

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
January 29, 2023

“Christ Jesus for us – our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption!”
(1 Corinthians 1:30)
By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 4th Sunday after Epiphany is
from our Epistle reading 1 Corinthians 1:30.

**“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.”**

Here ends our text.

“He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

Paul takes the Corinthians back on a trip to memory lane. Think about your calling.
Think about who you were when God called you to be in Christ Jesus. What kind
of glory could you boast of? Wisdom, wealth, power, aristocracy?

**“6 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.”**

Corinth was a port city and there was much diversity of wealth and social standing.
It wasn't the intellectual hub that Athens was. Paul says that there weren't many
wise according to the flesh. There weren't many Rhode Scholars and Noble Peace
Prize winners. Not many were super wealthy, although there were some like Gaius
and Erastus the city treasurer. There weren't many blue bloods. They were mainly
working-class people without notable power or influence.

They didn't have much to boast of in themselves, and that's a good thing. Because
Paul reminds them of their greatest wisdom, power and birth of nobility – being in
Christ Jesus!

God's ways are totally the opposite of the world's ways. What the world sees as foolishness is wisdom. What the world sees as weakness is power. What the world sees as things that are not God uses to bring to nothing the things that are.

So we heard in our Gospel reading of the Beatitudes as Jesus said that "Blessed are... the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."

Taking a trip down memory lane to remember who each of us were when we were called is a good thing. For it humbles us and takes away all our boasting. What was your condition when you were called by God? Each of us was spiritually blind, sinful and an enemy of God. We were poor in spirit, mourning our sins, humbled at the glory of the Holy Almighty God.

And yet, though we had nothing to offer to God that would make Him want or desire us, He offers to us and gives to us what makes us worthy and desirable in His eyes. He gives us Christ Jesus! This gift of His Son is so united to us that through faith in Jesus we are "in Him". Who Jesus is and what Jesus has becomes ours – all ours through faith!

What becomes ours? Paul tells us. God's wisdom is manifested to us in that Christ's righteousness is our righteousness. Christ's sanctified life becomes our sanctified life purifying all our words and deeds. And Christ's redemption is our redemption.

Remember how the disciples were walking with Jesus past the temple, taking a trip down memory lane right before Jesus was going to die. Jesus had just commended a poor widow who had just given her last two mites as an offering. Powerless and poor, Jesus said that she gave more than all the rest because she gave out of her poverty. What seems weak to man is beautiful to God.

And then the disciples remarked how beautiful the temple stones were.

"6 "These things which you see—the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down."

What seems glorious will be brought to naught. For it isn't about the outward beauty but about the beautiful message that comes forth from the temple – Christ Crucified!

Yes, Jesus then tells the disciples about the coming of the end of days and all the wars and destruction that will take place.

“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

Your redemption! Your redemption from this sinful world comes to take you into the perfect world He has prepared for you by His death and resurrection.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

I was watching a show on the National Geographic Channel called “To catch a smuggler – from Columbia”.

It takes place in the main airport of Columbia, El Dorado. And the National Police try to stop any smuggling of cocaine out of the country. Well, people will try anything to get out of their poverty. And are convinced to just hide this cocaine in your luggage or person and then you’ll get a big payoff and all your problems will be gone.

One woman on this episode was convinced to swallow capsules of cocaine. All you have to do is swallow it. It seems so easy. Except she had to pass through an x-ray scanner and the capsules were easily seen in her stomach. She was arrested and sent to the hospital to remove the capsules. She lamented her predicament, now handcuffed to her hospital bed. Most likely she would be facing 10 years in prison. But, I noticed her holding something in her free hand. It was a pocket version of the Bible from the Gideons. She was repentant, humbled in spirit and now wise in the Lord. Though there were consequences for her actions, God forgave her and united her to the righteousness in Christ.

Had she gone through the airport undetected, would she have known the saving wisdom of Jesus Christ? Or would her newfound earthly riches led her further astray? What we do know is God used this moment when she was weakest to call her into His saving power. Sometimes, people have to hit rock bottom before they realize that all our human glory and boasting is nothing. But in Christ we have everything!

Isaiah 64:6

But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

But then God's Word graciously tells us the good news that by the pure grace and love of God, He gives us His righteousness.

Listen to the prophesy from Jeremiah 23:

**5 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord,
“That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;
A King shall reign and prosper,
And execute judgment and righteousness in the [c]earth.
6 In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell safely;
Now this is His name by which He will be called:
[THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

And that day did come. So Paul says in our text:

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—”

Jesus became the wisdom of God's salvation. His absolute weakness – His crucifixion became for us our salvation- our victory!

“Of Him”. Jesus was the only way to save the world from its sin. “Of Him” overthrows all the power, wealth and wisdom of this world. Ephesians 2 tells us of our most precious gift.

“8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

And again, listen to:

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

So our trip down memory lane reminds us of who we were before Christ, but brings us to who we are now – in Christ!

And so all our glorying is in the Lord who made us who we are. All our glorying points others to the Lord where the beautiful message of Christ Crucified for all people gives true wisdom, saving power, and righteousness. All glory to God!
Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)