

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Second Sunday after Trinity, June 13, 2010**

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Hymns: 240, 293, 290, 395, 46.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 7:6-15, 1 Corinthians 10:1-14, John 3:23-36.

Text: 2 Corinthians 1:16-20.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Perhaps you have heard some of the sayings that teach that man may make plans but God has the final say, or that what we plan really depends on God to bring about, or "Man proposes, God disposes". That idea comes from the Scriptures. St. Paul had plans to visit the Corinthian Christians, but his plans apparently did not work out the way he expected them to. He apologizes to them that his plans did not work out as he intended. But he reminds them that he did not and does not intend to say both "yes" and "no" and he wants to remind them that

**GOD IS FAITHFUL.**

- 1. God does not change his message to fit the age or the culture.**
- 2. God kept and will keep every one of his promises.**

He writes *"I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say, 'Yes, yes' and 'No, no'?"* Paul uses this inability of his to come to Corinth to lead into a much more important subject. He asks "do I make plans like so much of the world? Do I say yes at the same time I say no?" The answer is "No, he does not talk that way, nor does he make plans or promises that he does not intend to keep, and he strives to be consistent in his plans." But even more important than what Paul says and intends is what God says and intends. In all of our lessons today you heard the idea that "God is faithful".

Paul uses this planned visit to Corinth as an example, or as an introduction, or as a transition, to talking about the consistency and faithfulness of God and of Jesus Christ. Jesus is extremely consistent and constant. He is not wavering or waffling the least in what he tells us. He does not say one thing to one generation or people and something else to someone else.

*"But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not 'Yes' and 'No.' For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not 'Yes' and 'No,' but in him it has always been 'Yes.'"*

St. Paul wants to make it extremely clear that he does not say one thing and do something else or mean something else. He wants to make it unmistakably clear that he does not talk out of both sides of his mouth. He emphasizes that his message is consistent and always has been consistent. All of this means that he does not say one thing today and something else tomorrow if it suits him. He does not say one thing to one group of people and something else to another group of people. He does not tell people what they want to hear but instead tells them what God wants them to hear. He is a servant of Christ, and must speak plainly what Christ wants him to speak.

And what is it that Christ wants him to speak? We know the answer to that from the Holy Scriptures. St. Paul for example has written, by inspiration of God, 13 books of the New Testament. And these books, these chapters, these verses, these words are consistent. They are, after all, the Word of God. God does not contradict himself. Perhaps you have read a novel or even a non-fiction book in which you catch the author writing something in a later chapter that contradicts what he wrote early in the book. A reader takes a sort of glee in finding a fiction author to be inconsistent in that way. But God is totally consistent from Genesis to Revelation.

God does not contradict himself. It is our sinfulness or human wisdom which makes us think that we have to choose between what God tells us in different parts of Scripture. Sometimes that happens because of what religious leaders tell us. It is especially apparent when the church has man-made rules which are not found in the scriptures, and people think that they have to choose between contradicting things which God tells us, when it is a contrast between what God says and man-made rules.

God is faithful in many ways, and Paul emphasizes that God keeps his promises. God promised the Savior to Adam and Eve, and he kept that promise. God promised the Savior to Abraham, one of Adam's descendents, and God kept that promise. God repeated that promise of a Savior from sin hundreds of times in the Old Testament, and he fulfilled that promise as recorded in the New Testament.

We know that what God says is true. We know that God is honest. We know that God does not contradict himself. If we think that the Bible contradicts itself, we are forgetting the problem lies in our sinful human understanding. We know that God does not say one thing to one generation, and another thing to another generation. The "generation gap" is supposedly a difference in the way older people think and younger people think and behave. Studies often tell us that this kind of a gap is most obvious in morals, values, lifestyles.

But let's talk about people – older people as well as younger people, and what they really have in common. People are, by nature, no less sinful than they have ever been, regardless of their ages. People are, by nature, no more sinful than they have ever been. Mankind, and that is every one of us, is by nature totally corrupt without God. We were conceived and born in sin. We cannot deny original sin, for Scripture plainly teaches "***Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.***" (Psalms 51:5 NIV)

Many would like to have us believe that the message of God changes from generation to generation. Those who claim to be teachers of the Bible, and I am talking about church leaders, ministers, theologians, including those who reject the verbal inspiration of the Bible as the very Word of God, are constantly, and more so today it seems, trying to reinterpret the Bible so that it fits what mankind in a certain generation wants it to say.

