

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
Schultz**

2nd Sunday after the Epiphany

January 11 and 14, 2018

1 Corinthians 1:1-9



Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ²To the church of God in Corinth – those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, who are called as saints – along with all in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! ⁴I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus. ⁵You were enriched in him in every way, in all your speaking and all your knowledge, ⁶because the testimony about Christ was established in you. ⁷As a result you do not lack any gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also keep you strong until the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, who called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Dear People of God – precious in His sight for Jesus’ sake:

My little sister is named Cindy. She graduated from DMLC and was assigned to teach at St. Paul Lutheran Grade School in Columbus, OH. She married Uncle Mark – the owner/operator of Greiner Landscaping! Aunt Cindy did one of those Ancestry DNA tests. Since we have the same Mom and Dad – our family ethnicity would be the same – and so? If you trust in the results of those tests – some 7-15% of my ancestry comes from Greece! I think that’s a wonderful thing! Think about the ancient Greeks! Think of mathematics – Algebra and Geometry and Trigonometry and Calculus and more! Guys like Pythagoras and Euclid – the guys who invented the theorem and the formulas for solving the most complicated theoretical physics problems were Greeks! Think about medicine and you have to think of Hippocrates – The Hippocratic Oath – “*Do no harm!*” Think of the plots of tragedies and comedies – from Shakespeare to The Big Bang Theory to Life In Pieces – they have their origins in

Greek Comedies and Greek tragedies of Euripides! Think about Philosophy – and you have to think about Aristotle and Socrates! They say if there is one unbeliever in Heaven – (*and of course there isn't*) – it would be Socrates! The ancient Greeks were incredible people! This second Sunday after the Epiphany we are going to think about the Apostle Paul's First Letter to the believers in the Greek City of Corinth. Today God's Word will instruct and encourage us:

The Gospel Has The Answer!

I. Who am I?

II. Why am I here?

III. Where am I going?

The Apostle Paul arrived in the Greek City of Corinth around A.D. 50~A.D. 51. President Carelton Toppe – former President of our (former) Northwestern College taught 1st Corinthians. It was not isagogical – read it through – verses in paragraphs – chapters – what's the point – what does this mean? It was exegetical – one word at a time – often one syllable at a time. What's the antepenult – the penult – the ultima? (We watched an episode of Major Crimes the other day. The guide said the penultimate series episode – the second to last!) What's the prefix? What's the tense of the verb? Is it perhaps Aorist? Aorist is not worried about time – not past or present or future or past perfect or present perfect or future perfect or even pluperfect... Aorist says think about the *action* – what is *happening* – the essence of the action apart from any time consideration. Like a touch...the first time your hands touch – or a kiss – the first time your lips touch – and your eyes are closed – and they hug you! That's the *Aorist*! When people talk about God's Word and they say, "That's the way you interpret it!" You can say, "No – the Greek is so precise there are not 8 different ways to look at it. God's Word is clear and to the point! It's not confusing – not fuzzy--not unclear!" People who lived in Corinth were probably a lot like people in say New York or Chicago or San Francisco! They were people from Greece, Latins, Syrians, Asians, Egyptians, Jews and all kind of combinations! Corinth was famous for her Temple to Aphrodite – the Greek goddess of love – worshiped by means of buying "hugs and kisses". So to call Corinth *Sin City* would not be off the mark either. There were very *very* rich people and very *very* poor people – and lots of people in-between – willing to do just about anything to make a whole bunch of *drachma*!

Our Heavenly Father sent His one and only Son Jesus – to redeem the people of Corinth. At just the right time the Holy Spirit moved the Apostle Paul and his friend Sosthenese – to write a message of law and gospel to these people who would perish eternally without God’s Word! God’s Word says, **Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God...** Paul realized he was saved by grace through faith and not by works. Paul wrote to the Philippians... **If anyone else thinks that he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ in regard to zeal, persecuting the church; in regard to the righteousness that is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But, whatever things were a profit for me, these things I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. ⁸ But even more than that, I consider everything to be a loss because of what is worth far more: knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have lost all things and consider them rubbish, so that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, which comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God by faith. *Philippians 3.* **Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes...** Paul is establishing his apostolic authority. Sosthenese his friend – perhaps a member of the Corinthian congregation who was in Ephesus with Paul at the time he wrote this letter – and could substantiate the reports Paul had received about problems in the Corinthian congregation – problems he would address with law and then with gospel.**

Paul and Sosthenese--**²To the church of God in Corinth – those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, who are called as saints – along with all in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! ⁴I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus.** The lambs and sheep Paul is addressing are **sanctified** – dedicated to Father, Son and Holy Spirit – declared not guilty because Jesus died and rose again to save them. Grace – undeserved love and forgiveness – peace from a good conscience – also and only by grace through faith – gifts from God because he loves you for Jesus’ sake. **⁴I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus.** Shepherds love their sheep! That’s

what shepherds do. They thank Jesus for the sheep entrusted to them. Shepherds think about their Sheep – and pray for them all the time!

