

Living Out Our Lutheran Identity

Christian Apologetics in a Lutheran Ministry

November 17, 2020



1. Share one thing Pastor Berg said that resonated with you.

2. Share one thing Pastor Berg said that you found to be thought-provoking (for whatever reason).

3. Give a brief explanation of each of the classical apologetic arguments:
 - a. Historical/Evidential

 - b. Cosmological

 - c. Anthropological

 - d. Teleological

 - e. Ontological

4. Identify settings/individuals/arguments against Christianity for which you might use each of the apologetic approaches above.

5. Read 1 Peter 3:15. Describe the spirit with which we need to use apologetics.
1 Peter 3:15 - ¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

6. Read the following passages. Then describe the limits of apologetics.

Romans 10:17 - ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31 - ¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

²⁶ Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 12:3 - ³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

7. Read the following account. Describe Paul's apologetic approach and show evidence of the attitude that was behind his apologetics.

Acts 26:22-29 - ²² But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—²³ that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

²⁴ At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

²⁵ "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. ²⁶ The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

²⁸ Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

²⁹ Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

8. Describe the difference between methodological naturalism and metaphysical naturalism.

9. "We are always dealing with probability or plausibility and rarely with undeniable certainty." How does this affect your use of apologetics?

10. Agree or disagree: You have to have an opinion about Jesus in our world today.

11. Explain the four options that Pastor Berg presented about the identity of Jesus and how each holds up (or doesn't hold up) to honest apologetics.

12. Explain the answers to the "problem of evil" (How can there be an all-powerful God and a world of evil) that Pastor Berg presented and how each holds up (or doesn't hold up) to honest apologetics.

13. How, why, or where do you think the use of apologetics is important in a Lutheran congregation? (or in the life of a Lutheran Christian)