



## *DP Vantage Point*

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

Saturday, May 30, 2015

Sermon from 2015 Spring Pastors' Conference

Text: 2 Timothy 2:1-7

In the name of Jesus, the Christ, whose name we embrace and whose name we proclaim, brothers in the Office of the Pastoral Ministry, fellow redeemed:

Early this morning the lead banner on my FOXNEWS app was "Because of their faith". You have probably seen the news. At first western hostages were being executed, now ISIS has declared war on Christianity. The latest video is two groups of Ethiopian Christians were executed by ISIS yesterday; 35 men. Because of executions like this the color of martyrdom has become orange, the color of the jumpsuits that most of the martyrs were wearing. Seeing that news release we can easily recall Lord's words in John 16: "In fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God." What brings that news closer to home is the fact that one of the executioners had a distinct North American accent. And six were arrested from Minnesota as they attempted to join ISIS. That begs the questions; will such things as Christian martyrdoms start to happen here as the terrorists lash out in their anger?

Hmm...Do you feel like you have a target on your back? Do you see the target on the back of the person in front of you? Do you see the target on yourself? Not put there by you, but by the evil one. You are a target because you are a pastor in the Lutheran Church. You are target because if the evil one can get you to fall the church will be affected. God's people will be offended. Some will question their faith, if evil one gets an upper hand in your life. Some will even fall away from the faith, if the evil one can snag you. Depending on what causes the disqualification those effects can reverberate for a generation or more. I have seen it happen again and again. Good pastors are disqualified from the pastoral office for one reason or another. It could be a moral failure. It could be malfeasance. There are a variety of weapons that the evil one has in his arsenal.

As the Apostle Paul writes these words to his good friend and protégé, we can hear Paul's concern that Timothy not be offended by what is happening to Paul. Paul writes: "Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner." Paul calls upon Timothy to: "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal." Paul's circumstances had gone from bad to worse. He is experiencing the vicious wrath of the evil one. Companions have abandoned him afraid that they might also be arrested and sentenced to die. The persecution of Christians is beginning. The end of his ministry is at hand. The only one still by his side is Luke. But his faith is not wavering. "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." He reaches out to Timothy, "Do your best to come to me soon."

That makes this is Paul's farewell letter to Timothy. Good words for Timothy and good words for us. In his last letter to Timothy Paul writes about the pastoral office; the office that you and I fill, the office that man you a prime target of the evil one. To help Timothy understand the strenuous demands and responsibilities of the office, Paul draws upon several other vocations, and those become our focus this day. **"Soldier, Athlete, Farmer; Pastor."** Paul uses each of those three vocations is descriptive of the pastoral office. 1) The Pastoral Office is about victory, a crown, and the harvest. 2) The Pastoral Office is about readiness, training, and hard work.

<<Part 1>>

No one has to tell you how demanding the pastoral office is. You live the responsibilities every day. While there are many joys and blessings, there are also long, demanding hours. You have experienced the heart-ache that goes with watching sin wreak its havoc on families and on your membership rolls. We live in a time when we have seen the Christian church moved from a respected pillar of society to the despised fringe, as if the Christian church was nothing better than peripheral piffle. We have each felt the sting of the contempt that the world has for our Christ and our confession of faith.

Because of what is happening in our culture at this summer's convention we are having a lawyer from the non-profit Alliance for Defending Freedom speak to us about our First Amendment rights which are systematically being taken away from us. Tim Goeglein who was in the "W" administration said this in a presentation at the 2015 March for Life: "The millennials are the first generation in American history that is measurably losing its rights." A Roman archbishop was heard reporting sometime back, "I will die in my bed. My successor will die in prison. His successor will die a martyr". The color orange is real.

The Apostle Paul has a good grip on what is happening to him and why; and he wants Timothy to understand as well. Share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling." He says, "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." There is a spiritual battle going on in this world and, whether we like it or not, we are part of it.

When commenting on his struggles with the church at the time, Martin Luther describes an even more dangerous warfare. "Still this is nothing in comparison with that spiritual battle, in which we are surrounded on all sides by many thousands of demons, who disgorge all hell against us and assault us with the greatest armies. Nor is there any doubt that Satan is grasping at us with all his powers...He is not simply furious, he is fury itself." And you are the evil one's target, as I am.

