



Devotions



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Calvary Lutheran Church

CalvaryLeeds.com

Forward

This little book came about after a conversation Pastor Freudenburg and I had when he first came to Calvary in July 2019. We were talking about Calvary and how one of its strengths is a desire to reach the lost. He asked me to recount some of our weaknesses and he summed up the list by saying, "It sounds like the church suffers from a 'Silver Bullet Mentality.'" I agreed and then we decided to write this little devotion book to help expose this truth and pave the way for God to use real silver bullets so the lost would be reached for Jesus!

No one likes to hear that more "work" is needed. There are no short cuts for reaching people for Jesus with silver bullets. Sharing the Gospel, which is the only Silver Bullet from God, instead requires the sowing of seed, which is a joyful rewarding work. Reaching the lost means going along with the Good Shepherd who left the 99 sheep to tirelessly look for the one lost sheep. It is work building relationships and allowing people to see into our own lives that we have a precious hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ and that our arms are open to them! It is work to share the Law and the Gospel to kill and raise people from the dead! Now you know why bullets are necessary!

I pray that this book of devotions will bless you as you wrestle with the silver bullet mentality. I pray you will use all the lesser tools in service of the only real Silver Bullet that God alone gives. May you rest in the fact that Jesus alone saves us. Jesus did the work on the cross and then proved it in His resurrection and then opened the door ascending into heaven so that all who believe in Him will follow to be where He is!

Jesus be with you!

Pastor James Travis

Four Silver Bullets: This is Jesus' Church

- 1. The Gospel***
- 2. Be the Church***
- 3. Value the Lost***
- 4. You are a Steward***

First Things First – “I Am God and Not You” The Gospel

Bible Reading: Ezekiel 28:1-10

Saturday, October 26

“My church helps at the soup kitchen.” “My church has the best Vacation Bible School.” “My church has great people.” Such statements demonstrate that we take ownership in our church. I am glad! Taking ownership means that we take care of the church, invest in it, make it look beautiful, and love worshipping in this place. But watch out!!! Calvary is not **our** Church. Calvary is **God’s** Church. Jesus is the LORD of the church. The church we belong to at Calvary is not “our” church. Instead we pray, “THY KINGDOM COME” or in modern English, “God, come be the king of Your church and be my king and be my neighbor’s king!”

Paul writes Timothy about wanting to come visit, *“Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”* (2 Timothy 3:14-15). Paul here says the church exists not because we created or built the church, but because the living God wants it to exist.

So, if we want a silver bullet solution to grow the church, the first step is to call out to God, “Forgive us LORD for pretending that we own Your church. LORD, you take over and run the church in this place. LORD, make the place we assemble in Sioux City Iowa at Calvary a place where we hear Your words and respond to them by living as Your people. In Jesus name Amen.

Challenge: Pray this whole week for forgiveness for making the church our church and call out to God to be the LORD of the church again and renovate the church so He is in charge.

Bible Reading: Romans 1:15-16; If time Romans 1-3

Sunday, October 27

The gospel is the first silver bullet. *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”* (Romans 1:15)

The gospel alone brings salvation to people. There are many ways to fill the church. In Honduras Pastor Paul Flo said if you want to fill a church just bring balloons, pop, and have a good time. The Honduran silver bullet for filling the church is to have a party with props. Back in the 1950s & 60s the silver bullet for filling up the church was to put up a sign that invited people to a special event such as a powerful music group or sock-hop. Such a sign would fill the church. Other silver bullets followed for Vacation Bible School such as having a catchy theme, luring kids with bounce houses or games. Some of these silver bullets are still used. In 2000-2015 the silver bullet taught is to do church better than everyone else then people will come. Yet, not one of these silver bullet's will save a single person. Only the Gospel can do that. If the Gospel is not shared personally with people, then even a large crowd is a waste of time. It would have been better not to have assembled the crowd.

Pastor Bill Hybel's who pastors one of the largest churches in the United States admits this, *“We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their Bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own.”* (Bill Hybels admitted many of the church people were immature and did not know the Gospel because they were only coming to “the show” on Sunday.)

