

INI-SDG

In the Name of Jesus – To God Alone the Glory

2.22.2009 Transfiguration – St. Stephen Lutheran (West Bay) Mountain View, CA – Pastor N. Radichel

It is a good morning isn't it? Every morning should be. Why? Because we are told in God's Word from **1 John 3:1** *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* It is this undeserved love from our Father in Heaven that we speak about each Sunday in our worship services, and Lord willing, read about in our homes each day. What else ought to be on our lips but the Grace, Mercy, and Peace that comes alone through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

As Children of God we cling to the promises of our Savior. So there is great meaning for each one of us when you recall that: **You Are Baptized Into Christ!** To understand the impact that Jesus' baptism, His ministry, and His work of redemption has on our lives and on our own baptism, we need to stop often to "smell the roses" if you will, and understand the fact that His ministry has now become our ministry to share as His faithful disciples. And that's why we are going to be reading this morning from:

NIV 2 Corinthians 4:1 *Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

This is God's Word, dear fellow blood bought souls of Christ.

A good friend of mine and fellow pastor once gave a chapel while I was attending Immanuel that will always stick in my mind. I don't recall the passages that were given, but I do remember how the message stood out. It was a message that focused on one single word used well over a thousand times in the Bible. It is the simple preposition... **"THEREFORE."**

Since that day in chapel, that word has come up much more often than I ever thought it would in my life. Even while I was still in college, that word echoed in my mind. You are in school... THEREFORE you ought to be studying as much as you are able. You are in an important relationship, THEREFORE you should treat the relationship and the individual with respect and great care in all you say and do. And as responsibilities increased for me, so did the weight of that word! You are studying to become a pastor; THEREFORE you should get a little bit more serious about that goal and commitment. You are now married and in God's eyes "one flesh," THEREFORE... act that way, and look to Christ as that third strand who will keep your marriage from falling apart with the cares of this world. God has blessed you with children young man! THEREFORE, you ought to treat those blessings for exactly what they are. And you have been called to be a pastor to a group of believers who also, like yourself, desperately need to hear and learn from God's Word, THEREFORE... ***Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)***

It is with a sense of humility and joy that we understand the responsibilities and various tasks our Lord gives to us each day. So my friends in Christ, IT IS a good morning... because, YOU ARE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST! **THEREFORE...**

FIRST, WE'VE BEEN GIVEN A MINISTRY OF MERCY

In my email account, I sometimes find it funny how long a trail of emails will run with the responses back and forth between myself and someone else. I sometimes wonder, why can't it all be finished in just one email? The Apostle Paul certainly didn't find it funny that he was writing a second letter to the Christians in Corinth, but rather he found it necessary. The circumstances changed, the words weren't fully understood, and more action was needed of the congregation in order to continue to keep with God's Word of truth and instruction for their lives. Paul is a good example for us because even in potentially frustrating situations he remained

faithful in the ministry Christ had given to him. Paul wrote to the Philippians *For me to write the same things to you is not tedious... (3:1)* Paul had been entrusted with this ministry; THEREFORE, he continued to respond to them accordingly. That's why he wrote to the believers in verse: **1 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.** The question is raised, "Why should I look back to my baptism?" Well, our Heavenly Father teaches us that like our Savior's ministry, THIS is when each of OUR ministries really began.

At the end of the season of Epiphany we, by faith, view the transfiguration of Jesus before His disciples. It was there where Jesus' divine glory was revealed. There on that mountain it was as if a veil had been lifted from His face and revealed His glory as the Son of God. Jesus wasn't transformed, for He ALREADY possessed this glory, but He let it be seen by those with Him. [Like a light that is uncovered.] However, when we speak of baptism or any Christian conversion, it is much more like a transformation that takes place through the POWER of God's Holy Word. For we learn that it is *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:5-7)* It is for this reason of HOPE that Paul told the Corinthians, **since through God's MERCY we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.** God's transformation of your spiritually dead soul to life is seen in what follows that transformation, God's transfiguration (or unveiling) of your NEW life in Christ.

THEREFORE...

SECOND, WE WALK A LIFE OF REFLECTION

You might like the painting, as I do, of a beautiful landscape that lies beyond a crystal clear lake. In the reflection of that lake you see the reflected features and colors of the real thing. My life as a child of God ought to be such a reflection of the real thing... Christ. In view of Christ's Mercy with me, I want to reflect all of His features and colors that are beautifully pictured through His Word each day in my life. In Lamentations we are reminded that *Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. (3:22-23)* THEREFORE, I am to blame when I continue to allow sin to trouble the waters that distort that beautiful reflection. You don't see reflective landscape paintings with troubled waters, nor should we continue to allow our sins to distort the beauty of Christ's blood that was shed to paint each one of us with His forgiveness. *Therefore (Paul writes to the Romans), we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (6:4)*

A few moments ago I gave a personal list of a few things that the Lord has given and made me responsible for over the years; THEREFORE, in view of His merciful blessings how should you or I react to whatever stress or pressures continue to trouble our lives? Paul writes in our verses... **We do not lose heart. 2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God.** What are our lives in Christ? Are we given permission to sin in view of His forgiveness? When difficulties come, do we give into the temptations to sin? Do we slightly twist God's Word for our own purpose? We may at times, but we will confess in sorrow these sins also. For our ministry is to walk a life of reflection of Christ and His Word, because we are baptized into His name, and being called into His name comes with everlasting blessings! The verse before our text says, *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (3:18)*

THEREFORE...

ALWAYS, WE SPEAK IN THE FULL LIGHT OF THE TRUTH

In the 1950's and 60's, the U.S. faced the challenges head on of the segregation between race and color. However, this segregation was only skin deep. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Darkness is only driven out

with light, not with more darkness.” How true that is! But as Christians, we fight a segregation that penetrates the soul, and it surfaces in our thoughts, words, and actions. We must speak boldly of this truth, not in the struggle between skin tones, but between our Old sinful Adam and the gift of our New Man in Christ! After all, “Darkness is only driven out with light.” Christ repaired the segregation between sinful man and God by paying the ultimate sacrifice on the cross. And it is the POWER of this Good News in Christ that creates life and light in our spiritually dead and totally darkened hearts. It is the POWER of God’s Word that CONTINUES to create life and light in our lives through Christ. For as we learn, ***In Him was the life, and the life was the light of men.*** (John 1:4) It is only as we see this divine light; this Spirit-given understanding that comes from the lips of Jesus in the Scriptures, in which all the pieces are pulled together. Only then can we see who we are, why we are here, and get the answers to the puzzles and challenges of life. Only then can we begin to reflect that perfectly painted horizon, the Son of God.

THEREFORE, should we allow ourselves or tolerate others to continue in secret or shameful ways? Should we use deception or evil ways of persuasion? Should we live a life that seems to distort or show a bogus handling of God’s Word? **2 On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.** It was Paul, John, and the disciples’ prayer that through their message from Christ they brought to others, many would be brought to faith in Jesus as the Son of God, the Savior, and the Example for their lives. May that continue to be our own prayer as well, and in our Ministry of Mercy as it was shown to us. For the light we have been given through the Word, through our Baptism, is the life we ought to be reflecting as children of God, and the life we speak about when we ***Behold, Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world... (John 1:29)*** THEREFORE, when we understand the impact of Jesus’ baptism, His ministry, and His work of redemption in our lives... HIS ministry... is OUR ministry to share, as His faithful disciples. The Glory comes from God; THEREFORE the Glory ought to be reflected to God. Amen.