

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in St. Paul's letter to the Christians in Collosae, the second chapter, beginning at the sixth verse,

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, and raised

with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in our sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all your sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

And now may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable to you, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the lamb,

For those of you who do not know this little tidbit about me, I have 23 years of education. I am 31 years old and have been in school for 23 of those years. This is not said to brag, but it is said to inform you that I do have a lot of schooling. Now in that 23 years of schooling, I

went to public school for all but 3 years of college and seminary. Thus, 16 of those 23 years was spent in the public school system. Now the purpose of this sermon is neither to extol nor tear apart the public school system in America; rather, it is to inform you that my mind has a lot of “hollow and deceptive philosophy” and is sometimes dependent on “human traditions” in my thinking.

But, then again, I think that regardless of which school you went to there is a part of your learning that is based on hollow and deceptive philosophy and human tradition. In fact, in my time at Bethany, I remember having a professor who once told us that he was the most dangerous person that we knew. Not physically dangerous, but rather mentally or knowledge-ly dangerous. As he explained it to us, most students just walk into a classroom and soak up what the teacher says without so much as a peep to the contrary. So if someone wanted to truly ruin a generation of thinkers all he would need to do is teach... Kind of scary, no?

And yet, Paul in our text tells us to not be taken captive, to not fall prey as it were, to such people and Paul tells us that we can do this, or better yet, we should strive to do this because, **You have received Christ!**

Now let's be fair, it is not hollow and deceptive just because it is taught in the public school system. Nor is it human tradition because it is taught in the public school system. But when you trace back the teachers learning and their knowledge base it becomes clear where the knowledge comes from. Going into my freshman year of college I was signed up to take a biology class. This was also the year that Christ called me into His flock. Now as I am taking this class, I have no problem keeping up and doing the assignments, performing well on the tests... however, I just couldn't buy all the things the teacher was teaching us. One day, as we were walking and talking, the professor noticed the “fish” sticker on my car and asked me, “So you're a Christian?” Yep... I can regurgitate with the best of them for your test, but I don't really believe all that you teach... especially evolution.

But it is so easy sometimes to get caught up and led astray into the thinking of the world, into hollow teachings, into teachings of men and not of Christ. Take sin for instance: you go into many public schools and the concept of sin is not taught. In fact, I would wager that many of those who do teach, all across the U.S., would never want to nor ever teach the concept of sin in their classroom. One major reason, the government says they can't bring religion into their classrooms. So now you have an entire generation of people who do not hear about sin... unless their parents bring them to church. But you have a society telling you that you don't need church. We can all just be spiritual in our own time in our own way, we don't need to go to a church. We don't need to be told that we have sin. We definitely don't need to be told that we are inherently corrupt, because as the world teaches it, we all just have our own little foibles that we need to overcome. We all have these little problems, but definitely not something like sin.

Or maybe look at baptism: how can water do such a thing. Water can take away sins, that is crazy. Let's be honest, baptism just means that I've made my decision for Christ and I want to be labelled as such.

Or maybe the Lord's Supper: there is no way that the body and blood of Jesus is found in that little wafer and that little cup. And even if it is, how can he be here in Omro and also in Oshkosh, and also in Mankato, and also in Germany? It's impossible for that to happen, so stop with the fairy tales.

And this is just three of the most important concepts that we as a church teach, that are destroyed by a hollow and deceptive philosophy that is not based on Christ. We believe all of the above because they are in the Bible and that is what the Bible says. Not what a man says, not what my high school teacher said, not what the government said, it is what the Bible says.

But the Bible also says, "Do not lie" and I bet some of u have already lied today. The Bible

says that we are to think the best of our neighbor and yet how many of us did not even think to invite them to church. The Bible says that we are to love all people and yet how many of us are still harboring angry thoughts. You see it's really easy to say that the problem is out there... but we have our own problems too.

But when we are in sin, which is constantly. When we fall victim to sin and become a slave to sin. When we are 'dead' because of the sin that we commit... it is then that God stepped in. As our text says, "when you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ." This is what God has done. This is our our heavenly Father has done, and He did it through His Son, Jesus Christ. God made us alive, not with fancy and special things, He did it with a very precious thing to Him, His Son's own blood. Jesus lived and died, so that we could have heaven. Jesus lived a perfect life, the GodHead dwelling bodily on the earth, never sinning, never leaning on man's knowledge or on hollow philosophies; rather, He trusted in His heavenly Father. And then Jesus died. He died

an innocent death, not dying for His own sins and crimes, but dying for the sins and crimes of us all. And as He was nailed to that cross, God the Father did something amazing, he took away the written code and with it the record of our wrongs and He nailed them to the cross with Christ.

And then with Christ's coming back to life, He descended into Hell to proclaim his victory over all the principalities and authorities of the world. Then He rose again, from the dead proclaiming His victory to the world over death, hell and Satan. This is what our God has done for us... and still there is more.

Jesus Christ, before His ascension into heaven, left with us three "Means of Grace:" the Word, the Lord's Supper, and baptism. The Word which we read and hear in our lives, which strengthens our faith. The Lord's Supper which we are about to receive where Christ promises us the forgiveness of sins for those who rightly receive this Supper. And Baptism...

In our text we get two important points about baptism: 1) It is comparable to circumcision, and 2) in baptism we are buried with Christ and raised with Him also. To the first point, according to Johann Gerhard, “In place of circumcision, holy Baptism is especially instituted in the New testament for such a purpose.” Gerhard continues, “For just as in the Flood all flesh, which had corrupted His way, drowned, so also in baptism’s water the old Adam is drowned. Just as through circumcision, the foreskin of the flesh was removed, so also Baptism is a spiritual circumcision through which the sinful flesh is laid aside.” And Lange states, “Circumcision is to be performed on all males on the eighth day. Baptism has taken the place of circumcision. There is no command to baptize on the eighth day, but the parallel between the circumcision of infants and the baptism of infants is clear.”

To the second point: in baptism we are buried with Christ and we rise with Him also. In baptism, our sin is washed away. And when we die, we go to heaven because of the faith that

baptism has worked in our heart... faith in all that Jesus has done for us.

Dear friends in Christ, sometimes in our lives it is difficult to ignore all of the “human tradition” and “human knowledge” that is around us. We are inundated with it on a daily basis by so many people and so much media... but Christ, he is who we need to listen to. We need to hear His voice in the Scriptures. We need to receive His forgiveness in the remembrance of our baptism. And we “Take, eat” and “Take, drink” regularly in the Lord’s Supper.

Thank God that we have received Jesus... not because of the things we do, but solely because of the love that God has for us.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever will be, world without end. Amen.