

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Almighty and everlasting God, who governs all things in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the prayers of Your people and grant us Your peace through all our days; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

THE EPISTLE LESSON 1 Corinthians 1:1–9

(Paul fondly addresses the Church of God in Corinth.)

¹Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,

²To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE GOSPEL LESSON John 1:29-41

(Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.)

²⁹The next day [John] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³²And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

³⁵The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). ⁴²He brought him to Jesus.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Isaiah 49:1–7 (*The Servant of the Lord.*)

¹Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name.

²He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away.

³And he said to me, **“You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”**

⁴But I said, **“I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God.”**

⁵And now the Lord says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him—for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength—

⁶he says: **“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”**

⁷Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers:

“Kings shall see and arise; - princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

INTRO – Imagine a grandmother and grandfather taking their daughter and her family to the airport. The daughter, her husband, and the kids get out of the car with baggage, and after the hugs, but before they leave, grandpa pulls the oldest child aside and hands her a bag. ‘Snacks aren’t what they used to be on the plane.’ He says. His grand daughter looks into the bag and lets out a gasp of glee. ‘Grandpa! Hershey’s kisses. Thank you! You know they’re my favorite.’ “I know,” replies grandpa. “That’s why I got them. And, O Honey, by the way, They’re to share.” Now the glee on the face of the grand child leaves a little. She thinks to herself, ‘Share? I thought they were for me.’

I. We are in the month of January. It is dark. For the next two weeks we will be working to understand what God has to say about light from the assigned readings in Isaiah. Today’s message to the Jews, and to us, is like a surprise message from the grandfather. ‘My beloved, My gift, the Messiah, He is to share!’

A. Look at the words of this prophecy.

1. Please realize that Isaiah is a prophet and written in prophetic poetry, often hard to understand.

2. However, the New Testament helps us to know that Jesus is identified as the Servant, The Suffering Servant really. Look at verse 3. **“You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”**

3. And please look especially at verse 6.

a. God the Father is speaking, and speaking to Jesus, and to Israel about the Messiah, ⁶he says: **“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I WILL MAKE YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE NATIONS, THAT MY SALVATION MAY REACH TO THE END OF THE EARTH.”**

b. You see, God is speaking to the Jews about the coming Messiah, the one anointed with the Spirit, the promised one. This Messiah, who would be Jesus, He is not just for the Jews, but for all people. He is **A LIGHT FOR THE NATIONS, THAT MY SALVATION MAY REACH TO THE END OF THE EARTH.”**

B. God is speaking of Jesus, who is to be the Savior of all and not just the Jews. BUT, God is also speaking to Israel.

1. Look at verse 3 again. **“You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”**

2. You see, the Jewish people of 700 B. C., they were not to just keep the hope of the Messiah to themselves. They were to reach out to others with the hope for light in this dark world, the hope of God to help with the pain, the death, the sin of this world.

a. For example, Jonah lived about the time of Isaiah. God sent Jonah to the hated Assyrians, to the enemies of Israel with a call for repentance, belief, and forgiveness.

b. Isaiah himself talks about God using and calling Cyrus from Persia and Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon, conquerors of Judah.

c. The Messiah was not just for the Jews, but for all, even the enemies of the Jews!

C. This understandably confused the Jews, because they had laws concerning their worship that they were to be separate from non Jews,

1. They would be considered unclean for worship if they came in contact with

these Gentiles.

2. These rules about worship were made so that they would not be led to worship false gods. There is only one God.

3. Nevertheless, this verse is still saying that God's intent is to reach all people with his love. The Jews were not to be led astray, but they were to reach out to people with God's teaching, especially that hope in this dark world is in God alone, because of the Servant, the Messiah.

II. If you were a child, and grandpa gave you a bag of Hershey's kisses, and told you to share them with your brother and sister, what would you do? Would you share them? Would you maybe keep them all to yourself? Or, would, you perhaps share some, but after you ate most of them for yourself?

A. You know as I do, the Jews did not share the hope of the Messiah as God intended.

1. First, they had not just learned to stay clean from the Gentiles, they hated their enemies.

a. You know that Jonah ran from the Assyrians.

b. They hated their conquerors the Babylonians and Persians, and later the Samaritans.

2. The darkness that the Messiah was coming to disperse with His light was not just in the Gentiles, this hate and sin and darkness was in the Jews too.

B. But secondly, they were confused.

1. They knew God wanted them to be righteous. They wrongly thought the Messiah was coming to them because they were righteous.

a. To a certain extent, they shared part of God's teaching. They were willing to call others to repentance, to call them to work at a life of righteousness,

b. So, they reached out in self-righteousness, looking down on others, rather than in love, as someone who also needed this Servant as a Savior. They neglected to reach out in love.

2 Let me tell you, **Self righteousness without love for others is not righteousness in God's sight at all.**

a. The Jews missed the fact that the darkness was in them.

b. They missed the fact that they also needed the light of the Servant, the forgiving Savior.

C. Thankfully for us, the Jews were wrong. Jesus came for all people, even sinners, even the Jews.

1. Into the darkness of this world, and the darkness of our lives, comes light.

2. Let me tell you, one of the real forms of darkness in our life is self-righteousness. When Christians look down on others because we think we are better, we are in the dark. We can't see. Our eyes are blind.

3. Guess what, we need the light of Jesus to break the darkness of our sin too!

III. The good news is that Jesus, the servant, the suffering servant is the light who HAS broken the darkness.

A Knowing our sin, our self-righteousness, our unwillingness to share the good news, He took our sin, and suffered rejection.

1. We all know the rejection of His suffering and death on the cross.

2. But, how do you think it feels when He died for us, but thinking we're good

enough we think we don't need him, and so don't share Him. No wonder the words in verse 4, **"I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;**

3. Guess what, He knew that rejection was coming, and He suffered for selfish, self-righteous people like us too. What love! What light for our dark world!

B. God spoke of Jesus, and He spoke to the Jews, **"You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified. . . It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I WILL MAKE YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE NATIONS, THAT MY SALVATION MAY REACH TO THE END OF THE EARTH."** We are called to be light too by sharing the Light.

1. We have lots of opportunities. In our Gospel lesson for today, Andrew shares the good news about the Messiah with His brother Peter. We are all light, witnesses of Jesus love in our lives to our friends, acquaintances and loved ones.

2. No other Lutheran Circuit in the Country has a Mission Society like we do, the Alaska Mission for Christ. You can not only donate, but you heard Randy Luffberry encourage us to get a team together. I'd love to be part of such a team, or see our church share Jesus with others in Alaska.

3. Our Synod has missions going. And the Ablaze program seeks to reach 100 million people by 2017. We can support and be part of that.

B. But please remember the servant who is the light of the world, forgiveness in a world of sin, and love in a world of hate.

1. He suffered to be light. Don't expect sharing the Good news to be easy. More and more people are ridiculed for telling others about God's love in the ONE Savior.

2. And we aren't just called to share the light when we are flush with money.

3. Maybe toughest of all, Jesus loves us when we are unlovable, and we are called to love others, even those who seem 'unlovable.'

CONCLUSION – Grandpa didn't just give the bag of candy to His granddaughter, he told mom too. And, then he gave her a couple of more bags. When mom saw daughter not sharing, She let her daughter know there was plenty for all. So, the daughter was actually more free in sharing with her brother and sister. Guess what, there is plenty of God's love to go around, even for us. We need it. So, we are not only called to share light, **WE ARE LIGHT.**