

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran
Church**

**Sermon by Pastor Anthony
E. Schultz**

February 12, 2017

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

6th Sunday after the Epiphany

WELS Series B.



Praise to the God of All Comfort

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶ If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

People of God, rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

I have always appreciated the observance of national *whatever* day! Do you know what I mean? The last Monday in January is National Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day! Do you appreciate bubble wrap? It was originally invented to be an insulating window curtain but it never caught on. Then somebody said, "Hey, you know you could wrap this stuff

around things that are fragile and breakable and ship them – and they won't break?" And that caught on. Somewhere along the line people also said, "You know what's fun – to pinch this stuff and make it pop! Last Monday in January. February 1st is National "Get Up!" Day. US Figure Skaters celebrate Get Up Day. We get up – they say. We fall down and we get up again. It's like remember that time Mr. Grasby came to St. Luke's from our Lakeside Lutheran High School and talked about John Stephen Ahkwar – from Tanzania – the Olympic Marathon runner who kept falling and kept getting up. The race was over – every one had finished except John. An hour and a half after the last runner had finished – still John kept coming. "Why did you keep going?" He said, "You don't understand. My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start a race, they sent me to finish it." Today begins National Random Acts of Kindness Week – this Friday National Acts of Kindness *Day*. Random Acts of Kindness was invented by a guy named John de Long from New Zealand. It has been suggested June 2nd – National Donut Day would also be an excellent day for a random act of kindness – invite someone out to Dunkin Donut – and then pick up the tab! The only thing about *Random* acts of kindness--is – for a Christian there's nothing *random* about it. There was nothing random about Jesus' sacrifice to wash away all our sins. Before the creation of the world – literally some 6,000+ years ago – God determined to rescue us from sin through Jesus' sacrifice on the \dagger . That's why we are here today, because:

Jesus Is The God Of Comfort

I. Jesus is our comfort

II. In Jesus we endure!

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today is part of the Apostle Paul's second letter to the believers in the Greek city of Corinth! Corinth was famous for her markets – shops lining the narrow streets where people haggled – argued over prices in Greek and Latin and other languages. Hogs grunt, sheep and goats bleat, chickens cluck and roosters crow and doves coo and cattle moo. The animals can smell and see the fresh produce and baked goods close to their pens. There is the smell of the pigs and cows and poultry – barbecued meat on metal rods – where those who grilled it – swat the flies away with literally animal tail ends – fastened to sticks – and slice off meat for those who buy it. Down the street from the market place are temples to Greek gods. Gods like Asclepius. Are you familiar with Asclepius? I think kind of! You know when you see symbols for medical care – often times there is this snake? Asclepius is the god of medicine – along with his daughters Hygiene, Recuperation and Healing, Beauty and Remedy and more. The Corinthians worshiped Serapis. Serapis – a god that looked Greek but with Egyptian trappings – to sort of unify the Greeks and the Egyptians. Some people really liked Serapis, too! Inside the temples are dining halls where people eat part of the animals they brought for sacrifices. People discuss business and politics and the latest philosophies. People are busy – trying to find whatever it is – that's going to make them rich or happy or famous or powerful or all of the above!

Concerning the letters to the Corinthians Martin Luther wrote: *“St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be one in faith and love, and to see to it that they learn well the chief thing, namely, that Christ is our salvation, the thing over which all reason and wisdom stumble!”* The Corinthian congregation had lots of troubles. In the name of love they had become tolerant of some pretty wicked behavior within

their congregation. In the name of love there was a dangerous lack of discipline. For example – the Corinthian Christians were having fellowship meals – like we are looking forward to during Lent – Wednesday night suppers. They were having suppers like that all the time. And that was good. The problem was – the really wealthy people – who were not working 9 to 5 would come pretty early. They would come early and have their prime rib and their loaded baked potatoes and their aged wine and cheese and artisan bread. And then when the poor people finally got there – some so poor – they couldn't even hardly afford to bring some cans of soup – and that's all they had! And if you could make it even worse – sometimes the rich people who came early would have too much to drink. And then after supper they were going to have communion – and they were in no condition for that. There were people who were living in all kinds of sin and immorality that even unbelievers would consider wrong – and the Christians just looked the other way. And then when the Apostle Paul called this to their attention they became so strict and so harsh – when the guilty people said they repented and were sorry and were going to turn from their sins – nobody understood now was the time to say, “Jesus died for all your sins. Be of good cheer – your sins are forgiven!” So Paul wrote to them again – to encourage them with the Gospel of forgiveness full and free!

