

Pastor John Makey
September 26, 2021

Christ Lutheran Church, St. Catharines

THEME: Kingdom Focused

TEXT: Jeremiah 1:4-10 *Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.*"

⁶ "Alas, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young." ⁷ But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD. ⁹ Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth. ¹

From Romans 1:16, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes",* and

John 15:16, *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit --- fruit that will last."*

(Hymn at the early service:

There is a Redeemer Jesus God's own Son, Precious Lamb of God Messiah Holy One

Chorus: Thank You O my Father

For giving us Your Son

And leaving Your Spirit

Till the work on earth is done

Hymn at late Service: Christ is Our Cornerstone

Christ is Our Cornerstone, On Him alone we build; With His true saints alone, the courts of heaven are filled. On His great love Our hopes we place of present grace and joys above.)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has been a year this Sunday that Pastor Todd was officially installed as our new Pastor. I thought it would be a good time to stop and think about what that means for both him and us, the members of Christ Lutheran Church. The Words of Scripture I chose for today's message speak to us about being called. God's words to Jeremiah are just as applicable to you and me today as they were to Jeremiah, *"before you were born I set you apart."* Psalm 139 echos the words to Jeremiah and to all of us here today, *"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."* (vs. 13, 16). All of us which includes Pastor Todd and you and

me as God's people, have been chosen, we have been called. In Holy Baptism He put his seal upon each of us and Pastor Todd. We are reminded from the verse in the Gospel of John what happened at our baptism. Jesus tells us, ***"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit --- fruit that will last."*** In the call document to Pastor Todd from us it stated, ***"In the name of the Triune God and by His authority we ask you to assume the responsibilities of the office to which we have called you and faithfully to perform all the duties of your office according to the Word of God and the confessional standard of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as drawn from the Sacred Scriptures and found in the Book of Concord."*** And you and I, who are the Lord's people here at Christ have pledged this, ***"we pledge you our wholehearted and continuing cooperation and support in word and deed and in our prayers to God in your behalf."*** These are some pretty onerous tasks on both Pastor Todd and us as members of Christ Lutheran Church.

I came across an article written by the sainted Dr. A. L. Barry president of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. He has some wise words for us today, and a good refresher for all of us here as we serve our Lord. First, Dr. Barry states, ***"The pastoral office is a gift that God has given to the church." ... "given for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ."*** ***"Through a congregation's call, God places a man to be the shepherd of that congregation. The word "pastor" comes from the Latin word for "shepherd". Shepherding is a predominant picture in the Bible for both the work of Christ and the work of our pastors. The Scriptures indicate that the Holy Spirit appoints men to shepherd God's people."*** ***"Pastors model their ministry on the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ who did not come to be served, but to serve. The pastoral office is an office of loving, caring service to the people of God, in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ."*** Often, we sheep don't see or understand that the loving and caring work of the Pastor that may require him to speak some words of rebuke that seem harsh to our sinful human ears. But, they are words that need to be said to be faithful to God's Word, and to his calling from us as members of Christ Lutheran. We should also remember that he is human just like you and me. He is not perfect nor are any of the rest of us. The only perfect person is Jesus Christ, and that is why he came and died for us. Dr. Barry also goes on to talk about how to support our pastors. ***"The most important way we support our pastors is through our prayers, asking the Lord of the Church to give our pastors wisdom, strength, courage, and peace, asking Him to bless our pastor's ministry among us***

and to work powerfully through the proclamation of the Word and administration of the Sacraments.” And then he makes a statement that I think is too often missed by most of us, *“Our children should be taught each night to remember their pastor in their prayers. The members of our congregation assist their pastor as they encourage and support him in the ministry entrusted to him. They volunteer their time, by serving in a variety of ways in the parish, and give of their treasures. The pastor is not a “hired hand”, who is to do all the work of the congregation. Telling the good news of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus, in many different situations and opportunities in life, is a task given to all Christians, not only pastors.*