⁴I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus. ⁵You were enriched in him in every way, in all your speaking and all your knowledge, ⁶because the testimony about Christ was established in you. The Gospel has the answers. The answer to who am I? It is tempting – when someone asks you *who* you are – to tell them *what you do to pay the bills*. To say I am a farmer or a teacher. To say I am in retail – I am a nurse or I fix cars or I am a single mom or I am a retired something. And I get that. But if you stop and think about it – you are more than what you do between 40 and 50 or even 60 hours a week. You are a child of God and an heir of eternal life for Jesus' sake. You are a person on your way to Heaven – still in this world because Jesus still has work for you to do. We are servants of Jesus – every single one of us. That has implications all over the place. When you wake up on Monday morning – you are blessed to serve Jesus! When you think today I am serving Jesus it isn't appropriate to pull your *My Pillow* out from under your head and smash it on your face while you scream, "I don't want to get up! I don't want to go to school! I don't want to go to work! I don't want to make breakfast and do the dishes and do the laundry. I don't want to take care of people in the ER or the hospital or the nursing home!" What we do – we do for Jesus! That would mean by the power of the Gospel to do whatever you do the best you possibly can!

Take for example Joshua Bell. He sat at a metro station in Washington, DC and started to play the violin; it was a cold January morning – ten years ago last Friday. He played six exceedingly complicated Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, since it was rush hour, it was calculated that literally thousands of people went through the station, most of them on their way to work. Three minutes went by and a middle aged man noticed there was musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds and then hurried up to meet his schedule. A minute later, the violinist received his first \$1 tip: a woman threw the money into his violin case *without slowing down*. Someone leaned against the wall to listen to him, looked at his watch and walked away late for work. The one who paid the most attention – a 3 year old boy. His mother dragged him along but the child kept looking at the violinist--the mom pulled hard --the child turned his head all the time. Several other children

“happened”--all the parents, without exception, forced them to move on. In the 45 minutes the musician played, only 6 people stopped and stayed for a while. About 20 gave him money but never slowed down. Joshua Bell collected \$32. When he finished playing and silence took over, no one noticed? No one cared! No one applauded. **No one said, “Thank you!”** No one knew this but the violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the greatest living musicians in the whole world! He played some of the most intricate pieces ever written using a violin worth \$3.5 million! Two days before his playing in the subway, Joshua Bell sold out a theater in Boston~the tickets averaged \$100 each. **Who am I?** A blood bought child of God! *Appreciate the people God has placed around you!*

Why am I here? If you get The Watertown Daily Times—you probably know—if you take the first half of the paper and separate it from the sports and stuff—and open the back page of the first half—what do you have? The Obituaries! Almost every day there are 3 or 4 or 5 obituaries. First name, middle initial, last name. A photograph—often in color about the size of a postage stamp. A person—sometimes in their 80s or 90s or 100+--sometimes far younger. Their whole life reduced to about 3 ½ inches of print—including a list of survivors and whether there is a funeral or a celebration of their life. Why are we still here? Because Jesus still has something for us to do. If everything I needed to do—everything you needed to do—was *done*—Jesus would bring us home, too. And so we wait on God’s time!

Where am I going? I am going to heaven because Jesus loves me! **⁸He will also keep you strong until the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, who called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.** Jesus keeps us strong to the end! How essential—how comforting is that! **God is faithful**—in spite of the fact we are so often unfaithful! Sometimes—at night—we watch murder mysteries—like Sherlock Holmes—murder mysteries written as short stories by a man named G. K. Chesterton. Sometimes there is a Pastor—who has incredible powers of observation and deduction. More often than not—someone who is dying—whispers something that is an essential clue to the identity of the killer! Time after time—the hero of the Chesterton mysteries literally kneels beside the killer—as their life is ebbing away—and tells him—*if you confess—if you repent—if you* ask God—He can forgive you—He will forgive you *if—if you do this or that!* It is only by the grace of God—that we know the grace of God. We

can literally kneel in the driveway – in the water from the garden hose – used to wash a car – next door to the Church on a Good Friday – and tell the man dying from a heart attack – Jesus loves you! Jesus died for you! Jesus washed away all your sins. Jesus forgives you! Jesus wants you to be with Him forever in Heaven. Jesus loves you! Where are we going? We are going to Heaven because Jesus **will keep us strong until the end – so that we will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus. God is faithful.** *Amen!*

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schatz

