2 Corinthians 4:5-6 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

 One of the things that is indelibly burned into my mind are the words: Khruzate To Euaggelion (prounounced kay-rix-a-te to oi-an-gelion). It is a Greek phrase that means: Preach the Gospel. I say it is a phrase indelibly imprinted on my mind because that little phrase was always what you saw as you sat in the Chapel at our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. You could not worship there without taking note of those words.

 Now why were those words there? I believe to burn them into our minds. To remind us that the point of our preaching, the reason we were becoming Pastors, Lutheran pastors, is so we could preach the gospel of Jesus completely and accurately. And I want you to know that this is not as easy as you might think it is.

 It is not easy because the tendency in the world is to preach a sermon kind of dancing around Jesus. Pastors do that in numerous ways. For instance, the pastor may preach “about Jesus.” In other words he will tell you what Jesus did and then based on that spend the rest of his time telling you how you are to act and be, since “that’s what Jesus is about.” In many cases these preachers don’t direct you to look at Jesus but always “to the Jesus in you” for your faith. Or that pastor may preach a message with the mention of Jesus. In other words, you hear the name of Jesus spoken of but you are not given any specifics of his life or purpose. An example might be where you hear the idea “Jesus opens heaven for you,” but you are not told how or why or when. In many cases these Pastors will tell you “they assume” the gospel.

 Or you might even find that Jesus is spoken of but if you pay attention you begin to grasp that the preacher does not believe Jesus to be the Christ. To believe Jesus is the Christ means you believe Him to be the Son of God, God and Lord in every way. But as you listen you begin to see they use Jesus as an example, they pick and choose what parts of the Bible they want to believe about Jesus, tell you, again, how you are to act and be because of Jesus but it is all just because Jesus was a good guy who showed us a better way to live. If you pay attention to this you begin to grasp you are not hearing the gospel, the news that Jesus the Christ died, rose and ascended into heaven for your salvation but you are hearing the law, what you are to be and do, how you are to live and on and on.

 What I find most prevalent as I read the sermons of other pastors (not WELS) is the absolute generalization of God and his truths. The most popular one is “God is love.” As if this attribute of God somehow nullifies the other attributes of God. Yes, God is love but He is also just, righteous, all knowing, all powerful, and …, God! He says if you believe you will be saved and if you do not believe you will be damned! He makes it clear that the heart of what you are to believe is Jesus and his work and that if you don’t believe in Jesus you will be condemned. He makes it clear that it is His Word, Jesus that will be the judge of all things. In other words, to just generalize really doesn’t tell you much and in many cases the generalizations bring about wrong conclusions. So if I were telling you about a skunk and the only thing I told you was that it was black with white stripes, you might be able to identify a skunk or you might identify the zebra as the skunk or some other animal that is black with white stripes. Think of all that you are missing because that skunk has been generalized! And what a surprise you will have when you do find a skunk and you go to give it a hug and a pat on the back!

 No, we need to make sure that it is Christ Jesus that is preached, the whole gospel and its awesome truth. But you need to be sure and cover all the points. Let’s you and I then, contemplate this preaching of Jesus all the more under the theme: **JESUS IS LORD!**

Please note how this section starts, **“For we do not preach ourselves.”** The reason these words are written is that confronting the early church were those who were Gnostics, those who declared they had the real message, they had the real stuff about God. I guess you could say they declared themselves the “super apostles” and all you had to do was look at their success. They were great preachers (worldly speaking). They were flashy and dashy and had the best of everything. In truth, their message was about them. How they had been given insight, knowledge, blessings galore and they just knew and felt they were on the right track. An example. The other day I saw a little video about a pastor who reveled in her drug use past and other godless ways. Who declared that God found her and now she was a pastor (at least she went to school, I think). And now God was using her and her crude ways (I say that based on her words found in the video) to build a church with the real truth. And now, this little video was to be further proof of her wisdom and rightness as a pastor because her church was growing and multiplying and she was in her own right a star! And while she had some resemblance to God’s truth in some of her statements, it was clear her base message was going to stand opposed to a large portion of God’s Word. She was the prime example of preaching ourselves and generalizing. You know, preaching how you feel, what you know, how God works in your life…those are not necessarily bad things, but when the end results of all of that keeps bringing you back to you instead of Jesus, there is a problem.

 So what is to be preached? **“Jesus Christ as Lord.”** Now if we were to just let those words stand without grasping what they mean, we might have a problem. Because I know all kinds of people who tell me that Jesus Christ is Lord, their Lord, but then they will go on and tell me they don’t believe the Bible to be God’s Word or they don’t believe this part or that part of God’s Word. They go on and tell me they know Jesus is Lord and how He speaks to them and guides their lives. They say, “Just look at my life and you can see how Jesus is at work and if you would really believe you could feel what I feel too!

