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# Homiletical Studies

## Epistle Series B

### THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

December 30, 1990

Colossians 3:12-17

*Introduction:* When I was a child, I reckoned that Santa Claus would be impressed if my behavior included certain virtues such as kindness (toward my brothers) and patience (toward my parents). I always felt distinctly relieved after Christmas, when I no longer had to work so hard to impress Santa! The list of virtues St. Paul includes in this epistle are not things we Christians do to impress God. Like children after Christmas, we now see a gift before our eyes. The virtuous behavior St. Paul expects of a Christian is rather the spontaneous response of love:

#### AFTER THE GIFT IS OURS

- I. Before the gift, we did not deserve any rewards.
  - A. Evil behavior and alienation from God characterized our lives (1:21).
    1. Our past sins are abundant (we note the conclusion of Paul's list of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
    2. Our "good works" are flawed also.
  - B. Virtue and righteousness are not our achievement, but our need.
    1. We cannot take comfort in our past achievements nor impress God with a list of our virtuous actions.
    2. Our need for the gift of forgiveness is clear.

*Transition:* I can honestly say that God's Christmas gift to me is "just what I always needed." Thanks to God, we can discard the shabby rags of our sinful past and put on the brand new garment of righteousness which is His free gift of love to us.

- II. The gift is available through Christ.
  - A. God's word tells us Christ paid for our new garment of righteousness with His life (1:22).
  - B. Through Christ we "take off the old. . ." and "put on the new self" (3:9-10; Romans 6:13-14).
    1. The new garment is a baptismal garment (Ephesians 5:26-27).
    2. The gift never grows old (2 Corinthians 4:16).

**III. The gift has a tremendous after-effect on us.**

- A. Clothed with the gift of Christ's righteousness we give thanks to God through our actions.
  - 1. The "new self" deals with others as it has been dealt with by a loving Father (verses 12-13).
  - 2. The "new self" takes part in the Body of Christ, the best environment for peace on earth (verse 15).
- B. The gift of God liberates us to offer ourselves in righteousness (Romans 6:19; 12:1).
  - 1. Everything we do in public and in private should be worship (verse 16; Romans 12:1).
  - 2. Everything that we do should be offered to God in response to His love for us (verse 17).

*Conclusion:* Like wide-eyed children under the Christmas tree, we see a great gift before us. After the gift is ours, we give thanks. Our thanks for such a gift properly includes "whatever we do in word or deed." No other thanks is adequate. Our thanks must correspond to the greatness of the gift and the greatness of the mercy of God.

Jonathan C. Naumann  
Ruislip, England

## THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

January 6, 1991

Ephesians 3:2-12

Paul's overflowing and joyous excitement packs so much into the text that an analytical and verse-by-verse sermon outline would weary both preacher and congregation. We have at least four major topics from which to choose a point of emphasis appropriate to Epiphany:

- 1. God's Divine Economy (God's Church Extension)
- 2. God's Many-Sided Wisdom
- 3. The Privilege of the Pulpit
- 4. The Open Secret

A few textual notes apply regardless of the theme chosen. The Greek etymon of "economy" in verses 2 and 9 pictures, in the first instance, the management of a household. But derivative applications include administration, stewardship, dispensation, arrangement, regulation, divine office, and ordination. Paul's usage equates "administration of His grace" with "administration of the mystery." For us a

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“mystery” may be a television “who-done-it,” implying some knowledge withheld. English translations might do better to find a different rendering. For Paul, a “mystery” is not knowledge withheld, but rather truth revealed. The administration of grace or mystery is the denouement or proclamation of the great divine drama in Christ. For Paul, a “mystery” is an open secret—formerly veiled and now “epiphanied” in the Word become flesh.

The marvel is not only that the Lord accepts us Gentiles, but that He incorporates us into the Body of Christ. He commissions us as surely as He chose Paul. We cannot help breaking into doxology. Paul could not help disrupting his line of thought in Ephesians with a hymn of praise. Our commentators tell us that Ephesians 3:2-13 is parenthetical to Paul’s theme of “Sit, Stand, Walk.” *The New Testament: God’s Word to the Nations* emphasizes the form with parenthesis and typesetting. In form, then, the text is an aside, but in content it is the theme, not only of this letter, but of Paul’s ministry.

In verse 6 we have another example of Paul’s struggle with human language. As in 2 Timothy 3:16, when Paul cannot find the right word, he coins a new one. He had a word for “joint-heirs” and a word for “joint-sharers.” But “joint-body” is not only unique in the New Testament; it is not found anywhere in previous Greek literature.

