

"Does God Frustrate You?"

Text: John 16:25-33

May the empty tomb fill your heart, and may the risen Lord lift your spirit. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Does God frustrate you? The question itself could mean several different things, couldn't it? It could mean: "Does God irritate or exasperate you?" It could also mean: "Does God hinder you from doing what you want?" Even then if we turn the questions over in our minds, we can find good and bad, positive and negative, reason to rejoice and reason to repent.

So it is that we will investigate this general question this morning and seek to find guidance and growth on the basis of God's Word. The text that will form the bedrock of our study this morning is found in the Gospel of John, the 16th Chapter:

John 16:25-33 *(Jesus said to His disciples) "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. ²⁶ "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; ²⁷ "for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. ²⁸ "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father." ²⁹ ¶ His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! ³⁰ "Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God." ³¹ Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? ³² "Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. ³³ "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

Here ends the very words of God. These are not man's words; they are the precious words of Almighty God. May we all honor them as such and learn from them accordingly. To this end we pray, "**Sanctify us through the truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!**" Amen.

Perhaps it is nothing new, but one of the more troubling aspects of our society today is the raw arrogance that is so evident. Although we are more than lenient with ourselves, we tend to be impossibly hard on everyone else. If I get distracted while driving and make a mistake (like driving the wrong way on a one way street, which I recently did) it was obviously because the one-way wasn't well marked or, or, well it just had to be someone else's fault or at worst a perfectly normal and understandable mistake. If someone else were to do that, however, I'd suggest pulling their license for a month or so to teach them to pay better attention when they are driving. You get the point.

Recently – as I'm sure you've all heard by now – an offshore oil drilling platform blew up and sank in the Gulf of Mexico, and the ruptured well is now spewing an estimated 5,000 barrels of crude oil a day into the Gulf. Bad things happen in life. What is interesting is the immediate blame that we feel the need to assign. It's BP's fault. It's the government's fault. Somehow I'm sure it has to be Dick Cheney's fault. This sort of thing has never happened before, but as was the case with 9/11 the American people seem to demand that everyone in any position of authority MUST possess a prescience or crystal ball that allows him to foresee every possible bad thing that might happen and have in place the means to correct or rectify whatever might go wrong - immediately.

Life just doesn't allow for such things. There are too many variables, too many things that can and do go wrong every day. In our recent five airport excursion, I was again struck by the incredible levels of security that are now employed just so that we can get on an airplane. Could you imagine the flood of complaints that you would hear had these measures been taken prior to 9/11? The American people simply would not have tolerated the attempted prevention of that which had never happened. Same with off-shore oil drilling. I wonder how many folks are aware that we have been drilling offshore for over 100 years with never an accident that came close to something like this – and yet somehow someone should have known. Someone (not me) should have seen this coming and prevented it.

All of this just illustrates a point. The greater our technological advances and the more we become an instant gratification society, the more we come to expect that nothing will ever go wrong. If it does, it will be immediately correctable – and we are frustrated in the extreme when things move slower than our impossible expectations.

Now transfer all of these thoughts to our relationship with our God. My sense is that mankind has so discarded the true and proper “fear of God” that we now sit in judgment over against our God. We are, at times – and in the worst possible sense – frustrated by our God.

Stop and think about that for just a moment. Think of the raw, black, blasphemous arrogance that is necessary for man to feel frustrated by God. We don’t need to guess how God himself feels about such rebellious thoughts. Go to the Book of Job and read there beginning with the 38th Chapter:

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: ² “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? ³ Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. ⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶ To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:1-7)

For two whole chapters God slams the terribly suffering Job and his haughty friends for their arrogance, listing an incredible array of natural and celestial laws of nature that lie beyond man’s control – magnificent marvels that give glory to the Creator alone. God concludes with these words: ***Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said: ² “Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it.”*** Job’s response when confronted by the Almighty God? ***Then Job answered the LORD and said: ⁴ “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth.”***

Arrogance, again, is the root sin. Satan was not content to exist as a servant of God; he wanted equality with God. Adam and Eve were not content with their perfect existence but bought into the devil’s lie that there was something more out there. How about you? Where do you stand? How do you feel about God when things don’t go the way you hoped or when God denies even your repeated, impassioned requests?

Another of our basic problems here is a simple lack of trust in our God. Arrogance, of course, plays a role here as well. We come to imagine that the way we want things to be *must be the right and best way*. When things don’t go that way, prideful man turns an accusing eye to his God and wonders how God could have messed up so badly. The right answer

to our question, “Does God frustrate you?” *Yes! And thank God that he does!*

Go back now to the words of our text. Can you sense the built up frustration on the part of the disciples in our text? For years they had been frustrated by Jesus both for what he said and how he said it. In their not-so-humble estimation, Jesus simply did not speak clearly enough to suit them. He spoke in mysteries and parables. His stories and lessons all seemed too cloaked in metaphor and imagery. He didn’t say, “Kill me and I’ll rise the third day.” He said, ***“Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days.”*** He didn’t say, “The work righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is a damnable lie.” He said, ***“Beware the leaven of the Pharisees.”***

You can almost *feel* the release of their pent-up frustration when Jesus finally, near the end of his time on earth, lifts the veil and speaks to them in our text in the straightforward manner they had been craving: ***His disciples said to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! ³⁰ “Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.”***

It was almost as though the disciples were accusing Jesus of acting or speaking wrongly. In their words you can sense, again, their accumulated frustration – as though (in their *humble* opinions) things would have been much better all along had Jesus spoken in this way the entire time he was with them. So had Jesus been making a mistake prior to this? Mark well his response: ***Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?”***

The disciples *were already believers*, weren’t they? While they obviously felt that Jesus’ clear words gave them a mental clarity and certainty, that was much different than the power to convert them. Jesus’ words, veiled as they thought they were, had already converted them. Faith does not come through logical comprehension; faith comes through the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God. That Word had already done its work in the disciples, but still they were frustrated by the process.

