



DP Vantage Point

*For Christ and for His world SWD magnifies partnerships,
multiplies ministries, and maximizes resources.*

Sermon Introduction for SWD Pastors' Conference

Text: Luke 17:11-19

Dear Brothers in Christ:

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Apologetics... Lutheran pastors, and ten lepers. The cover letter describes the purpose of this pastors' conference as discussing "the joys and challenges of delivering a right-handed message in a left-handed kingdom."

The left-handed kingdom is where we live and work as pastors in the church. The left-handed kingdom is where our congregations exist. Sadly, as we know, the left-handed kingdom has grown increasingly hostile to Christianity. In recent years we have gone from Jerry Falwell's "Moral Majority" to a culture where church attendance has dropped to an all-time low. We have gone from an Olympic gold medal decathlon winner to Caitlin. We have gone from separate restrooms for men and women to some strange, third alternative. Thanks to a Supreme Court Obergefell opinion, we have moved from the traditional view of marriage between one man and one woman, to a definition that destroys marriage and undermines family. In his dissent Chief Justice Roberts writes that the majority opinion was "an act of will, not legal judgment." He writes,

- "The court invalidates the marriage laws of more than half the states and orders the transformation of a social institution that has formed the basis of human society for millennia, for the Kalahari Bushmen and the Han Chinese, the Carthaginians and the Aztecs," he wrote. "Just who do we think we are?"

Just who do we think we are? A haunting question; but timely. Just who do we think we are? How do you answer the question posed by Justice Roberts: Just who do we think we are? As far as the left-handed kingdom is concerned, we find ourselves once again as strangers and aliens in a foreign land. St. Paul defines the issue when he writes to the Romans, "Claiming to be wise, they became fools... they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!"

Herman Sasse wraps that in the context of history commenting:

- History knows of no more unsettling spectacle than the judgment which comes to pass when the men of an advanced culture have rejected the truth, and are now swallowed up in a sea of lies. As was the case with fading pagan antiquity, where this happened, religion and law, poetry and philosophy, life in marriage and family, in the state and society, in short, one sphere of life after another, fell sacrifice to the power and curse of the lie. Where man can no longer bear the truth, he cannot live without the lie. Where man, even when dying, lies to himself and others, the terrible dissolution of his culture is held up as a glorious ascent, and decline is viewed as an advance, the likes of which has never been experienced.

In the midst of that we are called to serve as confessional Lutheran pastors. It is a challenging time for us, as the people of God. As divinely called church workers we serve in the right hand kingdom; but we live and work in the left-handed kingdom. We are "in the world but not of the world." Like our Lord Jesus before us we find ourselves "Walking the borderlands between Galilee and Samaria". It is an interesting intersection where our Lord has placed us, a grey and nether world between the Kingdom of Grace and the principality of the evil one. Understanding our present condition we see that...

1. This is a time for mercy; loving-kindness measured by Christ-centered compassion for sinners.
2. This is a time for proclamation; clear proclamation focused on our Lord Jesus.

[Full sermon is attached]

A Word from Luther: A God-pleasing perspective on our life and living. 1 Peter 2:11-20

19. Christians should use the world in such a way that they are always intending to get out of this life, even though they have house and home, wife and child. That is only for this life; they should do what is right for them, but at the same time say: "Today I am here; tomorrow, somewhere else. Now I use this inn; tomorrow I will use another, for I do not intend to remain here." In his beautiful sermon on Pentecost, St. Peter spoke about David, who was a holy king. "David," he said, "did not ascend into heaven" [Acts 2: 34], but when he had served the will of God, he fell asleep, etc. He does not want to fault his office and government, as if he had done wrong, but rather adorns it with honorable words. He was a king and did not throw away his crown and royal glory, but retained them. He retained them as an office committed to him by God to administer, with which he served God. A good ruler and everyone in his office and estate should do the same. He should not think he was placed in that position so that he can live and rule as he desires, but only for the purpose of serving God as long as he is here. He has no lasting place here except as a stranger who comes among the other guests, lives to serve and please them, does what they do, and where there is danger or necessity joins with them and helps to rescue and protect...

21...He [Peter] admonishes them to live here as guests and to strive for a different, eternal kingdom, that is, to abstain from all kinds of fleshly or worldly desires and to lead a good life in all kinds of good works. He states two reasons for this: first, so that we do not lose that which is spiritual and eternal through a fleshly life of following our desires; second, so that God's name and the glory we have in Christ are not slandered among the heathen and our opponents but are praised through our good works. These are the chief reasons why and for what purpose we should do good works, which should most strongly admonish and incite us to do so.

Luther, Martin. Luther's Works, Vol 77: Church Postil III (page 101-102) Concordia Publishing House.

SWD News and Tidbits:

1. Update on Search for new SWD Mission Executive:

The search committee has reviewed the names of those who have been nominated for the position of Executive Assistant to the President for Missions. The next step is conducting a series of interviews with the potential candidates. Those interviews will begin in early January. Please keep the process in your prayers, as our Lord has already selected the man who will serve as our next mission executive.

