

"Get With the Program"

Text: Mark 8:11-21

May the undeserved love of God fill you with hope and confidence in your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

It was the perfect summer day, and it was more or less the perfect little boy thing to do. After picking a couple of dandelions and pulling off the little petals one by one, Tommie began chasing the pretty butterfly that floated past him on the summer breeze. It was the sort of thing that Norman Rockwell paintings are made of.

The only problem was that at that particular moment Tommie was supposed to be playing right field for his T-ball team, the Metro Collision Cubs. His coach, a man many years removed from his butterfly chasing days and a man who took his career as a T-ball coach a bit too seriously, suggested quite loudly that little Tommie *"Get with the program."*

You've undoubtedly heard it. You've probably used it. Even if you had never heard it before, the context alone would probably have told you what it meant the first time someone told you to *"Get with the program."* Break the sentence down and it really makes no grammatical sense whatsoever. Take it as a whole, in context, and it communicates beautifully. You hear the expression when someone – alone or in a group – is failing to grasp or follow the accepted and obvious plan of action.

What remains to be seen (and therefore what we will be exploring this morning) is just how such an expression applies to our text for this morning, and therefore also to us as individual Christians.

That text is found recorded in Mark's Gospel, the Eighth Chapter:

ESV (Mark 8:11-21) *The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. ¹² And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." ¹³ And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side. ¹⁴ Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵ And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." ¹⁶ And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had*

no bread. ¹⁷ And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." ²⁰ "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." ²¹ And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

These are the very words of God – divine truths miraculously preserved down through the ages for our study, growth, and comfort. That our God would grant us these great gifts also this morning, so we pray: **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

Have you ever stopped to think just how frustrating it must have been for Jesus, knowing what he did, to walk among frail, shallow, sinful, shortsighted human beings during his 33 years on earth? Jesus was there at the creation of time and matter, and yet had to live among men who denied his very existence of the Creator. He had passed from eternity into time, and yet he had to live and work among those who acted as though there is nothing beyond this temporary existence. Jesus had always known the absolute supremacy of God and the immediate and unquestioning service of the mighty angels, but on earth he lived among those who arrogantly disregarded the word and will of God and glibly substituted their own fanciful notions about right and wrong. In short, Jesus was the ultimate insider living an entire lifetime among those who, for the most part, hadn't a clue as to what was really going on all around them.

Nor did it really matter that Jesus had friends as well as enemies on earth. In fact the prolonged ignorance of even his inner circle of followers had to have been even more frustrating than the sheer folly of his enemies. Our text has examples of both.

First, we read that the Pharisees came after Jesus – testing him. We should probably take this as evidence that the Pharisees really didn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God. It is hard to imagine them trying to take on anyone they really believed to be God. It was, in fact, their stubborn refusal to believe that Jesus was who he said he was that was so frustrating for Jesus. Why?

The signs.

God graciously announced the diety of Jesus with signs and miracles never before witnessed by man. Jesus himself pointed to these signs when he pleaded with the unbelievers: **"If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸ but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."** ^(ESV John 10:37-38) The miraculous signs or miracles that Jesus performed were God's special gift to a world that had seen many false messiahs come and go. The signs verified that Jesus was different, that Jesus was exactly who he claimed to be.

But then we find something a bit odd in our text. There we read: **The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. ¹² And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation."** What is so odd about this? It is that our text takes place immediately after the feeding of the 4000, which came some time after the feeding of the 5000, which were just two miracles among the hundreds, or even thousands, that Jesus had been performing and would continue to perform all across Palestine. All of this, and still the Pharisees not only come seeking a sign, but Jesus tells them that no sign would be given. What are we to understand from this? Hadn't Jesus been giving them sign after sign after sign? Apparently these sorts of earthly signs were not enough for the high-minded Pharisees. They demanded **"a sign from heaven."** The fact is no sign would have persuaded these determined unbelievers. This was the aspect of the situation that caused Jesus to **"sigh deeply in his spirit."** He knew the character of these enemies and the nature of unbelief. Just as ten spectacular signs from heaven could not and did not persuade Pharaoh to release the Jews from Egypt, so also a thousand signs from heaven would not convince Jesus' enemies. These men came not to learn and believe; they came to test, to ensnare, and to discredit.

We can only imagine Jesus' frustration and sorrow at this point – frustration at the stubborn unbelief he was witnessing, and sorrow at the inevitable terrors and torment that he knew would one day result.

Note this terrible fact with honest sobriety. Recognize in every unbelieving soul that you encounter throughout your life on earth the eternal torment that will most certainly be visited upon every single human being that dies without saving faith in Jesus Christ. Recognize this fact and you will begin to understand just why Jesus **"sighed deeply in his spirit"** at the terrible

truth he knew so clearly: **"Whoever does not believe will be condemned."** ^(ESV Mark 16:16)

Yet those were the enemies of Jesus. Frustrating and discouraging as this must have been, his frustration was only compounded when he dealt with his own men – those who should have known better. How he must have wanted to scream at them **"Get with the program!"** whenever they again demonstrated their shallow and superficial attitude and outlook. Our text gives us an example where the disciples mistake their Lord's **"Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod"** statement as a reprimand for neglecting to bring more bread.

