

INI-SDG

In the Name of Jesus – To God Alone the Glory

6.21.2009 Pentecost 3 – St. Stephen Lutheran (West Bay) Mountain View, CA

In Christ Jesus, whom we confess with our mouths and in whom we place our utmost faith and confidence, dear fellow redeemed.

NIV 2 Corinthians 4:13 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. 15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

This is the Word of God. It has been said that the best advertising comes by word of mouth from happy customers. Is it really any surprise then, that God has chosen to have His believing children—the objects of His love and the recipients of His grace—to be those given the charge to spread the good news of salvation? The apostle Paul, in our text, quotes the Psalmist, who wrote almost a thousand years before Paul lived, *"I believed and therefore I spoke!"* Paul then states, *"We also believe and therefore speak!"* My friends, whether we are talking about the time of the Psalmist, or that of Paul, or that of today, we believers have been led to understand, to receive, and to rejoice in the love of our Savior God. Consequently, we can join God's children of all ages in saying—**WE BELIEVE AND THEREFORE SPEAK!**

1. Yes, we believe that reality is not limited to the things we can see, but includes a vast spiritual realm that we cannot see! This truth can and should bring us great comfort as we make our way through our lives in this world. The apostle Paul actually concludes our text with this thought, when he says, *"We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

Dear friends, the world in which we live is guided in large part by the theory of evolution, which denies the existence of God, and a philosophy called materialism, which suggests that matter is the only thing that is real. Consequently, in this mind set any talk of God is rejected, any thought of life after death in either heaven or hell is denied, and the existence of angels is viewed simply as superstition. The unhappy result of such unbiblical theories and philosophies is that man elevates himself to the position of ultimate authority deciding what is right and wrong in his own eyes, while rejecting the laws of God. At the same time these theories and philosophies reduce the value of human beings, placing them at the same level as animals, while they strip human beings of any ultimate or eternal purpose. According to evolution we are simply the result of a mindless series of accidents, while in the view of materialism all existence is limited to life in this world and any purpose we may have is self-determined and ends when we do.

In contrast, we confess that our God exists. We can see His handiwork in complexity of the created world, which surrounds us, and the voice of conscience within us. We see God's intelligence in the laws of nature, and His love in His providential hand, which sends the rain to give us moisture and the sun to cause all things to grow. Beyond nature, however, we have the revealed word of God in our Bibles. God reveals Himself to be triune—three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in one essence. He reveals that we are His special creations and that He Himself guards, guides, loves, and protects us. Listen to the words of the Psalmist, for we can and do confess with him: *"The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.... Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their souls from death, and to keep them alive in famine"* (Psalm 33:13-15,18-19).

You and I are not alone in this world, tossed about by forces of nature, unprotected and insignificant specks in a godless universe. God assures us that He has created vast numbers of angels to glorify Himself and to minister to our needs. He gives them charge over us to keep us in our ways (cf. Psalm 91:11-12). We need not fear. He can have hope. God would have us walk through this life with confidence and with direction! This **WE BELIEVE AND THEREFORE SPEAK!**

2. **We believe, as well, that any affliction a believer experiences in this world is but temporary, and will be replaced ultimately by eternal glory!** The apostle Paul says, *“For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”* The apostle conveyed to the Romans this same truth, but in more familiar words when he said, *“All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28). Everything that happens in our lives—good or bad—can and will be worked out for the good of God’s precious believing children. What God permits to happen in our lives, furthermore, is tied to His good and gracious will for all people. *“God our Savior...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,”* the Bible tells us (1 Timothy 2:3b-4).

It is not easy to endure trials and tribulations in this life. You are in an accident and break numerous bones; you are diagnosed with cancer and must undergo lengthy and difficult treatment; you lose your job and face financial hardships; you lose a loved one and find yourself alone; you stand up for your faith, only to be ridiculed by your colleagues at work—none of these things are easy to endure. Satan will surely suggest to us that God had abandoned us, but that is hardly the case. Remember the divine logic outlined by the apostle Paul, *“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:31b-32) No one and nothing is more powerful than God! He will either prevent affliction from entering your life, or you can rest assured that He has a greater purpose for allowing it to enter your life. Remember your Scripture—*“Whom the LORD loves, He chastens”* (Hebrews 12:6a). God can and does draw us closer to Himself as we endure affliction, for His goal is always to purify us and prepare us for the glories of eternal life, which await us. The apostle reminds us in our text that our time here in this life is limited, while our stay in heaven will be limitless. Consequently, any affliction we bear here will be *“but for a moment”* in comparison to the eternal joys we will experience in God’s presence in heaven. This **WE BELIEVE AND THEREFORE SPEAK!**

3. **We also believe that even as God raised up His Son, Jesus, from the dead, so He will raise us up from the dead to rejoice together in His presence forevermore!** The apostle writes, *“We also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.”* The cornerstone of our Christian faith is that Jesus died on Calvary’s cross as our substitute to remove our sins, but that He was then raised from the dead on the third day to live and to reign throughout eternity! That truth has direct application to each of us, for God did not create us and does not sustain us in order to desert us at death and forget us in the grave. God has promised us that on the last day He will raise all the dead and cause both those living and those raised from the dead to stand before the throne of His dear Son. God will not fail to fulfill His promise, for as our Scriptures assures us, *“God is not a man, that He should lie”* (Numbers 23:19a).

Each of us can remember well when a loved one has parted from us in this world. But while the world often mourns without hope and in uncertainty—suggesting with fingers crossed that surely if there is a God, He will accept their loved one, won’t He? —we Christians have been given a rock-solid truth to which we can refer and upon which we can build our hope of eternal life. The Bible assures us that *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). Everyone who trusts in Jesus as their Savior from sin needs have no fear of death, for it is but the door to paradise. The Scriptures reveal that *“we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruption has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ!”* (1 Corinthians 15:51-57) My dear friends, this **WE BELIEVE AND THEREFORE SPEAK!** Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.