

"Spoiled"

Text: Colossians 2:6-15

Grace, mercy and peace be yours in the secure knowledge that your sins are one and all forgiven in Christ Jesus, our Lord, and that we are absolutely complete in him, lacking nothing. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

It would be interesting to have everyone here this morning write down what popped into your mind when you first read the theme for the sermon this morning: *Spoiled*. I'm guessing the top five or so answers would include things like the bratty kid in the grocery store or the milk that has long since passed its expiration date. Maybe the homecoming football game that was *spoiled* by the other team's last second field goal, or the big outdoor event that was thrown into chaos by the unexpected wind/hail/rain storm.

Whatever it was that came to mind, it's a pretty safe bet that it wasn't anything good. We don't tend to associate the word "spoiled" with anything positive.

Our text for this morning, however, is going to give us not only the worst of all possible examples of *spoiled*, it is also going to tell of the very *best* possible example.

See if you can identify both as you hear or read the words of our text for today, found in Paul's Letter to the Colossians, the Second Chapter:

^{ESV} **Colossians 2:6-15** *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ ¶ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (that is, in Christ).*

So far the very words of God. Acknowledging that these are the words of God and not of men, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your Truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!"** Amen.

Dear Fellow Ambassadors for the Lord Jesus, do you agree with the expression: *"Faith can change things"*? Every once in awhile you hear or read that. You've all probably seen folks holding those signs at sporting events: *"You gotta believe!"* Consider that for just a moment. Can faith really change things? Depends, right? *Faith* and *belief* are not the same thing. The world doesn't distinguish between the two, but Christians do. When we use the word *faith* we almost always mean *saving* faith, and that, to us, means Christianity. It means trust in the fact that God sent his Son, and that his Son, Jesus Christ, has paid the penalty for all of our sins. For this reason we cannot separate the idea of *faith* from Christ Jesus. *"Faith"* is faith that every good thing necessary for our salvation has already been supplied by Jesus.

It is also only in that sense that we can agree that *"faith can change things."* The Bible is full of examples of faith in action and the power and effectiveness of persistent prayer. It is *faith* that leads us to approach God's throne in prayer, and there we have been given access to *his* unlimited power. In that sense, faith can indeed change things – both *in* us and *for* us – but only because faith taps into or accesses the power of God.

Now compare *our* understanding of *faith* to the *world's* concept of *faith* or *belief*. Again, the world holds the two to be synonymous. Why? Because the world lumps all beliefs and all faiths together as equally valid (or equally invalid, as the case may be). Yet while *faith* can and does change things because it accesses the readily available resources of the One True God, a personally held *belief* or *faith* has no power in and of itself to accomplish anything good. In other words, believing something to be true does not make it true. Believing that something will happen does not make it happen. Believing you will succeed at something does not guarantee success.

I can tell you for a fact, for example, that I *believed* my team could and, at least early on, *would* win every basketball game we played in high school. If that kind of belief or faith really changed things, the guys on the other team must have had more. A lot more. In nearly every game. All the confidence and "faith" in the world never seemed to make that round orange ball go through that steel rim often enough. Lots of those high school dreams got spoiled, usually by the first quarter.

No big loss there. A couple hundred counseling sessions and I almost got over it. What's going on today, however, is anything but silly and anything

but unimportant. You and I are in a struggle against the devil himself. He has the home field advantage, and this is a contest we simply *cannot* lose.

We need to sit up and take notice here – especially you young people. What seems important when you are young almost never seems important when you are old. I pray that each of you younger Christians can be wiser than most of the rest of us were at your age, recognizing not only that what seems so important now won't seem so important later, but also that you'll be able to understand the great dangers that you will face in the coming years. Satan looks at you like a starving wolf looks at a baby lamb. He hates the fact that your parents have taught you about Jesus, and how your God-given faith in Jesus makes the devil powerless to hurt you. But he's going to keep trying, and one of his most successful tactics is to do to you exactly what Paul warned about in our text for this morning: he will appeal to your natural human intellect, and to your baser human emotions.

Public schools, and especially public universities, have become some of the most dangerous places on earth for Christians. This is true, again, because of exactly what the Apostle Paul warned us about in our text. Public schools are all about what our text describes as ***"philosophy and empty deceit"*** - beliefs that are only true in the mind of man, but still sound very believable and reasonable. Our text goes on to describe them as beliefs based on ***"human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."*** That means that while they sound good and reasonable, they are flat out wrong. Because God says so.

