

Lutheran Vespers, Sometime during 1947-1948
Recording #11
KVNU, 610, Logan, Utah
Rev. Harold Brauer, speaker

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The Word of God upon which we shall base our meditation for their service is recorded in the letter of St. Paul to the Colossians, Chapter 1, reading from verse 3 to 6 as follows:

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of truth of the Gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.

Dear Christian friends. The thought which I would like to impress upon your hearts today as the Spirit of God grants me ability is this: Thank God for the Gospel.

God has given us a great treasure. But we don't always appreciate it. Sometimes we are with reference to the Gospel like children playing with a beautiful string of pearls, not realizing how precious each pearl is. So let us try to come to understand the meaning and the importance of this Gospel more fully. Pray God to keep your minds from distracting thoughts. Don't let yourself be overcome by the drowsiness that may come upon you because of the soothing quiet atmosphere of God's house. Let's try to summon all our thoughts and think on this thing called the Gospel for this is more important than anything else we may be interested in.

Thank God for the Gospel because as the apostle brings out in the words of our text, the Gospel is the means whereby the Spirit of God works faith in human hearts. The Apostle reminded the Christians at Colossae of this. These people had not always been Christians, but now when Paul wrote to them, they were Christians. How had they become Christians? Well, they had not become Christians by argumentation. Paul had not gone to them to argue them into the acceptance of Jesus. They had not become Christians because Paul had overwhelmed them with his oratory. Perhaps Paul was not such a great orator. Some people said Appolos was a better orator than Paul was. Still these Colossians had come to faith because Paul had borne witness to the Gospel in their midst.

The Gospel is a wonderful gift of God, because it has in it divine power. The Gospel, this simple story which tells us that God loved us enough to send Jesus into this world to suffer and to die so as to redeem us from our sins, is a message which opens men's eyes. It allows them to see the Son of God and the Son of Man as their personal savior. And then it moves them in their hearts to accept this Savior. There is no other thing in the world like it. You cannot achieve the same result by any other means.

The minister can entertain a congregation with anecdotes and with a great many clever lectures on all sorts of social subjects or matters of moral philosophy. They may always feel that they have been rewarded for having listened to him. But they will never come to faith in Jesus Christ except by the Gospel. And who would begin to tell of the glories of the Christian faith?

Thank God for the Gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. It is God's means by which he changes an unbelieving heart into a believing heart, by which he converts people from the service of Satan to the service of God. It is the power by which he leads them out of darkness into light.

When a person is brought to faith in Jesus. He puts the arms of faith around the Savior and says, "My Lord," and takes unto himself a sweet heavenly peace. That is how you get peace with God. When you believe in Jesus, you enter into harmony with your maker. Faith in Jesus, which is wrought by the Spirit through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, also enriches all of life for you. When you believe in Christ, every detail of life takes on a different meaning, whether it be sunshine or rain, whether it be health or sickness, poverty or riches. Every experience of life and every possession of life comes to you then to be a thing which God will use for your good. You will see all of life's blessings as wonderful gifts of divine love and mercy. Everything then will be something to refresh your soul, because you will recognize it as God's gift to you.

That is a wonderful thing about faith. Faith really imparts meaning to life. Faith also provides you with riches of comfort. Faith does not give you any guarantee that you are never going to have a heartache, that you are never going to pass through times of trial and difficulty. There is no such promise associated with the acceptance of Christ. But you do have the promise that faith in Christ will provide you with strength, with courage, with comfort when these hard days and heavy blows come. Faith in Christ also unlocks for you, as it were, the inexhaustible fountain of prayer. Once you believe in Jesus and through Jesus enter into harmony with your heavenly father, you can talk to your creator. You can pour your heart out to him. You can come to him with your every need and tell him of all your troubles and difficulties and know that you will be heard. That is what it means when you pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus we have the assurance that God will hear our prayers. And so I say to you, Thank God for the Gospel, because it is the means by which he would bring you to faith in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus told the Gospel to those disciples with whom he walked to Emmaus, they said afterward, "Wasn't it strange how our hearts burned within us, when He opened up the Scriptures to us." Well that is how it is when God works in our hearts with the Gospel, then fires are ignited within us, then something is happening on the inside.

So thank God for the Gospel because it is also the means by which God brings to you a message of hope. How much hope have you? What are you hoping for? How far does your hope extend? If your hope only goes to the grave, you don't have very much hope. Every day people are passing away, some young and some old. You and I don't know when the call will come to us. Thank God for the Gospel because it gives you a hope

which stretches beyond the grave. When you know Jesus as your Savior, then you are confident of ultimate victory, for Jesus has overcome not only sin, but also the consequence of sin, which is death. Jesus has opened your grave for you. Jesus has opened heaven for you. Jesus has given you the ability to see today already, the joys and the glories of eternity which shall be yours.