Can't you just *feel* Jesus' incredulity here, his utter frustration that even his inner core of men just didn't seem to get it? How, after seeing the feeding of the five thousand and then the four thousand, could his top men imagine that he was reprimanding them for forgetting to pack enough bread? Read his reply to them again and you cannot miss the disappointment: **And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." ²⁰ "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." ²¹ And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"** How indeed could it have been that they still didn't get it?

Only these words were not written for the disciples in the boat, were they? These events are real – they actually happened, but they were recorded here *for you and me*, here and now. How then do you imagine Jesus would react to the focus of our lives and how we regard things as we walk through this passing existence? How would he react to our continued failure to be "other-worldly-minded"? You and I have the twin benefits of hindsight and Holy Scripture. All of the mistakes have all been made and recorded for our instruction – all with the intent that you and I would naturally reject the shallow, superficial attitudes of those who went before, and that we would instead **"seek first the Kingdom of God."**

And yet if Jesus suddenly appeared right here before us at this very moment, would we see him sadly shake his head and ask, with great

disappointment, "Just exactly when are you going to finally get with the program?" Though you and I know full well that this present age is passing away, and though we know with all certainty that the Day of Judgment and the dawning of eternity could come at any moment, still we find that we have adopted much of the same superficial silliness that we see in the disciples – the same nonsense that drew our Lord's displeasure in our text. *"Get with the program already!"*

Only that's not what our Lord would say to us, is it? Though it is certainly what we would expect, and though it is unquestionably what we deserve, Jesus has just one message for us: *"I forgive you."*

Such news is almost jarring in its incongruity. Knowing ourselves as we do, the message of the gospel just seems so inappropriate – and it is, at least according to our way of thinking. We in no way deserve to hear such news, but that is the nature of the news itself. It is a gift, an undeserved pronouncement that the guilty have been pardoned, and that the one innocent man has been punished in our stead. Jesus came to save sinners – sinners like you and me. God the Father didn't declare "good people" to be not guilty; he justified the whole guilty rotten mass of humanity. No sin and no sinner was left out. Romans 5:18-19: ***"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."***

Do we still need to "get with the program"? Of course. That means simply that we need to put on that new man day by day. That new man in every Christian exists on the same plane as does Jesus in that it sees the true realities of this world and exists for that which is truly important. Guided by the Holy Spirit living within us, we are constantly reminded of the need both to feed ourselves with God's Words of law and gospel, and to share that message with others, while there is still time. God grant us then to be men and women of God in this increasingly Godless, secular world, and to spend our time, our fortunes, and our energies accordingly. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV}(**Leviticus. 19:9-18**) "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. ¹⁰ And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God. ¹¹ "You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. ¹² You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. ¹³ "You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. ¹⁴ You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD. ¹⁵ "You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. ¹⁶ You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. ¹⁷ "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. ¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

^{ESV}(**Luke 10:25-37**) And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷ And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mark Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – July 14, 2019

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 28 (Stanzas 1-2,4-5) (Red Hymnal)

"Now Let All Loudly Sing Praise"

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

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

The First Lesson: (Leviticus 9:9-18) Our first Scripture reading is part of what we today know as the Mosaic Law, delivered to the nation of Israel by God through Moses. Although many peoples and nations have since recognized the wisdom and practicality of many aspects of the Mosaic Law, adopting many of these laws for themselves, most of the Mosaic Law was intended only for the Jews. The mandates of the Mosaic Law ended with Jesus, who fulfilled every demand perfectly. Contained in the Mosaic Law were also elements of the moral law, which still stands for all people of every nation as a statement of what pleases and displeases our God. Christians of all ages still see God's moral law as a timeless summary of how we can now thank our God for the free gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 30 (Page 34) Read responsively

The Second Lesson: (Luke 10:25-37) Our second reading is the account of the Good Samaritan. Sadly, most Christians today turn this account into a preaching of law, when we should, in fact, hear it as a proclamation of pure gospel. The key is to recognize our place in the story. Most see themselves as the Good Samaritan, and hear only Jesus' command to "be good and do good." Certainly this is God's will for our lives, but we miss the true beauty and depth of Jesus' message here when we fail to realize that Jesus himself is the Good Samaritan and that we are the battered and broken sinners who needed the rescue that only he could provide.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – page 5. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 378 (Red Hymnal)

"All that I Was, My Sin, My Guilt"

The Sermon – Text: Mark 8:11-21 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Get with the Program"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 315 (Stanzas 1-3) (Brown Hymnal)

"I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Brown Hymnal page 20)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 648 (Red Hymnal)

"I Am Jesus' Little Lamb"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here!
To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (40) Average (34)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship hour
	-11:30 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship hour

CLC News – Prince of Peace of Loveland has called Pastor James Albrecht. Pastor David Reim has returned the calls to Bowdle and Ipswich.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council of St Paul is scheduled to meet during the fellowship hour this morning. A reminder that any member can add a question or suggestion to the Council meeting agenda by passing it along to any Council Member or the Pastor.

Work Day – It has been some time since our last work day at church and several different project have accumulated. A list of the various projects will be posted shortly. Trustee Coordinator Sam Meyer will be scheduling a Work Day in the next week or so. Please let him know when you could be available to help. If it would work better for your schedule to take care of any of the projects on the list, please let him know.