

To the church of God at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus. It is the greatest of gifts that you will ever have; it is freely given to you. Given by the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the one who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus. Think on this, sustains you and guiltless on His day!

The church in Corinth was certainly anything but guiltless. They had a whole slew of congregational troubles. From arguments and divisions over personality clashes, to threats made against each other, to issues of greed and pride, to issues over public worship, church discipline, and the abuse of the Lord's Supper, and finally issues of false teaching. There was undoubtedly declining membership, fluctuations in their worship attendance, maybe even some transferred to Galatia, Ephesus, or even to Rome.

These were issues that were public and involved not only their congregation but their witness to the community. And they, just like you, are called to be saints. Why then is there discontentment with the gifts of God given through Christ our Lord? Why is there disrespect for parents and other authorities? Why is there the dishonoring of the marriage bed? Why are the lives of the living but unborn snuffed out by the millions? Why all the death in the world? Because of the sin of the world!

The sin of the world. Sin, not sins, but sin. Not just your individual actions, but the condition of that in which you and I and all people were conceived, in sin. Sin, the deadly plague, the state of rebellion and separation from God and yet we do not even know it apart from God's revelation. We are dying sinners in a dying world.

It is this condition that you live in, it is this condition that even the child within the womb lives. It is your condition that political activists from any side of the table can talk or legislate away. It is the condition that the medical community cannot treat nor can you be counseled out of it. Nor can there be an invention or genetic discovery to remove this condition. And not even the spiritual strivings and kind compassion of mankind can remove this problem. The problem is not that we need to improve ourselves to a certain level that we can attain, nor is that if we believe and try hard enough within ourselves that we can earn and achieve more in this life. The problem is the sin of the world!

This is the basis of all “religion.” God must be appeased, things must be made right. So we try to atone for our sins. We try and offer up our sacrifices. We try and offer up our guilt, hoping that God will see how bad we feel and be nice to us. We sacrifice our children, their lives, sometimes figuratively and sometimes literally, to show God how good of a Christian family we can be. We even try to find self-justification on how murdering unborn children is for the benefit of the parents and society, how our breaking of marriage vows and the gifts given in marriage are meant to be enjoyed, no matter sexuality preference or marital status. We even try to make things right with God by using his name and portions of his teaching to fit our needs and satisfy our itching ears. We might even try justifying the validity of other religions by invoking generic language of God is love and maybe even claim that there is more than one way to be saved. But in the end, there is sin, it is who you are, it is who I am, poor, miserable sinners, and for there to be life and salvation, sin must be atoned for.

To you dear saints who were called into the fellowship of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord: Behold, check it out, look here, and recognize the wonder of a man that looks so ordinary. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! That is, the one is presently and actively taking away, removing sin. The load of the world’s sin was already shouldered by our Lord at His baptism. On him the Spirit descended and rested upon, he is the one baptizes with the Holy Spirit. He is the Son of God.

What is it that you are seeking in this man Jesus? Why do you come to the Divine Service and teach your children to worship? Why do you pray as our Lord taught us to pray? If we give reluctantly from our leftovers, God give us repentance. If we pray with uncertainty and doubt, God grant us repentance and faith. If we worship out of habit, because someone else is forcing us, or to show God how much we love and serve him, God give us repentance. It is not about our action, for your action reflects who you are, conceived and born in sin. Behold, check it out, look here, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The Lamb of God, the Son of God, who became flesh for you. Why, because you are a sinner, deserving of death and hell and things need to be made right with God. Sin must be atoned for, there is hell to pay. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We have the desperate need to receive the forgiveness of sins He offers. His fulfilling of the Law, his death, his resurrection, his paying

your price of death and hell, takes away the sin of the world. This is yours! Your sins are forgiven! His blood atoned for your sin.

This is not a partial forgiveness. When you were baptized you were not washed of some sins. But you were buried with him in baptism into his death (Romans 6), your sins forgiven. The forgiveness he gives you in his body and blood at the altar is not partial forgiveness, your sins receive that sacrifice of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. His forgiveness is not partial forgiveness. There is no need to earn favor with God, God's favor is given.

What are you seeking? Behold, look here, check it out, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, here for you. We have found the Messiah! Come and see, come and eat, come and drink. The Passover Lamb, lead to the slaughter, sacrificed for you, gives you Himself as heavenly food. This you sing in our communion liturgy, as you personally address him who is with you right here, right now. You address with the words of John, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the Lamb of God who gives his mercy and pardon, the Lamb of God who gives you eternal peace.

You can't keep him to yourself. He is the Lamb of God for the world. There are those who believe that we must now wage some sort of holy war, win as many people as we can for Jesus. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. What is given to us is to receive his gifts and proclaim. Not through fancy programs or parties or gimmicks, we just proclaim. Behold, look here, check it out, the Lamb of God. We have found the Messiah! This we proclaim, as we eat of his flesh and drink of his blood, in doing so you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26) Our Lord has already waged the holy war, and he has already won, the battle was for you, and for you he died and rose. The gravest of sins, all the idolatries, the adulteries, and even the murders that senselessly occur, even those of the unborn, even for these sins did our Lord redeem, he takes away the sin of the world.

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