<https://www.christianexaminer.com/article/willow.creek.model.its.leaders.say.fails.at.discipleship/44056.htm>

Prayer: Lord, forgive us when we have focused more on getting people in the door of church than to genuinely sharing the Law & Gospel with our neighbors so that they have the same confidence that we have and so they can in turn be disciplined in this new found faith and life. In Jesus name. Amen

Reading: John 15:1-15

Monday, October 28

When you get on an airplane the flight attendant always says, “Attend to your own mask before your child’s if there is a drop in cabin pressure.” Why is this? Hypoxia scientists tell us, “As your brain is starved of oxygen, so your capacity to do simple things deteriorates...” In other words, if you help someone else first you might die! (<https://www.express.co.uk/travel/articles/758140/hypoxia-definition-flight-mask>)

The same is true of the Gospel, we can be so focused on filling the church that we forget Jesus command is first true for us: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:28-30). Paul says the same to Timothy, *“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will **save both yourself and your hearers.**”* (1 Timothy 4:16). Paul’s point is that you can’t save others unless you yourself are first filling yourself with God’s Law and Gospel in the scripture. This is good advise for all Sunday School teachers, pastor’s, and church board or committee members: “Don’t do your work without taking time to grow in the scriptures first. If you do not, then you might save others but fall away from Jesus yourself.

A nameless person once left the church in a storm; tired, burnt out, and working hard for Jesus. They were the hardest working member, however they rarely stopped to hear or study God’s Word....the result, they began to believe the false teaching that Jesus saves us by what we do and they became offended when others worked much less than they did! Don’t become a statistic, stop your work and hear the Gospel weekly for “You first!” This is not selfish! This is God’s Will!

Challenge: Take time to stop and rest, realizing Jesus has done the work to save you. Rejoice, that resting is not unproductive but confident that God has saved you. In your resting time read John 15:1-15. Ask, “What is God pruning from my life at this time? Then pray, “God, prune my life. In Jesus’ name. Amen!”

Reading: Matthew 28:18-20

Tuesday, October 29

Why do you want the church to grow? Do you want it to grow so that “The church feels full?” Do you want the church to grow, “So we can pay the bills?” Do you want the church to grow, “So that you can enjoy what the church was like 40 years ago?”

If these are your reasons for the church to grow I pray, “Lord, may the church fail to grow in this place and may other churches who want Your will to be done to grow instead! Lord, help us repent and have mercy on us. In Jesus name, Amen!” Seriously, we want to keep people far from any church who wants to grow for the wrong reasons because all such people would be in danger of going to hell in such ungodly congregations.

In fact our goal should not be to grow...instead our goal is to do the churches mission, “Go and make disciples of all nations... baptizing...and teaching.” Our goal is to bring heaven to people and to make disciples.

Jim Putman in his book “Church is a Team Sport” writes, “Winning is making disciples—converts who are discipled into God’s team and taught to take part in Christ’s mission. Numbers don’t mean much unless you are counting the number of people being transformed by the Holy Spirit.”

Prayer: Lord Jesus help Calvary Lutheran Church and all its people not give into the temptation to be open merely to make a budget or to have people to carry out human traditions. Lord, help us to make disciples by modeling our faith to the next generation and to share the Gospel and invite others to hear the Law & Gospel so that people are truly discipled.

Challenge: Read passages in the Bible that talk about growth of the church and read how it was done. Read Acts chapters 1—8

Note: How many baptisms, people sharing the Gospel, and missionaries are sent in this section of the Bible?

Reading: Matthew 5:17-19**Wednesday, October 30**

Did you know that sometimes a person does not need to hear the Gospel? If a person is so wrapped up in their sin, guiltless and confident, they might think the Gospel that Jesus died and rose for them is worthless to them. They are confident that if there is a God they are all right by themselves. In this case, the Gospel is not a Silver Bullet. Instead, the silver bullet is none other than using the Law to crush them. Once they are crushed then and only then will the Gospel be heard.

C.F.W Walther in his book “The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel,” instructs pastors, “In the second place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is not preached in its full sternness and the Gospel not in its full sweetness, when, on the contrary, Gospel elements are mingled with the Law and Law elements with the Gospel.”

Knowing whether to share Law or Gospel is easy enough for a Kindergartner to determine, but the more we think about it the more difficult it is. We need God’s help as pastors and as lay people to know whether to share Law or Gospel with our neighbors. Pray for God’s help dear friends. The law is like a knife that makes us realize we are not godly people, we don’t live as Jesus wants us! We will be condemned. Only when we know these truths do we realize how wonderful it is that Jesus has died in our place taking the condemnation and punishment we deserve on the cross. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved. But he who does not believe stands condemned already.” (Mark 16:16)

Challenge: When do you give Law to a child? When do you speak the Gospel? Use this approach in disciplining. Then use it with others.

Prayer: Help my pastors in their preaching to rightly divide Law and Gospel. Help me with my own words to use both Law and Gospel. In Jesus name. Amen

Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Thursday, October 31

We are on God's team, we were drafted on our Baptism day, we are trained by the leaders in the church from the training manual called the Bible. We are fed by the LORD's High Protein food called the LORD's Supper (Okay – The Lord's Supper is better than any football analogy breaks down). The LORD Supper forgives, God comes in us, cleanses... etc. We each have different tasks and gifts to use in different positions on God's team.

