

Do You Want to Know A Secret

Who doesn't respond to the opening line of the Beatles 1963 hit, "Do you want to know a secret?" Depending on where you look that beguiling line came from Disney's *Snow White* singing to the doves, "Wanna know a secret? Promise not to tell?" Or the secret was that John had gotten married or that he really actually loved his bride (www.songfacts.com). When it comes to God's secrets as our text does, the matter gets amped up. Deut. 29:29 says, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever..." So, do you want to know God's secret?

Paul says this secret is inaccessible to the wisdom of this age. Even the brightest and best, "the rulers of this age", don't get it. And more than the rulers of this age not getting the secret, Paul says these rulers "are coming to nothing." 14 of 50-plus Bible translations translate 'nothing'; A Greek lexicon (BAG) has "doomed to perish" "passing away". In any event, these rulers aren't moved to find out. How about you?

What if I told you that you already know the secret? The simple truths you take for granted: that God in Man is manifest in the Person of Jesus. That He is the God-Man. That He is Lord of Creation and therefore it must obey His Word. None of the rulers of this age even recognized this. Had they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of Glory, says Paul. When the brightest and best – the scientists, the educated, the theologians - reject such basic Biblical truth as whatever is contrary to God's laws is sin, fallen mankind needs redemption, recreation, and resurrection – they are doing what Hebrews warns of "crucifying anew the Son of God" putting Him to open shame. How? By saying that the crucifixion didn't really happen, didn't need to happen, or it happened and did nothing. Crucifying God in ignorance is terrible; doing it again is demonic.

Those who go by human reason, what science can tell them, what conventional wisdom agrees on (known now as social media), to these God's secret is unseen, unheard, and *un-hearted*. The insert's "no mind has conceived" is the Greek "upon the heart of man NOT has it ascended, entered." There's no method of apprehension open to man, eyes, ears, heart which can give him any idea of the wonderful, mind-blowing things God has prepared for those who love him...and note this isn't only talking about heaven's joy, but the revelation of something right now. So do you wanna know *this* secret?

I've got you all primed now. I've set you up like the hitchhiker does the driver in the opening clip from the 1983 "Twilight Zone, The Movie". He asks him on a lonely highway, do you want to see something really, really scary? Remember this was in the days before home computers and the trick of asking you to stare, to focus on your computer screen as some innocuous scene on it like kittens, puppies, kids played. Suddenly it turned into something gruesome, hideous. So do you really want to know God's secret? Do you still want to even it's scary?

This secret is hidden from eternity, says Paul, "before time began." I was going to tell you where it's hidden but as soon as I do you'll be like that the girl in the Pina Calada song, "Aw it's you." Nothing special here. Nothing to see. Move it along. But let me build it up: This secret has been forever hidden; that perfect passive tells us two things God did the hiding and there's no way you'll find the secret unless God reveals it to you. In 1986 "The Mystery of Al Capone's Vault" was aired live. Geraldo Rivera blasted the vault open on air. It was billed as a 'mystery' but it was the secret aspect that was so compelling. What was in there? What could be in there? The secret aspect was built, pumped, hyped, and then...nothing.

How about God's secret? Paul writes straightforward to Pastor Timothy about it. The word translated as 'mystery' here is the same word the NIV insert translates as secret in our text: "Beyond all question, the mystery [secret] of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16). There's the secret; there's the thing kept hidden from eternity from the best and brightest of men. And even now though they're coming unwound, deflating, passing way, they aren't even moved to seek answers to dying, to what's next, to, isn't there more than this?

And not only is modern man unmoved to seek God's secret, the modern church doesn't always preach it. In the verses right before our text Paul says, "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words" (1 Cor. 2:1-4). In the church's I visit: it's the exception to hear about Christ at all and really the exception to hear about Him crucified.

