

Ninth Sunday after Trinity
Matthew 7:24-29; Galatians 1:6-9¹

I have used my pastoral privilege this week in changing our texts so that I might follow up from my sermon last week. Upon reflection, I thought it might be possible to come to a conclusion I wasn't trying to say. The conclusion that you may come to is that I was saying that only Lutherans go to heaven. That's not uncommon. Lutherans are sometimes uncharitably accused of believing only Lutherans will go to heaven. Here's a better way to say what we believe:

There will be Christians from many denominations in heaven but they will all become Lutheran when they get there!

Let me say that again.

There will be Christians from many denominations in heaven but they will all become Lutheran when they get there!

What do I mean by this?

Jesus says, "Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the Rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the Rock." (Mt 7:24-25)

When Jesus says "these words of Mine" He is primarily talking about the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. But I believe He is talking about all His words. At the end of Matthew, He gives this charge to His church: "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Mt 28:19-20)

¹ Follow up sermon from Trinity 8

We are built up in the faith by all the words of Jesus. As Paul says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." (Rom 10:17) St. John says that "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." (Jn 20:31-31)

And we're not just talking about the red words in your Bible. When Jesus was on the road to Emmaus with two of His disciples, He showed them how all of Scripture was all about Himself. (Lk 24:27) Paul tells Timothy that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16-17)

This, of course, is where the problem starts!

My dad asked me an interesting question the other day: "Why are there so many Christian denominations?" Some denominations believe that Baptism saves you as Peter says in 1 Peter 3:21 and other denominations believe that baptism is mere obedience to the Lord's command to be baptized at the end of Matthew. They both cannot be right. Some denominations say that the Lord's Supper is the Lord's body and blood under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and drink for the forgiveness of our sins and other denominations say that it cannot be Jesus' body and blood and it is only bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus sacrificial work. They both cannot be right.

How are we to make sense of this mess? And what is required for our salvation?

Here's an answer to the question from our own confession. Fair warning: it's a long quote:

1. We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and norm according to which all teachings, together with <all> teachers, should be evaluated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testament alone. For it is written in Psalm 119:105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” St. Paul has written, “even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

2 However, other writings by ancient or modern teachers—no matter whose name they bear—must not be regarded as equal to the Holy Scriptures. All of them are subject to the Scriptures [1 Corinthians 14:32]. Other writings should not be received in any other way or as anything more than witnesses that show how this <pure> doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved after the time of the apostles, and at what places.

[These witnesses include the creeds, Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms and the rest of the books in the Book of Concord.]

7 In this way the distinction between the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament and all other writings is preserved. The Holy Scriptures alone remain the judge, rule, and norm. According to them—as the only touchstone—all teachings shall and must be discerned and judged to see whether they are good or evil [1 Thessalonians 5:21–22], right or wrong.

8 The other symbols and writings mentioned above are not judges like the Holy Scriptures. They are only a testimony and declaration of the faith. They show how the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in regard to controversial articles in God’s Church by those living at that time. Also, they show how the opposite teaching was rejected and condemned.²

Our Confessions are a faithful testimony and declaration of the faith and that is why I assert that those who enter heaven will become Lutheran.

² Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 473–474.

And I know that's a long quote from our confessions, but it's so important. The Scriptures are so important. If you get them wrong, you endanger your faith. This is why Paul is so mad in Galatians: "If anyone is preaching to you a Gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed." (Gal 1:9) The Gospel the Galatians received was the same one we receive from the Scriptures and the Book of Concord, that is, Christ and Him crucified for the salvation of sinners received by grace alone through faith alone. Judaizers came in and added works to grace.

Let me give you a contemporary example. I know it takes a lot of work to become an Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts or a Gold Award in Girl Scouts. What if the program changed and you only had to go through the award ceremony to receive the reward? Would the new recipients be thought of as Eagle Scouts? Doesn't it sound reasonable to suggest that these new Eagle Scouts needed to do some make up work?

The Judaizers were merely suggesting that the new Christians needed to do some make up work to be real followers of God. Paul goes through the roof! He is incensed! "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?... Know then that it is those of faith who are sons of Abraham." (Gal 3:1-3, 7)

Those of faith are sons of Abraham. Those of works are accursed forever which is what Paul says of those who teach or believe in a different Gospel. In other words, you are saved and being saved through faith alone by hearing the Word. If you add works into it, you are accursed.

This also answers what is required for salvation: Christ alone through faith alone received as a gift alone. "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mk 16:16) Jesus

says to Nicodemus: “whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (Jn 3:18) This belief in Jesus is created and maintained by the Word of God where Jesus reveals Himself to us.

Paul warns Timothy: “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (1 Tim 4:16) This is what it means to build your house on the Rock. This is why false doctrine is so dangerous.

Let me ask you a question. How much arsenic are you okay with in your dinners? You can get by with a little. I mean it only causes lesions and cancer later, but you won't feel those effects for awhile. If you ingest too big a dose at once, you'll die. And it's much better if you have no arsenic whatsoever.

So, how much false doctrine is okay with you in your ingestion of God's Word? A little may cause temporal sickness but not ultimate damnation. A lot, though, may damn eternally. Many Lutherans who have abandoned the Book of Concord, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Calvinists, Anglicans, and Eastern Orthodox people will die trusting in Jesus despiste their ingestion of some false doctrine, and not because of the ingestion of that false doctrine. Many Lutherans who have abandoned the Book of Concord, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Calvinists, Anglicans, and Eastern Orthodox people will die condemned to hell because they fully trusted in the false teaching of works righteousness.

You must cling to Jesus Christ alone. And you do that by clinging to His Word alone. One of the greatest gifts of the Lutheran Reformation is the fact that most everyone has access to the Scriptures. Psalm 1, 19, and 119 are the great Scripture psalms and worthy of your meditation. Listen to Psalm 19 starting with verse 7:

⁷ The law (תּוֹרָה) of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony (עֵדוּת) of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;
⁸ the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
⁹ the fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.
¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
¹² Who can discern his errors?
Declare me innocent from hidden faults.
¹³ Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.
¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Jesus is your Rock and Redeemer. Cling to Him and He will save you.

In Jesus name. Amen.