

Sunday, August 7, 2022  
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost  
Pastor Matt Duerr

### Nothing New Under the Sun

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. I'm sure you've all heard the phrase there's nothing new under the sun. It's a reference to whatever you're experiencing now; it's nothing new. It's happened before. Take for instance the top headlines in our world today, or in our country today, inflation! Yeah, if you go back to the late 70's, you'll see a very similar currents, where the government spent too much money and we had rampant inflation. Recession! Did you know that we have had 11 recessions since 1948? It's nothing new. But Pastor Matt, what about the record high temperatures caused by climate change? Did you actually know that 1936 is the hottest year on record? In fact, our recent quote "record heat in the United States;" if we actually take a look at it, the five hottest cities in the United States this last month, during the last heat wave with their quote "record highs" UN quote-were five or more degrees cooler than the maximum high temperature! You see those maximum high temperatures, and then maximum are the hottest year on record was during those Dust Bowl years of the 1930's which was an 11 year span. And as for the California drought that is so terrible, did you know that the worst three-year drought we've had was actually 1974 through 77? And if you want the driest year, if it's the rainfall year (which goes from July 1st to June 30<sup>th</sup>) it's the 1975-76 year and the driest calendar year is 1977, during that three-year record drought that we haven't come close to.

Now you might say Pastor Matt, that's all news and stuff today but what in the world does that have to do with the church? Well because there's nothing new under the sun. Just as we experience inflation, recession, high temperatures, changing climate, things like that and that's always been the case; there's always troubles in the church too. In fact, the church is always under assault, it just comes in different forms.

There's an assault on church, there's an assault on faith. And we hear, well you can't trust the organized church (that kind of sounds like the Reformation times). The teachings of the church are old, they're out of date. There was a lot of that going on in the 1800's. Leading authorities, and by that I mean leading sociologists, philosophers, theologians, scientists; leading authorities say the world wasn't created or the patriarchal system of the Bible is wrong, yeah et cetera, et cetera.

In fact, if we go back to the 1800's and take a look at what's happening then, I think it's rather eye opening for us today. In the 1800's there was a bit of a backlash to the teachings that came out of the Reformation. And the Reformation really can be summed up with those five Latin phrases: Sola Gratia, Sola Fida, Solo Scriptura, Sola Christus, Soli Deo Gloria. Put in English, it's by grace alone that we are saved, and we are saved by faith alone. Faith alone, that is founded in the scripture alone, which points us to Christ as our Redeemer alone, and the result is; to God alone be the glory because He's the One who was given the scripture, shown us grace, works faith in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, and sent His Son Jesus Christ to be the redeemer.

In the 1800's there was a real push within the world of academics and as a result the church, to embrace the rationalism that was taught by the French man, Descartes. In a nutshell, rationalism says that reason rather than experience is the foundation of knowledge or truth. And it wormed its way into the Church in a form that was called Erastianism. Which again in a nutshell said the State or government is superior to the church, in the supervision of the church. Why? Well because the State will be more rational. We don't operate from faith.

So, for instance in the 1800's, you could have a member in the church who would openly say, 'you know really, I don't believe any of this Bible stuff, but I really like the people and I see the churches as a fraternal organization. I'm willing to pay my dues and come and be a part of it, but I just don't buy the basic teachings of the Church.

Now for the Church, such a person comes forward for Holy Communion, what's the pastor supposed, or what is the church supposed to do? We believe in faith, we believe in scripture alone, and its scripture that tells us if we come and we partake of Holy Communion in an unworthy manner, that we eat and drink judgment and condemnation on ourselves. So, we're supposed to stop that person. 'Don't do it,' and if they continue, then to invoke church discipline on them. 'Look, you can't be doing this.'

And the State would step in and say, 'no, no, no, you have got to let them have communion. They have got to be a member. Don't you see? It's the rational thing to do. They're paying their dues. You can call it a tithe; we call it dues. They're paying for services rendered, so render the services. Besides that, it means more money in your pocket. It means you can claim better numbers in church and isn't that what you want, a big church with lots of numbers?'

That was a problem and that is what the gentleman by the name of Nikolai Grundtvig, a nice German, Lutheran, Swedish guy whose father was a pastor. He went to the University of Copenhagen, where he was taught rationalism and Erastianism. He dropped out; he couldn't handle it. Not the academic courses or work, but that in his mind the university was a place for seeking and gaining knowledge and looking for truth. And instead he was being told by his professors, 'look this is truth.' And the truth was based on reason rather than experience or that which is observed. So he dropped out, went back home, began to assist his father in the church ended up becoming ordained. And on his ordination day, he gave the sermon. The sermon was titled, I quote: "Why has the Lord's Word Disappeared From This House?" Or, to put in another way, we could make the title of that sermon "There's nothing new under the SON."

