

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 22, 2026

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

Hymns: 430:1-6, 347:1, 349:1-5, 380, 367.

Lessons: Passion History Part 5, Epistle: Acts 9:1-22, John 1:14-17.

Sermon Text: Philippians 3:7-14.

Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

What is really valuable to you? What is your goal in life?

In the Word of God we are looking at today, the Apostle Paul tells us that what was once important to him is now worthless, is even garbage. His goals in life had changed dramatically since his conversion on the road to Damascus.

Today let's ask the question

WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT IN YOUR LIFE?

- 1. The Apostle Paul has answered that question for himself.**
- 2. What is really valuable and important to you?**
- 3. Can we learn from the words Paul has written?**

In our first hymn today we sang "What is the world to me with all its vaunted pleasure When thou, and thou alone, Lord Jesus, are my Treasure." (The Lutheran Hymnal 430)

When we sing such words as believers in Christ, we are not boasting about how holy we are. We are simply stating how a believer in Christ ought to feel about Jesus.

Can we learn from Paul and the words he has written?

At one time Paul considered the fact that he was very Jewish to be an advantage, a very positive thing for him. In the words immediately before our text he wrote *"If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless."* (Philippians 3:4-6, NIV84)

He had an outstanding pedigree and reputation as a Jew. If anything should have earned heaven for him, it would be his ancestry and his enthusiasm and his really good life.

So why, then, does Paul say in our text that he counted all those things as worthless and useless, as rubbish? The big difference in his attitude came when he was brought to faith in Christ. At the very height of his activities in persecuting Christ and his followers, God brought him to faith in Jesus on the road to Damascus. From then on he was an altogether different person.

Now he's happy to have given up all this because of Christ. All of the things that once were important to him were things that robbed him of what was critically important in his life and damaged his soul.

Now God has given him something greater and more important. What is greater than being a good person, a good Israelite, thinking he obeyed God's laws is *"the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things"*

He has found, by the work of God, that Christ is the one and only really important thing in his life. He assures us that *"whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ."*

Christ has become that important to him. What was once important to him he now considered manure, garbage. a stinking mess. Wow! What a picture!

Have you ever acquired something and later realized it is not nearly as valuable or important to you as you thought it would be, or found out that it is even worthless?

Paul has!

All those things he had been taught to do to please God came to him from his parents and his religious teachers and his ancestors. At one time Paul took great pride in his Jewishness. He went to Damascus to root out the Christian heresy and heretics and arrest them.

But now Christ is the most important thing in his life.

Everything that Paul had and experienced and represented was now worse than useless. It was manure, garbage, dung.

Compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord everything that previously was valuable to him is garbage, to be thrown away.

Do you feel the same way? Is Christ the most valuable thing in your life? Is it your goal to ***“want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, ...and ... to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”***?

We can certainly admire Paul, who could say, ***“For me, to live is Christ...”*** Philippians 1:21. (KJV) When we compare our life with Paul’s life of service to the Lord, we feel very inadequate. As we learn more about what our Savior has done for us, we should pray that our love for him will increase so that we can show how much we appreciate his love to us.

Since his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul has received ***“The righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”*** Paul’s own righteousness that he counted on when he tried his best to keep the Law of Moses was no longer of any satisfaction to him. He had given up in trying to earn his way to heaven by good works. In Christ he had found the righteousness that is completely foreign to man, the righteousness that cannot be earned by man. This is the righteousness that comes from God that Christ earned by his work of redemption.

What Paul attempted to do before his conversion was not perfect and therefore was not pleasing to God. Any one of us in trying to keep God’s holy commandments always falls far short of perfection. The Bible plainly tells us: ***“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*** Romans 3:23 (NIV) But what Jesus did in his holy life was absolutely perfect.

Paul wants to grow even more in Christ and into Christ. Notice how he speaks of the Savior. He specifically calls him ***“Christ Jesus my Lord.”***

Of course he knows and we know that we don’t personally win righteousness before God with our lives.

He wants to ***“gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of [his] own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”***

He suffered the loss of all things in order to gain Christ and be found in him, to know him and the power of his resurrection. Listen to the blessings he now has because Christ worked faith in him. And think of all the blessings that you have because God worked faith in you.

Paul wants to grow in the grace and knowledge of his Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote: ***“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*** To know Jesus as his Savior, his Lord and Redeemer, and to appreciate ever more fully all that Jesus did for him, was one of many blessings Paul speaks of as a result of coming to faith in Christ. Another blessing is to know the power of Christ’s resurrection, that is, to be assured by Christ’s resurrection from the dead that he is the Son of God the Father in heaven. Christ’s resurrection is our assurance that we stand justified before God. ***“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification,”*** Romans 4:25 (NIV). Another blessing is to be assured that our resurrection on the Last Day is a sure thing because Christ rose from the dead. Jesus said, ***“Because I live, you also will live,”*** John 14:19 (NIV). Another blessing for believers in Christ is to suffer with Christ. It should not be considered something strange that believers in Christ have to suffer because of their faith in him. Peter wrote, ***“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed***

when his glory is revealed,” 1 Peter 4:12-13 (NIV). In being persecuted for preaching the Gospel, Paul knew what it meant to suffer with Christ. All believers in Christ should be willing to suffer all kinds of tribulations for the sake of Christ and his Word. Peter wrote, ***“Even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed,”*** 1 Peter 3:14 (NIV). We should gladly bear a cross following Jesus, if only we might finally attain eternal life. Nothing in this world really counts for anything if we do not finally get to heaven. Jesus says, ***“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”*** Mark 8:36 (NIV).

Paul writes, ***“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”*** Paul says that he had not already reached the goal of being in heaven. He had not yet entered into that perfection that we shall have in heaven. He still had to battle against Satan and his flesh. He admitted in his letter to the Romans ***“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing,”*** Romans 7:18-19 (NIV). Paul still had to do battle with Satan and with his own sinful nature. But Christ had made Paul his own when he was converted. Now he was eager to get to the end of this life and to partake of the joys and glory of heaven.

Paul continues in our text, ***“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*** Like a runner in a race, Paul says that he would exert every effort to win the race, to reach the goal. In doing this, he would forget what was behind, that is, all the earthly difficulties, the tribulations and sufferings. All he had in mind now was to win the prize, to obtain the victory, to gain eternal life in heaven.

We too have to learn this. We have to keep before our mind’s eye that glorious goal of eternal life with all its joys and blessedness. That means we dare not become too wrapped up in the things of this life. We dare not become too wrapped up in our daily work of earning a living. We dare not become too wrapped up in the pleasures of this life. As followers of Christ we should know that there is nothing in this world that is worth much. All material things, even if they give us some satisfaction here, will be destroyed by fire at the end of the world. Paul says, ***“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory,”*** Colossians 3:2-4 (NIV). The only thing that really counts is that we rise from the dead on the Last Day and go to eternal life in heaven. What joys we then will have! Paul says, ***“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us,”*** Romans 8:18 (NIV).

In all our tribulations and sufferings for Jesus’ sake in this life, may this be uppermost in our mind. Amen.