This has meaning for us from many points of view. As I said a moment ago, we have no right to expect that we will go through life without heartaches and troubles just because we are Christians. God has given us no such promise. We may be sick. We may carry some disease in our bodies for many years. Life may be hard. But we know one thing. God will not disappoint us, God will never fail us. He will always work things out for us. He will not only make the bad things be a blessing to us, but He will give us the ultimate victory. And thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you have discovered that life has used you roughly and badly, just keep your head up, you have a hope. If some dear one has been taken from you and life feels as though you were all alone in a tremendous vacuum, as though that void by your side were never going to be filled again, don't despair. There is a hope and this hope God gives you through the Gospel. There you find a wonderful assurance that this is not all there is to human existence. God has intended us for a heavenly home where our bodies, now tainted by sin and afflicted by disease and maimed by accidents and what not, are to be made like unto the glorified body of Jesus himself. All our tears are to be dried. All our wounds of heart are to be healed and there are to be fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. And don't think that it will be long coming. I hope that you will live a long life, that you will be able to go on with your dear ones for many years to come. Whether you get to be 80, 90, or 100, it will still be a very short time. The years will pass by with increasing speed.

So thank God for the Gospel which gives you a hope which reaches beyond that, so that you really can look up, keep courage in your heart and carry-on confidently because you are getting closer and closer to the greatest of God's treasures for you.

Thank God for the Gospel also because it is the power by which the Spirit of God fills your heart with love. The Gospel tells about Jesus. Through it we can learn how he has loved us with an infinite love. You cannot be loved, you cannot accept love from others without eventually feeling that you ought to express some appreciation of this love. Really the quickest way to counter the world would be to shower love upon it. You discover the power of love in your own home day after day. Teachers experience it in the classroom. It is universally true. Well now if Jesus loved you with an infinite love and died for you, if through His holy Gospel he assures you of His love, if He puts Himself that at your side as your friend who is ready to help you in every time of need and trouble, then you must say: "Thank you." You must respond to His love with a love of your own, first of all with a love toward God. How can you accept Christ without loving the Father who sent Him and sacrificed Him on your behalf.

So thank God for the Gospel because it will ignite fires of love in your heart, which will

enable you to live a different kind of life. This is God's way of keeping you, of fashioning you into a nobler, more beautiful, more charming Christian character. If you know that God has so loved you and you believe this, then you will say: "God help me to show my appreciation." You will try to avoid the things that will hurt God, such as dishonesty, unchastity, drunkenness, or whatever there may be that hurts God. You don't want to do evil because you don't want to hurt Him who has loved you so much.

Your love will also go out to your fellowmen because you know this, Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." You know that if you want to love God you must love man. You cannot love God without loving man. That is not possible.

And so thank God for the Gospel because it will fill your heart with love, also for your fellowmen. This, as everyone realizes today, is the great need of humanity. Is the world ever going to get together, with every individual and every class and every nation going to set like a greedy dog waiting to snatch another bone away from another dog. There is only one way in which mankind can get on happily with one another and that is by the spirit of love. This is what we must learn. We cannot expect people who are not Christians to show even a natural love, when we who are professing Christians at any rate, do such a poor job of showing Christian love ourselves.

If I asked you why does the average American go to work, what would you say? Why does the average American who works in a shop go to his machine day after day? Why does the average American who works in an office go to his business every day? I think the answer is plain. The average American would say: "Why don't you see it?" He goes because of what he gets out of it. But friends, that should not be our primary reason for going.

What would you think of a minister who preached primarily because of what he got out of it. What would you think of a doctor who refused to call on a person no matter how sick he might be unless he were assured before hand that he would get paid for it. Well, why only ministers or doctors or teachers or nurses? The same principle applies to every walk of life. I grant you that in some professions it may be easier to remember this principle of serving from motives of love. But no matter how difficult it may be, and no matter how hard the world of business and industry may be, we must remember as disciples of Jesus Christ that we go to work primarily because we love our Savior, because we want to do a service to our fellowmen. That you need reward, that you must live, that you must be able to operate at a profit to pay your employees salaries if you have a business of your own, and the like, that God knows. You need not tell Him. But what you need to learn and what God is very anxious to tell you is that you are where you are because you should express love. You should live your life in a spirit of service to your fellowmen.

So you see, this Gospel is a wonderful gift of God. It affects all aspects of our lives and it comes to us for the purpose of enriching us for the here and for the hereafter.

So let me close by saying once more, Thank God for the Gospel. Through it you were brought to faith in Christ. Through it you were given hope in this life and for the next and through it you were moved to love God and man. So, Thank God for the Gospel. Amen.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.