

Sharing God's Love

October 7, 2018

Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Labuhn

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

What a blessing it is to be back from vacation and to have fellow believers come from up and down the East coast to celebrate our LCC K9 "passing of the vest" ceremony today. While I was away, I walked part of the Camino in Spain and I also attended the Lutheran Church Charities K9 dog handling training in Chicago. That's where several of us met Amos, our "LCC K9 comfort dog" for the first time. He sure is a great looking dog. Yet, we are pleased to have other "LCC K9 Comfort Dog" teams joining us this morning from – South Carolina, Florida, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Because - as you know - today marks a joyous time and the official start of a new ministry here in Virginia.

As we've been learning more about this ministry, we've also been learning more about our new Vision with its mission and values. By now, I hope that many of us know our mission statement, there it is on the screen, so we can all say it together: ***"At Our Savior's Way, we glorify God and make disciples for Jesus by: Forming Relationships, Experiencing Jesus Together, and Sharing God's Love."***

Now, a couple weeks ago in his sermon, Pastor Mann shared how God's love was shared with him through the many cards that he received after losing his father and brother within a couple days and then losing his uncle. Through those cards, he felt God's love

as the community of believers reached out to share God's love with him.

However today, I want to talk more about the motivation of why we share God's love. Without motivation, without a full understanding and conviction, it's hard to do much of anything for any length of time. And maybe that's what I love about our Gospel reading for today. Because it's not just about the parable of the sower as Jesus shared with the large crowd. Our Gospel reading goes on to reveal the secret of the kingdom, and a greater understanding of the parables.

Maybe they were too proud to admit that they didn't understand, or embarrassed to reveal their lack of understanding in front of the crowds. The disciples, like us from time to time, didn't have "ears to hear." They didn't understand the meaning and purpose behind the parables. Why is it that not everyone who hears the Word of God believes and bears fruit? There they were helping Jesus to sow God's Word and they didn't know why some simply don't believe in the Word of God.

Maybe you or someone you know has gone through trials and tribulations and now has fallen away from the faith. Maybe you know someone whose faith is getting choked to death because of the busyness and cares of the world. Maybe you know someone who has been baptized, confirmed, married and now, don't attend worship as often as they used to. Why is that the case? Jesus shares with us some of the impediments that can get in the way of believing and producing fruit in the Kingdom of God. We are all in need of Jesus in a deep, personal way, yet our own egos, the world, and even Satan work to reject and oppose His Word from taking root in our lives. Our lives of faith can become tainted, choked out and obscured, preventing us from producing good fruit of faith which abide in His Kingdom.

The Good News is that the Word of God was rejected. Rejected by the chief priests and teachers of the law. The Apostles fled when trouble came, and even Peter who once said that he would never leave Him told others that he never knew Jesus. Even as He hung

on the cross, the Father disowned all of your sins, my sins and the sins of the whole world and they were placed upon Jesus. He died there with them on that cross. Why would God allow this to happen? Why would Jesus, who knew all along, willingly go through all of that pain, suffering, and death? Because He truly loves you. You personally. More than you will ever understand. He has a love for you that is an everlasting, abiding love that extends throughout eternity.

This intimate and personal love for you that can take root in your heart if you let it. It lives in you by the power of the Holy Spirit and motivates you to bear fruit— 30, 60 and 100 fold, so that you might share that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control that your friends, your family members, and coworkers who see in you as they need to hear about Jesus' deep abiding love for you and for them as well. It doesn't have to be extravagant, but it is God's deep, abiding love.

The sharing of human warmth and affection is something which we all desire and need. Loving and being loved is one of the staples of human existence. Although love and physical affection enhance each other, too often the concept of love is too narrowly defined and even misconstrued when one makes physical affection synonymous with love. It simply is not! The art of expressing love is a very broad, inclusive action.

This morning in two of our worship services, we will have children baptized through water and the Word of God into the faith. There will be/were promises made to bring them to church, so that they might be instructed in God's Word. That they learn the 10 Commandments, the Creed, and one day receive the sacraments of the altar. Yet without the Word and His Spirit working powerfully in their lives the seeds that are sown might wither, be choked out or devoured. And so, it's the job of the parents, and the sponsors to personally tell them about their baptism and share God's deep, abiding love with them that gives witness to their baptism. These words are not just shallow words but words of deep personal love that we value and that motivates us to personally share God's love.

By now, you might have asked yourself if Our Savior's Way has gone to the dogs. And I'll tell you, you bet it has! Because we hold God's love dear to us and through the sharing of God's love, whether or not it is through the LCC K9 Comfort Dog ministry or the many other ministries of Our Savior's Way, ***we glorify God and make disciples for Jesus by: Forming Relationships, Experiencing Jesus Together and Sharing God's Love.***

In Jesus Name. Amen.