

Sermon for the 2nd Sunday after Epiphany (13<sup>th</sup> January 2018) during Vespers

*1. Corinthians 2,1-10: And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

Dear friends of our Lord IX: It's a coming and a going. Big announcements – 4 weeks long – Advent of our Lord. He's coming! That was the message of the OT all along from the very outset and beginning. Finally he came. Christmas. The zenith of time. The critical juncture. Nothing would ever be the same again. BC and AD. This happened because IX was born in Bethlehem – Son of David and King of the Jews. His appearance was like a great light shining in the night – like that star that led the wise men from the East to worship him. Epiphany. IX is the light of the world. The savior of the world – not just the Jews, but also the gentiles: Africans, Eurasians, Americans.

The promising time of Advent has come to fruition. Finally. Christmas has come and IX too. Now we celebrate the time of his Epiphany. His appearance as one of us – Son of the virgin Mary – to live amongst people like you and me. He did this to reveal the glory of his heavenly Father, the one God, maker of heaven and earth, so that we, who had fallen by the wayside, had gone wayward and off track, lost our way with God and lost paradise in the process, would return from our wrong ways. Get back on track and home with God. So that finally we would put all our trust in him alone, seek all help and sustenance from him and depend entirely on him in good and bad times. In perfect unity with the Father, IX has made it clear to the world through the workings of the HS, that he did not come to destroy, but to save. Praying even for those, who persecuted, tortured, crucified and in the end killed him. They found no fault with him, because all he did was good and without sin. He went all out to seek the lost, bring sight to the blind, heal the lame, wounded and sick, release the bonded and those caught up in all of harmful ties and evil configurations, forgive sinners, preach the gospel to the poor and bring us all back home into God's family, the one holy Christian Church.

This holy mission of our Lord IX came to its climax at Golgotha, that skull rock and haunted place of the outcast, lawless and godless scum of the world – unholy, forlorn and hopeless. There on the accursed tree, IX conquered sin, death and devil – the unholy Trinity – the evil opposition almost from the beginning. We thought, he was the one punished by God. Meantime, he was bearing our iniquities and suffering for us and on behalf of our wrongdoings, sinful being and godless existence. He did it for us, who were his enemies. He did for sinners. To restore, forgive and atone for these godless beings. Now, that's all done, complete, finished and accomplished. Nothing more remains outstanding. It's done. History. Thank God – our liberation and salvation is confirmed. There's no turning back on this objective fact. Therefore you too can rest assured. The victory's won. IX is our victorious Lord and savior. He has got the whole world in his hands. You and me, big and small, young and old, weak and strong. And his hands are not out to get us, but rather to bless, heal, forgive and carry us home. "He leadeth me to quite waters by..."

Therefore you can depart in peace. Go your way forgiven. Go out to your desk, about your calling in congregation, church, family and home in the assurance, that God is for you and nothing can harm you nor pull you out of his hands nor stop you on the way home. That's why this time of Christmas and Epiphany is really one big holiday. Celebrating our undeserved deliverance by IX, that became our subjective reality in our holy Baptism, rejoicing in our glorious freedom as children of God – free from evil bondage and harmful servitude and thanking & praising the triune God alone for our lasting citizenship in his holy kingdom. He started the good work in us. He's not going to fail us one bit, but going to bring all his promises to fruition and glorious completion in his own, but perfect time. He calls out even this morning: Come to me all you, who are tired and heavily burdened. I will give you rest. We come with our burdens. He forgives us. Grants us mercy and God's gracious favor. Let's us find rest under his peaceful guidance and supervision, so that we gain hope and new life. Departing in peace and moving on with confidence. Because he's going with us. We're in good hands and nothing is going to separate us from God's love for us that is in IX – our Lord and savior.

We old Hermannsburg mission people treasure that old motto: ***From cross to crown!*** Just like our Lord IX came from Golgotha to the glorious Resurrection Sunday, so we, who through Baptism are buried with Christ into his death daily, shall by the powerful promise and active deliverance of our God be raised up daily too, so that we will likewise live in a new life of righteousness and holiness.

He invites you today: Come to me all you who are thirsty and I will give you waters of life boundless and free. Living waters poured from him. He shed his lifeblood for us and now invites all to come and drink from this blessed cup of the New Testament, which was shed for us and for our salvation. It's our hope and most precious treasure. It's a most powerful antidote against hopelessness, despair, death and dying, but it also is strong medicine to fight the lack of love, mercy and goodwill towards God's people, which always threatens even us God's chosen and called servants and church. So, come and taste, how friendly your God is. He does not just let you go, but blesses you with all his gifts and mercies, which are new every morning. You may come with empty hands, but he will surely fill them according to his promises.

Remember, even when the Apostle Paul came to visit the Corinthians he didn't have a bag full of tricks and trinkets. Rather he came with that one and only holy Gospel, the true treasure of the Church, the message of forgiveness for sinners through IX by his death on the cross and his most glorious resurrection at Easter. In Narnia C.S. Lewis calls it "ancient magic" and it sure bluffed Satan and that old witch and all their ilk. Now IX is raised to the right hand of God, lives and reigns above all and with all authority in heaven and on earth. He's gone ahead. We're bound to follow suit – by his grace, power and goodness. Where the head's gone, the members are to follow shortly. That's our comfort, that's our hope, that's our sure confidence. Therefore we go our path joyfully. Gladly following his calling – step by step one at a time. Sometimes it may seem like hop-skip-and-jump, but it's also been a plodding along. Others may march, others may dance, but remember, we are all most cordially and lovingly invited and drawn closer and closer home by our gracious and merciful Lord IX. Therefore go well, God's speed and Adieu.

Hymns:

1. Arise and shine in splendor (Martin Opitz 1597-1639 tr by Gerhard Gieschen) 396,1-5
2. Songs of thankfulness and praise (Christopher Wordsworth 1807-1885) 394,1-5
3. Hail to the Lord's anointed (James Montgomery 1771-1854) 398,1-5

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