

St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN Schultz

2nd Sunday after Epiphany

First Lesson: Jeremiah 23:2-6

1 Corinthians 1:1-9 Series A. January 19, 2014

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ²To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: ³Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— ⁶God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. ⁷Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.



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

I read an article the other day entitled “The Scariest Trail in the World!” Yikes! I thought! It’s in China—a place called Mt. Hua Shan. How scary could it be—I thought? It starts out steps—lots and lots and lots of stone steps—called Heavenly Stairs. They are nice—all carved out of a mountain-side—up and up and up and up—but it’s nowhere near Heavenly Steps. There are more and more stairs—up and up steep—“stunning”—the caption reads. I always like that—“stunning”—like you almost get a concussion? Like you almost keel over and lose consciousness? Again, “Yikes!” Finally after more steps than you can count—you get into one of those little gondolas—a little cart that hangs precariously by a single wire—and you go to the next mountain—and from there—I will admit—it gets not a little scary. You go up and up the sheer side of the mountain—three 2x4’s—kind of fastened together for your feet—three chains hanging from the mountain side—for you to hang on to. On the far side of the path—a sheer drop off. Up the mountainside you go—3 chains—now toe holes—chiseled into the mountain side. Then more planks—6 wide—one chain. And then you are to the top. What’s at the top? A little Taoist tea house—a place where you can order a cup of tea—before heading back down the mountains. I like tea as much as the next guy—but to risk your life to reach the summit—for a cup of tea? And then risk your life to get back down again? It occurred to me—this is how literally millions of people go through life—one scary step after another scary step—for what? And when they get to the end of the path—then what? Now what? What next? What happens when you die? They have no idea! It is only by the grace of God—the undeserved forgiving love of God—for Jesus’ sake—that we know. When we die—whenever—however—we will meet Jesus. We will be safe. We will be home in Heaven! We will be by Jesus because he died and rose again to forgive us!

This 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany God’s Word reminds us:

We Are Set Apart In Christ Jesus!

1. Jesus gives us grace

2. Jesus gives us every spiritual blessing

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on is from the Apostle Paul's first letter to the believers in the Greek city of Corinth! Back in the day – at Northwestern College – you take courses in German and Latin, then Greek and finally Hebrews, too. There are only so many hours in a day – and so many days in a Semester – so there are only so many books of the Bible that you translate – verse by verse – sentence by sentence – word by word. Prof. Eichmann walked us through the 4 chapters of Jonah. Prof. Panning walked us through the Gospel of John and President Toppe walked us through 1 Corinthians. That tells you something about how important 1 Corinthians is. President Toppe wrote – if you actually physically visited Greece today – you would most likely go to Athens – with a population of 2.5 million people – not Corinth which today is a little smaller than Watertown. Back in the days of the Apostle Paul it was pretty much reversed. Corinth was about 10 times bigger than Watertown. Corinth had an isthmus – like Madison – and so? An isthmus – a strip of land – about 3 ½ miles – where you moved cargo from ships in the Gulf of Corinth – to the Saronic Gulf – into the Aegean Sea – on its way to Italy. Corinth was a big city – and with that came big city problems.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ²To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord and ours: Paul – called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. Do you remember – Acts chapter 9? **9.1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."** Acts 9:1-6 Remember how a disciple named Ananias went and talked to Saul and Saul was able to see again – and was filled with the Holy Spirit? In a most miraculous way – the Lord Jesus Himself taught and prepared Saul – now to be called Paul – and sent him – made him an apostle – someone sent out with a message – to preach the Gospel of Christ crucified and risen.

The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write to the Corinthians – the inspired and inerrant Word of God. **Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ²To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified set apart/dedicated in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people** – again people set apart and belonging to our Heavenly Father, **together with all those everywhere** again that would be you and me – people of God – **who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord and ours:** Today Paul is talking to you and to me!

⁴I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵For in him you have been enriched in every way – with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge – Knowledge! To know and understand and apply. Knowledge comes from study – like Good Shepherd Bible Class Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. Right now we are reading a book – a chapter a

week – called Prepared To Answer – about being prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you about the hope you have of heaven for Jesus’ sake. Prepared to answer – talks about questions like this coming Tuesday: The Church of history has done terrible things! How do you answer that? What about the Crusades? What about the Spanish Inquisition? What about all the terrible things that people have done in the name of religion and God? What do you have to say about that? Do you know? If somebody asked you in the aisle in the Piggly Wiggly by the soups – or at ACE Hardware in the power tool department would you know what to say? There is a religion in our world – in Iran and Iraq and Pakistan and Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia and in America that says if you don’t believe like we do – someone should take off your head! There is no place in the world were anyone is in danger because they live near Christians! I was in the Post Office the other day when

⁴I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵For in him you have been enriched in every way – with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge – Knowledge! You gain knowledge when you read devotions – like the WELS E-devotion that you can sign up for. It appears Monday through Saturday in your e-mail in-box. They are very good. Last Sunday Pastor Gartner talked about favoritism – and so? That our Heavenly Father doesn’t play favorites. Doesn’t like people more or less because they have different colored skin, different hair, different kinds of shelter they call home, different languages, different food, different ways of transportation. Jesus loves us all the same! The e-devotion talked about that, too. It talked about a bus full of young people on their way to a weekend church retreat. They were all piled on the bus – visiting, smiling, even laughing. But then you notice a young man sitting on an aisle seat about 1/3 of the way from the front. He looked to be in his twenties. His hair was a little bit greasy. He had neglected to wash. His clothes were shabby and there was just the faintest smell of dried sweat about him. His body language oozed awkwardness. He had a baseball cap pulled kind of down. He kept his head down and didn’t say anything. And the people around him? They were pleasant and polite. But it was the kind of pleasant politeness that we have all seen at one time or another. It was the politeness that looked past him – even through him – the kind of pleasant politeness that said