In the early years of University of Iowa Football, the "Power I" was one of the most successful plays. When the Defense becomes wore down the stacked I of players could pound right through the middle. The same is true with the Gospel. Paul says, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* Romans 1:16. The Gospel is like the "Power I" formation in Football except that God is at the Running Back position. We hand the ball off by sharing the faith with a Bible passage, praying with a person, or paraphrasing what Jesus has done for us and then God takes the ball and breaks through by convicting and winning hearts.

Martin Luther on this day took a stand on the Gospel in 1517. You might say he employed the "Power I" that had been hidden for many years: October 31, 1517 Martin Luther nailed 95 thesis on the Castle Church Door and God has run with the truths ever since by causing countless people to hear the Gospel. Thesis 62 says, "The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God. " Luther questions the practice of a repentant sinner buying an indulgence (Piece of paper saying he/she is forgiven) but instead he begins to teach that believing by faith alone in the beautiful Gospel alone. What is the Gospel? That we are saved by Grace Alone by Christ Alone revealed in the Scripture alone.

Challenge: The "Power I" may seem to be outdated, but how is sharing the Gospel still the only effective means of bringing salvation? Thank of someone who needs the Gospel! Pray for them this day.

Reading: Revelation 21

Friday, November 1

St. Mark, St. John, St. Peter, Saint Martin Luther, and Saint _____ . Put yourself in the blank! Yes, you and all who believe in Jesus as their Savior are saints. The Word, “Saint,” does not mean, “Dead Person.” The word, “Saint,” means, “Holy Person” or “A person who has been ‘set apart’ for God’s purposes.” How did you become a saint?

1. God calls us to be part of the saints, *“To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be **saints** together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:”* 1 Corinthians 1:2.
2. Second, God makes us saints, *“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.”* Ephesians 2:19-21

What do saints do?

1. Romans 8:12 says, *“Contribute to the needs of the **saints** and seek to show hospitality.”* Saints ultimately live their lives in service to neighbor.
2. Some day in heaven we are told, *“Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?”* (1 Corinthians 6:2)

Prayer: Thank-you for making me a saint by your Holy Gospel. Help me to be about the ministry of the saints. In Jesus name.

Challenge: Who could you have over to your house this week to be hospitable or who could you host at church?

Reading: Romans 1:1-16**Saturday, November 2**

Martin Luther writes, “The Gospel cannot be preached and heard enough, for it cannot be grasped well enough. We preach nothing new; but we are forever and incessantly preaching about the man called Jesus Christ, true God and man, who died for our sins and was raised from the dead for our justification. But although we are forever preaching and repeating this message, we shall never be able to grasp it sufficiently. In this respect we always remain babes and little children who are just learning to read and are hardly able to form half of a word, nay, scarcely a quarter of a word.”

“Therefore we intend to speak about it now, too, because our highest interests depend on it. Moreover, our greatest task is to keep you faithful to this article and to bequeath this treasure to you when we die. For unfortunately it is evident that after we, who are now preaching to you, shall have laid our heads to rest, sectarian spirits and fanatics will come to tear down, to destroy, and to demolish what we have built.” (W 37, 27f—E 5, 18—SL 13b, 1884)

Challenge: Write out the Gospel (Good News of Jesus) in Your own Words Below (John 3:16 is the Gospel in a Nutshell):

Prayer: Almighty and everlasting God, You would have all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. By Your almighty power and unsearchable wisdom break and hinder all the counsels of those who hate Your Word and who, by corrupt teaching, would destroy it. Enlighten them with the knowledge of Your glory that they may know the riches of Your heavenly grace and, in peace and righteousness, serve You, the only true God; through Jesus Christ, our LORD. (LSB 305)

Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22**Sunday, November 3rd**

For our devotions this week on the church, I'd like to look at the Book of Concord. The Book of Concord is a collection of documents which church leaders originally compiled in 1580. You may never have heard of the Book of Concord, but you have surely read part of it, as the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as well as Luther's Small and Large Catechisms are included. The Book of Concord is the definitive argument that Lutherans are part of the universal church, not a bunch of theological rebels. Throughout the week we'll look at the different documents within the Book of Concord and ask the question, how do these texts tell us to be the church?

The Book of Concord begins with the Three Ecumenical Creeds, the creeds which all Christians hold to and confess together: the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. Our church didn't start with Martin Luther but began at the foot of the cross and continued on through the centuries. The Nicene Creed says, "I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church." One. Holy. Christian. Apostolic. What do each of these words mean? We'll focus on just one: Apostolic. Our church's teaching is that of the Apostles, that teaching we find in Holy Scripture. Because of this, we are connected to the church throughout all the ages, the church which has confessed that same teaching through persecution, trial, and tribulation. In our efforts to be the church, we can always look to our ancestors in the faith who have been the church for the last 2000 years. God has sustained them, just as he will continue to sustain us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the Apostolic teaching contained in the Bible. Help us to treasure this truth and share it with others as we are the church in this time and place. In Jesus name, Amen.

