

“Count Others More Significant Than Yourselves”

Philippians 2:1-18

We hear Paul eloquently say that you are to “count others more significant than yourselves” and you are to look after the interests of others. It is very popular in our world to flaunt a coarse, harsh, or demanding attitude – to look down upon another; to treat a person as being less than a person. The anonymity of social media has made this worse. You can puff yourself up or put others down and never have to meet anyone face to face.

We live in a “Look at me” society with far too many who believe they have been put upon this earth to be served by others. There are studies which suggest that narcissists tend to make more money. And then go on to recommend that it is the way to get ahead in life.

Christ says, “Not so with My people... ‘For I came to serve, not to be served.’” Paul tells us that our Lord took on the very nature of a servant, made Himself to be nothing, humbled Himself, and became obedient to the will of His Father in heaven – even to death. As Christ’s followers, we are called to “go and do likewise.”

This is the aspect of Christian life that makes life in the church unpopular for so many people. Our sinful human nature does not want to

get the short end of the stick. If we do something for someone, we don't like to think that we are getting nothing in return.

What is so sad, is that those who do not give of themselves, or do so reluctantly, never experience the joy of giving. Instead, people get caught up in their own little world; they focus all of their attention around themselves and miss out on the greater gifts of life.

This weekend, we are setting aside time to recognize and celebrate the work of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. A few weeks ago, I was at the LWML Fall Rally over at St. James along with a number of our ladies. God's work in His church never ceases to amaze me. As I looked around at all of the ladies attending, I was thinking about the accomplishments in the history of the LWML. Because each of the churches had a representative do some research and give a brief synopsis of LWML activity through the ages as the LWML has been celebrating its 75th anniversary.

These ladies, along with all of the other ladies in our District and Synod have done amazing work. Over the years and still to this day, they provide resources for missionaries to preach throughout the world, and provide shelter and bring clothing to those who lack the basic needs of life – understanding, of course, that God's Word is the first basic need of life.

The LWML collects the mites throughout the year. They send that seemingly small amount of money to be pooled together with the mites of others, and by the grace of God, pastors and teachers are sent overseas.

And people with nothing are sheltered, clothed, educated, and, most importantly, brought to faith in Jesus Christ. It takes a tremendous amount of work and money to get even one missionary into a foreign nation. We are talking hundreds of thousands of dollars are invested in each one. A classmate of mine, Pastor Doug Rienders, went to Kazakhstan and he had to commit to a seven year mission because the cost of getting him there and ready to be there was well into six figures.

Now, I hope that none of you are calculating how much it would take to ship me off to Kazakhstan. I don't know I am ready for that, and I'm pretty sure Malinda isn't. But, then again, we never know what God has in store for us. Next week, Pastor Peter Kolb will be with us and I would venture a guess that five years ago, serving a church in Vandalia, IL, he wouldn't have thought that he and his family would be moving to Thailand.

It is a call that requires a very Christ-like attitude. And it is through the good stewardship of ordinary churches like ours (as if any church is ordinary – we are the members of the body of Christ gathered in the house of God) and ordinary people like you (as if any child of God is ordinary – the Holy Spirit is residing in you after all); but in what the world views as ordinary and even weak, extraordinary things are accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That is the reason the churches of the Missouri Synod got together in the first place back in 1847. Men such as C.F.W. Walther and other pastors with names like Sihler, and Husmann, and Streckfuss understood

that a group of churches with the same belief and focus could accomplish things that individual congregations could not accomplish on their own.

The money pooled together provided for colleges and seminaries to train Lutheran teachers and pastors. By the 1850's LCMS churches were already forming women's auxiliaries doing local charity work. In the 1920's the local groups began pooling their resources within districts and states and the rest is history with missionaries having been sent to every corner of the world. The Bible has been translated into innumerable languages. The Lutheran Hour radio program is broadcast throughout most of the world and in many languages all so that the life-saving message of the death and resurrection of the Son of God for our forgiveness and eternal salvation can be heard, and that others will come to know the joy we share.

This, we could not accomplish by ourselves here at Our Redeemer, but through our Lord blessing the collective work of fellow Christians like the ladies of the LWML, God's Word has found its way well beyond the city limits of Quincy. We may never see any of that work with our own eyes, or some of you may. Someday you may find yourself doing mission work in Thailand. Keep your options open to what the Lord has in store for you.

And know this, that whatever you do in service to your Lord, He is with you, and you are a valuable part of the body of Christ. In all that you do in life, "Count others more significant than yourselves," serve the Lord with gladness, and rejoice in what He has already done for you. Amen.