

The Questions . . . and the Answer

“If God is omniscient and omnipotent, why did Jesus have to die on the cross?” An inmate posed this question to Pastor Charles Olander, who does prison ministry at Logan and Lincoln Correctional Centers. Pastor Olander explained that God is also perfectly just and perfectly loving. God remained both by using His love to satisfy His justice, putting Christ on the cross. God’s love was not consumed. In Christ’s redemptive work, it was manifested all the more. Bigger than any of our questions,

The inmate who raised the question has a master’s degree in computer science. He seemed to torture himself trying to balance faith and science. This was just one of many questions he asked. Yet through the Gospel, he was growing in his faith. And this was in prison!

When inmates attend Lutheran Bible study classes – as taught, for example, by Pastor Olander – they have the opportunity to learn how the peace and love and mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus can empower them to endure their time of confinement. Through this Gospel, they can grow in their faith as they prepare one day to leave prison and live as a Christian man or woman in society.

The Christian living starts sooner than that, though. Some inmates mentor new, younger inmates. Others tell of sharing the Gospel with other inmates, some of whom are very hostile to Christians. As inmates share their faith in Christ within the prison, the effects of Pastor Olander’s ministry are multiplied many times over.

“I was in prison, and you came to me” (Matthew 25:36). Pastor Olander has been serving the inmates at two correctional centers on a weekly basis since 1982. This ministry is yours too, in a sense, for you have helped him do this. Your offerings through your congregation and your individual gifts have made Central Illinois District funding possible, for this and other ministries. So, yes, you are instrumental in bringing the Good News of Jesus to people in prison. Thank you.

For finally, it is Christ’s ministry. Through it He continues His work of seeking and saving the lost, also in prison!

“I thank my God . . . because of your partnership in the gospel” (Phil. 1:3-5).

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