

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Second Sunday after Trinity, June 9, 2013**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 14, 387:1, 44, 535, 373:7.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 4:1-9, 1 Corinthians 1:17-31, Mark 6:1-6.

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

It may seem that you and I, people who are not wealthy, living in small communities in Midwestern American states, seem to be pretty weak and powerless. We don't have any political clout. Governmental decrees and laws attack our beliefs and convictions which are based on God's Holy Word. It seems we are in a tiny minority if we support principles and laws which reflect what God teaches us.

So our life seems pretty gloomy, right?

WRONG. Did you listen carefully to our sermon text? Paul, writing by the inspiration of God, thanks God for us *“because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.”* It is from that undeserved love of God that we realize

**BELIEVERS IN CHRIST ARE RICH IN EVERY WAY!**

1. **We have been made rich because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.**
2. **We *“do not lack any spiritual gift as {we} eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”***
3. ***“He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

Before he turns to problems in the congregation, Paul thanks God for the rich blessings the Corinthians have received in abundance. These blessings, of course, also apply to all believers of every age. He was thanking God and blessing and praising his mercy concerning the Corinthian Christians, for the grace of God which was given them in Christ Jesus. That was the reason for Paul's continual thanksgiving. In spite of their many weaknesses they were still believers; they had received from God, and were in possession of, his grace, as a free gift in Christ Jesus, a gift made possible through the work of Christ because of his suffering and dying in our place.

What a tremendous treasure it is that a Christian has first of all the Word of God, the Word of eternal grace and comfort. The Christian also has Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, the understanding of the Ten Commandments and of faith. In addition, the believer also has the certain refuge and assurance that God will hear us in trouble, if we will only call upon him.

And so it is that we, just like the Corinthian Christians, don't lack any spiritual gift.

Let's review these gifts again. First is God's grace in Christ Jesus. There is no greater blessing than grace, the pardoning love of God in his Son, who died for us. This is the heart and soul of the Gospel, the sure foundation of our Christian faith.

The blessings with which Jesus had endowed the Corinthian Christians included being enriched in all their speaking and all their knowledge. The Corinthian people in general appeared to value eloquence and wisdom above anything else. Doesn't this sound like the age in which we live? They pursued this wisdom as the highest good in life; they were proud of all the human knowledge they had acquired, in addition to the pagan spiritual knowledge they had acquired.

But the Christians in Corinth had, through the grace of Jesus Christ, gained a wisdom greater than anything they had ever known, and greater and more important than any that their fellow Corinthians could

attain without God's grace and gift. They had a message to proclaim that was more important than the most eloquent among them had ever delivered. They were truly enriched in all their speaking and in all their knowledge. What made them wise? What made them effective speakers? Paul writes: ***"our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you."***

It was what Paul had preached to them about Christ as God's Son and the Savior of all mankind that "confirmed" and strengthened them in their faith. A Christian has a certainty that no unbeliever can ever know. This certainly affects all he knows and everything he or she says.

As a result of such "confirmation" the Corinthian believers possessed many gifts. They had all the gifts God gives his believers: wisdom, faith, love, virtue, devotion, patience, endurance. Even such extraordinary gifts as the working of miracles and speaking in tongues were found in their congregation.

Paul shows the ways in which the grace of God has given evidence of its living power in the hearts of the Corinthian Christians. 'That in every point you have been enriched, abundantly blessed, in Him, namely, in knowledge, in all doctrine and in all understanding.' That is what St. Paul calls 'being rich,' first 'in all doctrine or wisdom,' which is the spiritual understanding of the Word of God concerning eternal life. That includes the comfort of faith in Christ and of calling upon him and praying.

God has also given them 'all understanding', that is, correct knowledge and understanding of the purpose of their entire physical life and being on earth. They had learned to know the way to eternal life, and they were filled with the riches of the certainty of the grace of God. They were rich in all understanding. They had an insight into the truth of the doctrines of God in its application to every-day life, that is, to their needs in every condition of life.

