

Epiphany 3 1/26/14
1 Corinthians 1:10-18 A

FOR THE WORD OF THE CROSS IS FOLLY TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, BUT TO US WHO ARE BEING SAVED IT IS THE POWER OF GOD.

Remembering that one picture is worth a thousand words, I call your attention to the drawing on the front cover of your bulletin this morning. Admittedly, its not a great piece of art -- it's not a Van Gogh, or a Picasso. We really do not know who drew it, but there a few things we know about it.

The drawing dates to around 200 AD. It was discovered as a sketch on the wall of a guardhouse near the Circus Maximus, the stadium in Rome where the chariot races were held. The drawing shows a man with the head of a donkey being crucified and a young man kneeling before him with arm outstretched in worship of the man with the donkey head being crucified. The inscription, written in crude Greek, reads, "Alexamenos worships [his] God."

I purposely put this on the cover of the bulletin this morning because it illustrates the very popular opinion of Christianity from around the year 200 AD. No, we are not told the exact details, but the context almost speaks for itself. Some Roman soldier is on guard duty on some hot afternoon or in the dark hours of the night, and, to beat the tedious boredom, he draws some graffiti on the wall of the guard shack. The message is clear: Alexamenos is made fun of for being a Christian.

One picture is worth a thousand words, and this picture truly shows us that the popular opinion is that Christianity is foolishness. The worshippers, the followers, of Christ worship a man who was crucified and they even adore that instrument upon which He was punished. And look at

how he depicts Jesus – a man with the brain of a donkey!

We look at this picture and say it's not like we didn't see this coming. It's not like we should be surprised that someone would draw Jesus with the head of a donkey and portray his followers as fools. We should not be surprised because of the words the Apostle Paul wrote, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing."

Paul knows that better than anybody. He knew it from firsthand experience.

Paul went on his missionary journeys, he preached the word of the cross, and it ticked a lot of people off, especially the Jews. In response to his preaching the word of the cross, the Jews said that Paul is a troublemaker; he's out starting riots; he's leading a rebellion with his little Nazarene-sect. They file charges against Paul, he was arrested, and had to appear before King Agrippa and his sidekick, Festus. When he stood before those men facing charges from the Jews, Paul opened his mouth and told them, "Gentlemen, I'm not a troublemaker. I don't start riots, and I'm not leading a rebellion with a little Nazarene-sect. What I am is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ." And Paul went on to preach the word of the cross to King Agrippa and Festus. He told them Christ had to suffer. As the first one raised from the dead, He would bring life and salvation to the Jews and the Gentiles, both.

Festus hears that, looked at Paul and said, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind (Ac 26:24)." And Agrippa looked at him and said, "Do you think with you silly words that you could convince me to be a Christian?"

Alexamenos was made fun of by the guards in the guardhouse. Paul is put on trial and is told he's out of his mind. So, what's all that got to do

with us? Plenty, when you think about where we live and what we have been called to do.

There are people all around us who are struggling and hurting under sin, death, and the devil. They are perishing under sin, death, and the devil. They don't know Jesus. Left to their own, they will perish for all eternity.

They are all around us, and we know who they are. There is your neighbor dying of cancer. The neighbor now living alone, mourning the death of their spouse. There is the friend who doesn't go to church, who is struggling to his their mortgage and raising kids, perhaps because they believe they need to buy stuff to keep up with the Jones'. There is the co-worker in the cubicle next to you who was confirmed at some church, but that doesn't matter now because they don't attend worship and they are in the midst of a messy divorce from their spouse. There is the family-member finally coming to grips with the fact that he/she has a drug or alcohol problem.

These are the ones perishing under sin, death, and the devil. So, what do you do? You do what you do because you are the people of God, whom God has planted in this place, at this time, to speak the word of the cross to those people who are hurting and suffering, who are perishing.

You go to those people, the one dying, the one mourning the death of a spouse, the one struggling to pay their mortgage and raise their kids, the one in the midst of a messy divorce, the one coming to grips with a drug or alcohol addiction and say Jesus loves you. In fact, Jesus loves you so much that He took all your sin, all your pain, all your suffering, all of those things that cause you anguish upon Himself. He went to Calvary's cross and He died for you. And because He did – somehow, some way, He's

going to make things right for you. He's going to see you through this. You speak the word of the cross to them.

And what happens, more often than not? You hear, "Alexamenos (or should I call you Paul), don't tell me how to live my life. You're such a fool, you worship a god that has the brain of an ass." Not much has changed in 2,000 years. What Alexamenos knew and what Paul knew, you also know – the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. What do you do in response to that? Well, we have 3 options.

You can ignore them. Mind your own business and say nothing.

You can talk to them – about the weather or the Super Bowl. Why, you can even go so far as to tell them that you care. You can tell them to think positive. But by all means, leave out the word of the cross. They'll think its foolishness, anyway.

You can do one or the other of these, but what good does it do them if you leave out the word of the cross?

There is, of course, that 3rd option. Go to them again and again and again -- lovingly, kindly, and keep proclaiming the words of the cross to them. Don't be a nuisance, but do what Christ has asked you to do. Do what you believe – say the word that the word of the cross is the power of God for salvation.

