

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

*How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!*

³⁴ *“Who has known the mind of the Lord?*

Or who has been his counselor?

³⁵ *“Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?”*

³⁶ *For from him and through him and for him are all things.*

To him be the glory forever! Amen

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you’ve got the Spirit – capital S – thanks be to God,

Even tho he died almost 60 years ago, people today still remember and revere his name. The older generation remembers him as a brilliant German physicist who gets the credit for discovering the formula $E=mc^2$. The younger generation remembers him as a man with a crazy hairdo who never wore socks. To this day his picture hangs in many a classroom; many a dorm room across our land. By today’s medical standards, Albert Einstein would be dubbed as having a form of autism. Despite his quirks – and we all have them - he was a gifted man.

At a convention in Chicago a lady asked, “Dr. Einstein what is that has made you such a genius?” Dr. Einstein responded: ‘Thank you! I never thought of myself as a genius. But if one person, if one comment, spurred me on to learn as much as I could about science, it was my Mom. When she sent me off to kindergarten, she never said: Albert, have a good day, I love you – like most of us did and do. Rather, she said, Albert, ask questions. So I went skipping off to kindergarten, to grammar school and to the gymnasium, which is the equivalent of our university, asking my teachers questions.

Asking questions is a good way to learn; asking questions indicates we have lots to learn from our parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches and others in authority. But the One who truly teaches us the essentials for life and eternity is still our risen and ascended Lord. Asking Him questions is a good way to help us grow in our Christian faith and life. Towards the end of his second letter (3:18) the apostle Peter encourages every Christian *to grow and to keep growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

So are you ready to grow, are you ready to grow in grace, are you ready to run with the gospel? Let’s do it together this morning with a set of 3 questions which flow from the pen of the apostle Paul. On this 20th Sunday in Pentecost, **It’s time to pop the questions.** As we do, may the Holy Spirit enable us to: 1) Listen to God’s answers; 2) Learn from God’s wisdom; so that we can 3) Live as God’s people.

In your day-to-day lives, are there things that boggle your mind – maybe it's that new software program, that iPhone or iPad; maybe it's that Bluetooth or Blu-ray stuff or that new insulin pump or the morphine implant. It doesn't take much to boggle this (my) mind. Man is very inventive and creative. Yet if we were to take all of man's wonders and place them side by side with God's wonders, man's marvels and wonders pale in comparison. God is our Creator, we're His creatures; He's God, we're not. And we will never be or become God – not here, not now and not in eternity. The Lord God is in a class all by himself. So when Paul poses our first question: *Who knows the mind of God?* The answer he expects is: No one! It is impossible for finite folks to know the Infinite; for limited folks to grasp the Unlimited; for comprehensible folks to understand the Incomprehensible. So *Who knows the mind of God?* The answer: We do! That's not arrogance; rather, that's God's grace to us in Christ. Here's why I say that.

As our world turns, we know what God is thinking right now; we know what God is planning right now; we know what God is accomplishing right now. We know what is on God's mind. We can say this with boldness and confidence not because we're smarter than the average Joe or Jane. But because Scripture is God's thinking; the words on these pages are God's thoughts; we know and we believe what is on God's mind. *No eye has seen, no ear has heard; no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.* I Cor. 2:9 What's on God's mind? The answer: Jesus, His Son! What's racing through God's mind? The answer: His unfailing love for a train-wrecked world. What's flowing from God's mind to His heart and back again? The answer: an *earnest desire for everyone to be baptized and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* What is God thinking about you this very instant? I can tell you, God says and His Spirit testifies: *The thoughts I have towards you personally and collectively as His body of believers are thoughts of peace not of evil to grant you an expected end.* Jeremiah 29:11 *Who knows the mind of God?* The answer: we do!

Yet, at the same time, we must humbly say, we don't! There are many things on God's mind that He hasn't revealed to us. Why did my girlfriend break up with me; why is my health so poor; how come I can't find a decent job; why does God permit cancer and other terrible things to touch my life? Why does God permit terrorists and gangs and drug lords to take up real-estate in His world? Why did Obamacare come into being? And the list of unknowns is endless. *Who knows the mind of God?* In that which God hasn't revealed, the answer is: no one! But you know what? God doesn't owe us an explanation on our whys and wherefores. They remain hidden in His mind until eternity. But that's OK. Because until we get to heaven we latch on to, we cling to, we hold on to His unfailing love in Christ. This is our strength in our weakness; this is our comfort in our sadness; this is our help in our helplessness; and this is our certainty in our doubts. The undeserved love God showed us at the cross and the empty tomb; the undeserved love He lavished on us in baptism; and the undeserved love we taste every time we dine at His table; is the same love by which He guides and directs our every day, our every circumstance, our every set back, our every sickness. *Who knows the mind of God?* We do and we don't! **As we pop this question:** may we listen to God's revealed answers!

Next question: *Who has been God's counselor?* Along life's way we run into all sorts of counselors. There are marriage counselors and family counselors, tax counselors and giving counselors, guidance counselors and grief counselors – only to name a few. Some of their counsel may be good, some not-so- good; some wise , some not-so- wise. Imagine the ear-full of counsel God must receive? 'God, here is what you should be doing; here is how you should be running the world; here is where you should step in and heal grandma; here is where you need to step in and clobber my X.' Our old Adam delights in playing God and being His counselor. Not only are we sinning against the first commandment when we offer God our pride-filled two cents, but just think about what we are saying and suggesting: ' God, the One who is above all and knows all, needs to listen to me!' That's like a 3 year old telling his mom how and what to cook. Imagine a 3 yr old thinking he knows better than Mom! What arrogance!

When an OT believer thought he knew better than God, God responded with a quiz. Of the 77 scientific questions about our world, do you know how many Job could answer – much less get right? Not a one! So the next time we're tempted to question God's wisdom and what He should be doing, let's take Job's quiz in chapters 38-41. I have a feeling we will come to the same conclusion Job did: *Lord, now I know that you can do all things, now I know that no plan of yours can be thwarted.* Job 42: 2 *Who has ever been God's counselor?* Many try but no one is or ever will be. So **pop the question**; then may the Holy Spirit enable us to learn and trust God's wisdom.

This brings us to our final question for today: *Who has ever given to God that God should repay him?* In other words, does God have any outstanding IOU's? Does He owe us anything because of the good things we've done, or because of the evil we've shunned? Are our earthly possessions, our spiritual heritage somehow our doings and deservings? I'd like to think so, but it's wrong to think so. Whatever we may call our own, from cars to cash; from clothing to cabins; from children to grandchildren, from our faith to our fellowship as Lutheran Christians, are all gifts from our good and gracious Father in heaven. He is the Owner and Author of it all. That's why Paul answers this 3rd question the way he does: *For from Him*, God is the source; *through Him* – God is the agent; *for Him* – God is the cause; and *to Him* – God deserves all credit. This is what prompted Luther to say: "Thanks is the only thing we can give God, because everything else is already his." *Who has ever given to God that He should repay him?* Silence on that question still leads God's people to lives of thanksgiving.

Finally, I can't speak for you, but I'm no Einstein. His question method, though, helps me grow in my Christian faith and life through a life-long study of God's Word. Then when I pose my questions, such as: Why hear God's word, why dine at His Table? why attend Bible Class, why pray, why bring regular and first-fruit offerings, why support our WELS work? why love my spouse and family, why forgive others, why be chaste, why be moderate in food and drink? Why exercise? God's people always answer: Because *to Him belongs the glory now and forever.* Good answer! Amen.