

Sermon May 29, 2016 - Pentecost 2

Do Not Be Fooled!

Galatians 1:1–12



Dear Friends in Christ

We are in an age where information readily available, information is at the tip of your fingers, it goes wherever you go, you can pick and choose what you want to read, what you want to believe as well.

So in a way I think this is a blessing because of the overwhelming information that is at hand, but it is also a curse because, just like there is such an amount of good information there is also a greater amount of information that is really deceiving, junk, without substance but what is worse, that many fall trap of that bad information, believing it and even getting desensitized to the reality of things, that includes even spiritual matters where we can be easily fooled into believing something different.

However, although man can easily be fooled, taken in, but there is only one unchangeable Gospel and that is good news.

It is good news because we are easily fooled, aren't we. It almost seems as if people want to be fooled. There are many who will believe what they want regardless of their senses or their common sense.

Many will believe anything, whatever it is, just present it correctly, package it properly, and you may will believe you, and whatever you say it will be the truth, the ultimate guidance for their lives. Why? Because many are gullible, we can say they are easily fooled. And of course, there's no shortage of those who would take advantage of the gullibility of others.

There's always someone out there willing to help you believe what you want to believe, and many are willing to let you pay them good money in the process.

Many make a living convincing people they've discovered a better way—a better way to health and wealth, a better way to live, a better way to fulfillment, a better way to many things, including a better way to God?

Yes, there's no place like religion for supporting fakes and crackpots, for throwing money at gurus and preachers, for discovering something “new” even when we have that which was never lost and is unchanging, the true gospel.

And this is no new phenomena, is not something of our age and day. It's been always like that, even in the times of the New Testament, just as the apostle Paul. He writes to the Galatians, “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” (v 6).

Paul knew all about those who claimed “new” breakthroughs in religion. He knew about those who claimed religion and faith needed to evolve over the years. He knew all about those who claimed that Scripture is outdated, at least incomplete. He knew all about those who claimed special revelation from God or a new discovery concerning God's purpose for us. He knew all about them because they were as alive and well in his day as they are in our day.

So Paul says to the Galatians and to us: “I cannot believe you're so easily fooled by all this!”

There will always be those who try to convince people that they've discovered a new or better way to connect to God. Follow these steps or say those prayers or if just do something... that there is a better way to

come to Jesus. A better way to find purpose. A better way to please God. A better way to believe and live, and all will sound good, at least on the surface, but as you peel away the layers of logic and nice words, you find it always requires a tweaking of the Gospel at best or changing the gospel all together at worst.

A little change here, there, a little nip and tuck, some theological plastic surgery, and there it is! But if it wanders away from Christ it becomes none sense. As B Franklin said: “The learned fool writes his nonsense in better language than the unlearned, but still 'tis nonsense.”

And Paul would say “I am astonished that you are so quickly . . . turning to a different gospel” (v 6)—which is really no gospel at all.

Any change of the Gospel is a different gospel and, therefore, is no gospel! Changing the Gospel destroys the Gospel! Do not be fooled!

But what is the Gospel, anyways? The Gospel is the Good news of Christ Jesus whom God sent in his mercy into our sinful world. God’s only begotten, born in the flesh to take upon him the burden of our sin and carried it to the cross at Calvary. On that cross, under the load of our sin, he suffered and died. He paid the price demanded for sin, the price demanded from us, thus rescuing us from sin and death.

And after his death and burial he rose on the third day, giving us with his resurrection a victorious life in Heaven but even here, on this side of eternity.

Now, because of Christ we do have the forgiveness of sins, we do have life, we do have salvation, all of those gifts are our in Christ Jesus. That’s what Christ accomplished for us out of his fatherly, divine goodness and mercy as a free gift for those who could never deserve such amazing grace.

Now, the gates of heaven stand open before us. Now, heavenly mansions are prepared. Now, today, we see, experience, God's eternal grace through Word and Sacrament, but one day we will experience it face-to-face. We eagerly look forward to that day, for then we shall dwell in the presence of our Lord forever.

That's it! That's the Gospel! There's only one Gospel of Jesus Christ! All is given by God, it is a gift, not from my own efforts, but when my human logic says I must be active in my own salvation, I must do something to deserve God's grace or to win his love, then that is surely a different gospel.

And if I think or if I'm convinced by someone else's book that I need to do all the right things here on earth so I can have a better seat in heaven—that is a different gospel.

Or if somebody says that we must be tolerant of all kinds of behavior because God is love and he made us the way we are, that too is a different Gospel. The Bible says, there is only one Gospel, the Gospel of Jesus Christ who paid for our sins.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ pleases God, not man. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's plan, not man's plan. It is God's plan to save man, though not in a manner man would have chosen. It is God's plan, not to please man, but to save man.

Paul even says, "If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ" (v 10) because of Christ.

Thanks be to God for his Gospel, for the Gospel of Jesus Christ is what gives us life. Now we because we have life in him we would want to be in Christ.

As the same apostle Paul tells us: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

A friend tells us this story, he says that when he was younger, back at the farm, he would take his dog for walks across the fields. On one occasion, they came across a nest of a quail. When the mother quail saw them, she would flop away, acting as if her wing was broken. She looked like easy prey, and his dog would be after her. She would stay just ahead of him until she was far enough away from the nest to ensure the safety of her young, and then she would fly away.

Do not be fooled! Often we are led astray from the true Gospel in like manner. Something looks as if it makes sense, no matter what the Bible says. It sounds so tempting, so logical, so easy, so fulfilling . . . and off we go! But it only leads us away from the truth. Therefore the words St Peter spoke are important he said: “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:13

Therefore “May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” (2 Peter 1:2) and pray that we don’t be fooled for there is only one Gospel—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is only one Gospel—the love of God in Christ, which snatched us from the jaws of everlasting death and opened the gates of everlasting life.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.