



DP Vantage Point

*For Christ and for His world SWD Magnifies partnerships,
Multiplies ministries, and Maximizes resources.*

1 November 2014

All Saints Day, 2014

Sermon on Revelation 21:1-5

50th Anniversary of Good Shepherd, Pleasant Prairie

Dear Brothers in the office of the Pastoral Ministry:

Eventually the body and soul of the dead will be reunited. Eventually body and soul risen from the grave believers will stand in our Lord's glory. Based on that certain future my encouragement for you this day is that you "Continue on to the Final Victory." That is a victory over sin won by our Lord Jesus. That victory won on the cross. 1) A victory which means that instead of death there is the resurrection. 2) A victory which means that instead of grave there is life eternal.

What our Lord describes for us in these last verses of Holy Scripture is really the fulfillment ...the culmination of everything that God has promised. It begins in the Garden of Eden when sin enters the world ...and the first curse is spoken. Satan is the first cursed. God says to him, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life." The ground is cursed because of Adam and Eve's sin. God says, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it...It will produce thorns and thistles for you. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." But it doesn't stop there. Mankind as a whole is also cursed in another more terrible way. God tells Adam and Eve, "Dust you are and to dust you will return." It's a curse comes because of sin. As St. Paul says in Galatians 3: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

We have lived with that curse at work in our bodies since the day of our conception. Because of sin death is at work in us. It is all around us. We have seen the curse of sin at work in the culture around us. We find ourselves in a culture where up has become down, where wrong has become right, where the gross sins formerly scorned by society are now paraded for all to see, and where morality has been replaced by immorality as accepted norm in society. In response to such things St. Paul has one simple passage: "The wages of sin is death."

As bitter as the curse of sin is, there is something better. There is God's own promise that He intends to restore all that sin has cursed. You see, God didn't merely to stand by and watch his creation destroyed by the evil foe when Adam and Eve sinned. God doesn't merely stand by to watch mankind suffer under the curse of sin and death forever. Part of the serpent's curse is the promise of the Savior. Cursing Satan God says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Our Lord Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise. There was strife between Jesus and the devil from the day of our Lord's birth. It came to a head when Jesus was nailed to the cross. Satan's head was crushed when our Lord Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "It is finished." The curse of death was removed three days later when our Lord Jesus was rose from the dead. By that St. Paul tells us that our Lord Jesus "has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

That was a victory that our Lord Jesus won for each and every one of us. That victory which our Lord Jesus won on the cross paying for our sins...and in the grave conquering death means that what St. John says here is true. "No longer will there be any more curse." Our God himself has replaced the curse with a great blessing. A blessing that begins for us in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism where our sins are washed away...and

God marks us with his name. A blessing that continues in the Sacrament of Holy Communion where our Lord Jesus gives us a foretaste of that fellowship that we will enjoy with him forever in the glories of heaven. A blessing that assures us that as St. Paul tells the Ephesians we “are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”

There is no more important message to be proclaimed or heard! That’s important for us to understand. For you see, the 50 year anniversary that you celebrate today is not merely about you and those who have gone before you here. This is about today and the future, those from out there who will be here after you. Look around. What do you see? We live in a society where the church, our Christ-centered confession of faith, our Law and Gospel proclamation, and where our Christian morality, are increasingly challenged, even despised. That mounting hostility only serves to sweeten the Gospel message. That enmity only spotlights the necessity of this congregation continuing in this community. In culture that has wrapped itself in the shroud of death; we have the message of the empty tomb. We have the message of life eternal.

That means that this is our time to clearly and loudly proclaim God’s grace for the sake of Christ Jesus. This is our time to gather at the foot of the cross for forgiveness and direction. This is our time to be the church of God, to plant the church of our God. This is our time to live out that grace and forgiveness in whatever place we might be, in whatever vocation we find ourselves; as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, employers and employees, citizens and families, living it all for the sake of Christ. It is as St. Paul tells the Philippians, you are “blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.”

For you see, Jesus not only suffered and died to win forgiveness for us. Jesus Christ suffered and died to win forgiveness for the whole world, even for those who despise him. Jesus Christ not only rose from the dead and now lives for us. His resurrection is also so that all might live with Him. Our task, your task, continues to be that of sharing that saving message. As we live and share that message of grace and forgiveness, of life and eternity, we “Continue on our way to the Final Victory.” That is a victory over sin won by our Lord Jesus. That victory won on the cross. 1) A victory which means that instead of death there is the resurrection. 2) A victory which means that instead of grave there is life eternal. With that I am reminded of two items, first the verse of a favorite hymn:

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;
Let the gift of Your salvation Be our glory everore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
Serving you whom we adore, Serving you whom we adore. LSB 850v4

Finally a passage from Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians that sums up the direction of our life in the church: “Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.”

