

Written Copy: 1 Peter 1:20-23 “Serving One Another in Love”

19th Sunday @ Pentecost – LWML Sunday Readings

Sunday, October 3rd, 2021

Text: 1 Peter 1:20-23

²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. ²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

The text’s intent

To motivate and encourage the Church to live according to their baptismal identity as children cleansed and purified through their redemption in Christ’s blood. We are to live not according to satisfying our former urges and lusts but instead to serve our Lord through works that demonstrate our genuine brotherly love towards those in Christ and sacrificially love those who don’t return that love. We do this placing our hope not in our works, but the work of our Savior credited to us. We place our hope not on lives lived in this world but in Jesus’ death and resurrection which brings to us our inheritance of eternal life.

Focus Statement:

Jesus Christ has redeemed us from the eternal separation we deserve by paying the price to cancel our sins by His blood shed on the cross. Through the Gospel that comes to us in Word and Sacrament creates in us a new heart and new life with the desire to obey Him. He keeps purifying our hearts through the ongoing power of baptism so that we can live to obey His call to love one another relationally and sacrificially.

Function Statement:

Why it’s important to know:

We struggle to love one another as our Savior calls us to as children living the new life in Christ. We fall back into conforming ourselves to please the desires and lusts of our old heart, loving others with strings attached regarding what they can do for us and refuse to sacrifice what we have for the good of others, especially those who don’t return our love. God the impartial judge states the punishment for this is eternal separation.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Live out lives of obedience to Christ’s call to love others by preparing our minds and hearts through repentance, and placing our hope not on things of this world but in the promises we have in Jesus death and resurrection. We love through the love He creates and sustains in our hearts.

Subject Sentence: Born again to love one another in obedience to Christ

Introduction: Why Are You Here?

Take a moment and ask yourself, “Why am I here today?” Now let me qualify that question; it’s not “Why am I in the Lord’s house worshipping Him today?”, although the answer I’m seeking is a part of that. It’s a given that you are here because you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and you want to hear His voice and receive His gifts. But why did you choose this place, Lamb of God, to be the place where you receive these things? Well, of course, it’s because of the Pastor and his great and edifying sermons and entertaining delivery! Now, just in case you’re wondering, that is said very much tongue in cheek. I **was** listening to Pastor Hensler’s sermon several weeks ago on humbleness = servanthood. It’s not about me. If you are blessed by the message that I deliver it is the work of the Holy Spirit who gives me what to say and speaks it through me.

I’m guessing there is a greater reason you are here. Look at those sitting next to you, to your left and to your right. Look at those sitting in front of you and behind you. You are here because you consider these people to be your Church Family. You come here to spend time with the Lord in the presence of your Church family. You feel that this is where you belong. And if your relatively new and don’t quite have that feeling yet, I believe you soon will. I can say this without bragging this congregation is very welcoming, more so than many other congregations. Now I’m sure you could find other worship services at other places where the Pastor delivers a better sermon, the hymns are more to your liking, and they are played in a grandiose fashion. You could find a place where the Divine Service with Communion is done in one hour. You could even have chosen to watch this service on live streaming at home, so you didn’t have to get up and get ready and drive here. But do you know what’s not there? Do you know what’s missing from those scenarios? Those sitting in front and back, and on either side of you. What you would be missing is your Church family. And they would be missing you.

This is the place that He has called you to be a member of His body and to serve Him in loving obedience. You have been given a new life in Christ, who knew before you were even born. He knew how He wanted you to serve Him as part of His Body by blessing you with particular talents, gifts, spiritual gifts so that you can be an important and active member serving Him at Lamb of God. And how should that service look? **1 Peter 1:22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.** It should look like sincere brotherly love; a love that is relational and sacrificial toward our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to the world around us.

We Fail to Serve in Love, Yet Christ Comes to Redeem/Restore

So, time for another honest look at yourself; how are you doing with that? How well are you loving in the way Christ calls us to love? How well are you serving? Well, we kind of do it, sometimes. We do love our brothers and sisters, at least those that we consider our friends, those who we help because they help us, or those we help so that they might continue to love us, respect us, honor us. The trouble is that's not what Christ would call a "sincere brotherly love". That's putting on an act love, especially if we decide someone can't really help us, so we stop helping them. That's not the true love and friendship that flows from the heart or Christ. And how about those that are hard to love, who make us angry, who we have differences of opinion with; can we say we are loving them earnestly with the love Christ has shared with us?

Peter tells us in **1 Peter 1:13** **Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** Prepare your minds for action. A literal translation of this verse would be "gird up the loins of your mind" or prepare yourself to serve one another with a mind not set on sinful desires and thoughts. Set your hope completely not on what you can do for yourself today, but in the grace that comes from knowing Jesus Christ now and knowing Him completely on the Last Day. What are the sinful thoughts that make us the opposite of "sober-mindedness" in our willingness to serve? The limits we put on our gifts of time and talents in service to the Lord. You're coming here and joining in worship this Sunday Morning is a great work. Just your presence with your fellow worshippers is a service of brotherly love. But what about your presence in Fellowship with your brothers and sisters afterwards? What about your presence in Bible Study on Sunday morning or during the week? What about your presence at the various ministry functions and events that are in our News and Notes? Is your heart telling you that an hour on Sunday morning is sufficient to satisfy God's call to serve Him and one another as the Body of Christ? Is it saying that anything more is just too much of a sacrifice of your time and talents? What is Jesus saying to you? Would He be disappointed in your choices?

