

Pastor Dan Basel ELS Giving Counselor Pentecost 12 August 12, 2018

Our text for today's message is recorded for us in 2 Corinthians 4:13-15. ¹³ *Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.¹⁵ For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.* (ESV)

P: This is the Word of the Lord:

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I may not always use that salutation as I begin a sermon. But if I do, I'd better come back to it at some point. Because that little salutation, "Dear Fellow Redeemed" is important. In fact it speaks to the foundation of all we seek to do as individuals and as a church body. The mission of the church has as its foundation the truth that God, our Savior would have *"all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim 2:4). And furthermore it works on the premise that *"And (Jesus) Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world"* (1 John 2:2).

Paul believed this and therefore he spoke. He proclaimed God's grace in Christ Jesus with amazing patience and love for the lost, reflecting a love for those for whom our Savior died. If we believe thus, how can we not help but speak of this Christian Faith as we consider how God uses us in

Extending Grace to More and More People

I. It is Firmly based in this Christ-centered faith

Where does **this gift of God's underserved love start?** Without hesitation it starts with God and his love for His fallen creation. He even provides us with this book, His written Word, the Bible. Without it being read/heard/spoken the Holy Spirit would not have the means/the conduit through which to work in the hearts of man. Truth is, **all blessings** spiritual and temporal flow from here.

But God's Word also proclaims condemnation. That part of God's word that we know as the law states it clearly, *"The soul that sins must die."* This would certainly be tragic if all we ever heard was this part of the Word. We would soon feel lost and could even be driven to despair.

Yet in order to truly understand God and to know "who we are." It is vital that we return to the very roots of our existence. One verse lays the foundation for us (*So, pardon me for just a little bit of Hebrew*): *"Bereshith bara Elohim et ha shamayim ve'et ha'arets."* You know the English well. ***"In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth."***

These words reveal who we are and where we come from. Sadly, they are the first words denied and often the last to be believed. But to say, *"In the beginning God"* and believe it means to acknowledge that we are accountable to Him who made us and sustains us. But beyond that we face the undeniable reality of our own death - we know it is true, ***"It is appointed to man to die once, but after this the judgment"*** (Heb. 9:27). Once again, this condemnation of the law has as its purpose to awaken us spiritually, for ***"By the law is the knowledge of sin."*** Ro. 3:20

But this guilt is not meant to drive us to despair - except of our own righteous. It enables us to see our sin and seeks to lead us to repentance (sorrow over sin/belief in forgiveness).

e.g. King David, a man who was considered a man after God's own heart, fell deeply into unrepentant sin. He committed adultery with another man's wife. Attempting to cover up his sin he committed murder. Yet the Lord brought David to repentance through Nathan, the Lord's prophet. The prophet's use of a parable to reach David through the Law unforgettable. (Tell briefly the parable 2 Sam 12:1-15). In a burst of indignation David, King David, condemned himself saying, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die." Then that Nathan reveals the truth, "You are the man!" By the grace of God David repents. Nathan, to our amazement, immediately declares God's mercy, based on the promised Savior. Even David, guilty of adultery and even murder was forgiven, even though the tragedy of his actions caused much hardship. (Context: 2 Samuel 12:1-15).

There is no doubt that the accusing finger of the law declares to each of us, *"You are the man!"* It is only as we come to God for His mercy in Christ, that we find forgiveness. When we do, we are told, *"... as we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 Jn 1:9).

Who is this merciful and gracious God? *It is the Lord your God, the maker of heaven and earth.*

What did this merciful Creator do to save us? 1st, Know that in love He sent Jesus who became fully human and kept the will of God perfectly in our place. 2nd, Holy and without sin, he took that holy life and laid that holy life down as a sacrifice for sin. He died in our place. You are redeemed.

This is your faith, your redemption. It is what we believe, teach and confess. **We can face death itself knowing that God will raise us up with Jesus.** And as our text states, *“He will bring those in Christ together with us.”* This promise is to you and to your neighbor - the one in the pew next to you, those with whom you work. It is a promise to all those who are in Christ. Paul states,

**“With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.” V. 14*

Paul states in our text, “we also believe, and therefore speak.” He is applying these words to himself. It is no different for you and I. **We believe, therefore we speak.** We believe that God by his grace has given us new spiritual life and in Christ we will be raised to eternal life. It is in this full assurance that Paul states, *“With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.”*

It is in this way that grace extends. What a joy to let the light of this faith - the pure Gospel - shine.

II. This Grace is extended in Joy by Believers like you

1. Through personal witness, & 2. through missions

Sharing this faith doesn't just happen by itself. Yes, there is a certain level of spontaneity to speaking, that's clearly implied. It is also reflected in our lives. Yet we also know that included in the great commission are two mission approaches, both are important.