What do I mean by that? Well Hebrews 13, verse eight which tells us "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever." So there's nothing new when it comes to Jesus Christ. And when it comes to the Sola Scriptura, that reveals Jesus Christ to us. We read, for instance, in Revelation 22:18 and 19 where Jesus gives this revelation to John; that

if anyone adds to the words of this revelation, plagues will be upon him, and the tree of life for eternal life will be removed from them. We read in proverbs 30, verse 6 “do not add to His words lest He rebuke you.” Or Deuteronomy 4, verse 2 “You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it.” How about Isaiah 40, verse 8; “the grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of God will stand forever.”

So, there's nothing new under the Son, Jesus Christ, because there's nothing new in scripture, because Malachi 3, verse 6 says “I the Lord, do not change.” And Nicolai understood this and so he took on rationalism, he took on the Erastianism and the result was the State came after him! They defrocked him, they annulled his ordination. They excommunicated him from the church, and true to form of governments, they fined him. He had to pay the government for standing on God's Word.

You see, he was very much inspired by the Reformation. He was very much inspired by Luther who also was brought before the authorities and told to recant and take away what he has said. Luther's response was basically, ‘unless I am compelled by scripture, not you governing authorities, here I stand, I can do no other, God help me.’ And that's where Nikolai was at. He understood the landscape and he was going to stand there. Because he understood that the foundation of the Christian faith is not reason it is scripture. Which points us to Jesus; and he understood what Peter wrote in first Peter 2, verse 8 about that rock, that stone, our foundation. It is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble because they disobey the Word as they were destined to do. They were destined to do that? Yes, again Scripture tells us ‘the heart of man is deceitful above all things,’ and because of that we're destined to mess things up if we rely on ourselves instead of God's Word.

Well what was Nikolai's answer? Like so many others, one of his answers was to write a hymn. Built on the Rock the Church Doth Stand. Five simple verses with five biblical truths. Number one, built on the Rock. He got it from our gospel this morning where Jesus asks His disciples, Who do people say that I am? And His disciples said, ‘some said

they say you're Elijah, some say you're John the Baptist back, some say you're one of the other prophets. And Jesus then says; "but who do you say that I am? That's where Peter immediately piped up and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." You're God, You're the Messiah. And Jesus says, "it's on that rock that I'm going to build my church Peter." That's not referring to Peter as the rock. He's referring to that statement of faith that He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer foretold in scripture. This is Sola **Christus**, Built on the Rock of God's Word and Jesus Christ the church stands.

Verse two, the real church where God dwells is not the building, it's His people. He, through baptismal grace us owns; is what Nicolai writes and what we sing. He redeems us, He brings us into His house, His family through baptism. But that's when He comes into us as well and the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling within us.

Which then leads to Were we but two? If there were just two of us Jesus is here. Two gathering together to worship, Jesus is here. By the way notice he doesn't write nor does scripture say were there a pastor and one member. It is not dependent on the pastor. It's the body of Christ coming together to worship God. And as Nikolai says, He'll be there bringing His grace and His favor.

In the fourth verse he takes on the building again. The building does have a significance. The building is built so we can see that baptismal font which reminds us that it's through Him we become a part of His family. The altar reminds us of the sacrifice that was done in the Old Testament and we don't have a sacrifice there. We have a Christ candle there because Christ became that sacrifice. And yet at the same time when we have communion there is the altar with the elements of communion there. Because Jesus comes to us gives Himself to us. And here in this building, scripture is proclaimed! Christ is the same! Here Zion, you walk in and the first thing you see is the window up there with the Lamb of God; and as you go out there's a window with the hand of God; (may the hand of God be upon you as you go out and serve Him). The building is built to remind us of sola scriptura, and sola Christos. The building reminds us we've been redeemed. And it is here in this

building where His will is done because when the church bells are ringing, the people are coming, they're singing they're praying, they're giving thanks, they are worshipping. And yes His word, His message is being heard. What is the message? "I know my own, my own know me. You, not the world, my face shall see. My peace I leave with you. Amen. Yes, it is so."

And there we see the heart, the rock of worship. Nikolai didn't write this, and you know take it and have a copyrighted and then sell it. Well, he wrote it so that it could be sung. He wrote it to make those scriptural points and remind people that Christ doesn't change. There's nothing new under the SON. He and His word are the rock of our foundation and our salvation. It is why we are we are; we know it. This is our response we come here, as if there's always been to worship, to obey, to give back to God, our praise, our thanks, our honor, our glory. It's a message that is sorely needed today. We've come to give not to get; we do get to hear God's Word, but that focuses us back on why we're really here. And to stand true to scripture. *Sola Scriptura, Sola Christus,*

The rest of the story of there is nothing new under the sun, as he went things keep on happening. The church is still under attack, and the hymn, *Built on the Rock*, it's been changed by two major mainline denominations. Their new hymnals have the hymn, but it's now called "Built on a rock the church doth stand." Notice the difference between them? *The Rock*, says there's one. A rock, choose the rock you want.

Indeed, there's nothing new under the sun. I pray that we may be the ones who don't live by 'there's nothing new under the sun' (SUN), but may we live by; 'there's nothing new under the SON.' Yes, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever. In His name, Amen.