The Compass

Red Hill Lutheran Church

Sermon Series: "Hope is Here!"
"Christlikeness." Text(s): Various Texts.

☐ **Day #1—Monday, November 9th. Read: Ephesians 4.11-16. –Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

From the Ephesian text today (and other Biblical passages), we see that the church's ministry is described as "building up the body of Christ" so that we may grow in faith, love, and unity. This "building up" both defines the very nature of the church, as well as its core ministries: *Word and Sacrament*. As we discussed last Sunday, our Lutheran understanding of the church is that the…

> …one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers, among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel...It is as Paul says in Eph. 4:4-5 "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (*The Augsburg Confession*: *Article VII*).

At the end of Matthew's Gospel, prior to His ascension, Jesus tells His disciples (us) that ALL authority has been given to Him by the Father. Consequently, Jesus *sends* the church into the world under His authority, to Baptize and teach through His Holy Spirit who is <u>with us always</u>. Martin Luther describes this reality in his explanation of the Third Article of the *Apostles' Creed*:

> I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and abundantly forgives all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and on the last day he will raise me and all the dead and will grant eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true. (*Luther's Small Catechism*)

At Red Hill Lutheran Church and School (RHLC/S), we are used by God to call people to faith in Christ as Jesus' disciples (learners, apprentices), building them up in their faith through Word and Sacrament, and then sending those disciples (us) out into the world (our daily lives) to love and serve our Lord and others! In obedience to God's Word, our *purpose*, *vision*, and *mission* at RHLC/S, guides our disciple-making efforts:

Our Purpose (Why We Exist): "*Know Christ. Make Christ known.*"

Vision Statement (What We Aim to Achieve): "*Making Christ Centered, Emotionally Healthy Disciples of Jesus, One life at a time.*"

Mission Statement (How We Will Achieve Our Vision): *"<u>Reach</u> and serve our local community, <u>Equip</u> their hearts, minds, and souls, and <u>Release</u> them into the world to share God's love.*"

Consider/Reflect: Never forget that <u>you</u> are an important part of our mission as a church! Our Lord has called <u>you</u> to follow Him and to deepen your faith in Jesus through the ministries of our church!

☐ **Day #2—Tuesday, November 10th. Read: John 17:1-5.—Examine: The Text and its Message.**

In John 17, we are given what is referred to as Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer." This prayer reveals Jesus' role as intercessor, praying to the Father for His followers then *and now*.

Jesus could approach God in prayer because of their Father-Son relationship. This is the only occasion when Jesus is recorded to have used the title "Jesus Christ" *(v.3)*. A central theme of this prayer is divine *glory*. The word "glory" is used eight times in

this prayer. In the Gospel of John, this glory is the divine plan of redemption through Jesus' life, and specifically, Jesus' death and resurrection. For Jesus, this is the pathway to glory. Jesus' primary concern was (is) the mutual glorification of Father and Son.

Jesus glorified the Father through His miracles (*John 2:11; 11:40*); and He brought the greatest glory to the Father through His sufferings and death (*John 12:23–25; 13:31–32*). From the human point of view, Calvary was a revolting display of man's sin; but from the divine point of view, the cross revealed and magnified the grace and glory of God. Jesus anticipated His return to heaven when He said, "*I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do* (*v.4*). In addition, Jesus affirms that the outcome of the mission cannot fail because it is in the Father's hands!

Jesus asks the Father that His followers (you and I) *may know* the Father. This knowing of God is a personal relationship of intimacy, which is continuous and dynamic. The word in Greek for "know" **is** "*ginōskōsin*." It is used in the present tense (A past action continuing in the present), and is often used to describe the intimacy of a personal relationship. Thus, a person who *knows God* has an intimate personal relationship with Him. Moreover, that relationship is eternal, not temporal. Eternal life is not simply endless existence. It is *qualitative* existence; a depth of life for which we were created by God!

> Jesus summarizes two key points: (1) to know God is eternal life; and (2) knowledge of the true God cannot be separated from Christ, who is the only access to such knowledge (cf 14:6–7)…False teachers have abused this passage, using it to question whether Jesus was true God. (The Church Father Athanasius): "Now had [Jesus] been a creature, He would not have added this, and ranked Himself with His Creator (for what fellowship is there between the True and the not true?); but as it is, by adding Himself to the Father, He has shown that He is of the Father's nature; and He has given us to know that of the True Father He is True Offspring. And John too, as he had learned, so he teaches this…[1]

Consider/Reflect: How do *you* bring God glory in your life? How *can you* bring God glory in your life?