Doubt it? Since Passion Week my life has been consumed with one conflict after the next. In the last ten days two pastors have resigned because of personal issues. In the last six months at least three ordained brothers have resigned because of boundary violations with morality. "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

Have you ever wondered if you could win that battle? Have you ever been in that dark shadowy valley where everything smells of death? Have you ever stood at the edge of an emotional cliff wondering if there was any hope? Have you ever been up against a wall with no idea of what to

do? Have you ever been so trapped by temptation that you have fallen again and again, helpless in the face of the evil one? Have you ever been so empty inside that you have gone again and again to the barrel to pull out an old sermon? Yes? Then you understand St. Paul's plea, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" That is a cry of desperation; a cry that recognizes that we cannot do it by our own strength. A cry that says I cannot do it by myself.

The good news is; Christ is risen! We may be the soldiers, but our Lord Jesus has secured the victory for us. He has defeated the enemy. You know the words. They are not just a great quote for the Easter sermon, they are written for you. Paul's words to the Corinthians: Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks are to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Christ Jesus bore all the agony of the cross, so that we would not be crushed under the burden of our sin. He crushed Satan's head with His foot. He defeated death by His resurrection. Christ Jesus wore our crown of thorns so that sinners like you and I might rejoice in Paul's words, "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."

And it is not just on that Day. We can have that confidence today and everyday. That is especially important when loneliness becomes our closest friend, especially true when the evil one comes at us in his fury, especially true when we feel as if we are drowning because of the all the demands that are placed upon us. We are never alone. While the devil may have targeted us with his flaming arrows we have one who is always with us. The Prophet Isaiah:

- But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

The battle is hard fought. The competition is stiff. The work is demanding. But remember who you called you into this work. Remember whose Word it is that we proclaim. It is Lord's Word that we sow, and He guarantees the harvest. Remember Paul's words in 1 Corinthians: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." For like a farmer who has planted his grain in the spring, our Lord now awaits a great harvest for His kingdom; a harvest of people who have been redeemed by Christ the crucified. Jesus says to us: "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." Do you see it all around? It's in your church. It is in your community, all across our state. The harvest happens as a result of our joint work in places like the inner city of MKE, the church plant in Waunakee, the Dominican Republic, in Mexico, in Africa and Asia.

<<Part 2>>

Good things are happening in many places, but the reality is that we serve as pastors in strangely precarious times. The threats are multiple. They come at us from outside and from inside; from the culture in which we live and from within the church we serve, and even from within our own selves. As Paul faces similar threats at the close of his life he talks with Timothy about the pastoral office; the office that you and I fill. It is an interesting perspective that Paul expresses about the office

with which we have been entrusted. **“Soldier, Athlete, Farmer; Pastor.”** Paul uses each of those three vocations as descriptive for the pastoral office. 1) The Pastoral Office is about the victory, the crown, and the harvest. 2) The Pastoral Office is about readiness, training, and hard work.

Soldiers and athletes are always training, honing their skills and tactics so that together they can attack the enemy. Soldiers know that no battle can be won by one soldier. We are part of an army of God; part of the church. Athletes train continually putting their bodies through rigorous exercise so that they are ready to run the race. Because of the curse of sin farming is not for the faint of heart either. Farmers are regularly challenged by the elements; droughts and floods, and hail and storms. Farmers are always struggling with quack grass and thistles. God tells Adam, “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.” They work in anticipation of the harvest.

It is difficult to read these words and not recall what Paul writes to the Corinthians: “Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

Soldiers, athletes, farmers and pastors can be disqualified. Soldiers don’t fraternize with the enemy. If they do, they are branded as traitors. Soldiers are under authority, subject to discipline. Athletes have coaches who help them prepare for the competition. Athletes who break the rules are barred from competing. Farmers who don’t understand that their vocation is about hard work simply will never reap a harvest. Farmers, who cannot tell the difference between wheat and tares, don’t recognize the threat.

As pastors we are soldiers of the cross; Christ Jesus is our Lord. As pastors we are running the race of salvation. As pastors we gather the harvest sinners for our Lord. As a soldier, athlete, farmer and pastor each of us is accountable to our Lord Jesus and to His Church.

