

"In Vogue"

Text: Mark 7:14-23

May the peace of God fill your hearts and silence all doubt or uncertainty that you are not only loved by him, but that you are and will remain a part of his eternal family. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Does it puzzle you a bit to know that God gives gifts also to the godless? Scripture clearly tells us that he does, which in a way seems rather odd. Why would God bless those who reject his very existence? The problem, of course, is that God's wisdom far transcends our own, which means his reasons for doing what he does routinely lie beyond our ability to fully comprehend. Why, for example, did God bless the Roman Empire with such success? One explanation is that he did so to prepare civilization for the coming of Jesus and the spreading of the gospel. God could certainly have had many reasons, but one thing is certain: he lavished blessings on Rome and its leaders. Have you ever read the writings of the man who is called *"The last of the five good emperors of Rome,"* Marcus Aurelius? The more you study this man the more difficult it is *not* to be a fan – as much, at least, as we can be fans of any man who, as far as we know, lived and died outside of the Christian faith. The man was obviously gifted, and yet despite incredible fame and fortune, he seemed to be able to remain grounded and real. In fact what initially drew me to want to know more about the man was the fact that he is said to have conscripted a slave to ride with him in his chariot whenever he was to receive public acclaim or adoration for his successes. The slave's only job was to whisper in his master's ear: *"Hominem memento te. Sic transit Gloria."* *"Remember you are just a man. Glory is fleeting."*

What misery would be spared the children of this world if they would but follow suit, if they could be so reminded, so grounded. It's just sad to see those who were once famous scratch and claw and grovel to maintain or regain their fame – to remain "in vogue." How pathetic to see 70-year-old drug-addled rock stars pretending to be 20, to see aging starlets cut, stretch, and tuck – all in a vain attempt to create the illusion that they are still young, and to see once great athletes beg to be noticed by playing too long or by opening their big mouths and allowing all of that stupid to fall out. Fame for many seems to act like the ultimate drug, withdrawal from which plagues them for the rest of their lives.

And it's not just "those guys." Christians to our own peril imagine that we are immune. Conversion does not render us immune from sins like pride

and vanity. In fact Satan seems to redouble such temptations among God's children. You see flashes of his success in the myth of Millennialism, where Christians are taught to look forward not to heaven, but to the day when that *they* will one day get to be the rich and powerful who rule the earth as do the godless today. You see it in so many "televangelists" as they grossly compromise the truth of God's Word for social acceptance and popularity. You see it, in general, in Christians who seem to want to be both in the world and of the world.

Make no mistake. All such sentiments are of the devil. They are born of pride and greed, and, as we will hear in our text for this morning, they are the very human characteristics that God himself sees as loathsome and repulsive. Our text for this morning is found in the Seventh Chapter of Mark's Gospel:

^{ESV} **Mark 7:14-23** *And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him."* ¹⁶ *¹⁷ And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) ²⁰ And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."*

So far the very words of our merciful God. Thanks be to God for giving us such perfect truth and guidance. In asking our God to bless us through the study of these words this morning, we pray simply: **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!"** Amen.

The all-consuming desire the world shares to be popular, modern, and "in vogue" is anything but a new phenomenon. You may find it as surprising as I did, for example, to hear that the magazine that bears that very name (Vogue Magazine) was actually founded – when? When would you guess? The '60's? It was founded *126 years ago*, in 1892. Its writers and editors have been pushing the envelope of modesty and propriety ever since. One cover featured Lady Gaga wearing only slabs of meat. Seriously.

While I have a hard time believing that that cover inspired any sane person to head off to work wrapped only in bacon, I will also readily admit that I don't get high fashion. I will further admit that I have never read through a single article in Vogue magazine. In fact the full extent of my experience with Vogue is occasionally seeing the cover in the magazine racks in the check-out lanes at Wal-Mart. I bring it to your attention for one simple reason: like virtually everything else the world produces today, lust apparently is the predominant selling feature, with the superficiality of high fashion a close second.

Again, I will readily admit that I don't get fashion – which, incidentally, I wear as something of a badge of honor. The point here is that my limited exposure to that particular magazine perfectly exemplifies not only today's "worldview" but the exact problem outlined in our text for this morning.

