

Sunday, October 10, 2021
The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
LWML Sunday

Theology-The Science of Simplicity, Part IV

Grace, Mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Well, this day is a little bit of a challenge! Back in August, Pastor Huber and I sat down to schedule out who would be preaching, where we would be preaching, etc. He pointed out that he was going to be gone almost the entire month of October, and I said that's no problem. I can take that, and I can take the end of September. I have this idea I'd like to work with a sermon series on the Creeds. And he said that sounds great and so it was decided. We put our schedule together and all was going well until a couple weeks ago when he called me and let me know, "by the way, did I tell you that on Sunday October 10th, we'd like to celebrate LWML Sunday?" I already had my sermon series planned out. I had it organized, and I'm one of those guys, I kind of organize things way in advance and to me, you know change is one of the two big C words. You know there's cancer and there's change. I don't do well with either one. But I said OK, yeah, we'll work it out, send me the information and he had Judy send me some information and well, the challenge began.

Well, let me just first again re-acquaint you or maybe acquaint you for the first time with what the LWML is. It's an acronym for Lutheran Women's Missionary League. This is a group, an auxiliary ministry of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod that focuses on sponsoring missionary efforts around the world. Now I'm not talking mission trips that are so popular in so many places today. This is actual boots on the ground help. It's listening to what the missionaries have to say; or even mission work here in the United States where they say, we need this, or I need this. They asked the LWML for help and the LWML helps gets them what they need. It's done through the collection of Mites. We call them mighty mites. Many of you are familiar with it, it's like a cardboard Piggy Bank that you put your change into. But everybody across the country, all the women of the LWML doing that together, comes up with millions of dollars of assistance for missionaries.

It's a great Sunday because the LWML even provides you with a theme. This year's theme is "Our heart in His hands." And they even give you a theme verse. In this case, it's 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." Therein lies the challenge! How do you tie that together with the third sermon, on the second article of the apostle's creed, dealing with Jesus? And, you know, miraculously, I guess we could almost say; they fit hand in hand. I'd like you to think about that for just a moment. A hand and a heart that is in a hand, it is what a transplant surgeon literally does. When a cardiothoracic surgeon removes a diseased heart from an individual, he has that heart that was bringing death in his hand; and then he puts in his hand a new heart a heart that will give life to this person who was dying. Of course, to have that new heart it means someone had to die and that death allowed a new heart to be put in this person. That is exactly what God has done for us. In fact, it's what He had promised all along going back to Ezekiel 35 verse 26. "I will put a new heart in you and a new spirit I will put within you."

So, when you look at the bulletin cover, you will see (and I encourage you all to do it), you will see a hand with a heart in it. It represents our heart in Jesus' hand. But look at the top of the heart you'll see a cross. Why a cross? Because Jesus is the one who died to give us a new heart. Right below that cross you'll see a drop of water. The drop of water symbolizes baptism and I want to stress, the miracle of baptism. It's not just something that's symbolic. It's a miracle. As Peter explains in his Pentecost sermon when he tells the people 'Repent and be baptized every one of you.' Repent, why, 'for the forgiveness of sins,' he says. Baptized, why, 'and you will receive the Holy Spirit,' he says. And it is the Holy Spirit that works that transformation in our heart to give us a new heart.

What does this new heart look like? Well, it looks like Christ's which is the ultimate pure heart that Peter was talking about in first Peter 1:22. It's a heart filled with sincere brotherly love. Where you really do have agape love, sacrificial love, a willingness to die to self for the sake of others. And this is what Christ gives to us, His heart totally pure. Our challenge, Peter says 'to purify our souls by our obedience to

the truth.' You might say, "Pastor Matt, are you talking about works righteousness?" No, absolutely not! We know that we are saved by grace through faith and that this is not our doing. 'Pastor Matt you're saying that the Bible is giving us an impossible challenge to be totally obedient to God's word.' That's absolutely correct. Except for it is not impossible, but we choose to sin. And there's the reality. We were created perfect, and we were created to do this, but we choose to sin. That's why we pray and say; 'I, a poor miserable sinner.' We are like drug addicts; we just keep coming back to the sin. But it is a call to us to follow Christ with a heart like His. What does that heart look like?

Well, we go to the gospel for this morning in Matthew. Jesus goes to John the Baptist to be baptized. John the Baptist rightfully says; 'Lord I don't deserve to baptize You, You should baptize me. I'm not even worthy to get down and untie the sandals on your feet.' And Jesus tells him, 'No, do this John.' Why? I quote, "To fulfill all righteousness." What is all righteousness? I'd like you to consider this; and please pay very close attention. When Jesus was baptized, at that moment, all the requirements of the law were laid on Him. He would live that perfect righteous life for everyone. At the same time, at that moment of His baptism all the requirement of the law as it relates to sin, was put on Him. He would die because the wages of sin is death. And He would die for every single person ever born, to pay the price of their sin in totality. And third, at the time of His baptism all the requirements of prophecy were laid on Him.

