

# “Today is the Day Called Today”

Hebrews 3:12-19

Last week, as we celebrated the work of the LWML and mission work in general, I quoted the recently departed Yogi Berra who said, “Wherever you go . . . there you are.” Wherever you go in life, that is where you are and that is where God intends for you to bear witness to your neighbor of what it is that Christ has done for you.

Who is your neighbor? Your neighbor is anyone whom God places in your path. As Yogi said, “Wherever you go . . . there you are.”

The same is true of “when” you should bear witness of Christ and what He has done to take away the guilt of your sin. The letter to the Hebrews says, as long as this day is called “today”, there is work to do in the Kingdom of God. As long as this day is called “today”, there is hope for those currently outside the Kingdom of God. As long as the day is called “today”, we are still living in this temporary world of time. As long as this day is called “today”, Christ has not returned.

When He returns, time will be of no consequence. There will be no evening or morning, there will be no night; there will be no seasons; and as the final verse of Amazing Grace so beautifully states, “When we’ve been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise Than when we’d first begun.”

The essence of eternity is timelessness. There will come a day when we are no longer bound to time. And when that “day” comes, the concept of a “day” will be of no consequence.

However, as long as this day is called “today”, as long as we are in this temporary world of time, we have work to do – and the work is to be done today. In the Small Catechism, Luther calls upon each Christian to begin the day remembering their Baptism. He says, “The Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Every day we are to remember our Baptism. Every day we are to recall the amazing, complete sacrifice Christ made so that we can be washed clean and covered in His righteousness. That is our task so long as this day is called “today.”

We are also called today to exhort and build one another up in the Word of God. Every day we are to encourage and teach and be witnesses of Christ Jesus in what we say and do. And today we are to be watchful for the end of time. Because, when Christ returns time and days will no longer matter.

One of my favorite quotes from our Early Church Fathers – Irenaeus of Lyon – you have probably heard me say this before, but he said, “The business of the Christian is nothing else than every day being prepared to die.” That is our number one task today.

Unfortunately, there are many people who say, “I will take care of that tomorrow.” And they treat their relationship with God the same way I treat my diet and exercise regimen – “I’ll do it soon; I’ll do it tomorrow, if I have enough time.”

There is this prevailing notion out there that Christ's Church is nothing more than a spiritual YMCA. And people treat it like that. Ask someone if they exercise, and they might tell you they have a membership at the Y. They didn't answer your question. Ask someone if they have faith in God, and they might tell you to which church they belong. Again, they didn't actually answer the question.

You can have a membership to the YMCA, but if you rarely or never take advantage of the benefits, of what benefit is it to you? – other than you can tell people “I have a membership at the Y.”

Likewise, having a membership at a church but rarely or never participating in the actual Means of Grace – of what benefit is it? It is through the preached Word and through Baptism, and the body and blood of Christ, and through the words of the Absolution that God showers us with His grace, feeds us, and gives us what we need so that we can go out and exercise our faith. If these means of grace are not worthy of your time, what does that actually say about your faith?

And that is where people get mixed up about what the benefit of Christ's Church truly is. When I rebuke someone for not having not been in church for a while, for weeks, months, sometimes even years, almost every time they will say, “I know I need to be in church more.” And they will come for one weekend and usually I won't see them for weeks, months, or even years.

But what they don't get is that my goal is not for them to come to church because that is what you are supposed to do. That's the Law. What I want for them is to actually receive the means of grace. This is where we eat. More specifically, this is where God feeds you. Now, I do recommend “snacking” during the week. Bible Class, devotion, reading Scripture – it is the reason I try to attend chapel at St. James on Wednesdays. It's not just

so that I set a good example or show support for the school, but I get to hear God's Word. I get to hear the Absolution spoken by another pastor.

You probably have heard me say that before. You might even be tired of me saying this, that I know that when I speak the Absolution that it applies to me also, but it is so good to hear those words. I just never get tired of hearing those words "in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all of your sin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

But our sinful nature says, "You don't need to hear that again. You don't need to eat that food again. Stay home, say a prayer, you're healthy enough. In fact, you look good. Besides, you'll have time for that later." But eventually, we will not have "time."

I hear repeatedly, "I would like to be in church, but I don't have time." That is the deceitfulness of sin. Because they are wrong. Now is when you actually do have "time." There will come a day when there will be no more time. There will be a "day" that will no longer be called "today."

So what is our task today? "The business of the Christian is nothing else than every day being prepared to die." Having heard God's Word, having heard the pronouncement of the forgiveness of sins, (hungering and thirsting for the body and blood of Christ) we are prepared to depart in peace (as we sing the words of Simeon). We are prepared to depart this world of time.

Having been fed and strengthened, we leave here with the opportunity to exercise our faith through our words, through our actions, through our life of prayer. And we do this as long as this day is called "today." And we do it wherever we go. Because wherever you go . . . there you are. Amen.