Obviously all of you know, for example, that the earth is about 6000 years old – because the Bible says it is. You also know that the world believes that the earth is millions (or is it billions now) of years old. In fact teachers in public schools are not even allowed to teach creation to their students. That in no way changes the fact that all who teach evolution are wrong, *because God's Word says they are wrong.*

The problem, the danger, goes way beyond just that, as bad as that is. The world believes you should worship yourself. Their religion is called humanism. Worse still, since they don't believe or acknowledge that there is a God that we need to obey, they believe that you should be allowed to do pretty much anything that you want to do – as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else. (Except for abortion, of course, where they teach that you can do anything that you want even if it *kills* someone else.) The scary part is that they are really good at making what they believe sound right and reasonable. Consider the word translated ***"deceit"*** in our text. The same word can also be translated as *"pleasure"* or *"pleasantness."* That's part of the problem. The philosophies of men more often than not *seem* good and pleasant. They appeal to our natural sense of "right" because they are based on the basic principles of this world – the things all around us and how those things seem to operate. Because they are based on human understanding, they *seem to* make sense to us. The

terminal flaw is that their ideas are not based on Christ; they are not based on the Word of God. The world is really very skilled at trying to make you believe that you are stupid and backwards if you are a Christian who really believes what the Bible teaches. The devil's ultimate goal is to change your mind about Jesus. It is to destroy your faith in your Savior.

This is where the first example of "spoiled" appears in our text for this morning. In verse 8 Paul warns: ***"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit."*** To ***"take you captive"*** literally means to carry you off as spoils of war, and it's the absolute worst thing that could happen to anyone.

Throughout recorded history (actually until relatively recently in civilized countries) soldiers have always been underpaid – especially given the sort of work they are required to perform and the hardship and dangers they face. The highly motivated modern American soldier is an historic anomaly. Seldom have military powers been able to rely on all-volunteer armies. Historically those who actually chose such a life did so for one reason: spoils. For the most part it was the allure of war booty that drew soldiers to the army. They were willing to attack complex defenses and suffer appalling casualties when attacking a city because they knew that success would mean that the city and everything in it would belong to them. *If they were successful.* In Bible times the war plunder included the women and children of a captured city.

Paul is therefore telling us in our text that we are in a war, a life-or-death struggle, and you and I are the prize. We are the spoils of this war that the devil wants to carry with him when he is sentenced to an eternity in hell. That's what makes this struggle we are in so serious. It's what makes public schools in this country so dangerous. Souls are there carried off as war plunder by the devil and his allies.

This is what we referred to earlier as the worst possible sort of "spoiled" imaginable. How horrible to think of any human soul being dragged into hell by Satan. How much more tragic to think of one who was once a Christian being *spoiled* in this way. The thought is so awful I can think of no better way to spend my time here on earth than to work to prevent something like that from happening – even if an entire life's work results in just one soul being spared.

Know then that every single human being is in danger of being mesmerized and destroyed by the deceptive wisdom of this world. Acknowledge the allure of agreeing with whatever the wise of this world tell you, in part because what they say *seems* to make sense to our baser nature, and in part because these men and women are widely regarded as the smartest of the smart. Don't underestimate either the appeal of

rebellious thought or the ease with which damning error can enter the unprotected heart.

The devil and the world at large would love to have you believe that there is something bigger and better out there beyond the ancient and (to them) outdated Christian faith. But here's where the *best* possible "spoiled" mentioned in our text comes in. God *spoiled* the devil's plan by sending his Son Jesus to rescue us. Even more than that, our text - *God's Word* - assures every single one of us that we have been **"filled in Christ."** That means we lack nothing because Christ Jesus lacked nothing. Our text put it this way: ***For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.*** As Christians, we need absolutely nothing that the world has to offer. Because we have Christ, who has accomplished for us what no one and nothing else could ever do, every Christian is already complete, lacking nothing of any real or lasting value.