Soldiers, athletes, farmers and pastors, are you paying attention to what our Lord is saying to us in these verses?

- Are you taking care of yourself? Our God has entrusted to each a body and a soul. We have physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological needs.
- Do you know how you deal with stress? Do you take care of your body? Have you seen a doctor for a physical?
- Do you understand conflict dynamics?
- Do you read and study Holy Scripture for your benefit and not just to write a sermon?
- Do you take time for your family?
- Do you go for a walk with your wife?
- Have you enrolled in a continuing education program?
- Do you read? When was the last time you read the Lutheran Confessions? Have you picked up a book on Lutheran theology lately? We are Lutheran pastors.
- How about a fiction or non-fiction book? It helps to keep the mind fresh
- Have you enrolled in something like DOXOLOGY so that you can get a handle on your demons, so that you can hone your skills as a pastor? Every pastor here would benefit, if you haven’t already been there.

- Do you have a father confessor, a mentor, a coach; someone in whom you can confide; a friend, someone who holds you accountable? Remember soldiers find themselves accountable in a chain of command, and we are soldiers.

We know the enemy is evil, pure evil. In spite of that evil, we know that our Lord guarantees the harvest. Do you remember Paul's words to the Galatians: "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

It is that harvest that Paul has in when he calls upon Timothy to remember these words:

- By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.
- Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.
- Always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.
- Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Remember, this is not just about you. This is about the Body of Christ. This is about the Bride of Christ, the church. This is about the Gospel message that we proclaim and to which we cling. Paul's words are for you: "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus." God's grace is for you, purchased with the price of Christ Jesus on the cross. By that grace you are forgiven. By that grace you are claimed to be a child of God. By that grace you have been called into the pastoral office to serve our Lord and His Bride.

Being a pastor is a wonderful privilege! We have a grand message entrusted to us. Your ministry is to be about the Gospel; morning, noon and evening. Martin Luther says this in the introduction to his commentary on Galatians: "In my heart there reigns and shall ever reign, this one article, namely, faith in the Lord Jesus; which is the sole beginning, middle, and end of every spiritual and godly thought that I may have, whether day or night." [From intro to Luther's Galatians Commentary]

We are to proclaim the Gospel. We are to teach God's people, to help them understand God's love in Christ and His will for their lives. We pronounce forgiveness, and we administer the blessed Sacraments. We are to be above reproach, examples of faith that can be followed by the people who have called us to serve them. Such is our vocation as a "Soldiers of the cross, Athletes competing by the rules, Farmers reaping a harvest of souls for our Lord; Pastors proclaiming the Gospel message for our Lord and His Church." 1) The Pastoral Office is about the victory, the crown, and the harvest. 2) The Pastoral Office is about readiness, training, and hard work. May each of us always be faithful, brave and true! To our Lord's glory. Amen

SWD Spring Pastors' Conference  
Opening Worship  
Rev. Dr. John C. Wille  
SWD president

## A bit from Herman Sasse:

The Caesar cult in its manifold forms, the deification of the state, is the one great form of the defection from the idea of the state. There are also other possibilities of such defection. The government can forget and neglect its tasks. When it no longer distinguishes between right and wrong, when its courts are no longer governed by the strict desire for justice, but by special interests, when government no longer has the courage to exercise its law, fails to exercise its duties, undermines its own legal order, when it weakens through its family law parental authority and the estate of marriage, then it ceases to be governing authority. Sasse, What is the State? 1932

Some might wonder why I refer back to the church fathers. My answer to that lies in the words of Walther who writes, **“Patres fuerunt lumina, non numina, indices, non iudices, ministri, non magistri”** (the fathers were lights and not gods, teachers and not judges, servants and not masters). Walther, C.F.W. (2014-01-18). Walther's Works: Church Fellowship (Kindle Locations 3599-3601). Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.

A more modern take would be: we cannot know where we are going until we know where we have been. We are not confessional Lutherans in the vacuum of this present day. Rather we stand on the shoulders of the theological giants who have gone before us.

