

SERMON FOR JANUARY 15, 2023

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 1: 5-9

THEME: RICH IN CHRIST

that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— **6** even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— **7** so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **8** who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the name of Jesus:

The headlines in the news recently have reported that there is another big jackpot to be won in the lottery. Before Christmas it was the Powerball lottery with a winning payout of over \$1 billion. This week the MegaMillions game had a jackpot of over \$1 billion. News of big jackpots, of having the potential of winning a lot of money appeals to many people today. They think that if they hit the winning numbers, then they will be able to live life on Easy Street. All of their problems will be solved. Of course, the so-called realists in the group will state that even though they know that their problems will not be solved, they rationalize their potential winnings by saying that it will make life easier for them and if someone has to win, why shouldn't it be them?

Worldly thinking has one's life revolving all around one's self. Ask anyone to talk about their favorite subject, they will talk about themselves and what makes their world tick. It doesn't take long to figure out, if you listen to someone, what it is that excites them and what is at the center of their life. What is at the center of your life will give you purpose and a reason for living.

Sadly today many face anxiety and depression because they believe that there is little hope for them in the present or the future. Polls done among college age students today cite that these students agree that they are facing a present and a future where there is no hope, no purpose, no objective truth, and nothing that can really be defined as good or evil. Everything is up for grabs, it is all a matter of personal preference and of what feels good and right to you. So go and live your own life, be true to you and your own self and reality. There is no need for God, no need for salvation, no need for any standard or foundation in life, because life is all about you and what you make of life. So go have a party and live it up, do what makes you happy, because in the end nothing else matters. The only storyline in life is your story, no other story, no other history matters. The only thing that matters is you.

For the Apostle Paul, though, life is all about Jesus. Why? Because Jesus has set you aside for His holy purpose. God in love sent His Son Jesus into the

world, and Jesus' whole focus in life was to do the will of the Father who sent Him into the world. Jesus' focus was to save sinners, sinners such as you and me. Sinners who have in their lives other things that get in the way of God and have priorities which move God out of the center. Jesus came to save those who look to winning a lottery to give them security in the future. Jesus came to save those who think that you have to look out for yourself because no one else will look out for you. Jesus came to save those who think that their life is meaningless, without purpose, and those who fear for their future and the future of the world. Jesus entered our world to take upon Himself your sins, your self centeredness, your fears and anxieties to give you hope and give you a reason to live!

That is why Paul emphasizes that Jesus is the One who truly can and does enrich your life. He begins by addressing the Church at Corinth by calling them "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints with all who call upon the name of Jesus." Paul states that you who are in Christ are made holy by Jesus' life, suffering, death, and resurrection. You who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, and now that you are in Christ, you have been given a new life which centers on Jesus, for Jesus has set you apart from the world and its sinful selfish desires. Your life is not futile, your life is centered in

Christ and now has been given a special purpose for Christ. You have a purpose filled life and you have a future that is going somewhere!

In Baptism God has made you a member of His Kingdom and a participant in the plans He has for the Church and the world. He has made you His child in Baptism, called you to be His own, and sends you out to live your life not according to the desires of the world and its futile ways. You have been given the new life in Christ so that Jesus lives in and through you. God has called you to participate in His work of bringing the love of Christ to all around you.

But Pastor, you object, what can I do? I don't think that I have any special ability that God can use. I really don't know what to say, or what to do. How can God use someone like me?

It's to these objections that Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians. They too wondered how God could use them. Paul in fact recognizes these objections by stating: "**26** For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. " Did you catch that? These people were not wise, were not powerful, they didn't have any social or political advantage in their lives. They thought that they were nobodies and that God couldn't use them.

So Paul reminds them that “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; **28** God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,” that is to say, God knows your objections and answers your objections in His Son Jesus. For Jesus was not born of nobility or wealth. His birth and His life was manifested in humility. The Almighty Son of God became weak, became lowly, to save the weak and lowly. Jesus is God’s answer to those who think and believe that they are nobody special or important, because Jesus is the wisdom from God, your righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Jesus has redeemed you by His blood, and in your Baptism He has enriched you in every way. He gives you a new identity, for now you are His child. He gives you a sense of belonging, for you don’t belong to the world, or yourself, you belong to Jesus. He gives you a sense of purpose in life, for you are called now to live your life to His glory according to your calling in life. In each and every circumstance you are to look to Him who has saved you. The Holy Spirit has placed Jesus at the center of your life, so that Christ and His love now flows in and through you to others.

You and I together have been placed into God's family, the Holy Christian Church, in the waters of our Baptism, all so that Christ might reveal Himself to others in the lives we are called to live. In Jesus we live, we move, and we have our being.

Jesus asks the two disciples of John the Baptizer: "What are you seeking?" It is a question He asks of us today. What is it that you are seeking in life? Many seek the riches of the world. But you, dear brother and sister in Christ, have been made rich in Christ. In Him you lack nothing. You have been baptized in Christ and now you are the redeemed children of God. Jesus has forgiven you all of your sin and you are now secure in His love, now and forever. And Jesus now gives you an eternal purpose in living your life to God's glory, for all that you do for the Lord has lasting and eternal value for you are now in Christ and have been ENRICHED IN EVERY WAY.

AMEN