

St. John 16:12-14

Dear Friends in Christ,

It would be impossible to even guesstimate how many times we've considered these statements from Scripture: "Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. 5:6b) - "while we were enemies" (Rom. 5:10a) - "you were dead in...trespasses and sins..." (Eph. 2:1) - "we were by nature children of wrath." (Eph. 2:3b) We can fit it together this way: We were ungodly, enemies of God, by nature children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sin. We...were...!

All the verses I just read to you were written by the Apostle Paul - inspired, inerrant, authoritative words the Holy Spirit gave him. So, you see, it's not that difficult to understand why there have been such powerful efforts to discredit Paul; why there have been such concentrated efforts to avoid real study of Scripture; why human arrogance is in fierce conflict with the Word of God and churches that hold on to the Word of God. But, then again, human arrogance is *ungodly, an enemy of God, dead in trespasses and sins*.

This is Pentecost Sunday. Our focus is on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. We pray He will bless . . .

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MIRACLE WE HAVE RECEIVED

I. Begins with Jesus.

The question some might ask is: "What Miracle?" Well, I believe most here know the answer: The miracle of faith that holds on to Christ as the One and only way unto eternal life. Thus, ***Our Understanding Of The Miracle We Have Received*** is knowing Jesus! Prior to our text for this morning Jesus said, "...He (that is, the Holy Spirit) will bear witness about Me." (Jn. 15:26a) Our text magnifies this:

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (Jn. 16:12-14)

The next question is this: "How does the Holy Spirit glorify Jesus?" By working faith in us; faith that gives up any notion of winning or deserving God's love; faith that trusts that Christ has paid for our sin and won eternal life for us. Listen to this from Luther's Small Catechism, question #156: "What is the special work of the Holy Spirit? Answer: 'The Holy Spirit sanctifies me (makes me holy) by bringing me to faith in Christ, so that I might have the blessings of redemption and lead a godly life...'"

Please listen again: "Makes me holy," not I make me holy - because, as Scriptures declare, "(we) were dead in...trespasses and sins..." (Eph. 2:1) The spiritually dead cannot make themselves spiritually alive. The Word of God is unequivocally clear: "but God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace (by God's undeserved love, not our efforts) you have been saved..." (Eph. 2:4,5)

In addition to this, Peter writes, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Pet. 2:8-9) God has put all this together for us, and done so in order that we may further glorify Jesus by our proclaiming "the excellencies of him who called (us) out of darkness into his marvelous light."

A fellow by the name of Sim A. Wilson wrote, "At Calvary sin received its mortal wound. There the victim became the Victor. He fell, but crushed the enemy in the fall. He died, but sin was nailed to the cross. His cross becomes the fountain of our life; His tomb, the birthplace of our immortality." The joy and comfort of all this is the miracle that God chose to give us the wisdom to know and embrace Christ as our Savior and Lord.

II. Not a "Yawn".

What I have just put in front of you is not one of those "Oh well, I've heard this a million times!" moments.

Every day of our lives we plod the ground of this earth. Many of us daily see the same people where we work and play. We're aware of the multitudes driving and walking, doing and talking. We maneuver around people at stores. We're aware of others' conversing around us, though we don't hear their words. People. Voices. Movement. And every person who is noticed, or unnoticed, is going to die. That's it. Here for a moment. Gone forever.

I went to church and Sunday School as a boy. It all ended after I was confirmed. I think I have mentioned, at one time or another, that the song we always sang during Sunday School was "Do Something For Somebody Every Day." While it encouraged the singers to witness for Jesus, there was never an explanation as to the content of that witness. One of the stanzas read, "Do something for somebody ev'ry day, The one by your side may be far from life's way; Then bring him to Jesus this very hour, His love has redeemed you, go tell of his pow'r."

No-one ever explained why we should witness for Jesus, other than the fact that Jesus loved people and we should be good to others. I don't recall anyone in Sunday School or church explaining the meaning of redemption. In fact, I don't recall any teaching or preaching about sin and hell, much less that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh who paid for my sins and earned eternal life for me. Maybe I wasn't listening. Or...maybe...I was. And the worst part of it was the fact that I was afraid of death and what might be on the other side.

Again, our text says, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...". Preceding that statement, Jesus says, "And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment...". (Jn. 16:8) Those were the terms I don't recall ever hearing, much less that the truth that Jesus is, as Jesus said, "the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (Jn. 14:6) Except! The only way to Heaven. *Sin - death - hell - payment for sin - the only way to eternal life* - were missing words and terms, as far as I can remember. And I believe my memory is still fairly good.

Everything I put in front of you at the beginning of this sermon does not - ever - invoke a yawn in my heart. It's what I want to hear and must hear and reflect upon daily! I'm telling you that the only thing that really counts for our lives in this world is the fact that, as Scriptures say, "even when we were dead (you might not like to hear that word, but there it is: dead!) in our trespasses, (God) made us alive together with Christ - by grace (we) have been saved...". (Eph. 2:5) I believe, as Scriptures teach, that "The wages of sin is death (you might not like to hear that word, but there it is: death!), but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:23) I believe that - and if you believe that - then we are going to go to heaven when we die! And if you can find something of this world more important and more meaningful and more exciting than that I would question your faith, and I'd really like to know what it is!

III. Gives Power to Witness.

The Miracle of Faith and the working of the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament empower us to be witnesses for Christ! Witnesses to His love, forgiveness and eternal life. The entire Book of Acts is premised on this fact. As Jesus said, "...repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Lk. 24:47)

Edward W. A. Koehler wrote: "Natural man, as much as in him lies, does not want to come to God; he is afraid of Him; he flees from Him and hates Him." (Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, Concordia Publishing House, 1952 edition, p. 126) Does that help to understand why Jesus was rejected - why sinful humans have created a multitude of religions that basically say the same thing; that insist God will accept them if they simply do the best they can? Does that help to understand why most want to do away with the Ten Commandments? This culture has been working feverishly to destroy the presence of Christ, the teachings of the Christian Scripture and the Ten Commandments. And look where this has brought us!

And Koehler notes, "Even as we sometimes bring about a change of mind in men by argument or persuasion, so God by the power of His Word persuades unwilling men so that willingly and joyfully they trust in His grace." (Ibid., p. 127) **By the power of His Word.** The Word we have. The Word we should know. The Word the Holy Spirit uses to draw others to Christ. The Word to which we must witness!

It's the miracle we have received. Faith to know Jesus. It's the power of the Holy Spirit working through the very Word that enables us to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

So, one more time I'll give you the weather forecast that was made some years ago which accidentally omitted the word "showers" in its prediction. "There is less than a 5 per cent chance of...tonight and tomorrow."

The Holy Spirit empowers us to share the greatest miracle with others, in whatever time is left.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

PENTECOST

May 15, 2016

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of the Miracle We Have Received”*

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II. Not a “Yawn”.

III. Gives Power to Witness

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