

 LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES



We
the
Church

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS



WE THE CHURCH

A Lutheran Hour Ministries Study

Adapted and edited by Pastor Eric Jay for St Mark Lutheran Church Connect 3 Small Groups

INTRODUCTION

From Pastor Jay:

In the midst of a chorus of voices that bemoan the culture and society that we live in today, I personally remain optimistic. While many see the decline of the Judeo-Christian worldview and the increasingly transparent influence of the church as a reason for despair, I remain encouraged and enlivened by the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Spend some time reading and studying the book of Acts. Opposition and the hatred of the world has always been the fertile soil in which the Light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ yielded its largest crop.

Picture in your mind 120 terrified disciples barricaded in an upper room and afraid for their lives. That is the small seed from which our powerful and gracious Lord Jesus bore His church; not through the pioneering victories of men, but through the immeasurable and unrivaled power of the Holy Spirit that works through the written and spoken Word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we stand united in faith and look toward the future of our ministry here at St Mark, there is nothing more important than a shared understanding and practice of who we are together as the Body of Christ and the Priesthood of All Believers. This video produced by *The Lutheran Hour Ministries* provides an impactful overview of where we have come from, where we are and where the Lord is calling us to go. After you watch the video together as a group, I have provided some follow up study and discussion points.

You! It's you Jesus is calling and wants to use. You. Right where you are. Right now.

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

John 20:21



ST. MARK

L U T H E R A N C H U R C H

Video Introduction (Lutheran Hour Ministries):

The Christian church in the United States is facing a difficult time. Church membership is in decline while our society drifts further from a Christian worldview. Congregations are closing down at alarming rates, and new church starts are lagging. Is it time to circle the wagons and prepare to go down with the ship?

This Lutheran Hour Ministries' video, *We the Church: The Priesthood of All Believers*, reminds us that Jesus Christ's bride, the church, has often struggled through deep crises. Yet God has raised up faithful leaders—both pastors and lay people to bring His people through. This study in particular looks at how God has shepherded The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through difficult times in its history. It also shows how He has worked through the faithful labors of laypeople and pastors to preserve His church, giving believers today the assurance that He can do it for them again.

VIDEO LINK

<https://vimeo.com/158541189>

Video Notes:

Study and Discussion Guide

Share your initial thoughts and reactions in regards to the general topic of the video (i.e. changing culture, challenges for the church in general, the era in which we live, etc.).

As members of St. Mark and citizens of our community here in Omaha, have you seen these issues/challenges locally? How so?

Read the following passages, discuss and answer the corresponding questions as a group.

John 17:22-23

²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

- **What is the cause and effect in this passage?**

Romans 10:13-17

¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

- **If we desire the world to know Jesus, if we desire to “change the world” for the better, what is the single solution?**

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- **Fill in the blanks:** We are to baptize and teach all that _____ has commanded, and not what _____ command.

- **If it is Jesus' authority and power, and we have been equipped with His Word and Spirit, and He is with us, what is our part?**

Scripture says in Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."

With that in mind, discuss the following as a group:

- **When you reflect objectively about our mission and ministry here at St. Mark, what things do we do well? What are the strengths of our church as it pertains to what the Lord has commissioned His church to do?**
- **What are the areas St. Mark can improve in as we seek to fulfill the Lord's commission and walk faithfully with Him?**

Why is it sometimes (or maybe always) difficult or intimidating to share our faith and witness Jesus to others? How can this be made easier?

Video Quote: "The foundation of the church is the Gospel. God grows His church through the Holy Spirit creating faith through this life-giving Gospel, whether written or spoken."

- What implications does this true statement have for "community outreach" and "community service"?

Outreach for the sake of outreach is ineffective. Community service done for the sake of doing something "nice" will not save souls or grow the church. Serving our community with the Gospel THROUGH acts of service will.

****Something to remember as you plan your Spring C3 community service project.****

Video Quote: "So, if we're looking to do outreach from the church, our first stop is to fully understand the Gospel; to see it, hear it, know it and remember all the Savior has done for us. Not just to know it, but be awed by what God has done and is doing for us."

- **Fill in the blank:** It is not our eloquence or savvy that is the power through which people come to know Jesus and are brought into the church, but through _____.
- As I have said several times, and probably will many more when it comes to our effective witness together, "you cannot give or share something you do not have." The Word of God must be in our hearts, in our thoughts and being lived in our lives if we hope to share it with others.

Video Quote: “People were connecting with family and friends and neighbors. The most significant thing about this time when the church really started to boom again, is that many of the people people connected with were unchurched or de-churched, and they were receiving the message of the Gospel and being brought back into the Church.”

- Reflect on this passage from Ecclesiastes 1:9, “What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.”
- What worked for Peter and Paul and the early church...what worked for our LCMS church...is still what will work today. The simplicity and eternal power of the message of God’s love for us in Jesus Christ.

Video Quote: The Lutheran Hour radio program was truly a world-wide revolution. Walter A. Maier, the first speaker of the Lutheran Hour said, “We want to use every available and suitable station on earth for the proclamation of Christ’s eternal Gospel.”

- In this age of 21st century technology, what an advantage you and I have!
- How easy is it to witness your faith? How can you share Jesus in even a very basic first step? Download the St. Mark mobile app. **USE THE APP! SHARE THE APP!** Website, Facebook, Twitter, forward emailed devotionals, recorded and streamed services from St. Mark...so many tools at your disposal...**USE THEM!**

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord Jesus, You have given us Yourself. You have given us Your Word. You have put Your Spirit in our hearts. You have given us eternity through Your blood. Lord, now that we have abundantly more than we could ever need or desire, compel our hearts to share this truly Good News with all nations and all people. We ask this not for the sake of our success at St. Mark, but for the glorification of Your name and out of our desire as Your people to serve You faithfully. Amen.