Epiphany is the second part of an open secret. Part one is that the baby wrapped in strips of cloth, consigned to an animal’s feedbox, hounded by Herod, fleeing, abused, mocked, rejected, nailed, and murdered is the risen and ascended Savior of His people. Part two defines *His* people as *all* people. Part two declares *us* equal in Christ before the Father. The angels (verse 10) are equally amazed at both parts.

Surely we share the wonder. The problem is that we are born blind. The open secret is not hidden, but we cannot see it when we wear the blindfolds of sin. The goal of the sermon suggested below is to move Christians to arise and shine (as the Old Testament reading from Isaiah 60 puts it) with light reflected from the Word become flesh. The power to achieve this goal is this same Word become flesh in Bethlehem—coming through His word to us here and now.

*Introduction:* Some secrets are not hidden for long; they are blabbered all over the place. Some secrets are not revealed for many years—only when no one involved can be hurt anymore. Some secrets are carried to the grave; dead men tell no tales. One secret was carried to the grave on Good Friday, but this secret now has risen in a joyous Epiphany explosion. Today we rejoice:

## REJOICE IN GOD'S OPEN SECRET!

- I. Rejoice that Jesus is God's open secret.
  - A. One mystery of God's plan was revealed in Jesus.
  - B. The second mystery of God's plan is revealed in you.
- II. Rejoice that you proclaim God's open secret.
  - A. You are commissioned to live in your joy in Jesus.
  - B. You are commissioned to speak of your joy in Jesus.

*Conclusion:* The secret is out! We rejoice that the mystery of God's plan of salvation is no longer secret. We rejoice and then we tell everyone what He has done!

Warren E. Messmann  
Fort Wayne, Indiana

**THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY  
THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD**

January 13, 1991

Acts 10:34-38

Key points in this Epiphany text are that God accepts people from every nation (Gentiles included) and that Gentiles can be received directly into the church without first becoming "Jews" (adopting Jewish customs and rituals). The door of the church is open to all Gentiles. It is interesting to note that Cornelius already was a believer before Peter's arrival (cf. 10:2, 4, 22, 31, 34, 35). With the preaching of Peter Cornelius moves from being a believer in the Old Testament sense—believing in the Messiah to come (promised)—to being a believer in the New Testament sense—believing in the Messiah who has come (promise fulfilled). He moves into the Christian Church. Even before Peter came Cornelius knew much about Jesus; but Peter completes the story (cf. particularly verses 39-43 and the emphasis on Christ's resurrection) and assures Cornelius that what he has heard concerning Jesus is true (verse 39).

Verse 35 must be interpreted, of course, in the light of verse 43. The Greek of verses 36-38 is somewhat awkward; on this matter one may consult the commentaries. The sermon theme results from a literal translation of one phrase in verse 35: "acceptable to Him [God]."

*Introduction:* People like to be "accepted"—at home, at work, at school. Of greatest importance is our being accepted by God.

## WHO IS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD?

- I. No one is by nature acceptable to God.
  - A. All people are by nature sinful.
    - 1. All are sinful from the moment they are conceived.
    - 2. All have disobeyed God and have broken His commandments in thought, word, and deed.
  - B. No sinner can make himself acceptable to God.
    - 1. We are unable to save ourselves, to make ourselves right with God.
    - 2. Left to ourselves, we are on the road to everlasting damnation in hell.
- II. All those who have faith in Jesus Christ are acceptable to God.
  - A. The good news is that we have peace with God through Jesus Christ (verse 36).
    - 1. Jesus is both God (verse 36) and man (verse 38).
    - 2. Jesus lived a perfect life (verses 37, 38) in our stead, paid fully for all our sins with His suffering and death on the cross, and arose from the dead.
    - 3. Through faith in Jesus we have forgiveness of all our sins (cf. verse 43), we receive the righteousness Christ has acquired for us, and we are acceptable to God. This faith is created and preserved in us by the Holy Spirit through the gospel.
  - B. Believers fear God (verse 35).
    - 1. This fear of God is a product or fruit of faith.
    - 2. This fear of God is taught in both the Old and New Testaments.
    - 3. With the help of the Holy Spirit we keep on having a proper fear of the Lord.
  - C. Believers do what is right (verse 35).
    - 1. This righteous living is also a fruit of faith; it is external evidence of an internal, genuine faith.
    - 2. Believers do "what is right" only with the help of God, and Christ's blood covers any imperfections in our works.
    - 3. We pray to the Lord to strengthen us through word and sacrament so that we may continue and grow in doing "what is right."
- III. Those who are acceptable to God—believers—come from every nation (verse 35).
  - A. God does not show favoritism (verse 34).
    - 1. God calls to faith and saves *both* Jews and Gentiles (verse 36).
    - 2. The Gentile Cornelius, a believer in the Old Testament sense—believing in the Messiah to come (promised)—had been acceptable to God. Through the preaching of Peter