We live in a society that, perhaps more than at any other time in history, values form over substance – which explains why teachers, craftsmen, and engineers are paid so much less than what singers, athletes, and actors are paid. The first group actually produces something – they educate, build, plan and solve real-world problems. The second group is all about games, feelings, and make-believe. Oh we *value* someone who can build us a home or teach our kids, but we absolutely *adore* those who can entertain us or create joy by consistently winning. All of which is oddly puzzling, since we could easily live without those that we adore; not so with those who build and teach.

But that's not exactly where our text seems to take us, is it? What then is the connection between "in vogue" and our text for this morning? Just this: in the struggle to be and remain "in vogue," the children of this world have demonstrated that they will eventually learn to justify the entire list of perversions that our Savior enumerated in our text for this morning. Read the list again, where Jesus tells us exactly what defiles a human being in God's sight, and it reads like a perfect description of the entertainment industry.

Is this current? Is this really a problem today? You tell me. Again the list from our text: "***evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.***" Without the inner change that comes with conversion, man is enslaved by all of these things. Every single item in this list can be justified, rationalized, accepted by those who would do pretty much anything to preserve and perpetuate the glory, power, and adoration that they have tasted even once – that seductive drug that is human adoration.

Yet here's where this whole thing takes a turn into the surreal, for even while these folks are awash in ***evil thoughts, sexual immorality, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness***" they will, at the same time, talk endlessly about their obsessions over, and firm rules concerning, what they put into their bodies. All of this takes us to that strange place where an immoral, adulterous, pro-abortion actress is celebrated in large part because she also happens to be an animal rights vegan.

Get the connection to our text? Jesus here makes it clear that the world has it exactly backwards. As the Jews of Jesus' day were awash in sin even while they justified themselves by eating only kosher foods, so the people of our day evidently believe that what goes into the body is far more important than what comes out of the heart. Form always trumps substance in the view of the godless.

Why do we even talk about such things? Why do we waste our time talking about the godless and what they do? Good question. We do not talk about unbelievers to make us feel better about ourselves – to make us feel better or righteous by comparison. We don't talk about them because we are so much better. We talk about them for two reasons really. First, because a part of each of us is *just like them*. There is no evil in the world that does not also lie crouched and waiting in our old Adam. The only difference between us and them is Christ in us. Day by day the child of God puts on the new man. Part of that process is beating into submission our old Adam or sinful flesh. Understand well that that sinful flesh never goes away, which means that the evil within is always there, always deadly, always eager to rend and tear. Know that you will need to mow that lawn every single day of our life on earth. The proof is obvious in that every we give that inner beast some slack on the leash, we prove that what is inside of us is no different than what is inside of them.

Christians are therefore certainly not immune to losing sight of the lesson taught to us in our text. We too are fully capable of forgetting that what comes out of our hearts is infinitely more important than what goes into our bodies. In fact what the world does always serves as sort of a marker buoy that warns us of what lies just beneath the surface in our own old Adam. Remember how he Pharisee in the temple said: "***I thank God that I am not like other men, for I fast twice each week...***" Just as Jesus said, the man was comforted by what did (or didn't, in this case) go into the stomach, regardless of what came out of his heart. The southern version of that same folly: "*I drink no alcohol and I don't use tobacco in any form.*" The northern

version: "I have given up meat for Lent." The Middle Eastern version: "It is Ramadan, so I fast during daylight hours, and I never consume gum, alcohol, tobacco, or caffeine." The Jewish version: "I eat nothing that has not been blessed by a rabbi and is therefore kosher." The New Age version: "My body is a temple of Gaia, therefore I consume nothing but what comes naturally from Mother Earth." It's all the same, and it's all a perfect example of the problem Jesus identified in our text. What is "in style" or "in vogue" in God's sight is never trendy; it is never fashionable or appealing in the sight of the godless. "In vogue" in God's eyes is when his children obey his will and honor him in all they say and do.

Yet why even talk about sin when we know that the payment for every single sin was paid by Jesus? Let me ask you this: Have you ever tried to straighten something that got bent? What do you do? Everyone who had tried this knows that you need to bend it past straight, knowing that it will spring back a little bit. Maybe a lot. Do you think the devil doesn't know this? He wants sin in our lives because he knows that sin is the one thing that can corrode or destroy the saving faith by which we are saved. He therefore uses a myriad of forces or entities in the world to bend Christians well past their point of comfort – knowing that we will naturally resist and snap back. Yet what we find is that the more he bends (the greater the perversion we see all around us) the less we are inclined to snap back to God's standard of straight.

