

Pentecost 6
Matthew 11:25-30 (ESV)

“Hidden in Plain Sight”

Have you ever heard the phrase, “hidden in plain sight”? If you ever read “Where’s Waldo” or an “I Spy” book, you understand this phrase. Something can be right in front of you but somehow still remain hidden. God’s plan of salvation is like this. In our text, we see that

SALVATION IS HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT IN JESUS CHRIST

I.

In our text Jesus begins by talking about things hidden. “These things” refers to God’s gracious plan of salvation in Jesus. Jesus is one with the Father. To know Jesus, the Son, is to know the Father and the Father’s plan of salvation, and to know the Father’s plan of salvation is to know Jesus Christ. It begins and ends with Jesus. He is the Son of God, begotten from eternity, and ordained to be our savior from eternity. Yet this plan of salvation is hidden from the wise and understanding, Jesus says. Jesus is not condemning intelligence, *per se*. He is speaking of people who are wise and understanding by the world’s standard. Our natural understanding is tainted by sin. It leads us to follow our own thoughts, feelings, and desires and ignores God’s. This plays out today as people claim to be other than what God has made them. Boys claim to be girls; girls claim to be boys. People love who or what they will and denounce all judgment. Millions stand in support and approval, praising it all, proclaiming freedom, love, and courage, calling it progress, insight, and newfound understanding. Of such people, Saint Paul says, **Claiming to be wise, they became fools** (Rom 1:22).

Such worldly wisdom is not new. Recall Adam and Eve’s fall into sin. They were tempted by Satan’s lie that the fruit would open their eyes and make them like God, knowing

good and evil. **When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate** (Gen 3:6).

Their eyes were opened, and they did become wise to the ways of the world, but it was to their detriment. Sin became their standard. God and his will became incomprehensible.

We Christians are tempted by the same worldly wisdom today as we struggle against the sinful flesh. Paul describes this tension in Romans 7. Every day you are tempted to build up earthly wealth and status, tempted to put your hope and trust in your health, your prosperity, or your work, tempted to throw in the towel on following Jesus because it would be easier to live like the world lives, love who you want, be who you want to be, —we're all just matter anyway, aren't we—, tempted to leave the Lutheran church for another, one that makes you *feel* good, talks less about the cross and more about you, tells you how good you are and how good you can become, and isn't confessing sins all the time. The struggle is real. Sin is alive and well.

Is salvation hidden from us then? Certainly not! Earlier in chapter 11, Jesus taught and peached in many cities, but then he denounced the cities where most of his mighty works were done, because they did not repent (vv. 1, 20). It is only from the unrepentant that God's salvation will remain hidden forever. Some have closed their own eyes and ears to the truth about Jesus. Instead of acknowledging and denouncing the sinful flesh, they embrace it. Those cities knew the prophets, they heard Christ's preaching, they saw the signs, but they still rejected him. They rejected him because he came in a form and manner contrary to earthly wisdom and understanding. **The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned**, Saint Paul says (1 Cor 2:14). The sinful heart and flesh hate the notion of a savior

who takes on human flesh and dies on a cross. For those under sin, Jesus and his cross are folly, and salvation is hidden. Their end is destruction (Phil 3:18-19).

II.

But take heart! Though salvation is hidden in Jesus Christ from the wise and understanding, it is also revealed in Jesus Christ. Jesus chooses to reveal his Father's will to little children. Little children are so receptive to the message about Jesus. They know and trust that Jesus is truly God, that he died on the cross and rose again, that he forgives their sins. Be assured today that you are God's little children by faith. You are here today by his gracious will. You are here because you have heard his word and have not hardened your heart. You were made God's little child in baptism when God's name was placed upon you and you became his own.

There in your baptism God has given you his Holy Spirit and a child-like faith. This Holy Spirit reveals God's good and gracious will to you in the Words of Scripture and in the Holy Supper. You know Jesus, your shepherd, and you know his voice. When you hear his words in the Scripture, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, I've borne the burden for you" and when you hear his words in the Holy Supper "take eat, take drink this is my body and blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins" you know these words are true, and you know they are for you. To you, the elect, God's little children, salvation has been revealed in Jesus Christ. It has been revealed in his birth, his life and mighty deeds, his death, and his resurrection. And this salvation will be revealed in your flesh when he returns to judge the living and the dead.

III.

Salvation is hidden in plain sight in Jesus Christ. It is true. It is hidden from the wise and understanding, and it is revealed to little children. The greater truth is this: salvation is still offered freely to all in Jesus Christ, according to God's gracious will. This is why Jesus thanks

his Father for the way that things have unfolded and says, **“such was your gracious will.”** It is gracious because, according to God’s divine plan, the promise rests completely on grace. It is not the wise and understanding who will be saved. It is not the one who obeys the law. It is not the one who is a descendent of Abraham. Rather, it is the one who believes who will be saved. **It is a gift of God, not by works, so that no one may boast (Eph 2:8-9).**

God freely reveals himself in Jesus Christ apart from any merit or worthiness in us. **Consider your own calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth (1 Cor 1:26).** Surely you did not even believe by your own reason or strength but were called by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. **For God chose what is low and despised in the world... so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord” (1 Cor 1:27-31).**

Jesus Christ and his works were never a secret. If salvation is hidden from some, it is because they have hidden it from themselves. Jesus answered John the Baptist’s question concerning his identity saying, “Tell John what you hear and see.” The signs are clear. Consider the first prophecy of salvation in Genesis 3. **I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring. He will crush your head and you will crush his heel (Gen 3:15).** It is not a surprise that the savior had to suffer. It was foretold from the beginning that his heel would be crushed. But he has crushed the serpent’s head. He died, but he rose again from the dead. He has revealed himself freely and abundantly to all people by his public death and his powerful resurrection. He put it down in writing through the apostles that all

people might know that salvation is in Jesus Christ and him alone. For God's will is gracious, and **he desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth** (1 Tim 2:4).

His final word for you today is a gracious invitation. **Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.** If you are an unbeliever burdened by your own sin and its consequences, if you are burdened by the fear and anxiety of a life without hope and purpose, if you are burdened by guilt and shame, or if you are a believer who is tempted by the ways of the world, harassed by the pains and woes of this earthly flesh, or attacked by obstinate unbelievers for Christ's sake... Come to him. Take his yoke, his lordship, upon you and trust in his cross. He is truly the most loving master, and he does for you what you could not do for yourself; he took the cross for you.

Learn from him—not that he is a distant and foreboding taskmaster, but that he is your savior, the God who comes near to you, who took on your flesh. He is your king; he came to you righteous and having salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey as prophesied. Gentle and lowly, he came to bring eternal peace and deliver you from this body of death. His cross was not easy, but because of his love for you and your future redemption, which he foresaw, he gladly took it up, despising the shame of it. And because of this burden, perfectly borne for you, you can count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds. For they are a light thing compared to the eternal glory he won for you. Hear his words, his invitation. See his life, his death, his resurrection. Trust in his promise, “given and shed for you the forgiveness of sins.”

Lord, preserve these saints in the grace revealed to them in their baptismal faith and grant that all would find eternal rest in you. Grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.