You don't need some silver bullet to replace the church!

Reading: Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Timothy 4:13; Acts 4:38-44**Monday, November 4th**

What makes a good church? I can think of many answers – a beautiful sanctuary, inspiring music, caring people, great preaching, etc. You can probably think of many answers as well. But what is enough for the church to be the church? The Augsburg Confession, written in 1530 and found in the Book of Concord, answers the question of what is enough for the unity of the church: “It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.”

The preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments according to the gospel. These things are what truly constitute the church. Where you have the Gospel preached – the free forgiveness of sins and life eternal because of Jesus Christ – you have the church. There, we not only gather with one another, but with saints and angels from all times and all places. There, in his mystery, God has bound us together to one another and to Christians throughout all times and places. This is a deep mystery – by the simple preaching of God’s word, there we have unity and community with one another and all Christians. Take time to reflect on this mystery and praise God.

Prayer: Father in Heaven, we thank you for your Word, by which you have established us as your church here on earth. Give us boldness to speak the Gospel to those in our daily lives. Amen.

Reading: John 10**Tuesday, November 5th**

In 1537, Martin Luther wrote a work called the Smalcald Articles. Luther intended this work to be a basis for discussion between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholic Church. In it, he gives a very simple and beautiful definition of the church: "...God be praised, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is: holy believers and 'the little sheep who hear of voice of their shepherd.' Sheep who hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus. For the church to be the church, it is enough for the Gospel to be preached. We probably usually think of pastors preaching the Gospel, but Luther reminds us of a far greater reality. When we hear the Gospel, whether from a pastor, from reading the Bible, or from a neighbor, we are listening to Jesus. Jesus himself is working through the Word that the Scripture or another person speaks to us to forgive us our sins and give us life.

Listening to Jesus can be difficult. There is a lot of noise in our world, and there are many voices even within our own heads. Often these voices can be discouraging. Today, take time to listen to Jesus and hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. John 10 is a good place to start.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me to hear you more and more. Amen.

Reading: Deuteronomy 5:1-22**Wednesday, November 6th**

Luther begins his Small Catechism by deploring the condition of Christians in his day and age: "... they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments. As a result they live like simple cattle or irrational pigs and, despite the fact that the gospel has returned, have mastered the fine art of misusing all of their freedom." Freedom is a great gift. Luther is not here talking about political freedom but rather spiritual freedom, the freedom that comes with the preaching of the Gospel. In his day, despite his efforts to bring back the Gospel, many still took it for granted. The Gospel is not only freedom from our sins, but it is freedom to live *for* God.

The Small Catechism teaches simple truths in profound ways. Because of this, it deserves our constant attention and mediation. Consider this, from Luther's explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed: "He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.." Jesus has purchased you and me with his holy body. And what do we do now? We live and serve together within the church. We are free to live in God's kingdom, free to serve Christ together. Today, take time to meditate upon what freedom is, and how we can use our freedom together in the church.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for freeing me from my sins. Help me to use my freedom to serve my neighbor. Amen.

Reading: Psalm 120-121**Thursday, November 7th**

How do you get to church every week? Most of us probably drive our cars. Some probably walk. Why do you go to church? That's a very different question. Some perhaps go out of a sense of obligation, some because they are joyful, others because they are sorrowful. No matter what brought you to church or why you went, it was ultimately the Holy Spirit at work within you that brought you to church. Luther writes, "The Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith."

Called. Gathered. Enlightened. That's you and me! The Holy Spirit has brought us here. It is no less than a divine act of God that we have a church in which we can freely worship every single week. It is not our work, it is God's work! Today, give thanks to God for our church.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending us the Holy Spirit who has called us together to be the church in this place. We pray that you would send your Holy Spirit to those who do now yet know Jesus. In his name, Amen.

Reading: John 20:22-23**Friday, November 8th**

At the end of Luther's Large Catechism, he includes a brief exhortation to confession. Confession is nothing other than simply being honest – honest about our own faults, shortcomings, and sin. Luther states that there are two parts to confession: "The first is our work and act, when I lament my sin and desire comfort and restoration for my soul. The second is a work that God does, when he absolves me of my sins through the Word placed on the lips of another person." Confession and Absolution, whether done privately or corporately in church, is the work of God. God is the one in charge of and working within his church.