What did Jesus do, and how did he do it? Listen again to the amazing words of our text (words that every single one of us should memorize before we confront the deceit of the world): ***"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in (Christ)."***

Here is a grand and sublime truth that far transcends the combined total of all of man's feeble wisdom. Revel in these words. Marvel at them. Soak them in. Here is truth that is thoroughly practical, universally applicable, and utterly timeless. All of our sin are gone, forgiven. ***"He has set it aside, nailing it to the cross."*** The sin-debt of all mankind has been paid in full. Our text tells us that every single one of those sins was nailed to the cross with Jesus Christ, who there paid, in full, every bit of punishment that would otherwise have been exacted upon us.

Dear Christians this is Life itself and these are life-giving words. They are the height of wisdom and truth in a very foolish and deceitful world. Cling to them. Make them forever your life-philosophy, your "words to live by," for nothing else carries the power to prevent you from being carried away by Satan as spoils of the war that daily rages. The fact is there simply *is* nothing better or deeper or more meaningful beyond this simple truth. There is nothing with any sort of eternal value beyond Jesus Christ, crucified for sinners. All *human* wisdom will be rolled up like a scroll in the final judgment. Only the Word of God will stand. You, dear Christian, have that Word of Truth as your personal possession. Never trade it, never abandon it, never neglect it, for nothing on earth is of greater value. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Hebrews 5:1-11** For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; ⁶ as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." ⁷ ¶ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. ¹¹ ¶ About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

^{ESV} **Mark 4:35-41** On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

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The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – June 19, 2016

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 8 (Red Hymnal)

"Father, Who the Light This Day"

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

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

The First Lesson: (Hebrews 5:1-11) This morning we reexamine the person and offices of Jesus. The Bible identifies Jesus as our Prophet, High Priest, and King. Not only *did* Jesus serve in all three offices while he walked this earth, he still holds those offices today. Our first reading speaks specifically to his office as High Priest, and the nature of that office. In this Jesus was unique. All other priests were themselves sinners, who therefore needed to offer sacrifices first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people. Jesus, having no sin of his own, sacrificed himself for the sins committed by every single human being – sins for which he was not guilty.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 2 (Page 30)

The Second Lesson: (Mark 4:35-41) Our second reading focuses on Jesus' office as our King. Kings rule, and this lesson teaches us that Jesus' rule extends over all things in heaven and on earth. The disciples of Jesus were amazed to learn that this rulership extended even to those things that they believed were beyond any control – like the wind and waves. Jesus, our King, still today rules over all things in heaven and on earth.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn –200 (Verses 1-3, 6, 8) (Red Hymnal)

"I Know That My Redeemer Lives"

The Sermon – Text: Colossians 2:6-15 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Spoiled"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn -366 (Verses 1-2, 5-6) (Red Hymnal)

"One Thing's Needful"

The Offering followed by the Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn -366 (Verses 7) (Red Hymnal)

"One Thing's Needful"

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 - Sunday (46) Ave (48)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship/Coffee Time
Thursday-Sunday		– CLC Convention in Eau Claire
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship/Coffee Time

CLC News – Pastor Nathanael Mayhew has returned the call to Faith Lutheran of Markesan, WI. Pastor Matthew Ude is considering the call to Ascension Lutheran of Batavia (Chicago area). Pastor Rick Grams has announced his retirement from the pastoral ministry, effective June 30. His congregation, Prince of Peace of Hecla, SD has called Pastor David Fuerstenau. They have also called Pastor James Naumann to serve as their vacancy pastor. Pastor Naumann has accepted that call.

Vacation Bible School – This year's Vacation Bible School is being planned for the first weekend in August (August 5-6). Please consult the sign-up sheet on the mailbox table and contact VBS Coordinator Sandy Roehl if you have any questions.

Hospitalized Member Updates – Both Leota Schiermeister and Ethel Baumgarten remain hospitalized. Leota has been blessed with marked improvement and has recovered from a bout with pneumonia. It appears that the Lord has other plans for Ethel, as her condition has deteriorated markedly in the last two days. Please continue to keep both in your prayers.

CLC Convention – The biennial Convention of the CLC is scheduled for this coming Thursday through Sunday in Eau Claire. Please pray for safe travel for all, for fruitful discussions, and that God's will might be carried out at these meetings. St Paul will be represented by Chairman Mike McEnroe and by Pastor Roehl.