

INI-SDG

In the Name of Jesus – To God Alone the Glory

4.26.2009 *Misericordias Domini* – St. Stephen Lutheran (West Bay) Mountain View, CA

Acts 4:8-12 (back of bulletin) Peter boldly preached Jesus Christ as the only Hope of Salvation, so proven by the resurrection.

The testimony of Peter that was just read is a good one. It doesn't point to the widespread claim today that all religions are basically the same. Nor does Peter say that "all gods are the same, but simply have more than one name." "Unfair," would be one word to describe someone receiving credit for someone else's work. And again, the illustration fits well that "The one who does the building deserves ALL credit for the building." When God doesn't get the credit He deserves, He calls it blaspheme. That English word to blaspheme comes from the Greek word *blasphaymeo* – meaning to speak *against* God. To say that all gods are the same would be speaking against God. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit said, **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:11,12)** That is why THE most important thing in my life HAS to be without a doubt...

FIRST LESSON – “MY FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD”

NIV 1 John 1:1-4 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. **2** The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. **3** We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. **4** We write this to make our joy complete.

I'd like you to play lawyer for just a minute. But in this courtroom setting, YOU will be defending yourself. IF, you had many witnesses to call up to the stand would you call just one of them, or would you call them all? When each of your witnesses actually got up on the stand, how would you question them? Did you really see it happen? Did you hear him say those exact words? You are certain, that you physically laid hold of him? John, Peter, and all of Jesus' disciples were witnesses who testified to what they had heard and seen concerning Jesus of Nazareth. They testify to us also saying that it was this Jesus in **which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched.**

One name under heaven given to men... is what the apostle Peter said. That name is Jesus, the true Son of God. Jesus is the one as John writes here in verse 1 **that which was from the beginning.** Jesus is the one who proclaimed to His disciples **the Word of life.** And when Jesus came to be true man on this earth, the apostle John writes in verse **2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.** Don't you see what Jesus has done? He has called on His apostles to testify the truth about what they have seen and heard from Him. Jesus sent them out to **proclaim what (they) have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.**

The apostle John speaks here at first his fellowship **3 ...with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.** John writes to express his joy in his fellowship with the one and only true God. Jesus testified to His disciples who He is and what He came to do. His disciples, having heard and seen, and have physically touched the Son of God share Jesus' testimony of forgiveness with us so that we too may believe and have faith. **Faith comes from hearing the message of God's Word.** (Rom. 10:17) It is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit creates, supplies, and sustains any Christian faith. Through His Word alone we joyfully are given forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. This morning the Lord Jesus continues to create, supply, and sustain faith- through His Word. Through the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus' Word continues to forgive and bless sinners conceived and born in sin, and give fellowship with the one and only Triune God. We visibly witness simple water washing a sinner, but through it comes the forgiving testimony and power of Christ's Word.

Baptism of: Graham Sebastian Kesterson

Performing Baptism: CLC Pastor Terrel Kesterson of Spokane, WA (Grandfather of Graham)

HYMN 750 (Worship Supplement)

See This Wonder in the Making

Luke 24:36-49 (back of bulletin) *Our Savior calms the fears of His frightened disciples, teaching them the Word of God and its fulfillment in Him, and commissioning them to be His witnesses.*

The testimony of our Savior that was just read is also a good one. Jesus appeared to His disciples to testify to them the fact that He HAD risen from the dead, that the words He had prophesied to them HAD happened, and that His Word of repentance and forgiveness of sins would need to continue to be preached to ALL nations beginning in Jerusalem. Jesus' testimony, became His apostles' testimony. We don't have to look far to understand from God's Word how it would then be shown that the apostles' testimony, of Jesus' testimony... would become OUR testimony. If our testimony doesn't match the apostles', then it doesn't match Jesus', because they received it from Him. And THAT is why we want to continue to show our love for our fellowship with God our Savior as mentioned earlier, AND the fellowship we have with His testimony... the Word of God.