You and I desperately need to learn from this. The first and greatest lesson is to learn to accept both the love and mastery of our God. God is genius beyond our comprehension. He is the consummate master in every single aspect of life. He knows not only what works; he knows

what works best, what works most efficiently, and what works longest. Remember the disciples' reaction when Jesus *clearly* announced to them that he was going to Jerusalem to suffer and die? "*Never Lord! Big mistake! Don't do it!*" That's how the disciples handled clarity – they sat in judgment over it. They let their emotions dictate their thoughts and opinions, and the result, had Jesus listened to them, would have been their eternal destruction in hell.

God knows what he is doing. Jesus knows what he is doing. We hear that same thing said of human beings today ("*he really knows what he is doing*") and we take it with a grain of salt. We need to learn NOT to do that with God. God frustrated the disciples, and it saved them. He does the same thing with you and me. The truths that he taught the disciples in parables and metaphors stayed with them and continued to guide and direct them in the wide variety of situations that followed. It should be obvious to them and to us why this was necessary, but he nonetheless spelled it out for us in our text: "***Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.***"³³ "***These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.***"

Jesus was about to be abandoned by his men. They would be scattered at the first sign of serious, life-threatening opposition. Ironically this opposition was brought about by the very thing they thought they could handle and which they had been begging Jesus to give to them – clarity of speech. "Speak clearly!" they begged, and as soon as he did, the Jews killed him for it. The disciples imagined themselves up for whatever might happen. They weren't even close. You and I also have our plans, our ideas, our desires. Jesus recognizes us as that which we are – sheep. Wandering, stupid sheep that desperately need a shepherd to frustrate their silly and dangerous notions.

The path that Jesus walked was exactly and precisely right – in every conceivable way. By his actions he paid for our sins and opened the door of heaven for us. By his actions – his perfect life and innocent death – he saved us from the eternal torment that we had so richly deserved. The next time then that we find ourselves frustrated by such a God, step back and learn to recognize that he is not the problem. You and I are. And then trust him to carry on to completion that good, wise, perfect plan that he has for our rescue and our eternal bliss with him in heaven. Amen.

Scripture Readings

NKJ **Revelation 21:1-5** Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴ "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ ¶ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

NKJ **John 13:31-35** So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. ³² "If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. ³³ "Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you. ³⁴ "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

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The Fourth Sunday after Easter – May 2, 2010

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn -#44- (Red Hymnal)

"Ye Lands to the Lord Make a Jubilant Noise "

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Revelation 21:1-5) We continue to receive great pictures of heaven from the Book of Revelation. In the midst of persecution and trials of every kind, we can keep our eyes fixed on heaven and know that things will not always be as they are now. Thank God for the gift of His Son, in whom alone we have hope and confidence.

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 66 (Brown Hymnal page 37)

The Second Lesson: (John 13:31-35) In this lesson Jesus not only prepared his disciples for his soon to be accomplished ascension, he also revealed to his Church his wishes concerning the future. There is no more certain sign that we are children of God than when we reflect his love for us in our lives each day.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn -43- (Red Hymnal)

"We Sing the Almighty Power of God "

The Sermon – Text: John 16:25-33 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Does God Frustrate You?"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn -#203- (Red Hymnal)

"Morning Breaks Upon the Tomb"

The Offering

The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn -#32- (Verses 1&4) (Red Hymnal)

"Redeemed, Restored, Forgiven "

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance - Last Sunday (43) 2010 Average (54)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:30 a.m.	– Fellowship Meal
	-12:00 p.m.	– Voters' & Women's Meetings
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-8:45 a.m.	– Sunday School & Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – A summary of the recent Coordinating Council is available in your mailbox. The Prospectus for the upcoming CLC Convention will be available prior to the Jamestown Delegate Conference. Pastor Frank Gantt having returned their calls, Clarkston and Orofino have again called Pastor David Naumann of Fond du Lac, WI; Pastor Mark Gurath has returned the call to Red Wing; Grace of Fridley, MN has called Janelle Hein to teach full time; Pastor Timothy Wheaton has returned the call to Fairchild, WI and that congregation has now called Richard Kanzenbach. Valentine, Mission, and White River have called Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer.

Voters' Meeting – Please remember the Voters' Meeting scheduled for this morning following the fellowship meal. Please join us.

Synod-Wide Anniversary Service – Sunday, May 16th has been designated as the Sunday on which the CLC will celebrate our 50th Anniversary with a special liturgy, service, and Bible Class. The Bible Class will include a PowerPoint presentation on the history of the CLC. Please join us to thank our God for 50 years of grace and blessing.

Looking Ahead – Please note that the Jamestown West Central Delegate Conference is May 25-27 and Confirmation Sunday is May 30.

Lord's Supper – Please note that the Church Council has determined that Holy Communion will be celebrated this month on May 9th and May 30th. Private communion is always available upon request for any who are not able to attend one of our regular communion services.