You might say, 'wait what are you talking about Pastor Matt? It is a reality, a fact, that throughout the Old Testament, God revealed His plan of salvation through the prophets. And well before Jesus was born, they were prophesying and saying this is what the Messiah will do. Watch for this, because you'll know Him, because He will fulfill them all. Why? Because if God says this is how it will happen, it is the right thing to do to make sure it happens. And that responsibility was totally laid on Jesus, fulfill all the prophecies.

And so, when we look at the Gospel of Matthew, I mentioned this a couple weeks ago it's a profound gospel because that's how Matthew approaches it. He begins right off with the virgin birth, and he quotes

Isaiah 7:14. When he writes, “all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophets, behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Immanuel.” Matthew ties that virgin birth back to the prophet Isaiah. Why? Because it fulfills all righteousness.

Matthew continues; you know what happens, ‘He was born in Bethlehem.’ Matthew quotes Micah 5 verse 2; ‘but you oh Bethlehem, Ephrathah.’ Bethlehem, this is where the Messiah would be born. Herod hears about the birth of the King, the King of kings. What does he do? He sends his soldiers out to kill all the babies, male babies two years old and younger in Bethlehem and in the surrounding area of Ephrathah. What did Jesus do? Well, fulfilled all prophecy as Matthew points out. In Hosea 11 verse one, He would flee to Egypt. But those soldiers did come, they didn't find the Messiah, but they still did what they were told to do. They killed all those baby boys two years old and younger in that whole region; fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah 31 verse 15 which again Matthew quotes.

Even in our gospel this morning, the baptism of Jesus the prophets foretold John the Baptist. Isaiah 40, verse three is where Matthew goes; ‘a voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. And it would appear that the writers of the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian creed all took a cue from Matthew and a cue from Jesus’ words there at His baptism. He fulfilled all that was righteous; the law, the penalty of sin, and the prophets.

And so, we see that He was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate. Isaiah 53, verse five He was wounded for our transgressions, and by His stripes we are healed. And He had all of those lashes across His back. He was crucified. Zechariah 12, verse 10 “They will look on me whom they pierced.” The word there translated as pierced is literally thrust through. So, the nails were thrust through His hands, and His feet and the spear through His heart. Also, in Psalm 22 verse 16 it says, “they will pierce His hands and His feet.” Please remember that at the time of Zechariah and at the time of the psalmist, crucifixion hadn't been invented yet. And yet they prophesied it. And that's why Jesus had to be crucified.

He died, Isaiah 53 verse 12, because He poured out His soul unto death. He was buried. Again, this is one of the more unique prophecies because it doesn't fit. He would be buried in a rich man's tomb. In the 1st century, if the Romans executed you, you weren't buried in a rich man's tomb. You literally, were thrown into a pit with others who were crucified and there was no burial. They let the animals do their thing. This was another way of trying to encourage people not to be crucified and follow the law. But Jesus was buried in the tomb of a rich man. He was buried. He rose.

And I'd like you to think about this. Matthew interestingly records seven claims by Jesus. Seven is the number of perfection in the Bible. Seven times that Jesus claimed He would rise from the dead. The Bible tells us that if someone prophesied, look and see if their prophecy comes true. If it does then consider it's from God. If it doesn't, it is not from God, nor is that person from God. Jesus made it emphatically clear. He is from God because He rose from the dead, just as He said He would. And when He rose from the dead, fulfilling what He said, that makes Him the prophet. When He rose from the dead, He defeated sin. He defeated death. He defeated His enemy the devil and became the King of kings because He was victorious! And when He rose from the dead, He fulfilled the final aspect of the role of a Priest. The Priest was to offer sacrifices of atonement. Jesus, as John said, was the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world. He, Himself, as the greatest High Priest offered Himself on the cross to pay the price of our sin, making atonement for us, becoming the Passover lamb so that God's judgment might pass over us. This is Jesus fulfilling all righteousness!

Which takes us back to the operating room. Who do you want to do the surgery, to hold your heart? And whose heart do you want put in you? May our answer always be Jesus. And like Him, with His heart, may we love each other earnestly from a pure heart. A heart that desires to see all men saved, a heart of obedience that seeks righteousness and to share His love with all. Oh Lord, take our hearts and transform them to be like Yours in every way.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.