

“The Revelation of the Gospel”

Go outside on a clear night, and if you know what you are looking for, you can see Mars – a little red spot in the sky. It’s hard to believe that we have been able to land a rover on that planet to check out the conditions there, while our feet are firmly planted on this planet.

But before that could happen – there were many other things that had to be figured out. We had to figure out electricity for instance – how little unseen electron particles work – and then, how to use it to do what we wanted to do.

Of course, you also have to discover how to keep rockets from falling out of the sky – and how to steer such a thing in the currents of wind and gravity and rotational forces. And on top of it all, you’d have to come up with a way to pay for all this.

Well, the truth is that we have sent a rover to Mars, and another one is on its way. Pictures have been sent back to us so we can see what the surface of Mars is like. Even though all these things have taken place – you don’t understand how. Could you have figured it all out? Probably not – but someone did.

Let’s shift our attention to another, more amazing truth – the Gospel. How about that one? Could you have figured out the Gospel all by yourself? What about an assembly of the best and the brightest – Pascal, Newton, Benjamin Franklin, the Wright brothers, Albert Einstein – the top mathematicians, engineers, physicists, and cutting edge thinkers – could they figure out the Gospel?

The answer is NO. The Gospel is not something that human beings can figure out and comprehend with reason. The Gospel isn’t manufactured, or discovered, through the intellect of man – it comes from the Holy Spirit.

Apart from the Holy Spirit – we, like all sinful human beings – consider the Gospel to be “foolishness.” It’s as foolish as me giving you \$5 and trying to convince you that I’ve given you \$100. It just doesn’t work that way – it doesn’t compute – it doesn’t “make sense” to us.

Oh, how blessed it is to know the Gospel. How blessed is St. Peter, here in our text – but notice what Jesus says to him – “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”

What was revealed to Peter, the whole world cannot figure out. Some have tried, speculated, but their speculations have fallen short. When you’re dealing with the Gospel – you’re dealing with life or death – and falling short doesn’t cut it. Jesus is not John the Baptist – or Elijah – or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus is “the Lord who saves” (that’s what His name means). He is the One promised long ago – the One of whom the prophets spoke. And as St. Peter clearly confesses – He is “the Christ” – the “Anointed One” of God.

Jesus is the chosen Lamb of God to be sacrificed to atone for the sins of the whole world. Jesus is the One “whom you crucified” – who was crucified in payment for your sin – “but whom God has raised from the dead.” Through the blood of Jesus – shed for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins – you are healed.

Without the Holy Spirit – all of this IS, and REMAINS – “foolishness.” How can someone who is dead be raised to life? How can you say that I have crucified Jesus – why am I guilty of this man’s blood? And how can one man’s blood heal anyone – much less save everyone, eternally? “Foolishness,” we’d say, utter “foolishness.”

But you are not without the Holy Spirit – for when you hear the Gospel – God the Holy Spirit is at work. Just as the Holy Spirit was at work in creating the heavens and the earth “out of nothing” – so the Holy Spirit creates faith in you, where once, there was no faith.

Just as the Holy Spirit breathed life into Jesus and raised Him from the dead – so He has resurrected you from the death of your sin, your unbelief which cries out “foolishness” – and now brings forth the confession from your lips that Jesus “is the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Left to ourselves to work out a plan of salvation – we would reject the Gospel – that is, Jesus Christ, the very capstone of God’s salvation.

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved,” the Holy Spirit declares. “Everyone, therefore, who hears these words of mine and does them will be like the wise man who built his house upon the rock,” Jesus says, “The rains fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew against that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the Rock.”

Jesus – and the confession of His Name, His salvation – is the Rock on which the Holy Spirit builds the Church – and as Jesus promises, it will not fall. Our sin rained down upon Jesus and death engulfed Him – but sin has been paid for, death overcome, and Jesus has been raised to life.

You now stand with all whom the Holy Spirit has united to Christ by faith. You have been built upon the Rock, Jesus, and not even the gates of hell shall prevail. That is the Gospel. That is the good news of your salvation – in Jesus, who is “the Christ.”

God the Holy Spirit, who has revealed this Gospel to you – who has given faith in Jesus to you, and has raised you to new life – continues to gather you around the Word and Sacraments of Jesus Christ, to strengthen you in faith unto life everlasting.

The Gospel is not some formula that has been given to you so that you can now go and share it with others – so that you can make it “make sense” to them, so that they can figure out their salvation.

No, the Holy Spirit reveals the Gospel of Jesus Christ to you so that you can believe it, marvel in God’s love for you, and confess it before the world in your words and deeds – living as one who has been set free from sin and death, to live with Jesus forever.

Dearly beloved, you are blessed because your Father in heaven has revealed this truth to you. Blessed are all to whom Jesus is revealed – for by this Gospel the Holy Spirit builds the Church – gathering all the saints to live in Jesus, the Rock who will not fall. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.