God bless your ministry! jw

Other SWD News:

SWD financials:

It's that time of year again when we start to look at budgets; receipts and expenses. The SWD financials are attached. One of the items that will catch your eye (it caught mine) is the fact that through the end of October, year to date, and our congregational receipts/intentions are behind by **\$158,886.00**. That is a goodly number with three months left in our SWD fiscal year. My hope and my prayer is that congregations will be able to catch up in the months ahead. Your attention to this is appreciated!

Sadly you will notice that there are congregations that ring up \$0.00 in year to date remittances. It is my plan to visit these congregations as we move forward to talk about the importance of our common work in reaching the lost and caring for each other. I am continually reminded of St. Paul's precious words commending the Macedonian believers, **"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."** (2 Cor. 8:1-5) The generosity of the Macedonians is motivated by their faith in Christ Jesus. The Macedonians are generous because they understand the value of what has given them, how he has blessed them, and they respond in a fabulous manner! May we walk in the footsteps of the Macedonians!!

SWD Mission Intentions:

We are working on getting the 2015 Mission Intention forms to you in the next few days. There is a bit of a different format this year as we have made it a priority to communicate how the mission dollars that come from the congregations are used.

As you know, from our undesignated general receipts we designate 25% for our common work in the LCMS. And the LCMS is sending out more foreign missionaries than we have in recent memory. Two very important considerations in that letter are:

1) Is your Mission Intention prompted by a joy-filled thankfulness for your heavenly Father's great love for you in Christ Jesus? A response of how God is blessing your congregation.

When your congregational leaders discuss your Mission Intention for 2015 I encourage you to take the time to list the various ways in which our Lord has blessed you as a congregation this year. Give thanks to Him! Let your gifts be measured by a thank-filled heart! Talk about the example that your congregation's mission intention sets for the people of God? Aim for the tithe for mission.

2) How does your Mission Intention express your congregation's collective faith in our Lord?

These Mission Intentions are not merely about money. Like everything else this is about our journey of faith, as well as setting an example for God's people. Saving faith is more than an inert commodity. Faith gives evidence of its existence by its actions. In our partnership with the congregations of SWD we share 25% of gifts we receive with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Together with the whole LCMS we are sending out more foreign missionaries than we have in recent memory. By that we are blessed as our God opens many doors for mission work both near and far. God always blessed His people in like manner as they share what they have been given. We are so blessed together!

Convention Action Items from the 2012 SWD Convention:

Once a convention ends and the delegates return home, it might be easy to forget what resolutions adopted at a convention. Not so! Convention resolutions are an important aspect of our life together. More will follow in the months ahead, but here is snapshot of how several other 2012 SWD Convention Resolutions are being enacted:

a. An update on RESOLUTION 3-03A, To Transfer Camp LuWiSoMo Property.

If you remember, this was one of the more lively debated resolutions that we had at the 2012 SWD Convention. At one point I didn't know if we were going to reach a decision on this resolution. But by God's grace we did; and I believe this is a good solution to a challenging situation.

Lots of very good news here! Camp LUWISOMO had a great summer under the leadership of Bill Durling. Campers were up. There was even a group of youth from the inner city of Milwaukee at the Camp. Several of us visited Camp a few weeks back and the place looks great! The dining hall is beautiful. They have a solid board of directors who have done their due diligence in a wonderful manner, and they have a good business plan in place. The Federal government has granted the 501(c) and the Camp has received "Recognized Service Organization" (RSO) status from the LCMS with my endorsement. They are busy visiting congregations and schools telling the LUWISOMO story.

The long and short of it is that Camp LUWISOMO's leadership has completed practically everything required in SWD RESOLUTION 3-03A, To Transfer Camp LuWiSoMo Property. Once all of the final paperwork is in place, the inventory is complete, various bills are paid, and financing is secured; in accord with Resolution 3-03a the property will be transferred to the new Camp Corporation. Camp LUWISOMO will be a freestanding organization responsible for its own day-to-day operations! That will be a great day for everyone!

On that day the prayers of many will be answered. I give thanks for the hard work of so many at the Camp who have worked so diligently to make this a reality. Congratulations! My hope and my prayer is that Camp LUWISOMO will continue to be a place for the people of SWD to treasure for many years to come!!

FYI. The resolution itself is attached to this Vantage Point in case you would like to read it.

b. Update on RESOLUTION 3-02, To Realign SWD Circuits

This taskforce, under the able leadership of Rev. John Berg from Trinity Sheboygan, has been hard at work their task of drafting a new alignment for circuits that will be presented to the 2015 Convention. A major aspect of their work has focused on a new circuit alignment for the metro Milwaukee circuits. All of which means that, if adopted, the urban areas of our SWD will be represented both on the circuit level and in our national conventions with delegates.

