

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, February 2, 2020**

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

Hymns: 296, 43:1-2, 351, 364, 292:1-4.

Lessons: Leviticus 20:6-8, 1 John 2:12-17, Luke 7:36-50.

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Dr. Martin Luther, in the 62nd of the 95 Theses wrote, ‘The true treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.’ Without the Gospel there would be no reason for the existence of the Church, because the proclamation of the Gospel is the Church’s business. Without the Gospel there would be no Church, for the Gospel is the means whereby the Church is built. The Gospel is the real treasure of the Church. It is the only thing that can give meaning to life and victory in death.

Men have suffered for the Gospel and given up their lives for it because they knew what a treasure it was.

You learned, perhaps in childhood, that the Gospel is the glad tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. It is “Good News” - the Good News of the grace of God in Christ. It is the good news that Jesus Christ died to take away your sins. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* John 3:16-17 (NIV)

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is something entirely new to natural man. No one knows it by nature and it cannot be discovered by human reason. It is something unknown to men as they are by nature. This morning let us consider

**THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS**

- 1. It is foolishness to those who are perishing.**
- 2. It is the power of God to those who are being saved.**
- 3. It is wiser than man’s wisdom and stronger than man’s strength.**

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. The Gospel is not man-made. It comes from God. It is not empty theories or a beautiful dream, but it is a work of God himself.

It is not just news, it is good news; it is glad tidings. When the message of the Gospel is brought to men, the broken and contrite heart is filled with joy. The captives of the devil are delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Those who sit in the prison house of eternal death see the gates of a new and perfect life opening before them. Those who have been feeding on the dry husks the world offers are received back into their Father’s house – the Father who created them. For those who believe, He is also their Father through faith in Jesus Christ! The hearts which have been heavy with grief are moved to rejoice and praise the Lord for His marvelous mercy to the children of men.

The Law of God shows the wrath, the anger, and the power of God. The Gospel reveals that God is Gracious! The heavens declare His glory and our own conscience testifies to His holiness, but without the Gospel there is no comfort in simply knowing that there is a God. That knowledge leaves us only with a certain fearful looking toward judgement, knowing that God demands perfection.

St. Paul says that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who perish. He says God will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and He will frustrate the intelligence of the intelligent. He asks ‘Where are the wise? Where are the scholars? Where are the philosophers of this world?’

Are they gathered with us here today? Are the scholars of the world worshipping with us today? Those who rely on man's wisdom think they have no need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why should they come here and listen to such foolishness? Let's make a comparison: How do you earn your living? You have to work for it, right? There's not much in this world that is given to you free. But how do you get to heaven? You hear the Word of God. The Word of God by the power of the Holy Ghost works faith in you. And because you have faith in Jesus Christ, faith that He died for your sins, you have waiting for you an eternity of life, an eternity of bliss in heaven, an eternity of no pain, no sorrows, no tears. You don't have to work for it! If man thinks about that, it is ridiculous. You are relying upon words. You are relying upon something that someone has told you.

With my Catechism Instruction classes, I sometimes use this kind of an illustration when we are talking about faith.

I tell them 'suppose I were to tell you that I had deposited \$100 in your name in a specific bank in St. Paul or Minneapolis. But you have to go up there and collect it. You have to trust in me and you must go up there and collect it. They say, "Pastor, you wouldn't do that for us." But I ask, how do you know that? If you don't believe what I am telling you, you will never claim the money! You have to believe what I am saying.' That illustration shows the foolishness of the Gospel, doesn't it? It is really ridiculous, in man's scheme of thinking about things, to think that you are going to get to heaven simply because God tells you so! It is foolish to the world. Where is the wise man who can believe that? Where is the scholar or philosopher of this world who can believe it? They can't, by nature, believe that or accept that! What is it that some churches, and pagan religions teach about how we get to heaven? They might teach that Jesus died for some of our sins but that you have to pay for the rest. Or they might teach that you have to live a good life on this earth in order to earn and receive a better life the next time around. That, dear Christian friends, is the foolishness of the Gospel!