The first of these is the one we are most used to - **the come strategy.** We come together to hear God's Word and ask others to come with us, our family, our friends, and perhaps our neighbors. Here we hear and share the Gospel, which is *the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.*

But we also seek to use the “go” strategy. It happens when we share the Gospel with others outside these walls. It continues when you call and commission missionaries to take the Gospel to far away cities, or support workers in far away lands. **Granted, financially we oft times struggle to just “take care of things at home.”** It is no surprise that we must apply most of our giving to support our local/community/home based ministries like your own congregation. But it is good to look beyond this too.

But never underestimate the importance of the work you do here, at Trinity, to reach others. You also do much more than you realize as a congregation when you join in supporting missions – like helping 5 sister congregations in our own land (Home). Yes, the news is out. Your pastor has a call, even as we take on another mission project. When you join together in support of Gospel outreach you also help serve thousands in seven (7) world missions.

This is but a taste of the blessings our gifts have helped to bring to our missions and seminary as we rejoice that God's grace is extended to more and more to the glory of the Father.

III. But our Joy as Grace extends is most visible through our “Thanks - Giving”.

Do you sense the joy of knowing that our Lord is working through us to spread the Gospel? Paul makes this clear in our text when he says, ¹⁵*“For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.”*

Needless to say our JOY is being fulfilled ALSO IN YOU. You as a congregation continue to proclaim the Good News of salvation to those in your community. You stand as a witness to the Gospel's truth and have not waivered in your support here.

It is also a joy to see what is happening in our wider church family. **Our missions are being blessed. Our churches are being blessed. One family at Mt. Olive, my home church in Mankato, recently had three children, ages 2-6 walked up to the baptism font, answer the questions, and from oldest to youngest were baptized. What a joy. Pastor Behmer, our Missionary in Bell Gardens, our missionaries at Hope Lutheran in Leander/Austin post how families are joining regularly. I can't keep up with all the good news!**

As one generous person saw how the Lord was blessing and knew it was her joy to support said, "*How can I fail to support those efforts?*"

I can't speak for you, but I know this all brings thanksgiving to God. *See the responsibility and privilege we have in sharing the Gospel I agree, how can I fail to support this?* Martin Luther *took a stand on the Word of God alone, being compelled to speak.* Our synodical forefathers took a stand 100 years ago, in Iowa, to reorganize a new synod, now called the ELS. How can we not be thankful?

How we express that thankfulness is seen in how we manage the gifts God has given us and to know that through us, God makes all the difference in the world for lost souls. While our salvation does not depend on our works, the future generations, the future members of the church do! As Luther puts it, "*Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is never alone.*" It is from such a heart, filled with God's love that the souls asks, "*What can I do to share it? What can I do to make sure others know this joy?*"

Have you ever noticed how little ones are constantly watching? I have a grand-daughter who is soon to be two! She shadows me like you won't believe. I can't tell you how many times she almost gets hurt because she watches so closely. Man, if my example doesn't match up with expectations, heaven help me! The same is true for our stewardship. Our giving should match our faith.

If you believe this faith is the true faith you will, wholeheartedly, support it. It means we will look at what the Lord has given us and say, "*What can I do that would help assure that the Gospel message, the true teachings of the church, are preserved and amplified. And thus by this or my service become a living, light sharing force in a sin-darkened world.*"

But to be fair, leaving a gift to the church takes work, hard work. **For some it is the hardest thing they've ever done.** For others its as easy as walking, it comes naturally. Our Lord knew this. That is why he spoke of our relationship with the Lord in the context of stewardship of money (earthly wealth) perhaps more than any other topic. We struggle with this! We do!

But do not be shy about your stewardship. Now is not the time to be timid, but to be bold in serving the Lord with the gifts he Himself has given!

Truth is, we are all 100 percent philanthropists - - - at our passing. We cannot take it with us. Yet, there is something we can take with us, if our family and our friends are in Christ, we will be "*together with them too...*" It is when we share the Gospel, uphold it in our lives, support it with our gifts, that God's grace is extended. As our text states, we can be assured they (others, like believing family) will be with our Lord together with us. And knowing your children and/or grandchildren are with you in the faith and will be with you eternally, **now that is worth planning for.**

If you haven't done so already, let me show you how. Or at least let's talk about the plans you have. It has been my experience that there is no problem our Lord is unable to solve. I will help you take it to Him. In love we will find a way and in love we need to for our families and in love for the One who first loved us.

As we consider God's blessing of grace to us and to others, our joy and thanksgiving lead us to give glory to God. **We so believe and therefore we speak - and if we speak let us allow our hands to move in service as well. Remember, it is through us, Jesus' followers, that grace extends to others.** Our impulse is then to give, in thanksgiving, and yes in honor of Him who saved us. To the glory of his name. Amen.