

May 29, 2016  
Sermon for The Second Sunday after Pentecost  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Galatians 1:1-12

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Galatians 1:1–12 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—<sup>2</sup> and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. <sup>6</sup> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—<sup>7</sup> not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup> But 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. <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. <sup>10</sup> For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. <sup>11</sup> For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. <sup>12</sup> For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Before going to the seminary, I served for a number of years with our local Volunteer Fire Department. We worked closely with the local ambulance service and often times we worked the same accident scenes. After one particularly bad accident scene, the ambulance crew told a story of what had happened. As they rolled up on the scene, there was a toddler clinging to the front grill of the vehicle after he had been thrown out of the vehicle during the accident. One of the paramedics rushed forward and grabbed the child just as his fingers were slipping. The child latched firmly on to his rescuer and clung to him, not letting him go during the rest of the rescue operation. The phrase hanging on for dear life was very fitting because the child didn't know what was below nor how far the drop was if he let go.

This happened close to 30 years ago. I imagine that paramedic nor any of his crew will ever forget that accident. It was dramatic, scary and exciting, like something you would see on TV or in a movie, and it really happened! A life was saved. A child was cared for and comforted.

The story of our own rescue from spiritual disaster is no less dramatic and exciting. We are God's children and as Christians, we are victims of our own sinful nature, in into the abyss of our "present evil age." St. Paul proclaims to us: We need a rescue too!

From our contemporary evil age with its confusing and seductive claims to truth, propagated by deceptive cults such as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, New Age religions, psychics, etc. You name it, someone is trying to sell it as a religion or a "spiritual" way of life.

With its easygoing "gospels" focusing on the self, which also happens to appeal to the passions and appetites of the flesh, it's easy to get a foothold in the world today.

With its wide-spread philosophy of materialism, success, and sensuality demonstrated in television commercials that push everything from that you want or need.

It's no longer keeping up with the Johnny down the street, it's keeping up with your city, state and world because the TV or internet put it all right up in our faces, and shouldn't we all have at least what our neighbor has...and more?

We need a rescue from the penalty for our sins (v 4)

Actually, the penalty we deserve is death (Rom 7:11). This fact does not carry much weight with many people today.

I recently read an example that told of an evangelist who was interrupted during his preaching by someone who said: "You tell about the burden of sin. I feel none. How heavy is it?" The preacher answered, "If you put a weight of 400 pounds on a corpse, would it feel the load?" The youth replied, "No, because it's dead." The preacher said, "Your spirit is dead too if it feels no load of sin" (adapted from Burgess, p. 192).

It is impossible to escape the penalty by our own strength (Rom 7:14–23). Like the baby I told you about earlier, we cannot save ourselves. Our helplessness causes us to call out for rescue, as did St. Paul (Rom 7:24). Only when we give up trying to save ourselves can we experience true rescue.

But we are not alone, Jesus Christ has come to our rescue!

In fact, Jesus gave His own life to rescue you (v 4a).

Paul cried out, "*Who will rescue me from this body of death?*" (Rom 7:24). It was almost a rhetorical question, because he knew his Rescuer: "*Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ, our Lord*" (Rom 7:25).

It is a rhetorical question for you too, because you know your Rescuer too! He is revealed to you by His Word and given to you in His sacraments. Jesus rescued you from the "dominion of darkness" (Col 1:13) by His sacrifice on the cross.

No because you are worthy or have done enough to be rescued. He rescued you solely by grace (v 6).

Paul experienced grace in a dramatic way when he was converted (Acts 9). Instead of punishing this murderous persecutor, God forgave him. He was baptized and became an apostle, *“not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ”* (v 1).

You may not be persecuting Christians, but if you think about your life and the times that you have fallen short, or even outright thumbed your nose at God’s Law, we deserve plenty of punishment and little or no forgiveness.

Yet, we too are saved by God’s grace. Baptized into Christ’s substitutionary death and resurrection, we have been rescued by Him.

It is said that Abraham Lincoln, when viewing a civil war cemetery, saw an unmarked grave and commented that the marker should read, “Abraham Lincoln’s Substitute.”

Jesus is our Substitute. His death was real, but His grave is empty.

He rescued you from captivity to the present evil age. We Christians live *in “the present evil age,”* but we do not live for it or according to it.

By God’s grace, our lives witness to our Rescuer.

He rescued you by means of the clear, plain, simple Gospel of Christ crucified and raised. (v 7–8).

Only this Gospel has the power to rescue people from their sins (v 7; Rom 1:17).

There is no worldly substitute Don’t be confused or misled by those who change or complicate this Gospel, which in Christ has rescued you.

This pure Gospel of grace welcomes even the smallest, simplest child into God’s kingdom (Mk 10:14–16). Which of you fathers would not rescue your child from physical danger, whether young or old? You can provide rescue for your children from eternal spiritual danger by bringing them to Holy Baptism and teaching him to cling to his Rescuer.

So cling to your Rescuer! Cling to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (v 9). It is in His Word where He comes to you and rescues you!

There is no other Gospel. All other “gospels” are Law in disguise. They either try to lower God’s standard of perfection, or demand the impossible: that you somehow rescue yourself.

There is no other Savior. Jesus is not just another religious leader or prophet. Only He died for the sin of the world and rose. Only He has the power to rescue you.

Cling to your Rescuer! Don’t waver in your faith, commitment, or devotion, no matter who tries to persuade you otherwise.

In gratitude for all that He has done, serve your Rescuer (v 10). “Cotton Mather said that the pagans mistakenly identified the early Christians as ‘Chrestians.’ Perhaps the reason was because the Greek word *chrestos* [*chrēstos*] meant ‘useful.’ Christians were considered ‘the useful ones.’ They followed the example of Christ, ‘who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil’ (Acts 10:38b)” (Walter Knight, *Up-to-the-Minute Illustrations* [Chicago: Moody, 1974] 185).

Don’t desert Him like the Galatians who listened to those who added certain regulations to the Gospel. In following false teachers, they deserted Christ. We can easily be fooled into deserting Jesus too. This is why we study our Bible at home and in Bible class. This is why we teach our children.

If we give up reading God’s Word and simply listen to another, how will we know if they begin teaching us falsely and leading us astray?

Don’t follow any “man-pleasing gospel” because it sounds good to you. Don’t follow false theology to gain the approval of your friends, family, neighbors, or anyone else.

Only through the Gospel of Christ are we pleasing to God.

God promises finally to rescue you from all your trials as He tells us in 1 Pet 2:6:

*“For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”*

He promised to rescue St. Paul in Acts 26:17 and He kept his promise. to Paul.

He will keep His promise to rescue you as we are told in Ps 91:14–16:

*<sup>14</sup> “Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. <sup>15</sup> When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. <sup>16</sup> With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”*

Only the Gospel of Christ rescues us from the present evil age and ushers us into the coming age. So cling to your Rescuer! Jesus Christ is your life and salvation!

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.