

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Sexagesima Sunday, February 4, 2018**

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 537, 377:1, 19, 375, 1:5.

Lessons: Genesis 19:1-29, 1 Corinthians 1:17-31, Luke 10:1-16.

Sermon Text: Matthew 11:20-24.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Although Jesus had performed many miracles while he was on earth, Scripture records only about 33 of his miracles, signs, and wonders.

Here Jesus is denouncing *“the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.”* Today let’s learn some

**LESSONS FROM JESUS’ MIRACLES**

- 1. Those who saw Jesus’ miracles and heard him preach did not repent though they had abundant opportunities.**
- 2. If pagans had seen and heard those things, they would have repented *“in sackcloth and ashes”*.**
- 3. Let us take care that we, who have had abundant opportunities to hear God’s Word and receive the sacraments in their truth and purity, do not perish eternally!**

Jesus’ first purpose in coming to earth was not to perform miracles. It was to pay the price for all the sins of all mankind. But he often performed miracles to point out and emphasize who he was. His miracles also showed that he had power and they were ways in which he revealed his holy love.

When we think of what his miracles did and accomplished, we realize that they attacked the results of sin. When he cast out evil spirits out of those who were demon-possessed, he was attacking the power of Satan and his allies. When he healed sickness, deformities and other physical ailments, he was attacking the results of sin that attack human bodies. Even when he fed people miraculously he was overcoming the curse of the ground because of the sin of Adam. God had told Adam: *“Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”* Genesis 3:17-19 (NIV) That required all humans to work hard to make a living, but in some of his miracles Jesus provided free food. All of Jesus’ miracles showed his power over sin.

All this is a reminder of his primary mission on earth. He came to redeem, to rescue mankind from the power of sin, death, and the devil by his perfect life and his innocent sufferings and death. *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* John 3:17 (NIV)

None of us has seen any of the miracles Jesus performed in the New Testament. But we can ask: what miracles have been performed in our midst? Have you seen any miracles of God? Before you answer “no”, lets talk about some of the miraculous things that have happened to you in your life.

Hold your breath. What if you couldn’t take your next breath? (Hold your own breath, then pause and then take a big breath.) Do we always realize what a miracle even breathing is? Do we realize how all the systems and organs and cells of the human body function together to keep us alive? If and when the human body is working right, the nose and mouth have an open channel to the lungs. The lungs expand to receive the

air. The heart pumps blood so that oxygen can be delivered to all the cells in the rest of the body. With David in the Psalms we can say ***“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”*** Psalm 139:14 (KJV)

We could look at other physical miracles in our own lives. We awaken each morning after what we hope each night is a restful sleep. Our body arises to function anew each morning. I’m using just those two examples to show how God is performing physical miracles for you every day, in fact, every minute of every day.

Now this isn’t supposed to be a science lesson today. But hasn’t God done more than just physical miracles for us?

We have to admit that we are dead in transgressions and sins. God has given us new life in Christ. We – all who believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior – have been made alive in Christ. No human being can physically give new life to someone who is dead. Forget Dr. Frankenstein’s monster. Forget the dreams of those who hope to bring humans back to life. Many human experiments have tried and are trying to extend man’s life time indefinitely or bring people back to life after they have been truly dead.

But today we are really talking about being made spiritually alive again. We have been born again; we have been quickened; we have been given new life. Scripture tells us: ***“Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. ... Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.’”*** John 3:3 and 6 (NIV) Peter assures us: ***“you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”*** 1 Peter 1:23 (NIV) Paul tells us ***“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.”*** Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)

To explain this miracle of spiritual life, we confess with Luther “that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”

As a result of God working faith in us and having drawn us together with those who believe, teach, and confess the same things, we can gather with fellow confessors of Christ, not wondering if the person next to us really believes in verbal inspiration or really believes in a six 24-hour day creation, or even really believes that Jesus Christ really truly rose from the dead! This, too, is really the work of God the Holy Spirit, that he “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.” Appreciate what God has done for you! Thank God! Praise God! And then appreciate, thank and praise those all around you here in church! These are people who care for you, who love you, who want things to go well for you! Show them your love, too. Some churches have a custom of physically reaching out and greeting and shaking hands with people next to them.