- he became a believer in the New Testament sense (believing in Jesus Christ who died and arose); Cornelius moved into the Christian Church.
- B. Peter, in meeting Cornelius, realized that Gentiles could believe in, and thus be acceptable to, the true God (verses 34, 35).
    1. He realized that Gentiles could enter the Christian Church simply through faith in the risen Christ and baptism (verses 47, 48) without first becoming "Jews" (adopting Jewish customs and ceremonies).
    2. This realization paved the way for missionary work among the Gentiles.
  - C. We rejoice that God does not show favoritism, but calls people from every nation.
    1. This Epiphany season has special meaning for all Gentile believers.
    2. As the opportunities arise, we wish to share our faith with all who do not yet believe in Jesus.

*Conclusion:* Who is acceptable to God? You and I and all believers are! God has made us acceptable to Himself through Jesus Christ. We rejoice in our blessed status, and we dedicate ourselves anew to living God-pleasing lives, lives which show us to be among those who are acceptable to God.

Walter A. Maier III

## THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

January 20, 1991

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

*Introduction:* The human body is the most remarkable of all the many things which God created. But the fall of man into sin brought a lamentable lot to this body. Furthermore, man by nature misuses his body. Many cultures have considered the body as something evil in itself. At Paul's time some Greeks were of this opinion. They abused and misused their bodies. This abuse is contrary to the will of God. Each person's body, except between death and judgement day, will last forever. Therefore, our text tells us:

### GUARD THE SACREDNESS OF YOUR BODY

- I. The essence of this sacredness.
  - A. The body is a fruit of the Lord's work.

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1. Not only has He created it; He has also redeemed all people, body and soul. Verse 20 tells us: "You have been bought for a price." That price is the incarnation, life, work, and death of the very Son of God. Faith in the promises of Jesus sanctifies the believer.
  2. Jesus has made the body a part of Himself. Verse 15 reads: "You know, do you not, that your bodies are members of Christ?" And verse 17 says: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him." This is said of the believing Christian. The union between Redeemer and redeemed is closer than any other relationship known to man. Even death does not dissolve it.
  3. The body is Jesus' property. Verse 13b says: "The Lord is for the body." Why? It is His property. Verse 19b reads: "You are not your own." I am not free to abuse or misuse my body. Under God I am only the steward of my body and soul.
- B. The body, with the soul, will last forever.
1. The Lord makes it His home now and forever. Verse 19 reads: "You know, do you not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in you, which Spirit you have of God?" Our God is an everlasting God. And His habitation, like Him, is eternal.
  2. He will raise the body from the dead. Our text tells us: "God both raised the Lord and will raise us through His power." The Greeks did not believe in the resurrection of the body. Many people today care nothing for this teaching. But this article of faith is basic to our salvation and everlasting life with God. Verily, my body is sacred to the Lord!
  3. He will preserve the body without its appetites. Verse 13 reads: "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will destroy both it [the stomach] and them [all types of food]." This remarkable statement means that in everlasting life the body will no longer need and enjoy the physical appetites and activities which it experiences in this life. Sexual activity too will cease.
- II. The dangers to this sacredness.
- A. The constant bombardment of false teaching.
1. Many misunderstand Christian liberty. Verse 12 of the text reads: "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Evidently the Corinthians argued that fornication was a part of Christian liberty. But Paul reminds them that he did not say such a thing. When some sin causes us to lose control of our bodies, we lose Christian liberty.



2. Many picture fornication as innocent and permissible. The text tells us: "The body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord." The Greeks did not consider it wrong for a man to go to a heathen temple and have intercourse with one of the temple priestesses. But it was sin, and fornication is still sin.
- B. The practice of fornication.
1. It is a heinous sin. The text reads: "Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." In God's sight there is a peculiar heinousness to fornication. It is very detrimental to the person who commits it.
  2. It breaks the union with Christ. Verse 15 reads: "Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!" Why not? The text continues: "Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her?" Sexual intercourse in marriage does not disturb the individual's Christianity, but fornication breaks the relation to Christ.

