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Peace, Sun Prairie  
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Pentecost 13

**Psalm 1**  
**Which way will you go?**

*Lord, to whom shall we go?  
You have the words of eternal life. Amen.*

*Dear friends in Christ,*

You stand at a place where the road splits. **Which way will you go?** Do you choose vanilla or chocolate ice-cream.

But now we come to something serious. You stand a place where the road splits. **Which way will you go?** One **way** follows the Lord and His **teaching**, the other is a path of rebellion that follows the sinful **advice** of the devil and the unbelieving world. May God through His Word keep us on the correct way!

Psalm one contrasts **the way of the righteous** and **the way of the wicked**. God's Word tells us all that all people are sinful and **wicked** in the sight of God who alone is perfect. Therefore we all enter this world on the wrong path.

But God did something to change that! In shocking, undeserved love, He gave His only Son, true God from true God, to be born as true man and take the place of sinners. Jesus walked the road of perfection and died the death this world of sinners deserved.

All who through God's gift of faith trust in Jesus personally enjoy the forgiveness and perfection Christ won for all. In God's eyes they are perfect, they are **righteous**, only because of Jesus' saving work.

So the **way of the righteous** is the way of believers: those who trust Jesus saves them. People who as a result, want to live their lives in thanks for their Savior God.

**Blessed is the (one) who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked ... But his delight is in the law of the LORD.** The word translated *law* is the Hebrew word that can simply mean **teaching** and therefore can include both the commands and promises of God.

God wants His people to follow His word and what it teaches is right and wrong, rather than the sinful world's often **wicked counsel**—its **advice**, attitudes and philosophies.

**He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.** Like a tree, the believer's faith is planted by God through the good seed of His Word. For most of us, that happened in our introduction to Christian education in the Word and Water of Baptism.

Faith that is well "**water-ed**" through the promises of God's Word produces **fruit**, good works done out of love for Jesus and in service to others around us. Through the refreshing streams of the Gospel,

believers **prosper**, for even in life's storms of doubt and temptation, they find their strength and comfort in God's promise to work all things, even trouble, for their good.

Even little children know plants need water to grow. **Like a tree planted by streams of water...** In a very real sense this is what Christian Education is in all its forms.

When you think of our Peace Lutheran School, Lakeside, Luther Prep, our Sunday school and Bible classes and our new Grow in Peace Early Childhood learning center, don't just think of programs, curriculum, buildings and budget and development for body and mind. Most of all see how Christian education is a vital **watering** of souls with the Word of God that God uses to make faith grow.

**The LORD watches over the way of the righteous.** This describes more than just the believer's lifetime. This also speaks of God's people living under His protecting love into the never ending joys of eternal life, just as another Psalm says: **The Lord will**

**watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.**

**But, Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away... the way of the wicked will perish.** Those who reject the Savior remain in their sin and guilt. So the way of the unbeliever is only **wickedness** in God's eyes, even if popular opinion says its fine.

**Chaff** is the worthless, inedible husk or hull of grain that is leftover when the crop is harvested. Such **chaff** blown **away** by the **wind** was burned up in the fire. Matthew 3 uses this same picture for eternal destination of the unbeliever: **burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire** (Matthew 3:12). Those who take the road of unbelief will never see life with God in heaven, but will get what they wanted: a life separated from God in hell.

You stand at a place where the road splits-- **the way of the righteous** and **the way of the wicked.** **Which way will you go?** This is not a silly question, even for believers.

Each day we need to continue on the road the Lord has placed us in Jesus. All the while the devil, the unbelieving world and the old sinful nature within us works hard to pull us of course with the trap described in these words: **walk in the advice of the wicked... stand in the way of sinners... sit in the seat of mockers.**

There's a dangerous progression described here. First, we're tempted to just 'walk by', to listen to sinful **advice** that goes against God's Word.

If we listen long enough to what God forbids we get comfortable and start to 'stand around' in doing the wrong thing, maybe even making excuses for our sin instead of fighting against it with God's help.

Eventually it can become 'sitting down', becoming totally at home not just with what's wrong, but the unbelief that mocks God and what the Bible says.

It might start with sinful **advice**: Hey, missing church once in a while is no big deal. Then it

proceeds to something like: “yea, I know I should come to God’s Word more often, but I really can’t get going.” It ends with: ‘Pastor, I know that’s what the Bible says, but I really don’t care.’ I truly wish that was just a made-up illustration, but it’s what I’ve heard far too many times on visits to people who were once faithful believers.

If we’re honest we see it in ourselves, don’t we? How easily our feet can stray toward the wrong path. Maybe it’s when we watch and listen to things that ought to make us blush with shame, but it doesn’t even phase us anymore?

Or we follow the world’s advice that you absolutely must have the most, the latest and greatest that we catch ourselves disagreeing with what Jesus has told us: **Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions** (Luke 12:15).

Are we shocked and offended to hear that a Christian couple would live together without marriage, since God’s Word tells us it is wrong and

sinful, or do we just shrug our shoulders and think “that’s the way it is nowadays?”

What do such things say about how easily we can get comfortable with the quicksand of the wrong path working to drag us away from the Lord. See how the danger is real that we could become so comfortable with sin that we **sit down in the seat of unbelieving mockers** and lose the blessings of God’s people now and in eternity?!

Where shall we turn for help?! Right back to the **way of the righteous**. Only this time spell **Way** with a capital ‘W’. As in that name for Jesus the only Savior, who says: **I am the way and the truth and the life**.

Don’t make excuses for your getting comfortable with any sin but admit it for the death and judgment it is and deserves. Flee back to Jesus who promises: **Whoever comes to me I will never drive away** (John 6:37).

Go running back to where Jesus comes to you: **his delight is in the (teaching) of the LORD.** What could be more delightful than what the Bible teaches us: how the Lord has not left us on the road to the ruin our sin deserves, but has stepped in to save us!

Let your **delight** be what Jesus says to you in the **His teaching** of the Bible: “Dear child, though you have strayed, see I have taken your place. I make the sinless road I walked to count as your own road.

Let God’s Word delight you again with Jesus’ amazing love for you: The sinless God chose the road to the cross and let the **chaff** consuming **unquenchable fire** fall on His soul instead of ours!

See how He walked the path of death and came back again on Easter morning so that when you die you may be certain **which way you will go...** through Jesus you will enter heaven’s joy!

Dear Christian friends, flee to Jesus and stay with Him as **on His teaching, (you) meditate day and**

**night.** In God's Word, the heart of all Christian Education, you will be **blessed!**

For there, Jesus comes to us with his forgiving love, the only way to eternal life and the only way to fight against sin and continue on the way God says is right.

You stand at a place where the road splits every single day. **Which way will you go?** May our answer always be: Jesus, for He is **the Way.** Amen.

*Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths... for you are God my Savior and my hope is in you all day long. Amen.*