

“Did I Miss One?”

John 17:1-11

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

When my girls were younger, it was a challenge most days after school to get them to focus on the good things that happened, rather than the bad. That is no longer true, but there was much rolling of the eyes when I would tell them that it is important to look for that which is good, rather than find fault or dwell on the bad. At one point, I remember establishing the rule that when I asked them how their day was, they had to tell me four good things that happened before they could tell me anything bad. It didn't always work, but the motivation was there. Now that I think about it, apparently that strategy worked. And now there will be more rolling of the eyes.

It is so easy to find fault and not appreciate the good. I think I have told this story before, but a number of years ago, before moving to Quincy, I went to the Good Shepherd Institute at the Seminary in Ft. Wayne. One of the great parts of that conference is the Service of Scripture and Hymns. It is a magnificent concert with the congregation singing numerous hymns with Scripture readings and commentary concerning each of the musical selections.

As pre-service music, a renowned music teacher from Concordia River Forest (I forget his name, but he is considered one of the best, if not the best organist in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod) he performed several

pieces of music. Of course, he chose some of the hardest, most demanding, yet beautiful, musical selections.

I was sitting next to Linda, the wife of one of my classmates, a very dear friend who is also a very accomplished musician. On my other side, was the music director of a church where another one of my classmates was pastor.

As the organist is playing this magnificent music, I look down and see my friend Linda holding up three fingers. I ask her what she is doing. She was counting mistakes that the organist was making.

I lean over and tell the other music director what Linda is doing, and she holds up four fingers. And Linda asks, "Did I miss one?" At that very moment, they both went (five).

I sat there and couldn't believe that these two lovers of music were getting no joy from the skill and beauty of what they were hearing. They spent the entire evening looking for anything that was wrong, rather than rejoicing in the privilege to be there. Finding fault is always easier than searching out the good.

If you spend your life looking for faults in other people, I guarantee that you will find them, because every person you come in contact with is a sinful, fallible, fault-filled individual. Yet listen to what Jesus says to His Father about His disciples, "I have manifested Your name to the people whom You gave out of the world. Yours they were, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

These are the same disciples who had, over the past days, been arguing amongst each other which of them were the greatest and who would have the highest positions in Christ's Kingdom. Jesus is talking to them in

the Upper Room, so these are the same disciples who Jesus knows in a matter of hours will abandon him and even deny knowing him. He tells Peter, you're going to do it – three times before the rooster crows.

But when Christ looks at them, because their faith was credited to them as righteousness, the only accurate description was that they were keepers of the Word of God.

When God looks at you, when God looks at me, it would be very easy for Him to find faults. But that is not the way God is. He chooses to declare you to be not guilty. He chooses to declare you to be keepers of His Word. It is God's desire that His people follow His lead. When we spend our time only looking for or listening for what we think is wrong, we totally miss the beauty and joy of the good that God has given us.

For example, we are in between Mother's Day and Father's Day, my guess is that whatever celebration you had or will have for those events will involve either greeting cards with warm sentiments, flowers, a nice dinner, or something along those lines. We spend those days rejoicing that God has blessed us with mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, and life from them.

None of us have had a mother or father who was without fault. I know that in my home there is often some deserved "rolling of the eyes." There are no perfect mothers, yet on Mother's Day love, kindness, and respect was shown to them. This year, Julianna made omelets for all of us after church and planned out an entire day devoted to mom. I am quite sure that none of you will send a greeting card on Father's Day which will list all the things your father did that was wrong. (I should not plant such seeds).

Out of love, we forgive. And as Luther says in his Large Catechism,

“Young people must therefore have it impressed upon them that they should look up to their parents as representatives of God and bear in mind that, however humble, poor, infirm, or eccentric they may be, our father and mother are nevertheless God’s gifts to us.”

It is with that spirit that we greet this day and every day – not just Mother’s Day, not just Father’s Day. And, to follow Christ’s example, as He has chosen to overlook your faults and eccentricities, He looks at your sin and counts, “Zero”. It is with that spirit that we are to look at all those whom God places in our path – especially our brothers and sisters in the faith.

As the children of God, who we are is defined by the forgiveness of sin. If God does not overlook and forgive your faults and failures, you have no hope; you have no place in His kingdom. As the Psalmist says, “If You, O Lord, kept a record of sin, O Lord, who could stand?” If God sat on high and, like my musician friends, counted each mistake you made, you would be cast into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But the Psalmist goes on to say, “But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.” God’s record of sin held against you is “Zero.”

If your desire is to find fault in others – you will certainly find it. If your hope is to follow Christ’s example, you will look to all of your neighbors and see them as people who God loves dearly, and you will look at your brothers and sisters in the faith and see them as His disciples whom He has declared to be keepers of His Word. Amen.

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.