

Grace Lutheran Church @ Wichita Kansas Day of Saints Peter/Paul

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Don't add anything to the Gospel. Don't take away anything from Gospel. Keep it pure. Keep the law out of the Gospel. Don't mix the Gospel with your works. Don't even be fooled if some "angel from heaven" comes to you and preaches another Gospel. So Saint Paul warns as he teaches in his letter to the churches of the Galatians.

The sheep of the congregations in Galatia, were something like churches of a circuit. The Circuit Visitor, Paul, was not about to let these sheep "do their own thing." Collectively, these sheep were listening to other voices. They were losing the Gospel. They were being foolish.

Our Lord Jesus so guarded a smaller flock from similar foolishness. When Jesus asked Peter and the other eleven Apostles, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" at first they gave the foolish answers that they had heard in the streets. You are John the Baptist. You are Elijah. You are Jeremiah. You are one of the prophets.

"No guys. These are wrong answers. Who am I?"

And you, are you foolish at times too about the Gospel? About Jesus? Do you need admonition from your pastor about the Gospel and about Jesus the Christ? Remember, the Gospel is not about you. It is not about me. It is not even about Paul or Peter or the other Apostles. The Gospel is about Jesus, the Son of the Living God.

- It is about His red blood being sprinkled on you through His death.
- It is about His nail-pierced hands showing themselves to Thomas and the voice of Jesus echoing in your ears, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed."
- It is about the Rock, Jesus, building His church upon His own Body and then telling His Body, the Church, to eat His crucified Body

given on the cross often so that His Body the Church may live and grow.

If you do not have this Jesus, you do not have the Gospel; you do not have the forgiveness of your sins and therefore, you have no real freedom, no matter what 1776 Declaration of Independence says.

O the blessed freedom of the Gospel of Jesus' love for slaves of sin like us. The Gospel is not about your love for Jesus or how much your heart has been changed. The Good News of Salvation is not the story of your giving up drinking or drugs or internet porn. These are all man-pleasing things, to be sure, and things most pleasing to God as well, but these are not the Priceless Treasure, the Pearl of Great Price, the Riches of Heaven, the Everlasting Gospel. The Gospel is about one Man and the rescue He performed. The Gospel is a greater rescue story than Anne Frank's rescue of Jews in Holland or the Cabanatuan Rescue of POWs in the Philippines in 1945.

Jesus rescued all mankind. From sin. From death. From the devil. Our fall was deep, hell deep. Our bondage was strong, stronger than our wills. Our outlook was black as night, with no light in sight. Then God acted on His Garden-of-Eden-Promise. He *sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.* We received that adoption. Baptism is God's adoption service. We were called by name. We were washed. We were given the gift of faith. We were justified.

Who cares whether one is Jew or Greek. Who cares whether one is North American or Mexican. Who cares whether one is female or male. Who cares whether one is five-years-old or fifty. I am baptized. I am a son of God through faith. I am Abraham's offspring, an heir according

to the promise. The Gospel never prefers color, age or gender. The Gospel prefers sinners.

So, St. Peter was sent to preach the Gospel to the circumcised sinners of Abraham's offspring—the Jews. And, St. Paul was sent to preach the Gospel to the uncircumcised sinners of Abraham's offspring—the Gentiles. There was no difference in the Gospel they preached....just in the hearers of the Gospel. And though there may have been different customs, like circumcising or not circumcising, like eating all meats or eating some meats or eating no meats, there was no difference in Jew/Gentile nature: SINFUL! There was no difference in how a Jew or how a Gentile was justified: BY FAITH IN CHRIST AND NOT BY WORKS OF THE LAW!

Whoever adjusts this or tinkers with this or changes this, is tinkering and changing the Gospel. He is a false brother. He is foolish. He is trying to bring hearers into the bondage of the law. Scatter from them. Keep away from them. Have nothing to do with such men or women or churches.

Seek Jesus and His Gospel where He has chosen to be found. Seek Jesus where there is a true loosing of sins on earth as in heaven. If someone tells you that you receive forgiveness of your sins by giving your neighbor a glass of cold water or by praying before eating or by becoming a nun or a priest, tell him "Nonsense!" Tell such people that "no one is justified before God by the law and by doing things of the Law." Tell them you trust the Gospel. You trust Jesus, one Man's death on the cross; one Man's first-fruit resurrection paving the way for your bodily resurrection. Your trust where Jesus promises to be....the Sacraments on your head and in your mouth; the Word in your ear.

And what if your pastor should tell you that you can't eat meat on Friday or that you can't drink a beer on Sunday or that you have to wear a crucifix or that we can't put a Jesus on a cross above the altar? "Nonsense pastor. Don't trouble me with trying to please men. Don't

pervert the Gospel. Tell me where the forgiveness of sins is for me. Point me to those places where I am free from the Law, free from the demands of men. Give me My Lord's Baptismal Word that I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. Give me my Lord's Word from the Altar that my participation in the Body and Blood of Christ is for my forgiveness now, and forever unto eternal life."

We do have many different customs and come from many different backgrounds, but the Gospel is not about how I grew up or how we did things in Iowa. The Gospel is from our Father in Heaven. It is about Christ crucified for my sin. It is about Christ resurrected for my justification. It is about Christ coming again for my salvation.

Point me only to this Jesus. Point me only to this Gospel. IJN. Amen.