The LORD was certainly disappointed with the choices Israel made in their service to Him in our Old Testament Lesson. He was so disappointed that He sent them away into exile. But He did not give up on them. **Ezekiel 36:24-26** **²⁴ I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**

The LORD has not given up on you either. He is fulfilling the same promise in your life by giving you a new heart and a new spirit. He has done a heart transplant in you too. No insurance plan could ever pay for this procedure. We could never pay for this procedure, nor will we ever have to. **1 Peter 1:18-19** ¹⁸ ...you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

That is illustrated very well through the LWML Logo that is on the front cover of your bulletin. By faith we place our hearts and lives into the strong yet loving hands of Jesus. He paid the price for this procedure by His blood shed on the cross. He paid the ransom price to save us from what our sinful heart earns for us, eternal death, and give to us the gift His sacrifice of love earned for us, life with Him now and eternal life to come. How does this work done 2000 years ago effect a heart change in you and me today? That's what the drop of water symbolizes, that heart change comes to you through your baptism. Your sinful heart is washed away and drowned. And that same power by which our Lord and Savior rose from death to life, a new heart and a new spirit is created within you by the Holy Spirit who was given in your baptism. This is the means by which this comes true **1 Peter 1:22** **Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.** With a new heart and purified souls we can begin to obey His call in the Gospel show sincere brotherly love for one another and Christlike love that flows from a new and purified heart.

How We Can Serve in Love Here at LOG:

Note that the whole context for this is not me working by myself. The context is living and working and serving together as His Church. Look once again at the LWML Logo. Can you see that our purified heart is encircled by a much bigger heart? That bigger heart represents the context of our service which is the Church, those who are sitting to your front and back, and to either side of you. This serving one another and the world in love is exemplified by the work the LWML does throughout our Church and the world, and even here in our own congregation.

What are some of the ways they have served and are serving with a sincere brotherly/sisterly love? They sponsored a room at Carriage Town Ministries, a local shelter for the homeless. They cook and serve at Franklin Avenue Mission (FAM) as well as donating money, Amazon Script Cards, and Christmas gifts to FAM. They bought toys for the kids at Mercy House at FAM. And along with the LWML District wide they contributed a total of \$100,000 to build Mercy House. They helped with VBS at FAM and at St. Paul in Pontiac, another mission church. They've sponsored Seminary Students. They do the funeral dinners when a member of our congregation dies. They purchased the refrigerator in the kitchen, along with numerous other kitchen supplies. They've paid for pastors' wives to go to the Katie Conference. They are donating \$100 to buy Halloween Candy for Trunk or Treat this year. There are these things and others too numerous to mention.

For how many of you does this work that our LWML does come as a surprise? That's because they don't do these things for honor or for glory, They do them out of loving service to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, out of sincere brotherly love for one another and Lamb of God, and out of sacrificial love for those in need around us.

Does that make them better Christians than you and I who are not involved in all these ways? No. Christ's love for you does not come from your works. We do not do these things to earn His love, nor could we. As we learned from James several Sundays ago good works flow from a faith relationship with Christ, from the new heart we receive in baptism.

And as fabulous as these works sound, by themselves they do not please our Lord, and would not be considered "good works" because they come from hearts that do not remain pure. Each one of us at one time or another reverts back to that sinful selfish heart that we received from our parents, handed down from Adam and Eve. We do these kinds of works with the hidden agenda that people will like us more, or so we won't feel guilty about how we are more blessed more than others. Going back to our LWML Logo, this is where the drop of water that represents baptism becomes so important. When our sinful selfish heart and mind take over, the power of baptism and it's continual washing and restoration removes that sinful heart and restores the new heart and mind that we have in Christ. Our works are made good when our heart rests in His strong and loving hands.

1 Peter 1:22-23 ²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. Through our baptismal faith we are constantly being born anew, given new hearts and minds as the living and abiding Word of God works in us to point us to our sin, then point us to our Savior. It works to keep us in a state of repentant faith. And that living and abiding word of God is at work in you right now through the Words that are preached, read, and sung, and through the Word made flesh in the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Conclusion

Why are you here today? Because the LORD has called you here to be a part of this Church family. Why are you here today? Because He has created and equipped you to live and love and serve one another in the fellowship of this altar, gathered together as His children to share sincere brotherly/sisterly love with one another, and share His sacrificial love with those in need. Just your being here today and joining in worship with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ is a work of brotherly love. The fact that you are so welcoming in greeting visitors and those that have not been here for some time is a great work of brotherly love. But is that all the Lord has for you to do? In what ways is He calling you to prepare your heart and mind for action? How can you be a bigger part of the Bible Study and mission work that is going on here? Look to your News and Notes and the upcoming events and things we are seeking help with. Prayerfully consider serving the needed positions on our Church Council. Ask Him to open your eyes to what He is equipping you to do that will serve Him and your brothers and sisters in Christ. And above all keep purifying your souls through His gifts of grace given in Word and Sacrament.

Knowing that we have been born again from that imperishable seed that is the Gospel, let us together commit ourselves to serving in His kingdom by reciting the LWML Pledge: ***In fervent gratitude for the Savior's dying love and His blood-bought gift of redemption, we dedicate ourselves to Him with all that we are and have; and in obedience to His call for workers in the harvest fields, we pledge Him our willing service wherever and whenever He has need of us. We consecrate to our Savior our hands to work for Him, our feet to go on His errands, our voice to sing His praises, our lips to proclaim His redeeming love, our silver and our gold to extend His Kingdom, our will to do His will, and every power of our life to the great task of bringing the lost and the erring into eternal fellowship with Him. Amen.***