So we must really realize and recognize that God has really performed miracles in your life.

Jesus himself, the very Son of God, performed miracles in towns including Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Capernaum is where Jesus did much of his work. Tyre and Sidon were morally corrupt cities in Phoenicia on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, north of Palestine. Even in the Old Testament the cities of Tyre and Sidon were known for pride, wickedness and idolatry. And Sodom – the great city that was destroyed because of its horrible wickedness and unbelief! Jesus makes this terrible judgment: ***“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”***

We do not know the exact location of Korazin, but we know it was near the west shore of the Sea of Galilee not far from Capernaum. Jesus had made his home at Capernaum after he left Nazareth at the beginning of his public ministry. The people of those three towns had numerous opportunities to see and hear Jesus and recognize him as the Son of God and the promised Messiah. But they hardened their hearts against him. No cities were ever more privileged. The Son of God walked their streets, taught in their midst, and performed many of his miracles before their eyes. Yet they had stubbornly refused to repent.

Jesus denounced those people because they did not repent even after seeing and experiencing miracles which he performed. A larger measure of God’s grace had been given and shown to the cities he named than upon Tyre and Sidon, and so their guilt shall be greater. The greater the grace, the greater the measure of responsibility, guilt, and punishment, if this grace is despised.

On the last day, when they stand before their judge, Jesus himself, the people of Capernaum, Korazin and Bethsaida will be completely without excuse, and the people of Sodom will not be able to challenge the earthly destruction God sent down on them in the form of fire and brimstone. Nor will they be able to challenge the eternal destruction in the unquenchable fires of hell to which they will be consigned, body and soul.

The pagans in Tyre and Sidon ***“would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes”*** if they had experienced the Gospel like the Jewish cities had. So why did Jesus spend his time in those three cities of the Jews and not go to those Gentile cities instead? We cannot answer that question. We must leave that question unanswered because we cannot look into the mind of the Lord. We must exclaim with Paul: ***“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!”*** Romans 11:33 (NIV) We must never demand that God explain to us why he deals with people and nations as he does. He doesn't owe us an explanation and we have no right to judge him on the basis of our limited understanding and feeble human wisdom. On judgment day these things will be made clear, and the Lord will take into account how the people of Tyre and Sidon and Sodom would have responded to Jesus' mighty works if they had had the opportunity.

Those who knew their Savior but later turned away from him, as well as those who had every opportunity to know their Lord but stubbornly rejected him, will be condemned to the most severe punishment. At the same time, those whose opportunities were more limited will be judged by the Lord on that basis. Unbelief always condemns, but there will be these differences, as Scripture clearly tells us.

In general the people of these Jewish cities had failed to accept Jesus and the salvation he brought. There had been some outbursts of enthusiasm, but generally speaking, nothing more. It is with anguish in his soul that Jesus denounces the cities of Galilee as he now heads toward another area to do his work. Scripture does not report any of the miracles Jesus did in these cities, but Scripture does not report everything that Jesus did while he was on earth.

What a terrible judgment! And they now knew it would be coming upon them – unless they repented! When we speak of repentance we are thinking of both the sincere sorrow over sin and the desire to stop sinning as well as the broader picture including faith in the forgiveness of sins. When we remember how many people in so many places rejected Jesus and chased him out of town – to say nothing of plotting to kill him, we must be amazed that they did not believe despite so many opportunities.

But what about us? We have here a harsh warning for us, too, who have had the truth of the Word of God, including the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, in our midst for so long!

We have the Word of God to tell us all we need to know. Is it not miraculous for the message of eternal salvation to still be preached and available to us in the midst of all the wickedness and hatred of the world against Jesus Christ? We publicly, together, repent of our sins in each church service. In order to do that, we must know the Law of God to show us our sins. Then we must know what Jesus did for us to save us from our sins. We have learned from the Gospel that he died to redeem us. We privately repent in our personal prayers.

May our repentance always be genuine! May we not suffer such a judgment as Jesus declared upon these unbelievers! “Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word. ... Lord Jesus Christ, Thy pow’r make known, For Thou art Lord of lords alone; Defend Thy Christendom that we May evermore sing praise to Thee.” (The Lutheran Hymnal 261) Amen.