While it will be up to the convention to adopt the proposed changes, from my perspective the committee has done excellent work. It has not merely been redrawing circuit boundaries to create circuits with what might be defined as greater affinity in the metro area. They have had to struggle to comply with an LCMS bylaw which defines "electoral circuits as consisting of a minimum of seven congregations and a minimum of 1500 communicant members."

More will come out about their recommendation as they formalize it. I will leave it to them to unpack their recommendations. You might want to invite Pastor Berg to your circuit winkel for just that purpose.

c. RESOLUTION 4-02, To Encourage "Life Together" in the South Wisconsin District through the Unity of Practices Regarding the Lord's Supper [Today's Business #1, p.11; Overture 4-02, CW p. 45]

Two of resolved's from that resolution read:

- **RESOLVED**, that the South Wisconsin District in convention direct the District president through his triennial visitation of the South Wisconsin District congregations, to explore specifically the practice of the Lord's Supper in each place; and be it further
- **RESOLVED**, that he would encourage those faithfully practicing close(d) Communion to remain doing so, while advising those with a different practice to reconsider their confession and practice for the

sake of the unity of the Synod and District.

As part of moving that resolution into forward, I have written a series of articles on the proper practice of Holy Communion especially as it is lived out in whom is properly admitted to the Sacrament. Those articles leaned heavily on church fathers because it is my conviction that on the basis of Holy Scripture they understood Holy Communion and its proper boundaries. The subject has been broached in a recent edition of the "Changing Life" enews so that God's people know that resolutions matter. There has been a pastors' conference on the topic, where pastoral exceptions were discussed. There has also been a KOINONIA group that has met to discuss "Close (d) Communion". We have talked about proper Communion practices and we have studied them.

d. RESOLUTION 5-03, To Support the Deaf Ministry of South Wisconsin Area.

Two of the resolved's read:

RESOLVED, that the South Wisconsin District recommit itself in affirming deaf ministry in the South Wisconsin area; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the South Wisconsin District be encouraged to support our deaf ministries in the South Wisconsin area, including one of the largest deaf leadership training programs in the nation and reaching internationally;

In keeping with this resolution SWD Deaf Ministry continues to receive a generous partnership grant each month. And it is my joy to share with you that just recently as St. Mark Milwaukee closed its doors for the last time, its members shared a very generous portion of their proceeds with this precious ministry. We give thanks for all the Gospel work that is being done to reach those who suffer from hearing loss. As you may know, this is close to home for me as my youngest sister suffers from severe hearing loss.

e. Various Resolutions were passed along to the LCMS for consideration at the 2013 National Convention.

These include:

- RESOLUTION 4-01, To Clarify Colloquy Application Prerequisites for Commissioned Ministry
- RESOLUTION 6-01, To Request that the Synod Direct the CTCR and the Seminaries to Evaluate Transforming Churches Network
- RESOLUTION 6-02, To Retrain the Significance of Overtures and Resolutions Submitted by Individual Congregations.

PW's travels and commitments through Thanksgiving:

- Sunday, November 2, Preach at the 50th anniversary of Good Shepherd Pleasant Prairie
- Sunday, November 2, congregational/informational meeting at St. John's Mayville.
- Monday, November 3, various visits with pastors
- Tuesday, November 4, Election Day.
- Sunday, November 9, Preach at 95th anniversary for Grace Racine.
- Monday, November 10, Circuit 23 winkel, Zion Lutheran Clyman.
- Tuesday, November 11-Thursday, November 13, Dispute Resolution Panel in another district.
- November 14-15, visiting some grandkids in California
- November 16-24, COP meeting and LCEF Fall Conference, and Mission Summit, Garden Grove California. (Nice place to visit; too bad we will be in meetings every day.)
- November 25, Executive team meeting.
- November 27, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good and His mercy endures forever!"

Calling Congregations, Divine Calls, and Clergy Roster:

- Beloit – St. John
- Brookfield – Immanuel (Associate)
- Hartland – Divine Redeemer (Associate)
- Hilbert – Trinity
- Lebanon – St. Peter
- Milwaukee – Hope
- Necedah – St. James/New Miner – St. Paul
- Oregon – Community of Life (Associate)
- Pleasant Prairie – Good Shepherd
- Portage – St. John
- Racine – Prince of Peace
- Sun Prairie – Bethlehem
- Union Grove – St. Paul (sole)

Pastors considering a call:

- **George Borghardt – Zion, McHenry, IL to Prince of Peace, Racine**
- **Patrick Niles – St. Paul, Concordia, MO to Trinity, Rantoul/Potter**

Pastors resigning:

- James Mallmann, resigned for cause

Prayer considerations:

- Fred Bischoff and family at the death of his mother, Bea
- David & Barb Paape at the death of Barb's mother, Millie
- Bonnie Meier, wife of Bruce, as she is receiving cancer treatments

May our Lord bless!!

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