

INI - SDG

4th Sunday a. Epiphany
January 30, 2011
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Hecla, SD

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 - ***For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption -- 31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."***

Theme: **LOOK AT WHAT GOD HAS DONE**

- Taken away any reason to boast
- Given us every reason to rejoice

Dear fellow fools made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, fellow redeemed,

"You will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen 3:5) We are familiar with these tempting words of the Devil to our first parents. Eve was enticed by the idea that she was missing out on something and could possibly attain the position of being like God. Ever since the Devil has been putting forth this temptation to man - to be like God.

After the waters of the flood covered the whole earth, the only family left was the family of Noah. Noah's family, obviously, all spoke the same language and this continued for their descendants after them. This unified language came to a head at the Tower of Babel. The people of Babel said, ***"Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the earth."*** (Gen 11:4) Those at the Tower of Babel conspired to make a name for themselves by reaching the heavens themselves. They wanted to be like God.

The temptation to be like God is a mighty one and the devil has many tools he uses to tempt us in this way. It can be that fruit which God has commanded not to eat. It can be pride that wants to make a name for himself. Natural man has no greater desire than to be like God. We see this also in any number of false doctrines that have corrupted hearts and minds. Take for instance the false teaching of "Decision Theology." Decision theology teaches that we, of our own strength, are able to choose to come to faith in God. That is, man deciding what he will and will not believe. Work righteousness is also the work of the devil. Work righteousness teaches that we do something to earn God's forgiveness and

thus earn our salvation. That somehow our deeds are so great that God has to reward us and let us into heaven. This is sinful pride at it's worst. It is man reaching to the heavens to make a name for himself.

But what do the Scriptures make known to us? Scripture tells us that it is not about all us. Luther rightly stated, in the explanation to the Third Article on the Holy Spirit - "I believe 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, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." It is God the Holy Spirit who calls us to faith. It is God who works our salvation. Let us this morning look at what God has done. By His will and work He has taken away any reason for us to boast and given us every reason to rejoice. May God the Holy Spirit bless us by His Word.

TAKEN AWAY ANY REASON TO BOAST

Say that God allows the world continues on for another 500 years. 500 years from now a school boy has to do a report on the culture of United States during the early 21st century. What would he write we value? Gathering research from archived magazines, newspapers, television ads, and internet pages he would learn all he needed to know about our nation and people. He would learn that our culture places great value on wealth, wisdom, power, fame, and pleasure. It is in these things that our society commits a great deal of time and energy.

In so many ways our culture is a mirror of the Greek culture in Paul's day. The Greeks put a great deal of value in wisdom. The wisdom they pursued was that of philosophers like Aristotle and Socrates. We read in Acts that in Paul's day ***"all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing."*** (Acts 17:21) The Greeks also valued power and strength. It was Greek culture that gave birth to the olympic games several hundred years before Jesus' birth. The Greeks also valued one's station in life. The greater prestige, the greater fame. Our culture is not all that different. We speak of the pursuit of wisdom at our universities. We just about worship our athletes. And we all scramble to get close to someone who is famous or to have our own 15 minutes of fame.

These are things man glories in - wisdom, power, and fame or nobility as our text calls it. But as much wisdom as a wise man might have, how will that benefit him eternally? The university professor with his three best selling books and his PhD's, what does all his wisdom get him? Is his wisdom going to aid him as he stands before Almighty God? Almighty God who put the stars in the sky and Himself created gravity?

Or take the Super Bowl athlete. We admire him so for his strength. We are in awe and wish we could run like him and catch a football like him. But as this athlete lays on his deathbed, his lungs gasping for that last bit of oxygen, will having been the MVP of the Super Bowl make him more ready to meet his Maker? Will the strength of this man mean anything to the God who with His might keeps all creation moving?

Or what about the movie star or musician? They may bring entertainment to our lives and millions of dollars to their sponsors, but will a fan club be something that God will

take into consideration on Judgment Day? Will God say, "Come! Enter heaven! For you won an Oscar AND a Grammy!"

We place so much emphasis on them and glorify those who have wisdom, power, and fame. But God shows no partiality. God is not so easily swayed by things like we are. He shows no favoritism. When God looks upon man He sees only one thing. He sees sin. **"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** (Rom 3:23) As highly as man may think is, as highly as he might value his accomplishments, before God he has nothing to boast about.

