

October 2, 2022

LWML Sunday

Pastor Matt Duerr

“For Us and With Us”

Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. If you have looked at the bulletin, you know it is LWML Sunday. LWML is an acronym for Lutheran Women's Missionary League. We set one Sunday a year aside during the month of October to talk about the LWML and the ministry that it has within our Lords church.

You've probably seen the little mighty mite boxes that are around in the church and that we promote using. You've probably seen the promotions we have up about the different LWML mission grants and trying to fulfill them. And then again, we hear about some of the individual things the women in the LWML do within our church, such as the prayer quilts that we do at Zion in Lodi. All of this is part of the ministry of the church. And as we celebrate LWML Sunday this Sunday a theme was chosen: “For us and with us.” and it's based on what Paul writes in Romans chapter 8.

But to understand those verses that we heard in our New Testament reading this morning, we need to set the stage, we need to rewind a little bit go earlier into the chapter to hear why Paul talks about that God is for us and with us. Paul tells us early in Romans chapter 8 that “for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Perhaps we've left that part help because we don't like the 6th word, suffering. Paul was suffering. He was suffering on account of his faith in Jesus Christ and on account of the ministry that he was called to. Paul was going to die because Rome was trying to shut down the church. But let's be honest, suffering still continues and there is an all-out attack on the Christian Church today by a culture that is focused on canceling anyone that says anything that offends them or that they don't like.

We find ourselves in a similar situation. The Christian Church continues to be under attack and the result is suffering. But Paul continues and he takes it to another realm. there's some additional suffering. He writes, “for we know

that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” And probably most of you understand a little bit what he's talking about. Creation is suffering, it's suffering as Jesus said it would. There are droughts, famines, there's floods, there's hurricanes, there's tornadoes, there's earthquakes, there's volcanoes, there's tsunamis, there's polar expresses. You name it, we got it! They seem to be increasing. Paul says that's labor pains. Labor pains start out far apart and not so intense. This is based on what I have been told. I have not experienced it myself. But as you get closer and closer to the time of the birth of the child, the time between those labor pains shortens and the duration of the labor pains themselves lengthens and becomes more intense. If I'm incorrect on that, please feel free to correct me after church.

So what do we see in the world? We see more and more groaning of the creation. More frequently and perhaps maybe a little longer and more intense. We blame it on CO2 carbon dioxide. I would say that Saint Paul was saying it's caused by SIN-man's sin. But he says there's an answer to these pains and these struggles. He says the Spirit will help us in our weakness. And if the Spirit is going to help us in our weakness, then truly God is for us and therefore who can be against us? And the answer is us. Not exactly the intent of one that we like to look at because the answer is not exactly the intent of where the leaders of the LWML were going with the theme of “For Us and With Us.” But I believe unless we actually look at us honestly, we may miss an awful lot of what ‘for us and with us,’ means and the hope that comes with it.

I'd like you to focus on what Saint Paul says, he says, “No, in all these things...” That is the Christian Church that is under attack, and the creation groaning in these birth pains.” In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels or rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of Christ Jesus our Lord.” Such a powerful verse! God is with us! And literally as we celebrate Holy Communion, coming to us, coming into us, what a marvelous message! And here is it's so blatantly obvious throughout scripture how was God for us? He sent His son to die on the cross for us, to pay the price of our sins for us, to overcome the effect of sin and death through His

resurrection and He's coming back to take us home because He has ascended it into heaven, is preparing a place there for us.

So, God has done everything for us through Jesus Christ and He continues to do everything for us because Jesus said He'd send us the Holy Spirit who works faith in our hearts and empowers us to be His disciples. You put that together with nothing can separate us from His love because His Love is all around us; and no matter how hard Satan tries he can't remove that love. The result is we are more than conquerors. Think about that simple phrase. I used to play basketball I loved being the victor, the conqueror, the one who won; but Paul is saying, 'no there's more.' There's more than being the winner, the conqueror, and that's where the big US comes in. It's because US is oftentimes the big stumbling block. And ironically, it's all about light.

And you might say 'Wait, wait, Pastor Matt, you make no sense.' If there is light you can see the stumbling block, you won't trip over it. And yet it's light that's the problem. Biblical light: consider what we heard in our introit this morning's Bible verses. Psalm 27:1 "the Lord is my light." Job 29:3 Poor Job, who went through so much. What did he say? "By His light I walk through darkness." Isaiah the prophet, Isaiah 60:19 "The LORD will be your everlasting light." Micah 7:8 When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me." The apostle John understood what the Bible says about light, and he summed it up very simply by saying: "This is the message we have heard from Him (that is God) and proclaim to you. God is light!" John heard that message, from God? Yes, in our gospel this morning in Jesus's great dissertation with the Pharisees. He begins by saying "I am" the name of God, Yahweh. I am God and I am the light of the world.

So how does that impact "For us and with us?" How does that impact us and why can that light would be a stumbling block for us? Well, because so we can do exactly what our Savior tells us. We can be more than conquerors, because Jesus tells us that in Matthew 5 verse 14. Yes, that's the Sermon on the Mount. But you know the second part that people don't like so much because the first part is the blessed part. So, we'd like the blessed part, but this is where He addresses us, and He says point blank you are the light of the world. Now it's one thing to say, 'you are the light of the world,' but He goes on and he says part 2. "Let your light shine before others." Oh, God is light, we're

now the light of the world, we're supposed to shine God's light in the world. Why??? So that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven. And that is what the LWML is all about. Because that's what the church is all about and that's because it's what, "us," we are supposed to be all about.

Taking it back to last week sermon, it's being the person, before they die in are languishing in hell; being the person that already cares for the lost souls and says; 'those people are in the darkness! They need the light. Oh, heavenly Father send your Spirit that I may be the light. And so that I might follow your Sons words to go and make disciples of all nations; so that I might care for your call to me to do that; and I might care for those lost souls because it is my responsibility to shine.'

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, shine be that light. In our Savior's Name, Amen.