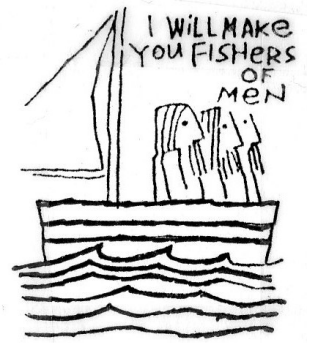


St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church of Watertown, WI
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
1 Corinthians 9:19-23 ESV July 18, 2010



For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

At my house – the last few months we have started watching the Food Network. They advertise a program I’ve never watched – called simply, “The best thing I ever ate...” And that intrigued me. The best thing I ever ate. It’s not the best meat I ever ate. That would be a piece of prime rib I had once at a restaurant in Nashville. It’s not the best bread I ever ate. That would be French bread – in Paris – like you always see in the movies – grocery bags with two loaves of French bread sticking out. You can’t explain how delicious that bread is. The best cup of coffee – would be in Paris, too, at an outdoor café – French roast – in a small cup – with a croissant. The best sip of wine – standing on the top of the Mount of Olives – seeing Jerusalem – the holy city – for the very first time! But the best thing I ever ate – of everything I ever ate? After giving this lots of thought – I think I would have to say – rice pudding – the rice pudding I had when I was a student at Northwestern College. It was warm and creamy – with melted butter drizzled on the top – with each grain of rice huge and tender but not mushy. And they had these institutional like salt and pepper shakers but they were full of sugar and cinnamon – and you could sprinkle it on the top. They had these little dessert bowls and you could have as much as you wanted! Oh, it was good! The best thing I ever ate! The best thing I ever heard – the best thing I ever read – would have to be the Gospel. The simple profound powerful essential good news that Jesus took away all my sins. That’s by far the most wonderful thing I have ever heard! It means whenever I die – how ever I die – I will go to heaven for certain and for sure – because Jesus took all my sins away. That’s news to share with the whole wide world! That’s what the apostle Paul is talking about today – living your life dedicated to sharing Jesus’ forgiving love:

Do Everything For The Gospel!

- 1. Be every man**
- 2. Share in every blessing**

Gospel very literally means good news! The good news that Jesus rescued us from all our sin and guilt. Last Sunday afternoon a lady named Christine was driving through the rain – when it started to rain so hard there was a flash flood. Skidding to the bottom of a tunnel – Christine’s car was swamped. She climbed out of her car and sat in the roof. All around her swirled the dark water full of sewage – and Christine didn’t know how to swim. She was utterly helpless when – to the rescue came off-duty firefighter Mike Marino. Mike Marino threw one of those lifesaver doughnuts attached to a rope to Christine – and pulled her to safety. Mike

was very humble about it all. But Christine will tell you he is an absolute hero. He saved her life! He rescued her! He saved her – when she was helpless to save herself! Jesus of course did much more than throw us a life-line. Jesus saved us from the sewage of a lifetime of sin – a rebellious attitude that was horrible beyond words! Jesus lived a life without sin – then died a torturous death – to wash away all our guilty stains. Jesus did that for everyone – for the what – some 104 to 106 billion people who ever lived? Jesus died for us all. That’s good news you can tell every man, woman and child you ever meet! It’s a historical fact! Whoever they are and whatever they have done – Jesus died for them!

Sharing the Gospel was so important to the apostle Paul – that he was willing to do anything to share it. In literature – when you read short stories or very very long ones – when there is a character that just about everybody can identify with – they call that character – every man! He stands for all of us. Paul understood that concept. He would be every man – to share the Gospel with everyone! **For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.** Paul is talking about Christian liberty – Christian freedom. In Christ we are truly free. We don’t need to live our life worried about what other people might think. We don’t need to live our life worried about what other people might say. We are answerable to Jesus. Jesus is the one we need to serve out of thankfulness for his forgiveness. We are truly free. Having said that – Paul says – I have made myself a servant – εδουλωσα – literally *made myself a slave* to all. That’s work! When Uncle Terry comes to visit – we start to get ready long before he gets here. We want everything to be perfect for him. When we pick him up – we plan on stopping very soon – at McDonald’s – because Uncle Terry loves McDonald’s! We stock up on all the things Uncle Terry likes – that he can’t get in Peru. Uncle Terry likes *Hostess* cherry pies. Uncle Terry likes peanut butter – creamy and chunky. Uncle Terry likes that French Onion Dip you make by putting Lipton Onion Soup mix stirred up with sour cream. You can’t get mixes in Peru. Uncle Terry likes hot dogs – he likes mac and cheese. We put fresh sheets on the bed in the guest room. We take Uncle Terry to Nike to get new running shoes. We take him to Bethesda Thrift because Uncle Terry likes a bargain. We would do anything for Uncle Terry – literally anything – because he’s family! That’s the attitude we need for everyone! Because we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to treat everyone like family.