☐ **Day #3—Wednesday, November 11th. Read: John 17.8-13.–Explore: The background to this text(s).**
Jesus would soon depart to the Father and leave His disciples in the world. The disciples had to stay in the world to carry out God's plan in spreading the good news of redemption and in planting the church. This carrying out the divine plan in the world will be difficult; in fact, it will be spiritual warfare! Consequently, the burden of the prayer is for protection from "the evil one." Jesus asked the Father to protect them (us) and keep them (us) from Satan and the animosity of those who deny God and God's ownership of this world.

As Jesus prays for His disciples' preservation ("protect them," *v. 11*) and also their sanctification ("sanctify them," *v. 17*), we see the dual nature of God's Word in the life of the disciple. God's word is powerful both positively and negatively. Negatively, God's Word is the means of stirring up the hatred of the world and the satanic powers, resulting in hostile reactions from the enemies of God and the persecution of believers who are bound by God's Word. Positively, God's Word is the means of sanctification (growing spiritually). Sanctification—being set apart for God and being transformed through the Holy Spirit, is the result of salvation—being saved by Jesus through His death and resurrection—Jesus' *glory*! Jesus' words, "*All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine***,**" reveals Jesus' claim to unity, intimacy, and equality with the Father.

One other point in this passage. Jesus does mention Judas. He is called "the one doomed to destruction" (literally, "the son of perdition"). Here is an example of the tension between God's sovereignty and human choice. Even people's volitionally free acts (Judas choosing to betray Jesus) fit into God's sovereign plan (*Acts 2:23; 4:28*). Thus, Judas' betrayal of Jesus fulfilled the words of David in *Psalm 41:9*, reflecting David's betrayal by his friends. Finally, Jesus prays in *v.13* that His disciples receive the "full measure of my joy within them." The expression "*the full measure of my joy*," the possessive "my" is emphatic. Jesus wants to give us joy! Jesus is alive and we can rejoice!

Consider/Reflect: Today is Veteran's Day. Thank our Lord for those who have served our country and defended our freedoms. Also, pray for our active duty military men and women today, asking for God's grace and protection for them and their families!

---

1 *The Lutheran Study Bible.* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

☐ **Day #4--Thursday, November 12th. Read: John 17.14-21.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**
While Jesus has been praying about His present disciples, we can trust that His prayer also applies to His present-day disciples—you and I. We can believe this because of Jesus' words in *v.20*. He made no distinction between those who had heard him personally and those who will hear Him through others. The truth is that all Christians have come to Christ directly or indirectly through the Apostles' witness. Jesus knew His mission would succeed. He would die and be raised; the Father and the Son would send forth the Spirit; the apostles would preach, people would be converted, and the church would be formed! For both present day and future disciples, Jesus prayed for unity (*John 17:11, 22*). The pattern for unity is the relationship between the Father and the Son (*v.21*). The basis of this unity is abiding in the Father and the Son, and the purpose is evangelistic (*v.21, 23*), that more people will come to know the Father through the Son!

As Jesus prays for the unity of His followers, Jesus does this so that His followers may be united in love; love for each other and for the world. In a very fragmented and broken world, to live and relate in love and unity is an incredible hope that the church both possesses and offers! It is this lifestyle-witness that our Lord wants in the world so "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (*John 17:21*). There are great differences between uniformity and unity. All believers belong to the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) and their spiritual unity is to be manifest in the way they live under the Lordship of Christ. However, unity does not mean that all Christians are the same or at the same "place" on the spiritual journey.

The unity Jesus desires for His church is the same kind of unity the Son has with the Father: *"…as You are in Me and I am in You"* (*John 10:38; 17:11, 23*). The Father did His works through the Son and the Son always did what pleased the Father (*John 5:30; 8:29*). This spiritual unity is to be reflected in the church. Apart from our union with Jesus and the Father *("they . . . in us"*), Christians can do nothing (*John 15:5*). The lost world cannot see God, but they can see Christians; and what they see in us is what they will believe about God. If they see (experience) love and unity, this can lead unbelievers to *believe* that God is love. This is why our sanctification, our ongoing growth in our relationship (union) with Jesus and for which Jesus prays in John 17, is so vital!