At this point, I'm at risk of beating a dead horse. Throughout several of these devotions, the theme has been how, despite appearances, God is the one at work within the church. But there's a good reason to keep reminding ourselves of this truth. We're often impatient. We want things to be a certain way, right now! Sometimes, all we can do is wait upon the Lord and remind ourselves that his ways are not our ways.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, grant us patience. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Reading: Pick a Psalm

Saturday, November 9th

You can't give what you don't have. It seems obvious, but today we're often in a habit of trying to give out what we don't have. We may want to love our neighbors, but don't know where to start, especially if we haven't had self-sacrificial love modeled for us in our lives.

The only way to give to our neighbors, especially those who are outside of the faith, is to first receive from Jesus. Luther says this in his Exhortation to Confession: "We should not go to confession as if we wanted to perform a magnificent work to present to God, but simply to accept and receive something from him." You and I need to continually receive what Jesus has to offer – forgiveness, life, and salvation. We need forgiveness from God before we can give it to others. It's a good thing that we have a God who loves to give freely.

Today, simply spend some more time with God. Spend time with Jesus in prayer. Pray one Psalm (or several). See how God desires to pour himself into you, so that you can be a blessing to others.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your rich abundance of gifts to me in the church. Help me to cherish the community of believers that you have placed me in. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Reading: Matthew 13:34-42

Sunday, November 10 (Week 3)

We saved money for several weeks to buy our kids the perfect present for Christmas, it was Corn Hole! Yes, the kids liked it, but... shortly there after we brought home a new clothes dryer. After unpacking the dryer, we cut a couple holes in the box and I think it provided months of fun. Why do children play with an expensive toy for a few days while a worthless box gets months of heavy use?

What I didn't know: U-line charges \$360 for 5 cargo boxes that are strong enough to handle a heavy duty appliance. That is \$72 per box. Maybe I am wrong? Which is the real treasure, the box or the expensive toy?

Jesus talking about lost people says, *"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'"* (Luke 15:8-9) As a church do we spend our time on things that do not eternally matter like church bulletin paper, which dress I should wear, what casserole should I bring to impress my friends, or what song we should sing? Does not Jesus much more care about you and I and those people who are lost around us? What if we put the same effort into the lost as we do into finding that perfect Christmas present!

Challenge:

List: 4 Pointless Treasures that Consume our Time in the Church. Then list people that are lost and that are His real treasures:

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank-you for treasuring me! Help me to value the people I have listed. Help me to value them and ultimately bring Your kingdom into their lives. Amen

Reading John 1:43-51; James 1:17**Monday, November 11**

I remember as a kid I used a Crescent Wrench all the time. I thought it was the perfect gift from above. You could adjust it to any size and so I did not have to keep going back to the tool box for another tool! "One size fits all!" "Throw out all other tools!" It was my favorite tool until one day, I could not turn a bolt and so I used a hammer on the crescent wrench. Wouldn't you know I broke the crescent wrench into two! I was embarrassed and did not want to tell my dad. My dad found out and told me, "Crescent wrenches are nice, but they can't take a hammer, you need to use the right tool for the job!"

I had used the Crescent Wrench as my silver bullet. Do you have a silver bullet for cooking? I had an uncle who cooked everything on his "George Foreman" and an aunt who swore by her Crockpot. Be careful not to do the same in the church. We have many tools to reach the lost, The Lutheran Hour, "Main Street Living," The Church Sign; The Church Web-site www.calvaryleeds.com; Bag-a-Lunch; Vacation Bible School. All these are tools we use to get the Gospel to people including the lost. But realize they are tools! Don't worship one tool or put down others, God can use many tools!

Sometimes reaching the lost needs no tool at all but simply talking to a person directly one on one getting to know them, praying for them, and being there for them. Sometimes, God just wants to use you and me! Consider Philips approach when reaching Nathanael, "Come and see," said Philip. Nathaniel came and followed Jesus! Other times the tools do not work because the person rejects Jesus!

Challenge: Which tools have you used in the past to reach the lost? Do you have a favorite ministry you like to support? Try a different tool to share Jesus this week. If you can't think of one try this: "Go on the Social Media of Your Choice" and invite one person to come to Bible Class or another event with you!

Prayer: Lord, help me use Your tools! In Jesus name. Amen

Reading: Luke 10:1-12

Tuesday, November 12

Jesus did not tell His disciples to go to everyone at once. He told them to spend time with “a person of peace.”

Luke 10:1-12 illustrates the importance of finding people of peace: *“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. ‘When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house...”*

Notice, Jesus only tells them to stay with people that promote peace. In other words, Jesus wants his missionaries to stay with people who are willing to listen to them, eat with them, and serve them. In your own witness, ask: 1. Who is willing to listen to me? 2. Eat with me? 3. Serve me? Then invest your efforts into that person!

