**Isaiah 40:21-31** Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? **22** It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; **23**  who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. **24** Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. **25**  To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. **26** Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing. **27** Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God”? **28** Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. **29** He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. **30** Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; **31** but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

**Mark 1:29-39** And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. **30** Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. **31** And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. **32** That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. **33** And the whole city was gathered together at the door. **34**  And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. **35**  And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. **36** And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, **37** and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” **38** And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” **39**  And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

**1 Corinthians 9:16-27** For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! **17** For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. **18** What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. **19** For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. **20**  To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. **21** To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. **22**  To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. **23** I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. **24** Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. **25** Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. **26** So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. **27** But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

**“The Gospel Or Bust”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Creating monopolies is second nature to human beings. If you got a good thing going why stop? We even have a board game called, “Monopoly” that teaches about the value and power of ownership. The hard thing with monopolies is how they do not leave much room for diversity. In our Gospel reading, Jesus knew the monopolizing that people wanted in Capernaum. He healed their sick and casted out demons. The temptation was for God’s Son to set up shop, kick His feet back, and let the people come to Him. However, Jesus came to serve and not be served, which meant bust up the monopoly and move on. He said, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”

When Christ sent out His Apostles, no one faced more diversity of mission work than St. Paul. As a former Pharisee he would have persecuted and shunned such lands, peoples, and cultures. However, God saw fit to put him in the mess of it all with one purpose to preach the Gospel. This is what God had done by His grace to save humanity in Jesus Christ. Rather than monopolizing, St. Paul makes a bigger boast saying, “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” The Gospel is for diverse lives to have God’s mighty power shine upon any with Christ.

1. **Diversity makes for an honest picture of life.**
2. God has never created any two people to be the same.

* Think of twins or how parents cannot raise two kids the same way.

1. Those Christians in Corinth did not come to be a church by worldly standards.

* Some were Jews by blood, others followers of the Law and Moses, others without the Law, and finally those just plain weak.

1. More than being in a diverse world, we live in diverse times.

* Complexity of life continues to become more complex as the world gets smaller.
* Freedom of religion has caused our land to have many diverse beliefs for better or worse.
* Unlike cookie cutter homes, the church is truly the body of Christ in a certain place.

1. **Diving into the diversity of life is for Christ to shine upon all.**
2. St. Paul refused to monopolize a single group or consider his own personal rights and interests.

* Instead, he became a servant as Christ served Him stepping into the lives of sinners.
* To Jews he became a Jew following their glory as God’s chosen people, but such glory rejected why Christ in the flesh died on the cross.
* To God-fearing Jews and Gentiles under the Law Paul honored the Mosaic code, but the law of works is what made Jesus the perfect sacrifice.
* To those Gentiles not having a Law this apostle did not overburden them, but neither was immorality any good compared to life in Christ.
* To those who were weak Paul had compassion when they turned back to false idols or mercy for their lesser standing in life.

1. Celebrating diversity in and of itself ends up being a dead end.

* No person, group, or culture can avoid or overcome sin, death, and the Devil.
* Whether willingness by Jesus to go to various towns or Paul adapting to diverse lives, the Gospel remained intact at all times.
* Respecting diversity is not about being indifferent, “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.”
* Some is not all, but the length of God’s love for us turns us not to count the numbers or despise anyone.

1. **United to Christ is for us to share in the one hope we have as sinners.**
2. Paul was not doing this just to love others in worldly terms.

* His purpose was for the sake of the Gospel, which meant Christ’s love was as much for him as for others.
* Rather than a privatized religion, it was a public confession for life where Paul took up His cross daily to serve with love.
* To share with others in Christ was to be the Church and live by that forgiveness granted freedom to be servants before Jesus.

1. The Gospel shines light upon all to see what great lengths God has gone to save us.

* In the world that becomes more diverse, it is easy to wonder if God cares about me or whether if anything is worthwhile.
* Yet, baptism now joins any in Christ to hear, “God gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.”
* Sharing in the Gospel draws us to the Holy One and God has a monopoly of love to give by His Word and Sacrament.
* Jesus brings forgiveness and shapes our love to serve with hope in life for others that He has not failed them.

God deals with diversity not by forcing conformity or letting things come unraveled. Jesus died and rose calling sinners from monopolizing for self to serve each other. The Gospel is for diverse lives to have God’s mighty power shine upon any with Christ. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.