

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fourth Sunday After Trinity, June 19, 2016**

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

Hymns: 371, 246:1, 346, 423, 423:6.

Lessons: Isaiah 61:1-11, 1 Peter 3:8-15, Luke 5:1-11.

Sermon Text: Luke 9:18-26.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear friends in Christ Jesus:

A true pastor is always concerned about his preaching. He realizes that he must preach the Word of God, no more and no less than what the Bible says. Especially now, when so many have forsaken the Word of God, it is increasingly more important to obey Paul's instruction: ***“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.”*** 2 Timothy 4:2 (NIV)

If a pastor obeys this instruction, he need never wonder if his message is timely. If the gospel of ***“Christ crucified”*** 1 Corinthians 1:23 (KJV) is preached, it will always be timely, the very message needed for this day and age. While the unbelievers consider such preaching foolishness, Paul says: ***“to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*** 1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV)

If we are concerned about our soul's salvation, we will consider our sermon text for today important. It does not confront us with the question: were you baptized and confirmed? Or this question: do you have your name on a church membership list? Or this question: do you go to church regularly? Rather, our text confronts us with the question: what is your personal relationship to Jesus? May we learn from our text to make

**A PERSONAL CONFESSION OF JESUS**

- 1. As the Christ of God who came for our salvation; and,**
- 2. As the One for whom we stand ready to give up everything that may conflict with our faith and hope in him.**

Our text tells us: ***“Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, ‘Who do the crowds say I am?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.’”*** Jesus had departed from the crowds in Galilee where he had been preaching, and he went to be by himself so he could pray. Then he asked his disciples who were nearby what the crowds of people were saying about him. The disciples supplied the common answers, the prevailing ideas about who Jesus was. Some, like King Herod, thought he was John the Baptist raised from the dead. Some thought Jesus was Elijah because they misapplied what the prophet Malachi had written about John the Baptist. Still others thought Jesus was one of the old prophets raised up from the dead. According to the common opinion of the crowds, Jesus was not acknowledged to be the promised Messiah.

Next Jesus questioned his disciples: ***“But what about you?” he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘The Christ of God.’”*** We should realize, first of all, that Jesus did not ask either question in order that he could get information. As the son of God he knew perfectly well what people in general and his disciples in particular believed about him. Jesus' purpose in asking the question about the opinion of the crowds was that the disciples might focus their attention on the false ideas of the crowds and set themselves against such ideas. When Jesus asked his disciples who he was, he had in mind this important matter: he wanted to hear a confession of their faith. Jesus wanted a personal confession of faith.

Such a personal confession of faith Jesus heard when Peter answered as the spokesman for all the disciples: ***“the Christ of God.”*** Let us learn why such a confession of faith is important. The name Christ is the Greek Word for what is called in the Hebrew Messiah, which means the Anointed One. When Jesus preached his first sermon in Nazareth, he used the text from the prophet Isaiah which said the Lord had anointed him to preach the gospel. ***“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.”*** Isaiah 61:1-2 (NIV) Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit to carry out his threefold office as our High Priest, Prophet, and King. In carrying out these official duties as the Christ, Jesus accomplished the salvation of mankind. As our High Priest, he lived a holy life for us, perfectly fulfilling God's law, and he sacrificed himself on the cross and shed his blood for the forgiveness of our sins. As our Prophet Jesus established the gospel ministry which proclaims: ***“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.”*** 2 Corinthians 5:19 (NIV) As our King Jesus rules in our believing hearts through the gospel Word, and guides us to eternal life in heaven. He rules over all things in heaven and on earth, and especially as the Head of the Holy Christian Church, so that we are assured in the Bible: ***“we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*** Romans 8:28 (NIV)

That Jesus is the ***“Christ of God”*** who came for our salvation, is the confession of faith that the Lord wants each one of us to make personally. For it is by such faith that we are saved. Jesus says: ***“my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*** John 6:40 (NIV)

