

“With the Lord Begin Your Task”

Mark 10:2-16

After all that Jesus has said to His disciples, as we saw a couple weeks ago in Mark chapter 9 when Jesus brought the young boy into the midst of all the disciples and said, ““Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me,” and the disciples, once again, now have a chance to put into practice what the Lord has taught them.

So what do they do? People were bringing little children to Jesus so that He could touch them and bless them. And the disciples were trying to stop this. Even though Jesus has said, “You must have the faith of a little child” and “Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me.”

Our journey through the Gospel of Mark is such a clear example of how God has used very flawed children of Adam to build His church. The disciples and pastors throughout the generations have all had their flaws and weaknesses – this is true of all the laypersons too, even the ladies of the LWML (hard to believe but it is true). Yet, God is able to cause His Word to prosper and not return empty.

We are constantly reminded that it is the Word that does the work. As Luther says in the Catechism, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy

Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified, and kept me in the true faith.”

The Quincy Circuit hosted the CID Pastor’s Conference this week. It was a gathering of men who all have flaws and weaknesses. I preached the morning worship service on Tuesday. It has been many years since I have been nervous stepping into a pulpit, but when the majority of your hearers are fellow pastors, that is a little different. The response was very kind, but my actual presentation was the worst of all the run-throughs I had done leading up to Tuesday.

I know that I am always my own worst critic. But I was a bit frustrated as I didn’t see it as my best work – and it was in front of my peers, but that was my sinful nature at work. What was my assigned task? To proclaim the Word of God in its truth and purity. Did I do that? I can confidently say, “Yes.” Did I make myself look as good as I could? I can confidently say, “No.” But that was not my task.

The marks of the church, that is, the church is recognizable as being Christ’s church when the Word of God is proclaimed in its truth and purity and the Sacraments are administered and received. The church is not recognized as Christ’s church because of who the pastor is or how well he articulates his words.

Many years ago, at a pastor’s conference in Wisconsin, my dad and I ran into one of his classmates from the Seminary class of 1965. After our encounter I vividly remember our conversation. This pastor, I believe his name was Jim, was someone who barely made it through school. It was

only by the grace and mercy of more than a few professors that he was able to pass. Jim did not have the mental wherewithal of the average seminarian. He struggled in school.

When call day arrived, Jim was sent to the most remote corner of the Synod. It was not the end of the earth, but you could see it from there. My dad told me that leading up to call day, there were people who questioned whether or not Jim deserved to be ordained. By the time I met him, Jim had faithfully served the church for more than 30 years. He had received the kingdom of God like a child, and, with that childlike faith, had faithfully devoted his life in service to his Lord. He would never receive accolades for any sermon or writing. But that was not his task. His task was to proclaim the Word of God in its truth and purity. His task was to administer the Sacraments that the people of God may receive them.

Today we celebrate LWML Sunday. The ladies of the LWML do not do their work within the church so that they can receive accolades or make themselves look good. That is not their task. Their task is to receive the Kingdom of God like a child.

Understand though, that receiving the Kingdom of God like a child does not mean that you prance through life in willful ignorance imagining that it doesn't matter whether or not you participate in the Word of God and grow in your knowledge and understanding. If that were the case, why would we bother having Confirmation classes? Having the faith of a child is recognizing that you, as a child, have nothing to offer God. Everything you

have comes from Him. Whatever knowledge, strength, or treasure you have has come from your Father in heaven in spite of your flaws and weaknesses, and you have been entrusted with stewardship to use those gifts for the good of the Kingdom so that the Gospel may be heard.

As we just sang, “With the Lord begin your task; Jesus will direct it . . . Jesus will perfect it.” Having the faith of a child is trusting in the words of the Gospel that the blood of Christ has covered the guilt of all of your sin. Having the faith of a child is believing that because Jesus rose from the dead, so will you. Having the faith of a child is bowing to the will of our Father, praying “Thy will be done” and meaning it.

Having the faith of child is seen in the ongoing work of the LWML. In my estimation, they are the most productive service organization in the Lutheran Church. Their pledge is the willingness to work wherever and whenever they are needed.

Having the faith of a child is trusting in the Gospel for our salvation, acknowledging that you have nothing of your own to offer God, but pledging to God the willingness to use what He has given you to His glory and not for your own.

As the hymn writer concludes, “Thus, Lord Jesus, every task Be to You commended; May Your will be done, I ask; Until life is ended. Jesus, in Your name begun Be the day’s endeavor; Grant that it may well be done To Your praise forever.” Amen.