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. It is a wondrous thing to be Jewish – by blood – by nationality. It is a wondrous thing to be a physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, Solomon – Joseph and Mary and the Lord Jesus. It is a wondrous thing to know that if you were smart enough and the record were complete enough – that you are part of the family tree of the Son of God. And yet it doesn’t make you any more forgiven. Remember that precious reading we had from Galatians just a few weeks ago. **You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were untied with Christ in baptism have been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:26-29** There is the Jewishness that is a matter of nationality – being an Israeli. There is also the Jewishness that is a matter of being bound to Old Testament ceremonial law. This is very complicated. It means very complicated rules concerning for instance what you eat. Do you know where you would look in the Bible to find out what was ceremonially unclean? Leviticus – Leviticus chapter 11! Birds. **These you shall detest among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they are detestable: the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, the kite, the falcon of any kind, every raven of any kind, the ostrich** (we watched them cook ostrich on the

Food Network—on Chopped!) **the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind, the little owl, the cormorant, the short eared owl, the barn owl, the tawny owl, the carrion vulture, the stork, the heron of any kind, the hoopoe, and the bat!** Leviticus 11:13-19 When would you be tempted to eat a bat? If you went to a confirmation in Indonesia— at the family feast— there is a very good chance they would serve bat on a stick! But an Old Testament Jewish believer— would have to say, “I’m sorry! I can’t have bat! God’s Word says so!” When Paul was with Jewish people— especially those who were still very careful to try and observe Old Testament Ceremonial Law— he would be careful not to break those rules— out of respect for their tender conscience. Paul didn’t want to do anything to cause offense. He didn’t want to do anything that would end up being a wedge between them and the Gospel of Christ crucified and risen!

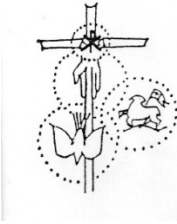
To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. Paul lived his life under Christ. On the night he was betrayed Jesus said, **“By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”** John 13:35 That needs to be true all the time— that we show— we demonstrate that we are Jesus’ students, followers, imitators— by how we love and forgive each other. **24/7 365** we need to love and forgive each other! Paul knew people who were outside the law. People who all their lives were Gentiles— not Abraham’s children— people who had spent their whole life— apart from God’s Word and God’s will. Paul took this into account— in how he treated them— how he shared law and gospel with them. He didn’t count them as nasty people to be avoided. He understood friendship evangelism. He became a friend— someone one they knew and trusted. He understood what it was like to make horrible painful and hurtful mistakes in life. And he understood how sweet it was to know God’s amazing grace. Paul shared the one thing needful with people who had squandered so much time without knowing about Jesus— because no one ever told them! How could they possibly know— without someone to tell them?

To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. Weak? Most people— most of the time try very hard to never ever let on that we have any weaknesses! We try very hard to cover up our weaknesses. Grey hair? White hair? Not me! Can’t dance? Then we don’t go anywhere near the dance floor at a wedding— lest someone take hold of our hand and drag us out onto the floor. Can’t swim? Then don’t bring your suit along. Don’t like your hair— wear a hat. Don’t like your teeth— learn to smile without showing them. Don’t like your picture being taken? Always be the one taking the picture! There are a million examples! The worst weaknesses— are inside— moral and spiritual weaknesses— the good we want to do and don’t. The evil we don’t want to do— that we keep on doing! Sometimes it’s only when we hit rock bottom that we can go to a meeting and say, “My name is such and so— and I’m an alcoholic!” There! You said it! The new animated movie last weekend? Despicable me! There. I said it. We may be weak— but don’t we know people that are weaker? Don’t you know people that drink more? People that eat more? People that curse more? People that come to church less? People that have had failed marriages— more children in more trouble? Don’t you know someone deeper in debt— with more mistakes in their lives that we have? To the weak— Paul became weak. It wasn’t false modesty that moved Paul to say, “What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death?” When you are sharing your faith— it can be pretty intimidating to someone unchurched or unshepherded— if they think we are so perfect— so close to Jesus we don’t make mistakes like mere mortals! It’s ok to admit our weaknesses— to acknowledge our shortcomings— the many ways we need to grow! Then to face the future— without fear— but a Gospel centered confidence and optimism. Remember the LORD’s promises through Jeremiah?

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. Imagine an air plane crashes on a tropical island. There are survivors – a whole bunch of them – a thousand miles off course – no one knows where to begin to search to find them. What would you do? Would you sit on the beach and wait to be rescued? Would you build a raft to get off the island – to make your way to shipping lane to be rescued? Or would you dig in – making your home on this island – building homes – planting crops – harvesting fruit and salting fish – planning to stay? Would you cooperate and share or would you look out for your self – hoarding? Would you be afraid – lashing out with deadly physical violence whenever you thought you might be in danger from *the others*? Would you appreciate in your new life on this island a new start – a fresh beginning – away from all the troubles and problems of your painful past? Would you tell the truth – or would you think that for the greater good there are all kinds of times when it's best to hide the truth or to tell lies – in the name of a greater good? Would you worship? Would you thank and praise God? Would you baptize newborn babies? Would you use the Gospel to comfort the survivors when people died? *Lost* is more than some 121 episodes over 6 years. Lost is what we all are – born dead in trespasses and sin. Found and rescued – forgiven and saved is what we are by grace alone. We are heirs of Heaven for Jesus' sake. This is news too good to keep to ourselves. The Gospel is what we have to share with everyone everywhere now – before it's too late. Amen!

To God alone all glory!



Rsv. Anthony E. Schuttz