## Other SWD News:

### 1) SWD Convention Dates of Importance:

On June 7-9, 2015, our South Wisconsin District will hold its 54th triennial convention at Concordia University Wisconsin campus in Mequon under the theme, **“Walk humbly with our God.”**

- The Convention Workbook is posted.
- Floor Committees floor committees have met and are putting forward some 25 or so resolutions.
- The first issue of “Today’s Business” should be available shortly; on line and printed in the binder you will receive when you sign in at the convention.
- If you have not registered yet, the online registration is closed. But you can still register by downloading the forms from the SWD website. If you haven’t registered, please give the SWD office a call. Please follow the directions carefully especially when it comes to credentialing. That is important not only for this convention but also for the LCMS presidential election next spring

### 2) Update on Peter Kelm:

Peter’s surgery went well and he is recovering at home. He has been recuperating, and shortly he will begin a course of chemotherapy. In the short term Peter will be on disability. Please keep Peter and his family in your prayers.

**3) Closed Communion document from the LCMS:** Just released, the attached document touches on one of our Convention resolutions from 2012 regarding the matter of “close(d) Communion”. President Harrison states: “I requested the document on Communion statements because I so often see bulletin statements that invite all who are baptized or Christians, or who believe in the “real presence,” to come to Communion.

This is not, and has never been, the position of the LCMS. The Synod voted at well over 70 percent at the last convention to request that the president of the Synod urge district presidents to work with congregations to ensure practices faithful to the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions.”

**As you know, we have been doing just that in SWD.**

**4) Dedication of the Old Latin School in Wittenberg:** At the invitation and urging of President Harrison there were five district presidents who attended the dedication of the Old Latin School in Wittenberg. Some might wonder what this is about. It is the birthplace of the Reformation. It is to be a place of study and a place for witness. Having never been to the “fatherland” before, walking where Luther and the Reformers walked and lived is a humbling experience.

Part of the reason being there is that I am told many SWD congregations and individuals have helped make this dream a reality.

Below is a picture of the Old Latin School on the day of dedication. It was a marvelous day. President Harrison preached at St. Mary’s for the dedication. That is Luther’s church where he preached some 2000 sermons.



## **6) Calls and Vacancies:**

### **Calling Congregations, Divine Calls, and Clergy Roster:**

- Beloit – St. John
- Beloit – Messiah
- Delevan – Our Redeemer
- Mayville – St. John
- Menasha – Trinity (associate pastor & principal)
- Necedah – St. James/New Miner – St. Paul
- Neshkoro – St. John/St. Paul/Trinity
- Oshkosh – Good Shepherd
- Pleasant Prairie – Good Shepherd
- Portage – St. John
- Racine – Prince of Peace
- Wales – Bethlehem
- Waupun – Pella
- Wauwatosa – Pilgrim
- Wauwatosa – Our Redeemer

### **Pastors considering a call:**

- Ryan Fehrmann – Grace, Paris, Illinois to Good Shepherd, Pleasant Prairie
- G. Gregory Hovland, Our Savior, Green Bay to St. John, Portage
- Kurt Ziemann – St. Stephen/Immanuel , Batavia/Random Lake to Zion, Painesville, Ohio

### **Pastors accepting a call:**

- Douglas Bergelin – Zion, Bismarck, North Dakota to St. Peter, Lebanon
- Brian Crane – Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana to St. John/United in Christ, Quincy/Dellwood
- Seth Flick – Immanuel, Riverside, CA to Divine Redeemer, Hartland

### **Pastors declining a call:**

### **Pastors Resigning their divine call:**

- Travis Schmidt, Risen Savior Franklin, going to candidate status
- Tim Schellenbach, Holy Cross Racine, resigned from roster as well.

## **7) Prayer considerations:**

- Peter Kelm and his family as he recovers from surgery and starts chemotherapy treatments
- Dean Dummer as he recovers from foot surgery
- Jean Barth, wife of Dr. Karl Barth as she struggles with health issues
- The South Wisconsin District in convention next week
- The many other districts that will also be in convention in the next month



May our Lord bless!!

**Rev. Dr. John C. Wille**  
**President, South Wisconsin District-LCMS**

Office: 414.464.8100  
Mobile : 414.839.9162

***Confessing Christ for the Next Generation***

*It is time for us to be distinctly Lutheran, to plant new churches, to honor our vocation,  
and to embrace our communities.*