

Colossians 1:21-29
"Our Only Hope"
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

July 16/17, 2016
Our Redeemer Lutheran
Vicar Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

It is better to fish hopefully than to catch fish.

Fishing is hope experienced. To be optimistic in a slow bite is to thrive on hope alone. When asked, "*How can you fish all day without a hit?*" the true fisherman replies, "*Hold it! I think I felt something.*" If the line goes slack, he says, "*He'll be back.*"

When it comes to the human spirit, hope is all. Without hope, there is no yearning, no desire for a better tomorrow, and no belief that the next cast will bring the big strike.

[Justified People]

The Apostle Paul, through Inspiration, writes to us saying that each and every one of us is justified in the eyes of Jesus Christ.

But as God's justified people, we are not given the right to sin. We are to do good.

Paul writes: "***And you (all of us), who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, (Jesus) has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him***" (Col. 1:21-22).

We are all holy and blameless. We are above reproach. We are reconciled by what Jesus Christ alone has done for us. Jesus died and rose so that we could be blameless!

But there is more.

He writes: "***If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister***" (Col. 1:23).

Yes, we are justified, but that doesn't give us permission to sin.

As forgiven people, we are to live our lives as God's people: in what we do and how we act.

We are not just a Christian when we worship the True God – the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit – at each Divine Service.

We live in the world, but we are not *of* the world.

We are a Christian at all times and all places.

That is what we often forget. How many of us look for hope apart from God?

How many of us search for false teachers to make us feel good inside?

You see, we are all forgiven through Christ alone, but we don't always show those fruits.

[God's Word]

That is all what Paul is telling us to do: Act like a Christian.

We need to act on our forgiveness of sins, which is a free gift from Jesus for all who put their faith and trust in Him. As Christ has forgiven us, we should forgive others.

We are to be stable and steadfast in the Word of God.

The Word of God is the source of faith and hope.

The Word of God is our manual, our rule book.

Does a NCAA Division One college or professional sports franchise play someone who has never practiced or studied the rules of the game? No.

That person would have no idea what to do out on the court or field. He or she would cause more detriment than good.

Instead, each college or professional athlete takes time to practice and to study the game, so they are prepared.

Could that athlete ever get to a time where no practice and studying was necessary? No.

The opponent is never going to get lax.

As Christians we should study-up on God's inerrant Word, so we are always prepared for battle with our adversary, the Devil.

[Hope of the Gospel]

So, why are so many Christians and Christian churches not turning to the Bible for help and instead look to their own personal logic?

Paul is telling us to never ***“shift from the hope of the gospel that you heard.”***

The gospel that we have heard is the one true gospel: Jesus Christ – God in the flesh, 100 percent God, 100 percent man – died and rose for you and me to give us forgiveness of sins, salvation and life everlasting.

The world would like us to think that there are multiple gospels:

- Prosperity gospel, where if you do enough good things, God will reward you monetarily
- Social gospel, where you seek to rid the world of social evils to bring about Christ’s Second Coming
- Liberation gospel, like the Social gospel, is about ridding the world of what we perceive to be social injustice

Now, what do these movements have in common? They are all works righteousness. They are all spurred by us, not Jesus Christ.

Yes, there is some good to these. But, these are not the true Gospel.

We have no part in our salvation.

We have no part in welcoming Christ’s Second Coming.

We are all holy and saved only through the blood of Jesus.

As we live out our Christian lives, we are all saints and sinners at the same time. We are saints in that we are justified and made right with God. We are sinners in that we do not always follow God’s will in our thoughts, words and deeds.

Our only hope is not in good works. Our only hope is not Obi-Wan Kenobi. Our only hope is not the Federal government.

Our only hope is Jesus Christ.

Our only hope comes to us through the Word – the hearing of the Holy Scriptures – and the Sacraments – Baptism and Holy Communion. Through these Means of Grace, Christ is in each and every one of us.

“Christ is in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27b).

As Christians, we are to ever stand firm in the present hope.

This hope that is truth that remains unshaken.

This hope is that we will not be forsaken.

This hope embraces and shields us.

Our only hope is Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Amen.

Now, let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord! Amen!