

**TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**IMMANUEL LUTHERAN, PLAINVIEW, MN.**  
**SAT. AUG. 22, 5 PM & SUN. AUG. 23, 2009, 9 AM**

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**MESSAGE**

Intro: We are going to build our theological vocabulary today, based upon the two highlighted verses of our lessons: **Isaiah 29** ‘**This people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of Me is a commandment taught by men**’

and **Mark 7** Jesus said to them ... ‘**This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men**’.

The two theological vocab words I want to teach you today are: ADIAPHORA AND DOCTRINE. An adiaphora or tradition are things neither commanded or neither forbidden by God in His Word and Sacraments. And a doctrine or teaching on the other hand are things clearly commanded or clearly forbidden by God in His Word and Sacraments.

The problem we human being can have is when we confuse or switch the two around and get all bent out of shape about adiaphora or traditions while neglecting or even rejecting the clear doctrines of God’s Word. That was the situation both the Prophet Isaiah was addressing in our Old Testament lesson when the Lord says: ‘**You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, ‘He did not make me’; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, ‘He has no understanding**’. It’s the same thing Jesus was addressing in our Gospel lesson when ‘**the Pharisees gathered to Jesus ... asking ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the traditions of the elders?’ ... Jesus said to them ‘You leave the commandment of God and hold to the traditions of men**’.

And that is what I want to talk to you about a little bit this morning:

**ADIAPHORA** = things neither commanded or forbidden by God

And **DOCTRINE** = things clearly commanded and forbidden by God.

I. This difference of adiaphora and doctrine is clearly taught and confessed many times in our Lutheran Book of Concord, our Lutheran Confessions. And of course we can’t address every adiaphora and every doctrine in a

15 to 20 minute message. But, I would like to consider just a few to show how Isaiah's and Jesus' points apply to Immanuel Lutheran today. For example, briefly consider Holy Baptism = the clear teaching of God's Word is the doctrine of one water baptism for the forgiveness of sins for all people, all nations, young and old as a means or gift of God's grace making us the children of God in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. There are numerous clear Bible passages to teach that doctrine which we confess in our Lutheran Catechism.

On the other hand, however, is how baptism water is to be applied via pouring, washing, sprinkling, immersing? It doesn't matter, we can do any of those modes of baptism. It is adiaphora = neither commanded or forbidden by God's Word.

Or for example briefly consider Holy Communion = the clear teaching of God's Word is the doctrine of Jesus' Real Presence of body and blood in, with and under the bread and wine for us to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of our sins in a common confession of faith in God's Word. There are numerous clear Bible passages to teach that doctrine which we confess in our Lutheran Catechism. On the other hand, however, is how communion bread and wine are to be distributed via individual cup or common cup, the 'fruit of the vine' being red or white, fermented or unfermented, the bread as a wafer or portion of a loaf? It is adiaphora = neither commanded or forbidden by God's Word. Well I could go on and on with adiaphora and doctrine. One more practical example, however, before I get to the whole point. Why does Pastor enjoy worshipping at times in the Christian Life Center though he actually prefers a more formal setting and liturgy? Most of you will say because it's air conditioned and Pastor sweats a lot. And you're certainly not wrong. It's nice to be in air conditioning and I do sweat a lot. But, actually for me our worship area whether it's in the contemporary setting of our CLC or in the formal setting of our church area is a statement that as Confessional Lutherans of Immanuel Lutheran, Plainview we know the difference between adiaphora and doctrine. Because I hope and pray we are a church that knows the Word of God and our Lutheran confession of that Word. God doesn't define where or how we are to worship other than in passages such as: **1 Cor. 14 'Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way'** and **Matt. 18 Jesus said 'For where ever two or three come together in My name, there I Am with them'** and many other clear passages of God Word.

II. The danger of getting all hung up on adiaphora = things neither commanded nor forbidden by God is the danger the doctrines of God become obscured and forgotten to the danger of losing our eternal salvation. So it is a very serious thing Isaiah and Jesus are admonishing **'this people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from Me ... teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'**. Not that adiaphora or traditions are wrong unto themselves, they can be very meaningful and serve a very good purpose hi-lighting or accentuating the doctrines of God. Such as immersion under the water in Holy Baptism can hi-light or accentuate the

drowning of the old sinful nature and the coming up of the new washed, born again, clean forgiven nature. Or using red wine as the fruit of the vine of Holy Communion can hi-light or accentuate the true red blood Jesus shed upon the cross for us. Or breaking portions of bread from a loaf can hi-light or accentuate the crucifying of Jesus' body on the cross for us. Or worshipping with stain glassed windows or ornate eye lifting altars can hi-light or accentuate the preaching and teaching of God's Word. But, any of these adiaphra must never dominate or cancel or replace the clear preaching and teaching and confession of God's Word. And that is what was happening in Isaiah's and Jesus' day, but what we must not allow to happen to Immanuel Lutheran today **'thus making void the Word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do'**.

III. Because ultimately you see my people, all the doctrines of God's Word and Sacraments point and lead us to the supreme doctrine of God's Word = that we human beings are all sinful in what we do, in what we say, in what we think, even when it comes to our religious adiaphora and traditions, BUT we are saved! We are redeemed! Not by what we do but by God's grace, by God's undeserved, unmerited love for us in Jesus Christ, God in flesh and blood, Immanuel = God with us, who was conceived for us, born for us, lived for us, was crucified for us, died for us, rose from the dead for us, ascended into heaven for us as our Substitute, as our Savior over sin, death and hell. And comes to us as a gift received through the simple means of God's Word and Sacraments; the Holy Bible taught and preached and announced, Holy Baptism applied, Holy Communion received. How these doctrines of God Word are packaged or delivered or given to us can actually be very creative through our adiaphora and traditions. In Holy Baptism we can immerse or pour or sprinkle the water, but we don't make a doctrine out of adiaphra. In Holy Communion we can use common or individual cup or wafer or portions of bread, but we don't make a doctrine out of adiaphra. In worship we can have stained glass or beautiful banners, magnificent pipe organ or simple piano, but we don't make a doctrine out of adiaphra. And lose our salvation while actually being very religious, sincere, zealous. As Jesus says **'have a fine way of rejecting the commandments of God in order to establish your tradition'**.

Conclusion: So I hope in a few minutes of a sermon, I have helped you understand a little bit the difference between adiaphra and doctrine as we Lutherans confess them, but understand also a whole lot the danger of confusing or turning things upside down like clay telling the potter what to do. So Immanuel Lutheran, Plainview I pray will not hear Jesus quote Isaiah towards us: **This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments/adiaphra of men'**. Amen