

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Third Sunday After Easter, April 30, 2023

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 351, 352:1, 339:1-4, 348, 355.
Lessons: Psalm 19, Revelation 7:9-17, John 10:22-30.
Sermon Text: John 20:30-31
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Books are written for many reasons: to entertain, to teach, to show us things, to share some ideas the writer wants others to hear.

From a study of Luther's Small Catechism you might have learned that the chief purpose of the Bible is to lead all people to know and believe in Jesus as their only hope of salvation.

But not every miracle Jesus did is recorded in the book we call the Bible. The Gospel of John is one of 66 books in the Bible. John tells us ***"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book."***

John is the apostle who closes his Gospel with the words ***"This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."*** John 21:24-25 (NIV)

Now that idea seems foolish to us today, but 2000 years ago there weren't nearly as many books as there are today. The United States Library of Congress has more than 39 million books and other printed materials. When John wrote his Gospel of Jesus Christ by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, books had to be written by hand and any copies which were made also had to be written by hand.

If John wrote ***"I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written"*** does that make God and the Inspired Word of God a liar? Of course not. But think about what Jesus accomplished, and all the words he must have spoken and all of the miraculous signs Jesus must have done while he was on earth.

Today, let's examine John's words and talk about

THE PURPOSE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

1. ***"That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,***
2. ***"And that by believing you may have life in his name."***

Someone has counted the words in the King James Version of the Bible, a translation from the original languages that you probably know well. That person counted 788,280 words in the entire Bible. God called John himself to write 5 books of the Bible and gave him the very words he was to write. That is what we call verbal inspiration. After his Gospel was written, John also, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, wrote three letters, that is, three epistles, and the book of Revelation. By the same counting procedures, John wrote a total of almost 34,000 of the words in the Bible

Yet John didn't record all the signs, miracles and wonders that Jesus did while he was on earth. John tells us that Jesus did many more than are recorded in his Gospel. John doesn't record even all of the 34 or so specific miracles that the Gospels tell us about in detail. And the Gospels also tell us that Jesus often did miracles, healing many people.

But John tells us about what Jesus did do and what that information can do for mankind. He tells us that the purpose of Holy Scripture is ***“That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”***

Let’s clarify just what is it that we need from the Bible.

We need the Bible as a light that reveals to us what God has done to save us. The Bible shows us our sinfulness and also shows us our Savior. Peter writes ***“we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place”*** and assures us that ***“no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*** 2 Peter 1:19-21 (NIV)

The apostle John is one of those writers.

He and many other disciples of Jesus were first-hand witnesses to ***“many other signs”*** that Jesus did ***“in the presence of his disciples.”***

John is staking his reputation on this fact. He assures us in the last chapter of his Gospel that he ***“is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.”*** John 21:24 (NIV)

Even though John didn’t tell us about everything that Jesus did, – and for that matter, none of the writers of the Bible did – he assures us that the signs, miracles, and wonders that he records ***“are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”***

Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the very Son of God sent to redeem the world from sin. He did this by living a perfect life and always doing the will of his heavenly Father. He did this by then suffering the punishment that all of mankind deserved because of sin. He did this by then beating the power of the devil when he came back to life after his suffering and death.

And how can anyone get to know that? It is from the Word of God.

And more importantly, how can anyone come to believe that? Scripture tells us: ***“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*** Romans 10:17 (NIV) And remember that it is Christ speaking in the scriptures to lead us to faith. We do not decide by ourselves to believe. It is the Word of God that works saving faith.

That is the Word of God that John wrote, taught, and preached.

It is by hearing and reading about Jesus – from John’s Gospel as well as from all of the Scriptures – that we ***“may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”*** It is only from hearing and reading about Jesus that anyone who hears and reads John’s words ***“may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”***

There is no other place to find the message of salvation. We find that message in the Bible, including John’s Gospel. The Bible assures us that ***“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”*** Acts 4:12 (NIV)

And that message is reinforced by the ***“miraculous signs”*** Jesus did. Such miracles show the divine power of Jesus, God’s only-begotten Son.

He, the very Son of God, had the power to do such miraculous things.

Listen to the kinds of miracles of Christ that are recorded in the Gospels: Healing the sick. Changing water into wine. Miraculously abundant catches of fish. Raising the dead. Opening the eyes of the blind. Driving out demons and evil spirits. Feeding thousands of people. Cleansing people of leprosy. Healing the deaf and the mute, those who could not speak.

So what is the result of believing ***“that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”***?

Jesus came to give life. As the good shepherd, he tells us: ***“I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*** John 10:7-10 (NIV)

This book (hold up the Bible) has the message of life – not just a longer life on earth with all its pains and difficulties, but life unending in a place with no pains and difficulties.

This life is made yours by believing, through faith. Not by faith in an earthly leader. Not by faith in medicines and healing from men. Not by faith in anything of this world, but by faith in Jesus, the very Son of God.

Among men there is often great dispute about what truth is and what is fact and what can be believed.

But the child of God, the believer in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior believes that the Bible is truth and it is fact and may and should be believed and obeyed.

Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus told his disciples ***“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*** (Matthew 28:18–20, NIV)

Listen to what Jesus assures us of: ***“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** John 14:6 (NIV)

Jesus is the only way to eternal life.

Think of how you drive or ride in a car from one place to another. Chances are, there are multiple roads you can take that will get you where you want to go. But there is only one way to heaven. Jesus is that way and there is no other way to get to heaven.

Jesus is the truth, and only gives us truth, never lies, never falsehoods. And God has given us his book of truth.

Jesus is the life. He came back to life after being dead and in the grave. And he is mankind’s only chance of eternal life.

Jesus Christ earned salvation for us. God the Holy Spirit works faith in us.

Paul wrote to Timothy, another servant of God in the New Testament about ***“how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*** 2 Timothy 3:15-17 (NIV)

Remember why the Scriptures were written. Remember why Jesus performed miracles while on earth. All these things were done to give us life and to assure us of that life in heaven.

Lord, teach us about this life!

Lord, give us this life!

Lord, assure us of this life.

Lord, take us to heaven to live with thee there! Amen.