SECOND LESSON – “MY FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHERS”

NIV 1 John 1:3-7 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our joy complete. 5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

When the citizens of our country through their leaders issued the Declaration of Independence, they did not mean to say that at that time each of them would be independent of everybody else and live *for* and *by* him or herself. Rather, by the Declaration the American colonists expressed their desire to be free from the political ties that bound them to the country overseas, that they might have fellowship with one another and walk together in this manner. So here's a crazy idea. What about unity of doctrine in the church? One of the marks of our day and age is that each person holds an individual belief. I was shown a recent survey of religious convictions which confirmed that most church goers weren't that convinced about their convictions.

The Pew Forum survey says:

A majority of those who are affiliated with a religion do not believe their religion is the only way to salvation. Almost the same number believes that there is more than one true way to interpret the teachings of their religion. This openness to a range of religious viewpoints is in line with the great diversity of religious affiliation, belief and practice that exists in the United States, as documented in a survey of more than 35,000 Americans that comprehensively examines the country's religious landscape. (<http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report2religious-landscape-study-key-findings.pdf>)

There is growing drift between what an individual confesses and what their church confesses. As we will be examining in our comparative religions study in Bible Class, we might ask, “How many Southern Baptists believe everything their church teaches?” How many Roman Catholics believe all the things the pope believes? Or for that matter, how many Lutherans hold to the teaching of the Small Catechism and the Lutheran Confessions? Not only is there a vast separation between the individual belief and the church's confession, but many people don't know what their church teaches. Maybe the real problem is that many people don't even care what their church believes. A church's teaching is often understood as “man's

opinion”, and, after all, “my opinion is just as good as yours.” In this the confession of faith is reduced to opinion, making tolerance the order of the day. After all, putting my opinion over your opinion is arrogant. But this is not about opinions. In the church we are to cast aside our opinions; and bow to the authority of God’s Word alone. **3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.**

We heard earlier from the apostle Peter that *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:11,12)* When we as Lutherans say there should be unity of doctrine in the Lord’s church we sound, to the world, like we are crazy. “The church rejoices in doctrinal unity” sounds to the world about as crazy as me saying “My unicorn out back prefers baby carrots.” But God’s message is clear. He did not give many message(s) or many interpretation(s) of His Truth. There is one message, one Truth. Just as the apostle John said in **5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.**

If a church is so sick that false teaching does not cause division, but that truth and falsehood live together under the same roof, then something is very wrong. For example, it’s obvious that as long as the liver is working properly in the body it can filter out toxins and poisons. But if the liver shuts down the toxins build up...the body will die. So it is with false teaching in the church when there is no working together for unity in God’s Word. The devil will always breathe the rotten air of his damnable false teachings into the church. But the danger comes when this teaching is not exposed and filtered out. The church that has lost this understanding and no longer cares for the truth and clarity of the Word is the church that has lost its zeal for the truth. And losing this unity of doctrine, is a church that has lost love for Christ and the salvation of man’s souls. **6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.** Concern for the unity of doctrine is concern for the Lord’s saving Word, and it is concern for all sinners who have life only in that Word.

It is quite impossible for anyone in this world to walk alone without making his life a crooked, deformed, and useless thing- For not only companionship, but fellowship is necessary. On the one hand, **My Fellowship with God** must be my top priority above all things. Jesus establishes that fellowship through His Word. And on the other hand, “no two can walk together except they be agreed.” Therefore, though I have many neighbors in the world, Jesus establishes **My Fellowship with Others**, yet again, through His Word. **7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.**

Every thing good comes from God. This is especially true of the unity of doctrine that the Lord gives to His church. We give Him thanks that He has blessed us with faith that trusts in His forgiveness of sins and brought us into this most important fellowship with Himself, His Son and the Holy Spirit, through the purifying blood of His Gospel. We pray that He would keep us in the same until we reach the new heaven and the new earth where no false teaching will ever threaten to divide us from Him anymore. Amen.