

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Consider the Words of the Apostle: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...” In preaching the Gospel, Paul clearly gives us that Saving Word, and identifies the center and substance of the Gospel.

For the Gospel is not just speaking that makes men feel good. It is not oratory designed to rouse emotion. It is not the proclamation of the vindication and exaltation of man for temporal happiness. And it isn't “nice” in the worldly sense.

Many men say nice things. But they are not the Gospel. The Gospel has a concrete, tangible, Flesh and Blood heart and center – that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And today we heard from St. Matthew about the work of the Christ.

He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of diseases among the people.

So while teaching and healing are merciful, they aren't the Gospel. The Gospel isn't that Christ made the lame walk, the deaf hear, and the leper clean. Those are miracles. They show forth His Divinity. They are the signs promised from of old. They are the fulfilment of prophecy. They are supernatural testimony to the Divine Nature of the One Person of the Lord Christ.

They are amazing. But they are not the Gospel. The Gospel is not that Jesus worked miracles. It is that Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came into the world to give a healing that transcends time and space, a healing that is eternal.

And more, that salvation comes to you, that you be saved. St. Paul calls that “obtaining mercy.” It is mercy given, mercy undeserved, mercy granted because of great love. What Paul deserved wasn't salvation. No man born of human father does. And that is the Gospel that the Lord taught all around Galilee – not that He can heal, but that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, who came to redeem all mankind by His atoning death and glorious resurrection.

So the Apostle's Words are Words for you. You, like Paul, have obtained undeserved mercy. In love, Christ died for you. He paid your debt to God. He satisfied the Law, for you. He died your death, that you be free of death.

And He rose to new life, that the life He gives you has no end. That is the Gospel. The substance and center of the Gospel is Christ, Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ for you.

It is He, Jesus Christ, that showed all longsuffering. And that longsuffering was manifest in His Apostle, that he be a pattern to you who believe on Jesus for everlasting life. For the Gospel is cruciform. It has substance and shape.

By the Spirit the Gospel creates faith in you, faith that reaches back and clings to Christ, faith empowered by the Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, Whose work is to bring Christ to you. Believing, you have everlasting life. Believing, you live

out your life in this world, eyes fixed on the One who won for you the life to come.

To put it in Lutheran terms, you are justified by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. And being justified, you live out your earthly life, growing in faith, daily forgiven, sanctified - by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

To live out our lives as those redeemed of God, for sanctification, saving faith returns every day to the Gospel. Faith returns daily to Christ. You return to His Word, to the teaching and preaching which has Christ as its heart and center. You return daily to His absolution.

You return daily to His Body and Blood, given and shed for you. You return daily to the very Means by which He has promised to come to you, the Gospel in all its forms, which strengthen and keep you steadfast in saving faith by bringing Christ to you.

And faith, your faith, saving faith, strives to please God, to do the things that He commands, to do the things that are in accord with His good and gracious will. That is called sanctification. It is God-given. As you daily receive His Gifts, so do you daily grow.

By His Mysteries you are enabled to show longsuffering, enduring the indignities of this world until your Lord calls you home. For your Lord came into the world to save sinners. He came into the world to save you. In Christ, you are healed.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

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