The work of the Pastor and people is kingdom work, not church work. Kingdom work empowered and led by the Holy Spirit in our lives. We pray in the Lord’s Prayer, *“Thy kingdom come.”* We are told in the catechism, *“God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.”* We are praying here not just for ourselves or our congregation, but also as the catechism says, we ask God to bring many others into His kingdom of grace and use us to extend His kingdom of grace. Dear brothers and sister in Christ, we along with Pastor Todd are called to serve. Serve in a way for the Lord to extend his kingdom. Serve with hearts for the lost and broken, that the Holy Spirit would bring them into a blessed eternal relationship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ. In fact, the call documents state this, *“to promote and guide the mission activity of the congregation as it is related to the local community and to endeavours of the Synod and its Regions, in particular to train workers and guide them in evangelism and to enlist the support of the congregation for mission work.”* St. Peter writes, *“you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* Pastor Todd and we as members of Christ Lutheran are in this together, to be witnesses of God’s amazing grace shown by the very blood of his one and only Son, Jesus the Christ. We are the body of Christ working together to reach out with the Gospel to touch hearts and lives. This is God’s plan for each one of us. It makes no difference whether you are a youth, or you are retired. It makes no difference whether you have young children or teenagers. It makes no difference whether you are young or old. Age has no factor in this. God’s plan includes all of us, because He has done something wonderful and eternal for the whole of the human race. I think there is one verse we overlook when we read John 3:16, and that is the verse following it: *“For*

God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” This shows us that God is kingdom focused. A whole sermon could be preached on this verse my dear friends.

It’s no secret. You know that God had his son come as a little baby, born in Bethlehem for you. You know that His Son lived the life of a perfect servant --- the kind of life we are supposed to live but can never do. You know that the Son, Jesus Christ took our place in the death march that led to Calvary. You know that He died there, and you know why he died there – to purchase the forgiveness of our sins and win for us a place in God’s kingdom. You know also know about Easter. You know what the resurrection of Jesus means for all believers in Christ, that they will be resurrected on the last day and live eternally on the new earth, the new garden of Eden. And you know God has called you to share this good news.

In Bethlehem there is a church over the place where tradition says Jesus was born. This church uses a very special kind of incense for its worship service. As worshipers leave the church and mix with the crowds, people always pause to notice them. The sweet incense of the Church of the Holy Nativity clings to their clothes so everyone can tell where they’ve been. The smell of incense tells other people that they have been to worship Jesus, the Author and Redeemer of all life. Our lives are to be a kind of incense that tells the world we know Jesus. Our lives are to turn hearts and minds to look to God so that others like us might come to know His life and love in Jesus Christ. God had plans for Jeremiah. Dear brothers and sisters here at Christ, remember God had us wait 3 years for God to provide us with a shepherd, God has further plans for us. He wants our plans to be kingdom focused, not church focused. Church focused means to be concentrated only on the building and the organization work of the church. Kingdom focused means to having a heart for lost souls who need the healing that only Jesus can bring into their lives. Kingdom focused means reaching out to these people that they too can experience what it is to be loved with God’s amazing grace. We are so blessed being part of God’s kingdom which is on earth and in heaven. I makes us want to shout the words of St. Paul, ***“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”***. We need to keep in mind we are no different than Jeremiah to whom God said, ***You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.*** ⁸ ***Do not be afraid of***

them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” ... “I have put my words in your mouth. It is no different than when Jesus asked the disciples (John 6:67) *“You do not want to leave too, do you?”* and Peter answered, *“Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”* You and I have been given these same words Jesus gave his disciples, the words of life to be shared. It is just like the words of the hymn say: *“Christ is our cornerstone, On Him alone we build; with His true saints alone, the courts of heaven are filled. On His great love our hopes we place of present grace and joys above.”* God’s kingdom is not just a kingdom we are looking forward to be in when we die. God’s kingdom is here right now in the present. You and I are part of God’s kingdom and we desire those who are lost to join us. Sure, we will experience God’s kingdom in its fullness and perfection when we die, but make no mistake we are in possession of God’s kingdom from the moment we were baptized and became his children. The moment we become believers in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. Pastor Todd sent me this statement on messenger this week, and it sums up perfectly the theme this morning of being Kingdom focused: *“The gospel is less about how to get into the Kingdom of Heaven after you die, and more about how to live in the Kingdom of Heaven before you die.”* (Dallas Willard) These familiar words from the letter to the Ephesians reflect this kingdom focused thought: *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith --- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God --- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* (Eph 2:8-10) My prayer is that God will help all of us to heed His call and enable each of us to be His witnesses by being Kingdom focused. *There is a Redeemer Jesus God's own Son, Precious Lamb of God Messiah Holy One, Thank You O my Father For giving us Your Son, And leaving Your Spirit, Till the work on earth is done.* Amen.

MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL HUMAN UNDERSTANDING
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN JESUS CHRIST YOUR LORD AND SAVIOUR.
AMEN.