

Sermon Series: Body Talk—Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Westfield, IN—1/12/2003

Title: “The Power of the Body of Christ”

Text: Matthew 16: 13-19

Intro: *Ills.: Christ’s Identity—is it important?*

Theme: The one, significant thing that distinguishes the Church, the gathering of believers, from all other groupings and organizations is that we proclaim and practice the power of Jesus’ forgiveness.

What is your hope for deliverance?

- Avoiding the secularized Jesus trap
 1. Jesus was confused with all the secular, material, political expectations of the day
 1. John the baptizer as a reincarnate social conscience so that they did not have to have one
 2. Elijah—great miracle maker, convicting many people with might and power but converting few to follow God
 3. Jeremiah—restorer of glory days of Judah (rumor about him hiding ark and returning with it in Messianic age)
 2. Do we look to or invite others to Jesus or to programs/personalities of the institutionalized church to be our deliverer?
- Is Jesus enough?
 3. God’s Selected Solution to Salvation
 1. *The Christ* – code word for “Messiah”—God’s promised deliverer
 2. When you up to your eyeballs in yours and others sins — you need someone standing outside of the swamp.
 - *“No one else can save us. Indeed, we can be saved only by the power of the one named Jesus and not by any other person.” Acts 4: 12*
 3. It is on that “confession of Peter”—*that Jesus is the Christ* —on which Jesus builds his Church
 4. Big enough to cover your world
 1. *The Son of God* – not some prophet or leader — but “the God-man” himself comes with power to act
 - *“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” Acts 10: 38*
 2. Bigger than my personal sin & its effect and problems and layoffs and losses and sicknesses and distresses
 3. Bigger than international politics and war and nuclear/biological/terroristic threats and the hosts of others crises
 4. Is your faith simple enough to trust?*(Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. He 11:1*
 - **ILLS.: Security No Greater Than Values**
 5. The one who truly helps you “*get a life*”
 1. “*Of the living God*”— comes to give us life when everything else is intent on taking the squeezing the life out of us
 2. Most of us want a “full, purposeful life”— but never seem to get there
 - *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10: 10*
 3. All of us face the awful truth of our own personal demise, someday, without any personal solutions at hand
 - *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.” John 11: 25*

The Grace Escape

- The keys of the Kingdom = forgiveness
 1. Jesus actually gives us the right in his name to forgive or to withhold forgiveness
 - *“And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” John 20:22-23*
 2. The continuous rhythm of confession and forgiveness in our lives--- **together**
- Free grace rather than cheap grace
 3. In a world which has warped the Christian message of love, we need to retake and redefine what true love is

- “*Instead, speaking the truth in love . . . Ephesians 4: 15*
 - Cheap grace is not love at all (not condoning sinful actions/words by silence and refusal to address [binding])
 - **Ills.: Free not cheap**
 - Free grace balances love in ***accountability and responsibility*** – love not guilt driven/no hostage taking [releasing]
4. When as Christians we truly and honestly practice ***confronting, confessing, and comforting***, we are truly free
- *Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8: 31-32*
 - **Ills.: Two kinds of grace**

Christ's Identity—is it important?

Jeremy Bowen, the presenter of a new British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) documentary on Jesus stated, "The important thing is not what he was or what he wasn't—the important things is what people believe him to have been. A massive world wide religion, numbering more than two billion people follows his memory—that's pretty remarkable, 2,000 years on." Bowen couldn't be more wrong. Who Jesus is and what he did is the foundation of our faith.

Citation: Alan Wilson, Nyon, Switzerland; source: Alex Webb, "Looking for the Historical Jesus," BBC News Online

Security no greater than values

Whenever there is a separation between values and practice, things break down. In ancient China, the people desired security from the barbaric, invading hordes to the north. To get this protection, they built the Great Wall of China. It's 30 feet high, 18 feet thick, and more than 1,500 miles long! The Chinese goal was to build an absolutely impenetrable defense—too high to climb over, too thick to break down, and too long to go around. But during the first hundred years of the wall's existence China was successfully invaded three times. It wasn't the wall's fault. During all three invasions, the barbaric hordes never climbed over the wall, broke it down, or went around it; they simply bribed a gatekeeper and then marched right in through an open door. The purpose of the wall failed because of a breakdown in values of those who built it.

Free not cheap

I was in a store shopping for a sweater. The cost needed to be minimal, so I went to the clearance rack to start looking. As I flipped through the sweaters, one caught my eye. It was the right color and the right size, and best of all, the price tag was marked \$8.00. Without much more thought, I made my purchase. At home I slipped on the sweater. Its texture was like silk. I had made my purchase so quickly that I hadn't noticed how smooth and elegant the sweater was. Then I saw the original price tag: \$124.00! I gasped. I had never owned any clothing of that value. I had come home with what I thought was a "cheap buy," but the original price was quite high. I had been oblivious to its value. Just as with my sweater, I have often treated the power of Jesus' blood like a "cheap purchase." His grace, though free to me, carried a high price tag—the life of his very own Son. (***Karen R. Morerod, writer, "Lesson Learned from a Sweater," Decision (November 1999), p. 39***)

Two kinds of grace

Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace ... is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him. **Citation: Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship*.**

Matthew 16:13-19

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." [NIV]