Paul would have us all reflect on who we were. Were we anything special? Did God call us to faith because of some special quality we had? **"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."** The Church has always been a pretty pathetic looking group of people. Few of us have anything the world would marvel at. No high profile jobs. Few, if any, highly educated in the wisdom of the world, with PhD's or a Masters Degree. We are nothing special in the eyes of the world.

Our lack of anything keeps us from boasting of anything before God. **But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.** God is not an elitist. He does not chose some for Himself because they are of such high pedigree. In fact much the opposite. The ones who have the least to boast of, He has chosen for Himself. Take a look at the thief on the cross, the adulterous woman, the man possessed by Legion, little Zaccheus, Matthew the tax collector, or those uneducated fishermen. Did any of them have a reason to boast before God? Did Jesus choose and call them because of some special quality? And yet these are the one Jesus called to follow Him. No man, NO MAN has any reason ever to boast before Him. As much as man wants to reach heaven all by himself, he is unable. Man has nothing which he can bring before God and say, "See, look what I have done. Aren't You impressed, God?" Look at all that God has done and we see that we have no reason to boast about anything.

WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO REJOICE

So why are you a believer in Christ Jesus today? When I ask this question in Catechism class, I sometimes get the answer, "Because my parents are believers." As if to say, that genetics played a role in their faith. It is true, God places people in our lives to carry out His calling. But remember, the reason you are a believer in Christ Jesus today has nothing to do with you. You have nothing to boast about. Rather it is solely His grace, His amazing, undeserved love that brought you to faith. In verses 26 and 27 of our text Paul uses the word "calling" and "chosen." These are things that God did. GOD chose you from eternity to be His child. In time GOD called you to faith. And yes, He may have had you born to Christian parents whom He knew would bring you up in the Word of God and thereby bring you to faith. But this faith has nothing to do with your family's heritage, but

instead it has to do with God's grace.

In verse 30 of our text Paul tells us more of God's grace without ever using the word grace. ***"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."*** What an amazing statement Paul is making here! Outside of the New Testament, I know of no other literature that speaks of someone as being "in" a person. But because of God we are in Christ Jesus. We are a part the eternal Son of God. Elsewhere Scripture speaks of the believers being the body of Christ. That is how intimately tied to Christ Jesus we are. You are IN Christ Jesus, and has been done OF GOD.

What does it mean to be "in Christ Jesus?" Well this too is quite amazing. In the eyes of the world we our fools. We are viewed as sort of bigots, who say that our Savior Jesus is the only way to heaven. We believe that God created the heavens and the earth in 6, 24-hour days. That is foolish. We are also weak. We confess that we sin often and are in need of forgiveness. Forgiveness that only Jesus gives through His death on the cross and resurrection. We are nothing, humbled, weak, and base.

But of God we are in Christ Jesus. HE has become for us wisdom. Wisdom that the world has no clue about. Paul wrote of this earlier - ***"Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"*** (1 Cor. 1:20) Christ Jesus is our wisdom. We know who the true God is. We know Jesus is the only hope for eternal life. Thus even our pre-schoolers are wiser than many university professors. To we who are unrighteous nothings, Christ Jesus is our righteousness. To we who are unholy, Christ Jesus is our holiness. To we who are slaves to sin, Christ Jesus is our redemption. Without Christ Jesus we have none of this - no righteousness, no holiness, no redemption. But of God we are in Christ Jesus and we have every reason to rejoice. We who are nothing, have been chosen by God in His grace to be something and have been given everything. Faith, salvation, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and heaven itself. It is because of GOD that we are in Christ Jesus. Just look at what God has done and we find every reason to rejoice!

Therefore dear fools, do not value things as the world values them. The wisdom of this world, the fame of this world it cannot hold a candle to the brilliance of the wisdom of God and the power of God that is in Christ Jesus. Look at what God has done. It was the Almighty God who by His grace has called us from darkness into His marvelous light. We who have nothing to boast about, have every reason to rejoice in God our Savior. As we look at what God has done for us we can rightly see a reason to boast. Boast in what God has done for us! ***"He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."*** Glory be to God! AMEN!