

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 21 & LWML Sunday
Saturday, October 12, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, October 13, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

“Consider Others Better Than Yourselves”

Philippians 2:1-11

Compare and contrast the words of the prophet Amos with the words of St. Paul. Amos has some very harsh words for his listeners. He accuses them of having no care or concern as they trample the poor and needy. I read the words of St. Paul for the text because I didn't think Amos was appropriate to lead off LWML Sunday. However, it caught my attention because it cries out to be contrasted with Paul eloquently saying that you are to “consider others better than yourselves” and you are to look after the interests of others.

He ratchets up the bar and says that your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing [He emptied Himself of His glory], taking the very nature of a servant . . . and became obedient to death – even death on a cross.”

We look at the heart of this text and we see words like service and attitude; those are two words very prevalent in society today. We have a service oriented economy. Most jobs are focused on servicing the wants and needs of the American people – 77% of our economy is the service industry. And when we go somewhere, we want good service. When we go out to dinner, we expect good

service. And if we don't get good service, they might experience a little bit of our attitude.

That is the way of the world. But that is not the way of God's people. St. Paul tells us, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." You are to "consider others better 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, which is what brought the wrath of God on the Israelites in the days of Amos. There is a narcissism epidemic today. There is a belief among many that they have been put upon this earth to be served by others.

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 many people. Our sinful human nature does not want to get the short end of the stick.

What is so sad, is that those who do not give of themselves, or do so reluctantly, never experience the joy of giving; the joy of serving. 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, we hosted the LWML Fall Rally – although I was not here because I was at a different Rally. God's work in His church never ceases to amaze me. As I traveled around to the six different rallies, what amazed me was the ladies. As I looked around at the

40-50 or so ladies attending each of the rallies, on the surface, there seemed to be nothing about them that suggested they could accomplish great feats of mission work.

Yet these ladies, along with all of the other ladies in our District and Synod have done just that. 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. 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, Rev. 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 – in 1995.

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.

I was blessed to be able to speak to the six Zone Rallies about the school in Uganda which we at Our Redeemer have been supporting, and so has the LWML. I just sent off a grant proposal which the ladies will be voting on at their 2025 convention.

By themselves, the ladies here at Our Redeemer could not accomplish what is accomplished by all of the various Zones working together. But it is through the good stewardship of ordinary churches like this (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); 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. Men such as C.F.W. Walther 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. This is what we see happening in Uganda. Missionaries have been sent to every corner of the world (as if the world has corners). The Bible has been translated into many languages. The Lutheran Hour radio program is broadcast throughout most of the world and in many languages.

This, we could not accomplish by ourselves here at Our Redeemer – even with these extraordinary ladies. But through our Lord blessing the collective work of fellow Christians, God’s Word has found its way well beyond the city limits of Quincy. We may never see the results of that work with our own eyes, or some of you may go on to serve the church as pastors or teachers or maybe even as a missionary. 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 member of the body of Christ. In all that you do in life, have the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus. “Consider others better than yourselves,” serve the Lord with gladness, and rejoice in what He has already done for you. Amen.