Challenge: Identify one person who is willing to listen, eat and serve you. Then write down what you might invite them to, so that they can learn with you and from you. (Suggestions: Mercy Meals (4th Saturday of Each Month at Faith; Soup Kitchen; Gospel Mission; Help Stock the Food Pantry; Bible Class, Youth Class)

Prayer: Almighty God, You have called Your Church to witness that You have reconciled us to Yourself. Forgive us when we have not moved on from people that are not at peace with us. You work where we cannot work and help us to see those peaceful people who you want us to reach. In Jesus name. Amen.

Reading: Mark 1:16-20

Wednesday, November 13

The last three devotions might leave you wondering: Does God just save person's of peace? The answer of course is: "No! God wants to save all people! However, the reality is that God knows each person has a particular sphere of influence. Work on talking to people in your own sphere before you take on a completely new sphere. God says, "*Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Lord GOD. Would I not prefer he turn from his ways and live?*" (Ezekiel 18:23) 1 Timothy 2:4 describes Paul's mission as urgent because he works on behalf of God and Jesus, "*who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*"

God cares about one person at a time and He often opens the door for each of us individually to speak to one person at a time.

Is God calling you to a wider sphere of influence? One way is through outside mission organizations, like Mission Central or LCMS missions. Checkout: www.missioncentral.us and www.lcms.org/service/ Tomorrows devotion will share about two missionary families we support at Calvary.

Challenge: Identify who God is calling you to pray for this week? Pray for the person of peace that you identified yesterday. Now come up with something that you can ask them to do with you this week. For example: Invite them to coffee with you or to volunteer.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank-you for giving me people of peace who are willing to listen to me and even learn from me. Help me to challenge the person's of peace in my life so that ultimately they will want to learn more about you. Amen

Bible Reading: Acts 17:10-33**Thursday, November 14**

Rev. James and Angela Sharp serve the Lord as missionaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in Uruguay. James plants new churches and works to support mercy outreach projects around the country. Through Word and Sacrament ministry, he partners with local church leaders to form and develop groups of believers into mature, self-sustaining and self-replicating congregations. James also teaches Lutheran theology courses to help train individuals in the Lutheran faith and to develop local leaders to carry on God's mission.

Angela focuses on education. She teaches English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) classes to people of all ages. She organizes, directs and provides content for Sunday schools throughout the country and conducts workshops for training new teachers and educational leaders. James and Angela also seek to build relationships through Bible studies and other community activities. Through these interactions, they are given opportunities to share the Gospel.

James was born in East Moline, Ill., where his home congregation is St. John's Lutheran Church. He earned a bachelor's degree from Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Ill., and received his Master of Divinity from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. During his time in school, he studied as an exchange student at Seminário Concórdia, São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Before becoming a missionary, he served in three Lutheran high schools and, most recently, as a dual parish pastor at Nazareth Lutheran Church, Baltimore, Md., and Christ Lutheran Church, Dundalk, Md.

Angela was born in Denison, Iowa, where her home congregation is Zion Lutheran Church. She received a bachelor's degree in secondary education (focus areas in math and English) from Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward. Before heading to the mission field, she taught at Baltimore Lutheran School, Towson, Md. James and Angela enjoy spending time with their four children - Elias, Ambrose, Callida and Magdalyn. <https://>

Pray for the Sharps as they serve in Uruguay. Pray for the Sharp children, that they would grow in their faith in Jesus despite living in an unbelieving country. Ask God to give His peace and strength to their family here in the United States who love and support them but miss them as well.

Iantha Scheiwe – Missionary in Hong Kong Value the LOST

Iantha Scheiwe was born in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. Her family moved to Watertown, Wisconsin, where her father worked with Bethesda Lutheran Homes until 1989 when her family moved again, this time to Austin, Texas. Iantha graduated with an undergraduate degree in Computer Engineering from Valparaiso University and received her MBA from the Bradford School of Management in the U.K. in 2013. After a 10 year engineering career in the semiconductor industry, Iantha was appointed to serve as the manager of Concordia Welfare and Education Foundation's (CWEF) office in the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan. In 2009, she moved with her family to Hong Kong and was appointed to the Executive Director position in 2010. In this role she worked with staff in seven offices in China, Cambodia, and Indonesia, connecting with disadvantaged communities to inspire hope and equip them to thrive. Iantha completed her service with CWEF in April, 2015. From 2015-2017 Iantha served as Associate Director of the Asia Lutheran Education Association.

