

You Are Not Lacking

Advent 1

Pastor Josh Frazee

1 Cor. 1:3-9

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

What is the Word of God? Is it not the words of God revealed to us by divine revelation through the writers who were carried along by the Spirit? This is what we confirmed on Confirmation Sundays in years past and what we continue to confess.

We claim to know about God and what He has in mind for us; and we claim to know this with confidence. To the rest of the world, this seems like arrogance. In the rest of the world everything is deemed as relative; there's no such thing as absolute truth. All ideas should be read through the eyes of today's best minds and revised to have only those things which could "really" occur. This includes the Scriptures. The top minds of today think parts of the Bible might be true, but others not so much.

As Dr. Robert Preus has put it in his work "Getting Into the Theology of Concord: A Study of the Book of Concord," even other churches "declaim that the church will never achieve purity of doctrine; nor is it necessary! Therefore we should concentrate our efforts toward ministry to people in their needs. The longest article in our Confessions deals with good works and ministry to people in their needs (Ap, IV, 122-400) and insistently admonishes the church to follow such an enterprise. But," Preus adds, "this does not make doctrine less important! Today when people are leaving the church in droves and abandoning the faith, we must keep our priorities straight (Getting Into, Location 137)."

Dr. Preus referred back to Luther's time in his work as well, writing that the "Church of the Reformation took Paul's admonition seriously when after Luther's death doctrinal controversies arose and threatened to destroy its unity in the Gospel. The Lutheran Churches recognized that the unity of the Spirit which Paul stressed could only be manifested when there was unanimity 'in doctrine and all its articles and...the right use of the holy sacraments' (FD SD X, 31). Their program for unity and concord in a troubled church went as follows (here Dr. Preus quotes the Formula of Concord): 'The primary requirement for basic and permanent concord within the church is a summary formula and pattern, *unanimously approved*, in which the summarized doctrine commonly confessed by the churches of the pure Christian religion is drawn together out of the Word of God' (FC SD, Rule and Norm, 1).

"What a remarkable statement! Here is not the cynical despairing of the possibility of doctrinal unity, so common to our relativistic age! not the sneering rejection of doctrinal unanimity as something inimical to man's freedom and autonomy. No, here is a statement of confidence in the unifying power of the Word and Spirit of God (Getting Into, Locations 221-222)."

Both the Word and our Confessions unify us in proclaiming that the Bible is God's Word. Because it is God's Word, it is inerrant. It is all or nothing. And as we'll continue to hear, we don't pick and choose what we want from it because it is not our words to judge but God's Word we get to proclaim.

Verse 1

Paul wrote, "I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and knowledge—even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you."

As Lutherans, we boldly proclaim that we have "all speech and knowledge" about God in Jesus. We dare to herald God's Word—that is, speak His Word as His Word, not as a word that belongs to us. We dare to herald God's Word as just that, His Word.

In the commentary notes for our text, we find that “Preaching gives witness to Christ, and the Corinthians’ faithful receiving of it demonstrates the Spirit’s confirmation of the message (ESV Study Bible, p.1947).” You also, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, have confirmed that the message you receive in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod’s pulpits is a witness of Christ, and your confirmation demonstrates the Spirit’s working in you to faithfully receive it.

As Paul wrote, “you were enriched in him in all speech and knowledge.” “(A)ll speech and knowledge”—all, not some, not part, but all. Against postmodern thinking, you have confirmed that you have received all of God’s Word. Now that you have made this good confession, be careful that you don’t fall into picking and choosing parts of the Scriptures over and against others. When people pick and choose to listen to some of the Scriptures, they also lose out on other parts. If someone were to choose to remove the parts of the Word concerning sin, such as sexual sins, that person would also lose out on the Word of God at their deathbed: “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

We do not pick and choose from God’s Word because it is just that, God’s Word. As Lutherans, we dare to proclaim and herald God’s Word in its full truth and purity. We can do this because we have received all knowledge of God in Christ our Lord.

Verse 2

Indeed Paul wrote, “you were enriched in him in all speech and knowledge...so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Beginning the season of Advent, we are in a period of anticipation. We know our Lord will be returning, but that also means that we need to prepare. We do this preparing by repenting.

Most certainly our entire lives should be ones of repentance, but in Advent and Lent we especially recognize our need to repent. In Lent we repent as we hear again that our Lord suffered and died for us in vivid detail. As we begin this season of Advent, we remember that our Lord is coming again and we are forced to question if we are prepared for His return. When we look to see if we are ready, we find that none of us is as prepared as we should be; and so we repent.

This doesn’t mean doing nothing but repenting. It does, however, mean repenting when God’s Word shows us that we have done wrong. It means repenting each and every time we are brought to see that we have sinned against the Lord daily, even multiple times a day. It means weekly confessing our sins here in the Divine Service.

We repent and we also receive. We receive all the spiritual gifts Jesus has bought for us with His innocent suffering and death. The most important of these gifts is salvation, but also includes the means through which we benefit from that salvation—namely, the means of grace. The means of grace are the Word and the Sacraments. We receive forgiveness through these means every week as we receive God’s Word properly taught and His Sacraments faithfully administered according to Jesus’ instruction.

All these gifts were given to us throughout the Church Year last year, and will continue to be given to us in this upcoming year with our Lord. It is through these means that, as Paul concludes,

Verse 3

“(O)ur Lord Jesus Christ...will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.”

In God’s eyes, you are deemed “guiltless” for the sake of our Lord Jesus. Jesus has also sent you the Spirit to sanctify you and keep you in the faith to life everlasting. Every time that you hear the Word and receive the Sacraments, the Spirit is at work keeping you steadfast in the faith.

That’s what we believe according to the Confessions: that the Spirit sanctifies and keeps us in the one true faith. We believe and trust that God will do what He has said. He is faithful; and you and I have been called into His fellowship. That is why we proclaim and herald His Word, not as our own, but as messengers of God.

As Dr. Preus put it, “It is by agreement in...pure doctrine that permanent concord and harmony can be achieved in the church (Getting Into, location 123).” So, dear fellow-redeemed in Christ, dare to be Lutheran. Dare to proclaim that you have received all of God’s Word and that you firmly believe it. And repent, repent daily if not hourly of your sin, that you might be found prepared when our dear Savior returns. He has paid the price for your sins and will forgive you. God is faithful and will forgive you just as we hear in the Word He has revealed to you—His Word, which is all about Jesus. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.