

PASTOR'S COLUMN FOR APRIL 2016

“SPRING CLEANING”

“The blood of Jesus, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.” I John 1:7

Well, we’ve had a couple of weeks of really nice weather, and a couple more of cold ones again (It’s Michigan, after all), but many folks have already started cleaning up after winter. Besides all the yard work, there’s a lot of sprucing up people will be doing in their homes. For many, Spring Cleaning is the annual event to get rid of the grime and clutter of the previous year.

I suppose Spring Cleaning is an apt description of the spiritual life as well. Having just been brought again to the foot of the cross, where Jesus died for our sins, and then to the empty tomb, where He rose again as proof that through Him we have new and eternal life, this time of year offers us a chance to leave behind all the grime and clutter in our souls. Being fed on God’s Word and Sacrament, we are strengthened to live a new life in Him.

This is also the time of year that our 8th grade Confirmands are preparing to make their public profession of faith before the congregation and be received into communicant membership. Hearts will swell with joy as the questions are asked of the confirmands (questions asked of us in years gone by), and they declare their desire to “renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways” and to remain faithful to God’s Word and the Christian faith “even unto death.” Pretty heady stuff!

But, what happens after that? Sadly, many of those kids, along with their parents, will disappear from active life in the church. Many will feel that their “obligation” is finished, and that they have carried out their duty. Now, there is no more “need” for church, except occasionally in a festive season, or in a crisis time. Church will lose its relevancy and urgency as other things intrude on our time and interests.

This is unfortunate because, like Spring Cleaning, where one has to keep up what’s been cleaned or end up with a bigger mess than before, the spiritual life must also be nurtured and kept up or it will become smothered under the clutter of this world. Faith must be sustained and strengthened through regular use of those means God has given, or it will wither and die. If you aren’t moving forward, you’re moving backward. That’s just the way it is.

Now is a good time for all of us to rededicate ourselves to Christ, in thankfulness for what He has done for us, and to realize that involvement in His church is not a burdensome drudgery, but a gladsome privilege. Now, we are engaging in a lifelong relationship with the One who made us, and gave His love to us beyond measure through His Son, Jesus Christ. In Him, we are cleansed and made new every day.

So, Spring Cleaning, anyone?

God’s blessings in Christ,

April 2016

Dear Antwort Mann,

My parents are always on my case. They never let me do anything I want, and they always yell at me for no reason. I am sixteen years old and can make my own decisions. Why don't they trust me and just leave me alone?

Signed, "Really Ticked Off"

Dear "Ticked,"

"Always" and "Never?" You don't give me specifics, but I can guess that what you are going through is common to most your age, including sweeping statements like "always" and "never." It may seem like that, but the truth is usually found somewhere in the middle. So, let me ask you a few questions for consideration:

Are you supposed to do chores around the house? Do you *always* do them? Do you *always* speak respectfully to your parents, and *never* yell at them? Do you *always* expect them to give you money, let you have the car, and buy you whatever you want, and *never* feel it is unfair of them to ask you to do something around the house in return? When you go somewhere with your friends, do you *always* let your parents know where you (really) are? You are *never* late, but if you were, would you *always* call and let them know? Are the friends you hang out with the kind that are *always* trustworthy and *never* get into trouble?

You weren't born with an owner's manual. Your parents likely are trying the best they can to raise you but, as sinners (like all of us), they make mistakes. They aren't always "fair," and sometimes yell when they shouldn't. They probably don't treat every one of your brothers and sisters the same way they treat you – at least, not all of the time. But, believe it or not, they really love you and are trying their best to raise you to be a decent and responsible adult. Their own failings and flaws as kids probably have them worrying about you making the same mistakes. They are trying to protect you from that, heavy-handed though it may seem at times.

So, Der Antwort Mann suggests that, if you want your parents to trust you and treat you more like an adult, then you need to consistently act trustworthy and behave like an adult. No temper tantrums when you don't get everything you want. No dodging or complaining when it comes to chores. You are part of the family, so it's time to act like it and help with the family responsibilities. Don't lie to your parents about where you are or whom you are with. If you are afraid of them knowing, then you probably shouldn't be doing it anyway.

It's tough being sixteen. You are caught between still being a kid who is dependent upon his parents, and a young adult who wants his independence. But this, too, shall pass. By trying your best to get along with your parents, showing them respect, and learning to forgive them as you would want them to forgive you, it will pass much more easily.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Ephesians 6:1

Best Regards,

Der Antwort Mann

Kids and adults are encouraged to send their questions to "Der Antwort Mann" for publication in the newsletter. These questions can be sent to, or dropped off at church.