*Conclusion:* The final verse of the text reads: "By all means, then, glorify God with your body." Single people must abstain from sexual activity, and married people must restrict themselves to each other. To glorify God means that people have a good opinion about God because of the sanctified lives which His children live. You have been redeemed to live with God forever. Guard the sacredness of your body.

Harold H. Buls

### THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

January 27, 1991

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

This text occurs in the course of Paul's answers to various questions posed by the church at Corinth. Paul senses that his readers may miss the point of his motives in giving advice as to marital relationships, and so he inserts a short explanation to reassure them that his admonitions proceed from love. Paul understands that the last times have arrived; the time is short, and he does not want the Corinthians to be caught unaware at the end. The glamour and glitz of a city like Corinth (or one's own home-town) is attractive. People become wrapped up in marriage, grief, rejoicing, and commercialization. They lose sight of the marriage of the church to her bridegroom, Jesus

Christ, who has bought her with a price and for whose coming she must be prepared. People lose sight of eternal joy in the midst of tears of temporal grief. They are numb to the grief of souls perishing around them in the midst of temporal happiness. They lose sight of the splendor of heavenly mansions in the benign glow of big screen entertainment and worldliness.

But the point is this: the time is short and we Christians must constantly focus our attention and energies on walking in the light of Him who is the true light. By the grace of God we are able to walk in the light of Him who is revealed in this Epiphany, our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Introduction:* In a television interview, a struggling father admits to working in two places for sixteen hours a day. He hardly sees the family for whom he endeavors to provide food and shelter. Tired, frustrated, and discouraged, he asks, "What is the point?" A mother who has just buried her sixteen-year-old, killed by a drunk driver, tearfully demands, "What is the point?" An extravagantly rich jet-setter pauses amidst his perpetual, yet somehow boring, playtime activities to inquire of no one in particular, "What is the point?" While paying the newly due bills from a lavish Christmas season, a disheartened mother reflects, "What is the point?"

### WHAT IS THE POINT?

- I. Paul was speaking to people who lived in one of the major trading centers of the ancient world. They were besieged by temptations not so very different from ours.
  - A. The temptation to become overly engrossed with the family while neglecting Christian duties.
  - B. The temptation to be overcome with grief.
  - C. The temptation to be irresponsible in frivolity and rejoicing.
  - D. The temptation to be consumed by an obsession with possessions.
  - E. The temptation to be *of* the commercial world rather than only *in* it.

*Transition:* Paul was warning the Corinthians of some major sins and distractions which had crept into their worshipping community. As his admonition to Christian living was being read to the Corinthians, Paul could envisage someone raising the noisy question, "What is the point?"

- II. In verses 29a and 31b, therefore, Paul explains what he means—in effect, here is the point.

- A. The time is short; the present form will be changed at the parousia.
  - B. No one knows when the end is coming. Like the virgins, like the homeowner, Christians must be ready for Christ's great epiphany.
- III. The point is that, because Jesus Christ loved His bride, the church, "and gave Himself up for her sake to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word," we too may live our lives, married or single, focused on the forgiveness which is ours.
- A. Because Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb without losing sight of the resurrection which was to come, so too we may grieve the loss of our believing loved ones confident of a happy reunion in heaven.
  - B. Because Jesus rejoiced at the wedding at Cana, although His hour had not yet come, and resolutely faced His last hour for our sakes, we too may rejoice in this present time, looking ahead to an even greater feast at the wedding of the lamb.
  - C. Because Jesus never bought a house or owned property, but lived and died so that He could go to prepare the many rooms in His Father's mansion, we can own property and use it in God-pleasing ways to our benefit and to the glory of God.
  - D. Because God so loved the world that He sent His Son into the world, we are free to be *in* the world, without being *of* the world, as living witnesses to those around us.

*Conclusion:* The point is this: because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins of worldliness, we can be confident of our atonement, we can be focused on the hereafter, we can live lives *within* the world, yet not *of* the world, always ready for and expecting the end of this present form. God has made His point!