Iantha now serves as the Director of the Concordia Mission Institute and facilitates mission partnerships with the ministries of the Lutheran Church–Hong Kong Synod. Iantha's husband, Joel, is an ordained minister serving as pastor of Church of All Nations in Hong Kong. They have three children, Eliada (age 15), Talia (age 11) and Taran (age 6).

Prayer: Lord, guard your servants James and Angela Sharp & family and Iantha and her family. Help those they serves and meet to be like the Bereans that they would have a hunger for Your Word. Supply them with Your Scriptures. In Jesus name. Amen

Reading: Acts 16:11-15

Friday, November 15

“Will you come with me?” According to research those simple words are a silver bullet for getting people to come to church. Just ask people who are in relationship with you such as a friend, neighbor... etc. According to several studies (one by LifeWay research and one by Barna research and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association), 82% of unchurched people say they would come to church if they were only invited.

The reality is that only about 2% of Christians have ever asked someone to come with them. Most silver bullet's for witnessing avoid personal contact and using actual words. Ironically, silver bullets make evangelism is ineffective. Paul writes, *“But how can people call on him if they have not believed in him? How can they believe in him if they have not heard his message? How can they hear if no one tells the Good News?”* Romans 10:14 (GW)

I've heard amazing stories of people believing because a Gideon Bible was picked up in a hotel. I've heard stories of children baptized, brought to Sunday School, who confirmed their faith and kept growing afterwards because they believed following in the footsteps of their parents (This is my story). Yet, did you know: that most people come to faith because someone who is in relationship with them shared Jesus with them no matter how jumbled or imperfect so long as it is sincere?

Challenge: This week invite your person of peace to church and sit with them. If they can't this week then invite them the following week.

Prayer: Lord, help me to ask my person of peace to come to church with me. Help them to respond just as Lydia did. Do a miracle in their life. In Jesus name, Amen.

Saturday, Nov. 17— C.F.W Walther 12th Sunday after Trinity—
<http://ourredeemernewark.org/c-f-w-walther-gives-an-ineighborhood-sermon/>

Indeed, it is true: not everyone is a minister or bishop in the Christian congregation. God is a God of order. For the sake of order it is always required that only one or a few be chosen from the congregation and they, in the name (*stead*) of all, administer the rights of the spiritual priesthood publicly. However, just as in the construction of a visible church (*building*) the building supervisors are not the only workers who organize and lead. They necessarily have many helpers.

In the same way also the invisible Church is a building (*in progress*) in which, not only the called servants of Christ work, but all Christians must lend a hand. Christ speaks to His Heavenly Father, ***“I do not pray that You take them out of the world but that You preserve them from evil.”*** Thus, Christ does not wish that His Christians abandon the world outwardly and conceal themselves in monasteries. No, the true Church should be right in the middle of the world, and its members should shine as lights among it (*the world*) and should illuminate the world. Christians should be the salt which seasons the whole world and preserves it from rottenness. The Christian Church is a huge mission launching pad (*German: house*), and **each Christian, a missionary sent out by God** in (*to*) his (*the Christian's*) sphere (*of activity*) to convert other human beings to Christ, to invite them to the celestial wedding, to call them to the Kingdom of God and to woo fighters everywhere by the eternal jewels and soldiers into the army of Christ. God gives His spiritual gifts not only to preachers and teachers, but also to laymen who are not in the public office. They, too, often have the most wonderful gifts: a splendid knowledge of Christian doctrine, a superior gift of understanding and interpretation of the Scripture, a marvelous gift of testing the spirits and refuting the erring, a magnificent gift of governing, comforting, admonishing, praying, and so on. Has God given these gifts to ordinary Christians in vain? Isn't God clearly indicating that each Christian is to be a coworker in His vineyard?

Prayer: God and giver of all good gifts, help me to use all my gifts as your missionary to reach the lost around me. In Jesus name. Amen

Reading: 2 Timothy 3

Sunday, November 17 (Week 3)

The Church Father Tertullian said, “And so it is that when a man walks along a road, the lighter he travels, the happier he is; equally, on this journey of life, a man is more blessed if he does not pant beneath a burden of riches.” Have you ever thought about how heavy the possessions in your life are? The more you have, the more you have to manage and worry about. The more you have, the greater your risk is for losing it.