 In order to understand what this phrase means we really need to consider the words of verse 6. It says, **“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.’”** Now there is a definitive statement on Jesus. And please, catch all that is said, referenced and indicated by these words. For instance, it is God who is quoted. To be more specific it is God the Creator who is referenced, for the statement **“Let light shine out of darkness”** is a part of the creation activity of God. In other words, this is the all-knowing, all powerful Creator God who made our entire existence and universe BE just by the power of his Word! God called forth light and it was! His is the power, the glory, the awesomeness and the majesty that is to be the foundation of our faith.

 And then note the words **“who said.”** Those words are from the Bible, from God’s revelation of how things went down. Now, if the Bible is just the work of men and is filled with errors and problems, then why quote the Bible, why use the Bible as the reference to the truth of God? Seriously, why reference the Word of God? Because as John says in the first chapter of his Gospel: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God…The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”** Now listen carefully to the next words: **“We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** You can’t disregard the Creating God and His Word of revelation without it having an impact on the truth of Jesus and your faith! Go ahead, just let the subtle truth of these words sink in.

 Now, who is in charge of faith? The super apostles, those with flash and dash? Those who tweak your emotions and who are constantly directing you to your life as proof of your faith? Is it those churches who appeal to your human need and work hard to integrate, assimilate and meet your felt needs? The Creating God who called forth light from nothing (not to mention the whole universe) is also the same God who **“made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”**

 I submit our focus is to be Jesus. God takes our blind by birth eyes and makes them see. God takes our sinful, God hating, totally dark hearts and wakes them to Jesus. Without that power of God, you will not be nor will you continue to be a child of God and an heir of eternal life. God shines his light in our hearts and that light is Jesus, the very glory of God, more than that, the very knowledge of the glory of God. Now at this point let’s ask this question. What did Jesus have to say about this?

 John 10:30 **“I and the Father are One.”** John 14:6 **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** Luke 2:49b **“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”** Matthew 28:18 **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”**

 What do the Epistles say? Colossians 2:9 **“For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.”** 2 Co 4:4 **“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”** Hebrews 1:3 **“The Son is the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right had of the Majesty in heaven.”**

Here is what it means that Jesus is the Christ. He is God. But more than that, He is the anointed one who came from the Father to bring us eternal life and salvation. You cannot know the truth of God without knowing Jesus. You cannot know Jesus without knowing the Word of God and the light of knowledge that the Word brings to your life. If your focus is you, that will be a problem. Your focus is to be Jesus and his Word.

 And Jesus, as the Christ did something very specific. He upheld the Law of God in every way, testifying to its revelation of sin and the condemnation that sin is. Jesus also lived the perfect life we could not and then became the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Jesus did this in his Passion. He suffered the difficulties of this world and its temptations and yet was without sin. Jesus went to the cross and there paid the price of redemption. He endured the wrath, anger and hatred of the Father against sin, so that God’s perfect justice has the perfect solution. Jesus rose from the dead to prove without doubt that He is our Savior, the Christ, who offers forgiveness and with that forgiveness, eternal life and salvation. Yet Jesus does not do this apart from his Word, the written Bible. The Father and Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to give us the whole, error free truth of God in Jesus. Concerning the work of the Holy Spirit Jesus would say, **“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”** Jesus is to be our heart, our core and the complete hope upon which we trust.

 And that’s why our text goes on as it does. It talks to us about being jars of clay with this treasure of Jesus. It tells us about this so we grasp it is all from God, his power, his wisdom, and his revelation! It tells us that we will struggle in this world: **“hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed.”** We make it through because of Jesus and his comfort, encouragement and power. And when you look at those words, if you think that being a Christian is just going to be filled with earthly blessings and everything wonderful and right, then you heard something different than I read! Our lives will be a struggle…or another way of putting that struggle: **“We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our body.”** We will struggle with sin and all the horrors this sinful world can and will throw at us. Yet the conclusion for us is always the same. **“That his life may be revealed in our mortal body…life is at work in you.”**

 Do you see it? Jesus is Lord! He is the Christ who came to bring us life, eternal life, full life with God the Father. He came to help us in this life of sin and to still grant his life of salvation. But it is all based on the fact that we focus on Jesus. He has won salvation. He has atoned for our sins. He grants us life and salvation. He is our strength, our help and our confidence in everything, yes, even when this sin stained world of ours wants to beat us down. Stay focused on Jesus. Put your trust in His Word. In this way you will never have to waver in the hope of what God has given in Jesus. Amen.