Don't allow Jesus' words here to remain superficial, as though Jesus is just advocating behavior modification. Don't fail to recognize the real, underlying point that Jesus is making, which is that *sinners require a savior*. Faith alone saves, and faith is degraded and eventually fails when it is allowed to remain in contact with sin. Ask yourself this: "Even knowing now as you do that it is what flows from the heart that defiles rather than what goes into the stomach, even now are you able to stem the flow of what comes from your heart? Even with this new information can you now make yourself clean and pure in God's sight?" Obviously not. In fact all we do now is sin with greater knowledge that what we are doing is sinful in God's sight.

That's why we need Jesus; that's why we need our Savior. We can be warned, but we can't do what needs to be done. We never could and never will be able to be anything close to perfect. Thank God that that's not how anyone is saved. We are saved by the goodness of Jesus Christ. We were rescued by God's Son, who paid for the sum total of all my failures and perversion on the cross of Calvary. I am forgiven in God's sight because of what his Son did.

That's the greater point Jesus is making in our text. It is the central truth of all of Scripture and it represents the only path to heaven: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting that he paid for your sins by his perfect life and innocent death, and you too are a fully forgiven heir of eternal life.

Could such news ever be out of vogue? Though trends and superficiality come and go, God preserve *us* in this one true faith – which is and always will be the only path to life. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Isaiah 29:11-19** And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." ¹² And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read." ¹³ And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, ¹⁴ therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden." ¹⁵ Ah, you who hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, "Who sees us? Who knows us?" ¹⁶ You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"? ¹⁷ Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest? ¹⁸ In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. ¹⁹ The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

^{ESV} **Ephesians 5:22-32** Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The 14th Sunday after Pentecost – August 26, 2018

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 231 (Red Hymnal)

"We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 15ff. (Red Hymnal)

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

The Old Testament Lesson: (Isaiah 29:11-19) The people of Isaiah's day were clearly no different than those in our day in and in our country. It is as if they are incapable of hearing or reading God's Word with comprehension. Instead they substitute whatever teaching of man "sounds right" or "feels right" to them. Today, as then, the godless imagine that what they say and do is hidden from God. As Christians we need to be reminded that God's patience should not be construed as divine tolerance or approval. The consequences of sin are so serious, its payment required the suffering and death of God's own Son.

The Epistle Lesson: (Ephesians 5:22-32) Our second lesson identifies one of those areas where society has absolutely and utterly abandoned God's Word and counsel. God himself established roles for husbands and wives. Those roles are not greater or lesser, just different. Both require trust and humility – wives trusting their husbands to fulfill their headship roles as God ordained, and husbands loving their wives with the self-sacrificing service once demonstrated by Jesus himself.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – (Hymnal page 22)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 453 (Red Hymnal)

"We Are the Lord's"

The Sermon – Text: Mark 7:14-23 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"In Vogue"

The Offertory – (Hymnal page 22)

The Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 325 (Stanzas 1-2 & 5) (Red Hymnal)

"O Thou that Hear'st when Sinners Cry"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Red Hymnal page 24ff)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis (Red Hymnal page 30)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 15 (Red Hymnal)

"From All that Dwell below the Skies"

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 an altar at which to commune** – Since we desire to follow the words of our Savior, we practice "Close Communion" – a practice that is not new to confessional Lutherans. This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting them 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 first 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.

Attendance - Sunday (38) Ave (41)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time

CLC News – Trinity of Spokane, WA has called Pastor James Naumann. Pastor Mark Gullerud has announced his retirement from the pastoral ministry, effective October of 2019.

September Preview – We return to our normal (non-summer) schedule in September, the week after Labor Day. The following is a list of start-dates for the various classes and events coming in September:

September 5	First Confirmation Class
September 5	First Mid-Week Bible Study
September 9	Sunday School and Bible Class resume
September 11-13	WCPC in Watertown, SD
September 17-20	CLC Board Meetings in Eau Claire
September 23	Church Council meeting

It's a Boy – On Thursday of this past week, the Lord blessed Andrew and Angela Roehl with a healthy baby boy – Eli Russell Roehl. He weighed in at 8 lbs. 10 ounces and is already taller than his grandfather. All are doing well.

"O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good."