God secret hidden from before time began has been known by you since you first went to Sunday School, were first taught about Jesus: It's that God takes on flesh and blood from the womb forever on to redeem us, purchase and win us from all sins, from death and from the power of the Devil with as Peter says, "His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death." The hidden secret is that God so loved the world that He sent His Son into it to live a perfect, sin-free life to satisfy the Law, and then give Himself up to suffering we can't imagine, to pain we couldn't endure, and a sentence of death and hell we'd soil ourselves just to hear pronounced. If you're reaction is. "Aw it's just that." Then you have no sense of your utter sin and sinfulness which you have to answer for but have no answer to. You should be those in mourning, those set in ashes, those beat down under the devil and so be readied for the oil of joy, to have beauty for ashes, and praise for heaviness. But you're content to pass away with the rulers of this age. If so, I say to you what I said

to a unruly Jr. Confirmation class 30 or more years ago: “Look you don’t need my help to go to hell. You can just leave if these things of God mean so little to you.”

The Spirit of God is the One who reveals God’s secret. And He did it decisively, pointedly, directly. And He reveals ‘even the deep things of God.’ There is to be no wonder, let alone fear, that there is something about God that the Spirit is holding back from you. He reveals “that we might know what God has freely given us.” It’s not ‘understand’ as the insert translates but “know” and it’s a perfect. This answers the other perfect. What God has forever hidden from the world of unbelief the Spirit has made forever known to us. And the word “freely” is *charis*, grace. The Holy Spirit forever makes known the gracious things of God. The Spirit doesn’t reveal all the why’s, how comes, and what if’s. He reveals the depths of God’s grace. That the Baptismal font is bottomless; it can drown any sin. That Absolution meets no sin it can’t send off your back. That Communion is the Medicine of Immortality meant for mortals like us.

Stop trying to read the mind of God. That’s what we do when we don’t go by what the Spirit reveals about the deep things of God in Word and Sacrament. “No one knows the thoughts – literally it’s the things of God – except the Spirit of God.” Those nudges, those urges, maybe even dreams, intuitions, feelings, etc., are not where or how the Spirit promises to work. If you put the force of God, the revelation of God behind them, you will soon wander off into a maze of uncertainty. God hasn’t limited Himself to work, to reveal in only Word and Sacrament, but He has limited us to look for Him with certainty only there. We bind each other as Confessional Lutherans to this. “... We should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through the external Word and Sacrament. What is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and Sacrament is of the devil” (SA, III, VIII,10).

Do you hear how empathic we are? Do you see how clear? Anyone who claims a “thus says the Lord” or, “the Spirit told me” apart from Word and Sacrament you are to run from not like *your* hair is on fire but because *theirs* is. The fires of hell have lit them up. But they are so certain, so sure, so sincere? Ask a confirmand how the rope between barn and house and barn and outhouse illustrates why their certainty doesn’t matter.

See that last line of the text: “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.” That’s one translation; I like the NASB margin: “Interpreting spiritual things to spiritual man.” Or better GWTN, “explaining the things of the Spirit to those who have the Spirit.” You know how I’ve said that tech people all speak the same language and it takes mere moments before 2 or more start speaking it. I don’t know that language. I have said it’s like R2D2 speaking to C3PO. Well, those in Christ understand the Spirit’s language. That language is foolishness to the rulers and the world that is perishing. It’s laughable to them that Baptismal water is stronger than the Devil himself and that Absolution separates what no man can: his sin from his self. It’s foolishness to them that Jesus’ Body and Blood should be on this altar in Communion. All of these secret truths can be understood only with the Spirit. The next verse after our text says this: “an unspiritual person does not accept the truths taught by God’s Spirit because they are foolishness to him.”

And in here, in Divine Service by word, song, hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting we have the fullness of the Spirit poured out on us. C.S. Lewis, writing just after WW II, likened going to church to using the wireless radio that meant so much to English civilians during the war. He said: "When you go to church you are really listening-in to the secret wireless from our friends: that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going" (*Mere Christianity*, 51). Amen

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