

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us
Published in *The Morning Sun* on Saturday, March 21, 2009

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6-8).

This is the Gospel. The pure Gospel. The only Gospel. There is no other. Christ died for us *while we were still sinners*. That’s the miracle of the Crucifixion. Our Lord does not go to the cross for people who are worthy of His suffering and death. He goes to the cross for His enemies; for those who hate Him and abuse Him and fail to live according to His Holy Law. He goes to the cross for us, miserable sinners that we are. He goes because we can’t go; because there’s no sacrifice we can make to atone for our sins and make us acceptable to our Holy Father in heaven. He goes to save us; to take upon Himself our sins and to suffer the punishment we deserve for them. The old hymn asks, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” Yes, you were. So was I. We all were. We were there driving home the nails through His holy and innocent flesh with our sins. But, that’s why He came – to be nailed to the cross by our sins, so that He could take those sins away. He died for us, at just the right time, while we were still sinners, that we might receive forgiveness, life, and salvation through faith in Him and His atoning sacrifice. That is the Gospel. The pure Gospel. The only Gospel. There is no other.

But, the world rejects that Gospel. It doesn’t think it needs that Gospel. It thinks it can get along fine without it, thank you very much. As St. Paul puts it, “the Word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing” (1 Cor. 1:18).

But, it’s not just the world that rejects that Gospel. It is being rejected left and right by more and more who claim to belong to Christ’s Church. It is replaced by a false gospel, which is no Gospel at all, one in which people are exhorted to trust in themselves and earn salvation through the power of positive thinking. So-called “Christian” leaders have been promoting a new paradigm for the Christian Church for some time now, one in which the Church is viewed as a business and the Gospel as its product. They promote the Satanic idea that the Church must become more worldly if it is going to grow and succeed. They do demographics studies and perform marketing analyses to determine what people want in a Church and then adjust their “gospel” message to suit those wants. They seek to create “a Church for people who don’t like Church,” and, in so doing, they turn God’s Holy House into a place of worldly entertainment, where the Gospel of salvation for sinners through Jesus Christ is repackaged to become a motivational message that builds self-esteem and meets “felt needs.”

Of course, those who follow this new paradigm for the Christian Church defend their approach by claiming that they’re doing whatever it takes to reach the lost. If getting people into the pews (or arena seats) means turning worship into a people-pleasing, fun-filled hour of “getting down with Jesus,” so be it. “Whatever it takes,” they say, which is really just another way of saying, “Whatever people want.”

But, dear friends, sinners are not saved by “whatever.” Sinners are saved by what Jesus accomplished on the cross. And, the Christian Church must never be about the business of giving

people what they want, but rather what they need. And what people need is the Gospel, the message of the forgiveness of sins purchased on the cross by the blood of Jesus. People do not need to be told how good they are. They don't need to hear self-help tips and the latest pop-psychology. They don't need another hour of entertainment. They don't need their "felt needs" met. They need their real needs met. They need Jesus. They need Him because they are sinners. They need Him because by nature, in and of themselves, they are not good. They don't love God with their whole heart and they don't love their neighbors as themselves. But, Jesus did. He lived the perfect life in their place and died on the cross for all of their sins. That's why He came. That's the Gospel. The pure Gospel. The only Gospel. There is no other.

Jesus established His Holy Church to deliver this Gospel unto sinners, so that they would receive forgiveness, life, and salvation in His Kingdom, which has no end. Any other message simply won't do, no matter how popular and appealing that message may be. Jesus Christ and Him crucified for sinners – that's the message of the Christian Church. Always has been; always will be. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Rev. Thomas C. Messer, Pastor

Peace Lutheran Church ~ Alma, MI

www.peacealma.org ~ (989) 463-5754

You may contact Pastor Messer by calling the church or by email: pastor@peacealma.org