For example, two generations ago the Church of England, known in the United States as the Episcopal Church, shocked all of Christianity when it declared that under some circumstances sex outside of marriage is acceptable, even acceptable to God! God teaches no such thing! That was in the 1960s. Of course, at that time in American history, young people were protesting a whole lot of things. Many, young AND old were breaking away from God's views of marriage and the sixth commandment. It was absolutely scandalous to most parents when a male and a female would move in together and behave as if they were married without being married. Christians used to even publicly call that "living in sin". But look at how many, and I might even say "most" people consider that today! I have heard people who claim to be church-going people say that they would rather have their children living together and having sex with just one person than having sex with a whole lot of people! So many parents in the world tolerate and approve of such breaking of God's sixth commandment! And look at how far churches have come since that time in the 1960s! Not only do they teach or tolerate that sex outside of marriage is okay, but living together regardless of one's age has come to be accepted by the world. Another example of how far the beliefs of the world – yes, of unbelievers – have come is also related to the sixth Commandment. That is the sin of homosexuality -- let me be blunt -- men with men and women with women. If we are to believe studies, there are more than 50% of people in some studies who approve of homosexuality, and believe homosexuals also deserve special protection under the law of the land just because of their homosexuality. Satan has done a good job of making the squeaky wheel get the grease! The more often you hear something, the more likely you are to believe it and tolerate it! Then we could also look at the seventh commandment. Greed, wanting it all and doing everything you can to get it all, is acceptable, and even praised by many. I'm not only talking about leaders in the financial industry. One obvious example is the convicted thief Bernard Madoff, who was sentenced to 150 years in prison for theft and fraud. I'm also talking about anyone who lies or cheats or steals to gain possessions of this earth. Certainly the best examples in recent years are found in leaders in the financial industry. But doesn't every single one of us want his piece of the American dream? And sometimes there is a very thin line between working to improve one's status in life and covetousness, which smashes the ninth and 10th Commandments. We could also mention the eighth Commandment. A book called "The Art of War For Executives", which was on the best-seller lists, based on ideas from an ancient Chinese master of war, tells you how to get ahead in business and to beat your

competition. One way that author called “extremely effective” is to destroy your enemy's reputation. That's the exact opposite of what God tells us in the eighth Commandment. And we could examine every commandment in light of the idea of the inconsistency of mankind.

But the point I want to make is that mankind is sinful. Mankind says and does one thing today, or for one group of people and another thing for another group of people. God's way is not that way. ***“But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not ‘Yes’ and ‘No.’ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ but in him it has always been ‘Yes.’”***

St. Paul's message to Christians, both in Corinth and to us here today, is not filled with opposing or contradicting ideas. He doesn't give us a smorgasbord of ideas and morality to choose from. He says his message is not yes and no. You can't have it both ways. He points to the very son of God, Jesus Christ. He emphasizes that is the same Jesus Christ that he and Silas and Timothy preached to the Corinthians. Jesus Christ was not yes and no, ***“but in him it has always been ‘Yes.’”***

What is this yes message of Jesus Christ? ***“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.”***

Every promise God has made he has kept. He answered and fulfilled and completed all of his promises in Jesus Christ. Has he crushed the head of Satan? Yes. Was he himself injured? Was his heel bruised? Yes. Jesus Christ had to die a most humiliating death to do that. That's the first promise God made, to Adam and Eve. Has God made the descendents of Abraham – the spiritual descendents of Abraham – as numerous as the stars in the sky or as many as the sands on the seashore? Yes. We have no clue, no idea how many believers there actually are and have been since creation. We only know there are many. Of course, Satan wants to discourage us by making us think we are such a tiny group. The Devil wants to make us think we are foolish for believing and preaching only the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth of God's Word, the Bible. For example, Satan and his followers in the world want to make us think we need to get together with others and join in large religious unionistic groups in order to preach the gospel, to make disciples of all nations. But God tells us we are to keep that gospel pure. We dare not compromise the word of God.

In this second letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul will speak of some of the promises God has made. But you know those promises. You may not right now know all of them, or be able to write them all down, but by searching the Scriptures, the very word of God, you will learn those promises of God. And God does keep his promises. The most important is ***“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.”*** (Mark 16:16 NIV).

Our text closes with the words ***“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.”*** Amen means “yes, it shall be so”, “Yea, yea, so shall it be”. When we pray to our faithful God, especially in the words our Savior taught us, we end with the word “amen”. That means that “we can be sure that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and are heard by him, for he himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Therefore we say Amen, yes, it shall be so.” Amen.