The problem isn't wealth itself. The problem is our relationship to it. If we think that it is ours, if we try and hoard it and protect it from danger, in short, if we treat money like a god, it will demand everything from you. There's only one thing in life that can offer you identity, security, and meaning, and it isn't money. It's the Triune God – the Father who created, the Son who redeemed, the Holy Spirit who continues to make us holy. As we start this set of devotions on stewardship, remember that true meaning is not found in wealth, but in Christ and his Word.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to love you more than anything else. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 25:14-30**Monday, November 18th**

Read Matthew 25:14-30. That's a bit of a weird story, but I think we all get it. We are to do what we can with whatever gifts God has given to us. But did you notice an important detail? One is given 5 talents, another 2 talents, another 1 talent. Here's the point: we're not all equal. We have different gifts, talents, and abilities. Often, we get caught up in comparison. Perhaps we think that we are not as equipped to serve the kingdom of God as our neighbor. Perhaps we are jealous of whatever our neighbor has. The parable has a different message. Everyone can serve God equally well – whether you have a little money or a lot, whether you believe you are equipped or not. God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called – and that is you! Serve God in whatever way God has equipped you to serve.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the gifts and abilities you have given me. Help me to use them, whatever they are, to your glory. Amen.

Feeding 5000

You are a Steward

Reading: Matthew 14:13-21

Tuesday, November 19th

There's just not enough. You and I have felt this feeling before. There's not enough food, not enough money, not enough time. We want and need more. The truth is that we're right. On our own, there's not enough. We can't provide everything that we need. The story of Jesus feeding the 5000 from Matthew 14 tells us a different story. There, the Lord of all creation, the one by whom everything was made, provided food for his people. Jesus provides for you and for me. First, he provides for our spiritual needs, forgiving our sins. Secondly, he provides for all of our earthly needs: home, food, shelter, and the like. Of course, we know that life isn't perfect. Sin interferes. And yet Jesus provides. Today, thank God for his provision in your life.

Prayer: God, thank you for always providing me everything that I need. In Jesus' name, amen.

Generosity and the Wedding Feast

You are a Steward

Reading: Matthew 22:1-14

Wednesday, November 20th

There are many things which we could say about this parable. One of things which jumps out at me is the generosity of the king. When the guests don't show up, he instead invites everyone, both good and bad, into the feast. Such is life in the kingdom of God. We didn't earn our place at the table. Instead, we are there only by God's generosity and the blood of Jesus. Having been shown such great love, we now get the opportunity to show generosity and love to others. Practice generosity today.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me to be generous with others in my life. Amen.

Hidden Treasure

You are a Steward

Reading: Matthew 13:44-46

Thursday, November 21st

Matthew 13:44 says this; “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden up in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” The kingdom of God is hidden. We know what treasure looks like – perhaps we think of stacks of gold coins or cash, of property, houses, land, etc. But true treasure is harder to identify. It is hidden. Being a Christian is often difficult, but the reward is eternal. Too often we spend our time and energy seeking treasure in material things. The path to true stewardship begins with valuing the Kingdom of God more than anything else. Only God can help us do this.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me to love you and your kingdom. Amen.

The Parable of the Sower

You are a Steward

Reading: Matthew 13:1-23

Friday, November 22nd

Where do you spend your time? If you're like me, you know that spend more of it than you would like in front of screens and devices. This can be a good thing to work on and change. I would like to reduce my screen time in order to spend more time in direct interaction with others. Our stewardship of our time is something with which we should be concerned. In the Parable of the Sower, it may seem to us that the sower is a poor steward of his time. Why spend time sowing among the rocks and thorns? What may seem foolish to us is wisdom to God. We should spend our time speaking the Word of God to everyone in our lives. What happens with that Word is up to the Holy Spirit. It is never a poor use of time to speak God's Word to anyone.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be a good steward of my time by speaking your Word to those in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Reading: Matthew 11:25-30

Saturday, November 23rd

There are no magical, silver bullets in the church. But there is the Word of God. God works through His Word and has promised to take care of his church. When we are worried, we should turn again to Christ and his Word, trusting that he will take care of us and His church: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for lifting our burdens from us. Help us to listen and trust in you. Amen.





Silver Bullet Devotions

Suggestion: On a set time each day when all family members are present, speak/read the following:

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Family: Amen

Leader: For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Family: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Leader: How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

Reading & Devotion

Prayer: *Include all those close to you, friends, family, neighbors; 2. Those over you, leaders, teachers, pastors, firefighters 3. Those in authority, president, state & local leaders. 4. Those who are weak and in need. 5. Pray for your own needs of body and soul.*

Leader: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us.

Family: Amen

In the United States the silver bullet is used to kill monsters and werewolves that are otherwise unstoppable. Miriam Webster says a silver bullet is “something that very quickly and easily solves a serious problem. Michael Hyatt writes a silver bullet is a metaphor for a singular solution that solves a giant problem.” <https://michaelhyatt.com/silver-bullet-thinking/>

Why not trust God with His methods
to solve serious problems?

The Gospel
Be the Church
Value the Lost
You are Stewards

Picture Attributes: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silver_Bullet_sign.jpg