Speak the word of the cross. To the one dying or grieving the death of their spouse, speak the word of the cross,

"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

To the one overwhelmed by paying the mortgage and raising the kids, speak the word of the cross,

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on...Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them...do not be anxious about tomorrow.”

To the one going through a messy divorce, speak the word of the cross, “Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you.”

To the one coming to grips with a drug or alcohol addiction, speak the word of the cross, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

Not much has changed in 2,000 years. Alexamenos knows that. Paul knew that. And you know that. But what we know is that the word of the cross is the power of God, for it brings salvation, and comfort, and hope, and the strength for the facing of this hour.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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Concordia Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

801 Beacon Lane

Beulah, North Dakota

Rev. Toby H. Heller, Pastor

January 26, 2014



*From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

Matthew 4:17

Divine Service

Setting One

Hymn of Invocation

412 (st. 1-4)

Confession & Absolution p. 151

Introit

I will tell of your name to my brothers;

in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn
to the Lord,

**and all the families of the nations shall worship
before you.**

For kingship belongs to the Lord,

and he rules over the nations.

All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;

**before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
even the one who could not keep himself alive.**

Posterity shall serve him;

it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;

they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a
people yet unborn,

that he has done it.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy

**Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be
forever. Amen.**

I will tell of your name to my brothers;

in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.

Kyrie

p. 152

Glory to God

p. 154

Salutation & Collect

p. 156

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our
infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal
and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God
now and forever.

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4 (ESV)

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Gradual

Praise the Lord, all nations!

Extol him, all peoples!

For great is his steadfast love toward us,

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;

bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 (ESV)

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel,

and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

“Alleluia”

p. 156

Holy Gospel: St. Matthew 4:12-25 (ESV)

Now when [Jesus] heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth He went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him.

And He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and He healed them. And great crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Nicene Creed	p. 158
Hymn of the Day	# 849
Sermon	The Word of the Cross
Prayer of the Church	
Offering	
	<i>The Handbell Choir will ring “Cares Chorus” during the gathering of our morning offerings.</i>
“What Shall I Render”	p. 159
Service of the Sacrament	p. 160
Distribution Hymns	# 688, 643
“Thank the Lord”	p. 164
Post-Communion Collect	p. 166
Benediction	p. 166
Closing Hymn	# 839

Today we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion in which we joyfully receive Christ’s Body and Blood, under bread and wine, for the forgiveness of our sins. As we celebrate the Sacrament, we also give public witness that we are in complete agreement with the denomination’s doctrinal teachings at whose altar we commune. Therefore, we ask that only communicant members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod commune with us. All guests are asked to talk to Rev. Heller before coming to the altar to receive the Sacrament.

In our thoughts and prayers,
 † Carmen Dschaak, Kyle Miller (Nona Blaisdell’s brother), and Agnes Wiedrich.

Welcome to worship in this season of Epiphany, the time of the Church year we celebrate God appearing to us in human body. Today, we see Jesus, “very God of very God,” doing the miracles only God can do — “teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people”. By doing these miracles, Jesus proves that He is, indeed, God. Visitors, please sign our guest book and worship with us again soon.

1 Peter: Please join us as we continue our study of 1 Peter this morning.

\$316.50 was donated to Gideons International last Sunday to purchase Bibles for world-wide distribution. “So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:11).”

2014 offering envelopes and 2013 contribution statements are in your mailbox this morning if you haven’t picked them up yet.

An updated telephone directory of Concordia members has been completed. If you would like a copy, sign your name on the sheet of paper on the table in the fellowship hall. A copy will then be put in your Church mailbox.



The January Human Care Project is collecting soup for Women’s Action & Resource Center. Please put your donations in the shelf unit in the entryway. Thank you.



Baby Shower

The LWML is hosting a joint baby shower for Aackley & Tracy Backus and Kollen & Lacy Korbyn today at 2:00 p.m. at the Church.

The entire congregation is invited to attend and welcome the new babies into the Family of Concordia.



Stewardship of Offerings & Attendance

Attendance:160 Offerings: \$4,339.00

“Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.” Discipleship cost Peter and Andrew everything they had: they left their trade, their hometown, their families and they followed Jesus. God has called us to the same discipleship – the same devotion, though the exact details of how that is lived out will vary. The important thing is this: that we know that all we have is the Lord’s, to be used for His purpose, that we are His disciples and are ready to follow where He leads.

† This Week at Concordia †

Sunday	8:30 am	Divine Service
	9:30 am	Sunday School/Bible Class
	11:00 am	<i>Worship @ Glen Ullin</i>
	2:00 pm	Backus & Korbyn Baby Shower
Tuesday	2:00 pm	Bible Class
Wednesday	3:30 pm	1 st -year Catechism
	4:30 pm	2 nd -year Catechism
	7:00 pm	Chime Practice
	7:30 pm	Bell Practice
Thursday	9:00 am	Deadline for February calendar items
Friday — Saturday		Pastor @ District BOD Meeting
Sunday	8:30 am	Divine Service
	9:30 am	Sunday School/Bible Class
	11:00 am	<i>Worship @ Glen Ullin</i>

Church Office Hours

Monday – Friday 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM

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Please use a pew card to record your worship and/or Communion attendance this morning.