

Sermon Series: "From Bethlehem to Calvary to Heaven"—Lord of Life Lutheran—Westfield, IN—2/29/2004

Title: "Focused Christianity"

Text: 1 Corinthians 1: 10-17

Intro.: *Ills.: Building a team not collecting talent*

Theme: As a members of the Christian family, we can find our source of powerful identity in Jesus in the midst of a world which is lost while trying to figure out who they are.

A snapshot of the books of 1 and 2 Corinthians

- ***A conflicted church*** – confused about the focus (Jesus); nature ("body" of forgiven sinners); and purpose (do all for the glory of God & evangelize the world) of the church, they fell into civil war
 - ***Foundational Christian teaching*** – centrality of Jesus, Lord Supper, resurrection, spiritual gifts, spiritual discipline, Christian liberty, marriage
 - ***Christian liberty and responsibility*** – Membership in the Body of Christ defined as ***accountability and responsibility***
- Often the Christian church mimics confused living of a schizophrenic world (Print 1 Corinth 1: 10-12)***
- Trying to find worth in trinkets
 1. **Ills.: "wearing this gold pin gives me a sense of worth"**
 2. Corinthians started as a wealthy, growing, well-healed gathering of Christians but forgot to leave their secularism, materialism, and humanism behind and disintegrated into a squabbling club of people full of themselves and not Jesus
 3. Enamored with programs, buildings, and personalities churches today look more like shopping malls than committed
 4. *"What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ."*
Philippians 3: 8
 - Warring with others to acquire what they have (power, prestige, priority)
 5. Physical sparing at work, school, home---if nothing else to try and take what belongs to another so they can't enjoy it
 6. Philosophical sparing — community wars imposing alien values or depriving personal growth out of selfishness
 7. Sad to say, even within the church family, we find it
 8. *When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God. Jam 4:3-4*
 - Morphing into conformity with the next big fad or influence in life
 9. Herd mentality which leads to destructive behavior
 1. **Ills.: the healing story of Jesus, the demoniac, and the pigs**
 10. Repression of others who may be living out the transformed life of Christ
 1. **Ills.: The Current Culture War (Passion of Christ, homosexuality/marriage issue, presidential politics)**
 11. Elitism at Corinth and within present Christian churches comes from ***not knowing who you are and whose you are***
 1. Corinthians tried to figure out who baptized whom/ who had better spiritual testosterone/ maintaining their rights
 2. Church goes and denominations posture with each other for who has the corner on pure doctrine and practice
 12. *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Rom 12: 1-2*
- Priority # 1 for believers: Focus on Jesus (Print 1 Corinthians 1: 13-17)***
- Living from your source of power living in Jesus
 1. It involves ***DYING – TO SELF***

1. *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."* Gal.2:20
2. Die to selfish ambition; perverted competition; empty self-worth; elitism; and false pietism
2. It will result in **RISING** to a whole brand new way of living — **IN JESUS**
 1. *"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."* Phil 3:10
- Focusing on purposeful and redeemed living in Jesus
 3. Paul knew purpose --- who sent him and what his mission was---- **to tell the good news** to a world dying to hear it
 4. What is your purpose as **"one who is sent"** out into your world?
 1. **Ills.: Vision for life**
 2. **Bring God glory** *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* 1Cor10:31
 3. **Witness to the risen Jesus within you** *Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.* 15:58
 4. **To live for heaven** *For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.* 2Cor4:17

Building a Team not collecting Talent

The New England Patriots were a surprising success in the first half of the 2003-04 NFL season. Despite using eight rookies to replace injured veterans, the Patriots led the AFC Eastern division, with a 7-2 record. Part of their success is due to an unselfish mindset adopted by coaches and players alike. The vice president of player personnel, Scott Pioli, displays a sign in his office that summarizes it best. The sign reads, "WE ARE BUILDING A TEAM—NOT COLLECTING TALENT." **Citation: Peter King, "Center of Attention," Sports Illustrated, 11-03, page 94; submitted by Stephen Nordbye, Charlton, Massachusetts**

Vision for life

Tree-skiing may sound like a death wish, but some skiers love the risk of skiing virgin powder lying in a stand of aspen or spruce. The key, of course, is not hitting the trees! In *Outside* magazine, writer and skier Tim Etchells lays out the challenge: *Even more so than in deep snow or moguls, what you focus your eyes on becomes critical in the woods. Look at the spaces between the trees—the exits where you hope to be traveling. "Don't stare at what you don't want to hit," says [extreme-skiing world champion Kim] Reichelm matter-of-factly.* **Citation: Tim Etchells, "The Trees: Lovely, Dark, and Deep," Outside (November 1999), p. 128**

1 Cor. 1:10-17

¹⁰I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in your understanding and opinions. ¹¹My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹²What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." ¹³Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? ¹⁴I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. ¹⁶(Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel--not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.