Consider/Reflect: "Knowing that He is going to the cross, Jesus prays for His disciples and asks that they be united by faith in Him. Whenever Christians ignore God's Word, they foster divisions within the Church and diminish their witness. But God's Word is the truth that will unite His Church, glorify Him, and enable His people to fulfill their calling in a troubled world. [Pray]: Heavenly Father, reveal in my life the love that You have shown me in Your Son. Amen."[2]

☐ **Day #5— Friday, November 13th. Read: 2 Timothy 3.1-5, 16-17.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**
2 Timothy is regarded as one of the "Pastoral Epistles." Meaning, these letters written to Timothy by Paul, relate to managing the "household" of faith, the church, by leaders or pastors. Both the church and the pastor of the church must be growing in Christ as disciples or no true spiritual maturity will exist. In the preceding verses (2 Timothy 3:1-9), Paul warned of the "last days" when many will abandon God and seek only personal power and pleasure. Consequently, obedience to God's Word is the foundation of spiritual maturity and witness.

The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture is vitally important, and a doctrine that Satan has attacked from the beginning ("Did God *really* say…" *Gen. 3:1*). It is beyond comprehension that our Lord would command us to go make and be disciples (Matthew 28:19ff) and then give His people a book they could not trust for such discipleship! God is the God of truth. (*Deuteronomy 32:4*); Jesus is "the truth" (*John 14:6*); and the "Spirit is truth" (*1 John 5:6*). Jesus said of the Scriptures, "Thy Word is truth" (*John 17:17*). The same word for breath and spirit, '*pneuma*,' describes what God did to give us His Scriptures. God, who is Spirit, "breathed," literally, "*in-spired*" (*in-spirited*) the writers of scripture. In other words, the Holy Spirit of God used men of God to write the Word of God (*2 Peter 1:20–21*). God used the words, symbols, metaphors, and grammars, of particular people in particular times and places to reveal His divine Word. God in His providence prepared the writers for the task of writing the Scriptures. Each book of the Bible grew out of a special set of circumstances. In His preparation of men, in His guiding of history, and in His working through the Spirit, God brought about the miracle of the Scriptures. Let us look at two purposes of the Holy Scriptures reflected here in 2 Timothy:

> **The Scriptures are useful** *(v. 16b*). The Bible is useful for *teaching* (learning what we believe), for *rebuking* (what is not right), for *correcting* (how to get it right), and for *training in righteousness* (how to stay right). A disciple who studies the Bible and applies what he/she learns will grow in holiness and love.

2 *The Lutheran Study Bible.*

The Scriptures equip us for every good work (*v. 17*). By studying the Word of God, obeying it, and letting it control one's life, the scriptures provide a "map" for "traveling" through this world. It is worth noting that all of the "great saints" named in Scripture—Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, David, and Timothy—were men who were devoted to God's Word. The purpose of Bible study is *not* just to understand doctrines or to be able to defend the faith, as important as these things are. The ultimate purpose is the equipping of the believers who read it. It is the Word of God that equips God's people to do the work of God. The beginning of this section noted the difficult context in which Christians live and serve (3:1-5). These descriptions are as true now as they were in the first century! However, while times may be, and will be, hard, Christians can become better people, even in bad times. We must separate ourselves from that which is false, devote ourselves to that which is true, and continue in our study of the Word of God. This is discipleship.

Consider/Reflect: Do you have a "habit" of reading and applying God's Word in your life? If not, begin today. [Prayer]: *Jesus, I have many habits. I ask you today to help me develop the habit of spending time with you, reading your Word, and living that Word in my life. I need you. I want to be like you and glorify my Father in my life. Amen.*

☐ **Day #6-Saturday, November 14th. Read: Psalm 119.1-8, 17-19. —Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Today we use the Daily Order of Prayers from *Luther's Small Catechism.* Read and mediate on Psalm 70 and:

"[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

(Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.[3]

Consider/Reflect: "God's Word is our beloved guide to life. It reveals God's trustworthy promises and eternal mercy. The psalm's length presents God's Word like a diamond with 22 facets, each displaying a distinct light. By exhausting every letter of the alphabet, the psalmist demonstrates the breadth of the Word and his own boundless dedication to it. Luther spoke of the making of a theologian on the basis of Ps 119."[4]

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow…
New Sermon Series Begins: "Hope is Here!" (The Mission of the Church)
Scripture Texts:
Acts 2.42-47
2 Corinthians 8.1-9
Mark 12.28-34

3 Martin Luther. "*Luther's Small Catechism.*" Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible.* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).
4 *The Lutheran Study Bible.*