And the abundance of this knowledge and understanding in them was in proportion to their acceptance of the Gospel-truth, because the witness of Christ was confirmed in them. The witness to Christ, the good news of God about his Son, 'the well-established truth of the message of salvation', had been made sure in them. They had remained steadfast in the truth, despite the sins he later admonishes them about. They were certain of the reality of the truths of God Paul had preached to them.

They were not lacking in any gift. The Christians of Corinth did not lack any gift of grace which was needed for their growth. They had learned the truth of God's Word. Later, Paul speaks of their spiritual gifts in this way: ***"Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you 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. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."*** (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

The believers in that heathen city were in possession of such rich endowments while they eagerly awaited the coming, the final revelation, of the Lord Jesus Christ. They received the rich endowment of the gifts of grace and used them for the benefit of the work for Christ, but at the same time their hearts were waiting in eager anticipation of their final redemption on judgment day.

They were well aware of the truth of Philippians 3:20: ***"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."*** Paul wrote to Titus: ***"while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."*** (Titus 2:13)

In the same way the heart of every believer is filled with homesickness for the heavenly mansions Christ promised. But that very fact causes him to work in the interest of the Master while it is day, to use all his gifts and abilities in the interest of his Lord. In the mean time he knows that Christ the Lord will confirm, establish, and strengthen us unto the end, the end of the world, because that is near, or to the end of our life, if the Lord calls us home before his last great day.

But no matter when the day may come, he has declared us to be blameless, that we shall no longer be guilty and under condemnation. This blamelessness of the Christians does not consist in any merits on their part, but in the fact that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them by faith

This is a righteousness that does not come *"from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."* (Philippians 3:9) This comes from Christ alone.

And God is faithful.

Our hope of eternal life is based upon the promise of God, who cannot lie. We have been elected to the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ by the boundless love of God from eternity.

And so we have been united with him in that wonderful spiritual union of members in his body.

So the Christian's faith is not a vague and uncertain hope, but is based upon the fact that God is faithful.

Luther said: "What Christ has begun in the believer, and what He has already given you, in that He will surely keep you to the end and into eternity, if only you do not willfully fall from it and cast it from you; for His Word and promise, given you, and His work, which He performs in you, is not changeable like men's word and work, but sure, certain, and divinely immovable truth. Since you have such a divine call, take comfort in it and rely upon it firmly."

And so Holy Scripture testifies that God, who has called us, is so faithful that, when he has begun the good work in us, he also will preserve it to the end and perfect it, if we ourselves do not turn from him, but firmly retain to the end the work begun for which he has promised his grace.

Since they possessed the gifts with which God enriches his people, they were convinced that their Lord would return in glory to take them to himself in heaven, and they eagerly awaited his return. The Christian who lives his life with the prayer "Come, Lord Jesus," in his heart is rich in grace and knowledge and faith and spiritual gifts.

Their Savior's promise that he will keep them in the faith unto the end comes as a special assurance to those who await his return. Paul assures the Corinthians that they can count on God to keep alive the saving faith in their hearts, so that they will be with their Lord in eternity. God keeps his promises to his believers, who share in the life of his Son.

So we, too, today, can have that same confidence and joy. God has forgiven our sins. God will give us eternal life. We will receive it through faith in his Son. For all this, we, too, can rejoice, as we do with the hymn writer:

1. Rejoice, rejoice, believers,  
And let your lights appear! ...

3. Ye saints, who here in patience  
Your cross and sufferings bore,  
Shall live and reign forever,  
When sorrow is no more.  
Around the throne of glory  
The Lamb ye shall behold;  
In triumph cast before Him  
Your diadems of gold!

4. Our Hope and Expectation,  
O Jesus, now appear;  
Arise, Desire of nations,  
O'er this benighted sphere.  
With hearts and hands uplifted,  
We plead, O Lord, to see  
The day of earth's redemption,  
That brings us unto Thee! Amen. (The Lutheran Hymnal 72)