Gary L. Miller  
Archbold, Ohio

### THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

February 3, 1991

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

We may disagree with G. Fee (in the *NICNT* commentary on 1 Corinthians) that Paul's sole issue here was Christian participation in pagan cultic meals (verse 10), but he rightly notes that in 10:14 and the following verses Paul absolutely forbids such activity while he

seems merely to advise against it in chapter 8. For here Paul just begins treating sacrificial food and sets forth his overall approach. So this text is more general than 1 Corinthians 10 or Romans 14, which enhances its applicability. While already here in chapter 8 Paul does address the food issue, it is on the general premise that Christian ethics are determined by love—not by authority, freedom, or rights. The sermon’s goal is that the hearer love his neighbor, especially one of weak conscience. The problem is that we want to assert ourselves, even in helping others. The means to the goal is that we are loved by the Lord who made us, cares for us, and died for us.

*Introduction:* “Knowledge is power”: atomic bombs, computers, Wall Street insider information. “If you cannot be an athlete in school, be a brain. Things will open up to you.” We often think knowledge gives us freedom, privileges, even rights. But, for Christians, knowledge does not drive behavior; love does. The alternative is this:

#### PUFFED UP OR BUILT UP?

- I. Knowledge puffs up.
  - A. It exalts the individual.
    1. In Corinth some prided themselves on knowing that idols were nonentities (verses 2, 4). They thought this knowledge gave them privileges which were lacking for “weak” others who did not know so much or acted with more caution.
    2. In our day scholars are motivated by attaching undue import to their work and to enjoying prestige. But all of us try to “one-up” each other.
  - B. It misguides the Christian.
    1. God’s good gift, knowledge, can be misused and can then misguide. The “strong” wrongly thought they were helping the “weak” by getting them to eat food sacrificed to idols, even in pagan temples (verses 7, 9, 10).
    2. We feel in control when we teach or lead others. Even when we help them, we are often asserting ourselves, our authority, and our freedom.
  - C. It destroys the weak.
    1. In Corinth the “weak” were harmed by being enticed to act against conscience. Some may have been tempted to revert to idol-worship.
    2. We can destroy others as we assert ourselves and our rights (personal, constitutional, etc.) more than we love others. This self-assertion is hellish.
- II. Love builds up.

- A. It starts with God.
  - 1. Knowledge too begins with God, but God enlivens knowledge with love, not vice-versa (verse 3, cf. Galatians 4:9).
  - 2. He is our Father, Creator, and goal (verse 6a). We are oriented to a person we can love, not a principle we can know.
- B. It climaxed on the cross.
  - 1. Here *the* Strong One (verse 6b) bent to the weak, to us arrogant sinners.
  - 2. He died so we might not perish; He did it for us, not for the sake of asserting Himself; He arose so we might be brothers (verse 11).
- C. It lives in the church.
  - 1. Christ Himself lives in the church—in our brother (verse 12).
  - 2. Love moves our deeds, even (especially) where “no rules” exist (adiaphora, verse 8). We cannot blueprint every situation, but we can love.

*Conclusion:* R. Harrisville has said, “It is necessary to know, not that one knows, but that one *is* known”—loved by God. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Ken Schurb  
Berne, Indiana

## THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

February 10, 1991

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

The text provides an opportunity for critical reflection upon our attitudes and practices in making disciples of all nations. Are we willing to make the sacrifices necessary to carry out this task faithfully? Verse 19 deserves a few comments. Paul says that he could simply preach the gospel and win some. But, if he is sensitive to the kind of audience he is addressing, he can win “the more” (*tous pleionas*). Paul is not saying that evangelism *methods* convert people. God is the efficient cause, and the means of grace are the instrumental cause of conversion. The approach we take, however, can hinder the furtherance of the kingdom of God. We never compromise or change doctrine; however, our practices and customs (adiaphora) may vary according to our audience.

The sermon outline intends not to blast the people for failing to make necessary sacrifices, for in many congregations the commitment to the trust which God has given us is very evident. Therefore, the tone might be somewhat complimentary and full of thanksgiving. Examples are used (compare 2 Corinthians 8:1-5) to urge the people to continue and increase in their sacrificial attitudes.

*Introduction:* We are the people of God. The Holy Spirit has called us through the word and the waters of holy baptism to receive all the blessings Christ has won for us by the shedding of His holy, precious blood. God, therefore, has entrusted into our care the sweet gospel message. And He asks us to administer or discharge our trust by seeing to it that the gospel is proclaimed to every race, tribe, and nation. Discharging this trust is a great privilege and joy. How exciting it is to know that God has counted us worthy to participate in spreading His kingdom. But we must be aware of the demands:

