

Second Sunday after Epiphany  
Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
Related text: John 2:1-11  
Date preached: January 17, 2016  
Sermon title: Read the Label.

I freely admit it. I generally do not read the very fine print that outlines things like terms and conditions. It's that very fine print of credit card terms or warranties, such that is printed in point .4 font that one needs a magnifying glass to read well.

Now by not reading those details it is entirely possible that I miss something of significance that may catch me off guard. In such cases, I'd have no one to blame but myself.

Something similar could be said about reading labels. One is meant to see the important things like the name of the product, the company making it, and of course, the cost. It is true of the labels on our food and our medicines. In the finer print however is information such as the list of potential side effects with taking a particular medicine.

I raise these illustrations as a way of pointing out something very similar in going on in the Scripture reading from 1 Corinthians. The Apostle Paul in his letter has taken great pains up until now to speak against the immorality prevalent in the city of Corinth. He is speaking to a church that is being

confronted with non-Christian voices, peddling messages that are deceitful, and can lead one away from Christ.

So we come to the point where Paul writes, “I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says, “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.” There we have it. To confess “Jesus is Lord” is to do so under the power and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Now, the terms and ramifications of what that means are spelled out in Scripture. The good news is that the Word of God is accessible in every language, in small, normal and large print.

To say “Jesus is Lord” is a confession of belief. It is also a statement about who we are in this relationship with Jesus. In other words, for us to say “Jesus is Lord” is to say that he has authority over every aspect of our lives.

His authority over us is not simply located in the things that we want him to handle for us, such as prayers for healing, the power to change other people’s attitudes and behavior, or to solve global systemic problems.

His authority over us goes also to the things with which we don't want to part. Jesus has something to say about how we use our time, our bodies, our money, and also goes to address our attitudes, our biases, prejudices, and even good things that we treat as idols.

Jesus is the head of the body of Christ. Like the head that contains our brains which control our bodies, Christ works in the same way conveying purpose to each part of the body of Christ for the benefit of the whole body.

To say Jesus is Lord is to pledge to use our talents, gifts and selves to honor God and to love our neighbors. In this way we bear witness to our Lord, a pledge made at our Baptism, and reaffirmed throughout our life.

To say Jesus is Lord is to say that he is our light. Jesus himself said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Without Jesus, the light that we ourselves are would cool and extinguish like an ember being removed from a fire.

There is a great delight and awesome news in the confession that Jesus is Lord. In the Large

Catechism that Martin Luther wrote in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century to instruct pastors, He wrote this as it comes to what it means that Jesus is Lord. “He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father’s favor and grace. As his own possession he has taken us under his protection and shelter, in order that he may rule us by his righteousness, wisdom, power, life and blessedness.”

The delight that Jesus is Lord is that we are wrapped in the security that our sins are forgiven. Yes, we will still face difficulty in this life. We will be faced with temptation. The enemies of God will threaten us.

The delight is that nothing, that neither life nor death, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And in this delight comes bountiful surprises. The surprise is that you have a greater gift than had you won the power ball. The gift you have is the beauty of eternal life with God.

The surprise is that this God who loves you showers you in mercy and love. His only Son goes so far as to surprise you as he surprised the wedding guests at Cana by changing water into wine.

Jesus is Lord. It means for us a life of submission. It means a life of delightful service. It means a life filled with surprises of mercy. It mean, LIFE.  
AMEN.