that would mean He's no better/bigger/greater than us. And I definitely don't want a god who is no better than I am!

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net