Our reading today is part of the first chapter of Second Corinthians! The NIV heading for this section is: **Praise to the God of All Comfort!** Paul wrote: ³ **Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,** ⁴ **who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. *Praise be to God!*** That's what we do here! We praise God, We thank Him! We sing to him. We play

instruments for Him. Sometimes Church pipe organs – sometimes grand pianos. Sometimes it's trumpets and French horns and tubas. Sometimes it's violins and bass and cellos and violas. Sometimes it's clarinets and bassoons and flutes. Sometimes people dance – in Nigeria they dance when they sing – they dance when they bring their thankofferings forward. They clap their hands and hit anything with a drum stick. I have seen them play a brake drum – pounding it with cement reinforcing rods and it sounds like a church bell. I have seen them play an automobile muffler and the pitch changes when they go up and down the tail pipe – the exhaust pipe. If you sing in the drug rehab in down town Lima – with recovering drug addicts – everybody plays a tambourine – or a Cahone – a wooden box with big holes cut through the sides – and you sit on it – and you pound it with your hands and sing! Praise the LORD! That's what God's people do. They sing – as they stand and sit and kneel beside a death bed. They sing *I Am Jesus' Little Lamb!* We praise the LORD!

We praise--the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort... When you read those words are you reminded of Psalm 103 – a Psalm of David? Do you know Psalm 103? **¹ Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits – ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. ⁶ The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. ⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: ⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he**

harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. ¹⁵ The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. ¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children –

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. God comforts us so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God... Again – does that sound familiar? This whole reading from 2 Corinthians chapter one – is not a part of ILCW Series A nor B nor C. We haven't read these words in Church as part of a regular Sunday for I don't know – 9 years, maybe 12 years – maybe even longer. And yet – I ask again – have you heard these words? Some of you did – although it might have been hard to concentrate – because these words are part of our funeral liturgy. We read them out of the bulletin each time we have a funeral. Jesus is our comfort – and this comfort we share with each other – the comfort of the Good Friday and Easter Gospel! When more than at a funeral – when one we love is in a box of metal or wood – and there is a hole in our ♥ that is just about impossible to explain. Still we have

the sure and certain hope of an inheritance incorruptible – safe for us in Heaven. Here is comfort when there is no other. Jesus' forgiving love never fails!

It happened the other day in Nashville at 4:30 in the morning. A lady in great distress was sitting in her car at the end of a pier – a boat launch – the end in the dark fast running water of the Cumberland River. The lady was obviously intoxicated – she had way too much to drink and now she was threatening to drive her car into the river and drown herself. Three police officers were trying to rescue her – trying to save her life. Eric – an 18 year veteran was on the driver's side trying to calm her. An officer was behind him and another officer on the passenger side. When Eric tried to open her car door – the woman hit the gas and dragged Eric into the water along with his friend – who tried to grab Eric and for a moment had his hand but he couldn't hang on. They saved the intoxicated woman – they saved her life. They found Eric hours later – in water three times over his head – a football field from shore--out into the river! He gave up his life – to save one person – drunk and depressed. The policeman died – she was rescued! At first thought – that might seem not right – and so? And then you stop and think – isn't that exactly what happened when Jesus died on the \dagger for a wretched sinner like me and like you! Think about it. Jesus died for people dead in trespasses and sin. Jesus died for people whose righteous acts are like filthy rags! Jesus died for sheep who love to wander! Jesus died so we might live with Him forever in Heaven. Here is comfort so we never ever despair. Jesus' forgiving love never fails. Forever we will praise God – saying, **“Thank you, Jesus!”** Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony P. Schwetz