2. SWD Mission Intentions for 2017-2018 Budget:

It is that time of the year when we are working on the SWD budget for the next year. Herman and I just met to review what will be proposed at the December SWD Board meeting. That conversation is always interesting; for the past twenty years or so districts like ours have been facing declining support from congregations. It has slowed a bit in recent years; this year once again we are projecting fewer mission dollars from congregations than in the past.

That is merely the reality. It is a reality that affects what can be shared with the LCMS and what can be designated for missions within SWD. My prayer is that this turns around so that our mission efforts are not ham-strung or paralyzed as a result. Fewer resources have a ripple effect on what we can accomplish together as we "confess Christ for the next generation".

If you haven't yet completed and returned your congregation's mission intentions, please do so in good order. As you do so, please take into consideration our Lord's generosity. Paul's words about the Macedonians come to mind, "For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." As you discuss the congregation's mission intentions, please measure your decision both by our Lord's generosity and what He has given us to do.

May our gracious Lord bless us with His generosity as we recognize the work that needs to be done in our midst!

3. Updates from the Council of Presidents' Meeting, November 2016:

- a) As required by Convention Resolution 12-14 the Council is engaged in a conversation with the Commission on Constitutional Matters regarding ecclesiastical supervision of members by the Synod President "should a district president decline or fail to act". If you recall, this was one of the hotly contested matters at last summer's convention.
- b) The matter itself was decided by the CCM in answer to a question posed by the Floor Committee 12. Opinion 16-2791 states: "Ecclesiastical supervision is covered in the Constitution's Articles XI B 1-3 and XII 6-8, which confer supervisory power first upon the President of Synod, who is to "conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod," and then upon the district presidents, who shall "especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of ordained and commissioned ministers of their district..." One element entailed in that ecclesiastical supervision is the authority to suspend a member of the Synod, which begins the formal process that could lead to expulsion from the Synod (Constitution Art. XIII 1-2).
- c) All that remains is for the Secretary of Synod to draft the appropriate bylaw(s), the CCM to review, and the Synod Board of Directors to approve by a two-thirds vote.
- d) LCMS Vacancy Report for November 2016 with all districts reporting

Sole pastor:	312	Congregations served by part-time pastors:	357
Senior:	47	New congregation starts:	12
Associate:	75	Congregations closed:	10
Total:	434		

4. Circuit Visitors Winter Retreat:

Winter Retreat is scheduled for February 20-21, 2017 in conjunction with NWD at Holiday Inn Stevens Point. Dr. Stephen Saunders, head of psychology at Marquette University, has agreed to serve as our plenary speaker on the subject of mental health concerns in the parish. Dr. Saunders is an LCMS layman, and has recently published a book titled: The Christian's Guide to Mental Illness: Recognizing Mental Illness in the Church & School.

5) Congregational Visitation continues.

In the weeks ahead I will be visiting the following:

- Our ministry at the House of Correction Franklin where Afam Ikanih serves as chaplain, November 30
- Peace Neenah for their 55th anniversary, Saturday and Sunday, December 10/11
- Winkels 19, 21, and 22 the week before Christmas

The following installations will take place on Sunday, January 8th

- Pastor Mark Wilkins as the intentional interim, associate pastor, Hope Lutheran Fond du Lac
- Pastor Douglas Peters as associate pastor Elm Grove Lutheran
- Pastor Don Fehlauer as the part-time pastor at Zion Lutheran Evansville

6) SWD Reconcilers: In accord with the LCMS Bylaw 1.10 and following, involving dispute resolution, the SWD Board of Directors has appointed the following to serve as Synod Trained Reconcilers: Rev. William Kilps, Rev. Doug Peters, and Mr. Gene Ladendorf. There is one spot open for a lay person which will be filled later in spring. Rev. David Totsky was also nominated as a "hearing panel facilitator". These gentlemen will be in St. Louis the later part of January for several days of dispute resolution training.

7) Passionate Believers work conference is set for Saturday, February 4, 2017, with the theme, "21st Century Lutheranism: What does this mean?" Our keynote speaker is Rev. Dr. Larry Rast, President of Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne. More information will be forthcoming. Once again we thank Divine Redeemer Hartland, their pastors and staff, for their gracious hosting of this event.

8) **Our SWD Board of Directors** meets Thursday, December 8th at the SWD office. This is our annual budget meeting. The Finance Committee meets Monday, December 5.

9) **Congregational Vacancies and Pastoral Calls:**

Pastor calls & vacancies

- Franklin – Risen Savior
- Milwaukee – Mt. Olive (evaluating)
- Milwaukee – St. Peter/Immanuel
- Sheboygan – St. Paul (associate)
- Sheboygan Falls – St. Paul (associate)
- West Bend – St. Andrew (sole)

10) **Prayer list:**

- Peter Kelm as he continues to battle cancer
- Mark Kufahl as he deals with congestive heart and kidney failure
- Randy Senn and family at the death of his sister
- Arthur Senn as he recovers from pneumonia
- Roger Laesch who is in the hospital with an intestinal obstruction

May our Lord bless!!

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"Confessing Christ for the Next Generation"

This our time:

- 1. to be distinctly Lutheran,*
- 2. to plant new congregations,*
- 3. to honor our Christ-centered vocation,*
- 4. to embrace our communities.*