## 2

The Gospel reveals how man can find a gracious God. The Gospel begins with, centers in, and ends with Christ. St. Paul says in the next chapter of First Corinthians ***"When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."*** 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 (NIV)

Paul was a man who was the equivalent of a university graduate! He had been a student of the Pharisees, and really knew the Old Testament scriptures! He had known what had happened in Jerusalem, but even at the stoning of Stephen, a believer in Jesus Christ, Paul was standing by, giving approval to his death! Paul had the learning, the head-knowledge that God would send a Messiah, but he did not yet know that Jesus was the Messiah. It took a direct intervention by God, through the blinding light on the way to Damascus, to bring Paul to faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul says that his preaching was not his own work, but the work of the Holy Ghost. He was not preaching so that they could hear an eloquent preacher. He came to preach Jesus Christ crucified for the sins of all men!

Without Christ there is no Gospel, for only Christ has done and could do what the Gospel proclaims to us. If Jesus Christ had not come to earth, there would be no Gospel. If he had not suffered and died for the sins of all men, there would be no Gospel. If he had not risen from the dead, there would be no Gospel! To preach the Gospel and to preach Christ is the same thing. Without the Gospel, men are without hope, without comfort, and without God in the world. The preaching of the Gospel is foolishness to those who perish eternally. The message of the Cross is foolishness to many. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God unto salvation. To us who believe the preaching about the cross of Jesus Christ that we hear, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God that we hear. You don't hear just news, or stories, or jokes or political opinions. You don't hear lots of different things from the pulpit. But what you do hear makes you wise unto salvation.

You come here expecting to hear something about God. You come here expecting to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, for many, Jesus Christ is a stumbling block and foolishness. Our text says that to the Jews he is a stumbling block. Jews came to Jesus seeking to see miracles. Is Jesus still a stumbling block? Unfortunately, the whole truth of God's Word is often a stumbling block to people. Many people can't accept

parts of the Word of God. They want to pick and choose what they want to believe, just as they pick and choose their own ideas about politics or economics, or how things on earth should be run. Men want to pick and choose the parts of God's Word that they think should apply to them, and toss other parts aside. They want to decide which parts of the Bible they should believe, and set aside other parts as 'fables', or 'myths' or 'fiction' or totally irrelevant to the way things are now. When men pick and choose from the Word of God, they stumble at Christ.

Isn't it foolishness to believe that we get to heaven simply by believing what someone tells us? 'Believe what I tell you, God says, and you will receive eternal life'. ***"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*** Mark 16:16 (NIV) Believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, and you shall receive eternal life!

***"The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom."*** Proverbs 15:33 (KJV) ***"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."*** Psalm 111:10 (KJV) Hasn't God made foolish the wisdom of the world? God ***"will destroy the wisdom of the wise, the intelligence of the intelligent [He] will frustrate!"*** ***"God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."***

What do we learn from man's wisdom? Do we learn the way to heaven? Can we find it with college degrees, years of learning, titles, all the trappings of wisdom? Even today, we must admit that some of the trappings of wisdom are needed to make a living in this world. But it is only for this world! Hand in hand with the education of this world, we must give our children the knowledge of the Gospel. What do we preach? We preach CHRIST CRUCIFIED!

### 3

In the Formula of Concord we confess "Man's reason is so ignorant, blind and perverted that when even the most ingenious and learned men upon earth read and hear the Gospel of the Son of God and the promise of eternal salvation, they cannot FROM THEIR OWN POWERS perceive, apprehend, understand, or believe and regard it as true." The working of the Holy Ghost must come into their lives. We know that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. ***"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."*** Romans 10:17 (NIV)

We admit in the Third Article that "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, nor come to Him. But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel..."

That's the Good News! That's the Gospel! ***"The foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength!"***

***"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*** Romans 7:24-25 (NIV) Amen.