#### DISCHARGING OUR TRUST

- I. May require us to sacrifice money (verse 18).
  - A. The Macedonian churches supported Paul during his missionary stop in Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:7-10). Paul did not use his right to be supported by his hearers in order that he might offer the gospel "free of charge."
  - B. The Christian church has made great sacrifices over the years to fund mission work.
    1. Loehe supported missionaries to America.
    2. One can cite examples of local mother-daughter congregations.
    3. It is partly by virtue of the gifts of others that this congregation exists today.
  - C. As we discharge our trust, God looks to us to use our resources so that we may offer the gospel to others free of charge (2 Corinthians 8:13-14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18).
    1. We support missionaries all over the world.
    2. We support mission congregations and special ministries in our local area.
    3. We purchase tracts and Bibles.
    4. We do these things out of thankfulness to God. He made us His children by sending us Jesus, who became poor that we might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).
- II. May require us to sacrifice rights (verse 19).
  - A. Christ has set us free (verse 19; Galatians 5:1-2).
  - B. Out of love Paul gave up some of his freedom, his rights and privileges, that he might "win the more" (verse 19).

- C. As we discharge our trust, we strive to become all things to all men. We do not compromise or change the truth of God's word, but we are sensitive to the audience.
1. We learn the language of our audience.
  2. We meet people in their homes, at their places of work, et cetera.
  3. We try to make people feel welcome and comfortable among us.

*Conclusion:* God enables us to discharge faithfully and with willing hearts the trust which He has committed to us. He moves us to sacrifice our treasures and our rights that we may become all things to all men and offer the gospel free of charge. In this way we become His instruments in winning as many as possible.

Mark Boxman  
Arkansas City, Kansas

## THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

February 10, 1991

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

*Introduction:* There is the glory of winning when your team gets the winning basket right at the buzzer. There is the glory of being the best in your particular field, be it business, teaching, student, parent, or laborer. There is the glory of being right when everybody else said you were wrong. There are all kinds of glory, but the text this morning speaks in particular of two:

### TWO KINDS OF GLORY

1. The glory of the righteousness of the law.
  - A. The people of Israel had "veiled" minds and lived by the righteousness that the law brings, their own civil righteousness (2 Corinthians 3:14).
    1. They trusted in the outward acts of the ceremonial law and not in the one who was "to fulfill the law."
    2. Their righteousness was one in which they would "strain out the gnat, but swallow the camel" (Matthew 23:24).
    3. They were so ingrained in this kind of righteousness that, even when the Messiah came, they failed to recognize Him (2 Corinthians 3:15).
    4. They stubbornly clung to a righteousness that was "like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

- B. Not only the people of Israel have lived by the righteousness of the law, but likewise all who trust in their own good living.
  - 1. It is man's natural desire and drive to trust in his own righteousness (Ephesians 2:3).
  - 2. This kind of righteousness can only end in eternal death because it can never satisfy God's righteous decrees (Matthew 5:48; James 2:10).

*Transition:* The glory of the righteousness of the law always ends in the futility of death, but our text talks about another kind of righteousness.

- II. The glory of the righteousness of grace (2 Corinthians 3:16, 18).
  - A. In Christ the veil is torn away and true righteousness in Christ is revealed (2 Corinthians 3:16).
    - 1. He is true God and shines with the glory of God as shown in today's gospel.
    - 2. He has fulfilled all righteousness for the Jews, for us, and for all (Matthew 5:17).
    - 3. He has a perfect righteousness (Hebrews 4:15).
  - B. Through faith in Christ, God declares us to be righteous for Christ's sake (Galatians 2:16; 3:11).
    - 1. He did what we could not do.
    - 2. He takes us from the futility of death and gives us life everlasting.
    - 3. Before God we have full and complete forgiveness.

*Transition:* Now that we have been declared righteous by grace through faith for Christ's sake we are a new creation and our very nature is one which desires to serve God (2 Corinthians 3:17).

- C. The righteousness of the glory of Christ is reflected as we are transformed by the Spirit's working of sanctification in our lives (2 Corinthians 3:18).
  - 1. In the new man we are constantly growing to be more like Christ (Ephesians 4:13).
    - a. We grow through the word.
    - b. We grow through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
    - c. We grow in our life of sanctification, having thrown off the works of darkness (2 Corinthians 4:2).
  - 2. We set forth the truth of God's word plainly in our words and deeds (2 Corinthians 4:2).
    - a. We now as new people want to witness to Christ's love as we share the message of what He has done for us.
    - b. We do all to the glory of God.



*Conclusion:* There may be many things in which the world takes glory, but there is only one kind of glory that really counts and that is the glory of Jesus Christ.

John C. Kaiser  
St. Cloud, Minnesota