When Peter made this confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ of God, our text says: ***“Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.”*** The people and the disciples themselves had to have much more instruction before Jesus was proclaimed as the Christ of God. Their many false ideas about what the Christ was to accomplish had to be rebuked and rejected. Jesus made a beginning in giving them the facts about the Christ when he said: ***“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”*** After Pentecost when the Holy Spirit had been given to the disciples, then they could proclaim all the facts about Jesus, as Peter summed them up saying: ***“God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*** Acts 2:36 (NIV)

Not only was Jesus as the Christ to go the way of the cross, but also his followers must know that the way to heaven involves taking up their cross to follow Jesus and not be ashamed of the crucified Savior. We want to learn that a personal confession of Jesus involves being ready to give up everything that may conflict with our faith and hope in him.

## 2.

***“Then he said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’”*** Jesus here spoke to a larger group of people than just his 12 disciples. Those who have been made willing to be Jesus' followers by the powerful gospel Word are here told very clearly what it means to be a follower of Christ. We see here that a personal confession of faith in Jesus is much more than to simply acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. It's more than to simply say nonchalantly “I believe in Jesus.” Denial of one's sinful self and cross bearing is involved. Being ready to give up everything that might conflict with our faith and hope in Jesus is involved. That we should not be ashamed of Jesus and his Word is involved. It can, if God so wills, even involve giving up our life physically for the sake of Jesus.

Let's briefly consider these things. A follower of Christ is to “deny himself.” It's our sinful self that we are to deny as Christians. It's not that we merely give up a pleasure or possession on occasion. It means to fight against the lustful and covetous thoughts in our hearts. It means to give up all the sinful desires and actions involved in sexual immorality, getting drunk, ruining the body with illegal drugs. It means to refrain from doing all the sinful things that worldly people do; that which the world in general finds to be socially acceptable behavior. The apostle Paul put it this way: ***“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer***

***yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.***” Romans 6:12-13 (NIV)

Jesus also speaks of cross-bearing as a natural part of a believer’s life. To bear the cross after Jesus means to willingly suffer whatever hardships and tribulations God brings into our lives as a result of confessing Jesus and his Word before men. We do not choose the cross we are to bear after Christ, nor do we have to wonder if there is a cross to bear. If we speak out when a confession of our faith is called for, fight against false teaching and the false ecumenical movement with its sinful unionism, we will soon bear the hatred of those who, as Luther says, teach otherwise than the Word of God teaches. Such a cross we ought to bear gladly. Peter writes: ***“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”*** 1 Peter 4:12-13 (NIV) To deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus, should be a regular part of our everyday life.

No one who is a true believer in Christ will consider this to be too much that the Savior asks of his followers. Jesus in our text compares the two alternatives: ***“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?”*** What is more important? What would we rather have? A life of ease here on earth, or eternal rest in heaven? Money, honor, fame here on earth? Or the everlasting inheritance in heaven that can never spoil or fade away or be lost? The easy way, the popular way, the way of the majority of people, is not the way that leads to eternal life. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: ***“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*** Matthew 7:13-14 (NIV)

Jesus expresses a similar warning in our text: ***“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”*** We have spoken of our personal confession of Christ. What will his confession of us be on the Last Day? If we have served the world and its lusts, we will forfeit life eternal, our soul’s salvation. Then the Lord Jesus, who will judge all mankind, will be ashamed of us on that day. But if we have served Christ faithfully, confessed him and his Word without fear or favor of men, and have denied our sinful self and gladly borne the cross after Jesus, then we shall enter into the fullness of joy in heaven prepared for us from eternity. May we say with the Christian hymn writer:

“Ashamed of Jesus, that dear Friend  
On whom my hopes of heaven depend?  
No; when I blush, be this my shame,  
That I no more revere His name.” Amen.  
(The Lutheran Hymnal 346:4)

Reprinted from a Ministry By Mail sermon preached July 3, 1988.