

LWML Sunday, January 22, 2023

Readings: Isaiah 6:1-8, Romans 8:31-39, Luke 12:35-40

LWML Sunday -- The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) is an official auxiliary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Since 1942, the LWML has affirmed each woman's identity as a child of God and her relationship with Jesus Christ. Lutheran Women in Mission are women of faith, empowered for active service in Jesus' name and bold support of missions through Mite Box offerings. As Christians, we have been given the kingdom of God to bear its fruit.

Sermon Transcript:

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

So I was reading this Gospel and something struck me that made it very interesting. I don't think I'd seen it before. First off, we have Jesus talking to His disciples. The first thing we need to remember is when it's talking about when the master comes, that you can be ready to open the door. This is not Jesus saying to unbelievers, you need to hear the Word of God and then you need to choose to accept Jesus by you opening the door. He's not talking to unbelievers. He's talking to believers. He's talking to us who already have been given the faith. Now we are called to be His servants, and He is telling us how we should live as His servants. And He's telling us to be prepared, to be good and ready servants, alert and paying attention so that we are not caught unawares when He comes again.

Now, sometimes that sounds like it's a pretty law-focused message. Be alert, be ready, or else. That's not again the message that we need to get from it, although we can understand where it comes from. If you go to Isaiah, Isaiah is being called by God to serve as His prophet. He's already a Jewish man. He's already a believer in God Almighty. But now he is being called specifically to serve as His prophet. The Seraphim shows up and then the Lord later on shows up and speaks to Him. But the Seraphim show up and that's enough to scare the living daylights out of him. That's not even God. It's just one of the angels. He shows up and he hears the glorious song from heaven, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." And he says, "Woe is me. I am lost. I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell into people of unclean lips."

And this is true for all of us. All of us are sinners before the eyes of God, and we should, when we look at our own lives and we think about being in the presence of God, one of our responses initially should be "Woe is me". But that is the whole point of the gift-giving that we receive here in the Divine Service. We start out by saying, "Woe is me". We say, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. Or the old language I, poor miserable sinner. So we start out by recognizing that we like Isaiah, are unclean unless somebody comes to cleanse us. And so the first part of understanding what it means to be watchful and ready for the coming of the King, of our Master, is to remember that He has already claimed us and purified us.

Last week we talked about the wedding feast at Cana and the turning of water into wine. We talked especially about the jars which were for the Jewish right of purification. Isaiah received something similar to that, greater than that actually with a coal from the altar. It purifies him, his mouth, makes him ready to speak God's Word. And Jesus then fulfills that right of purification through His own death on the cross to purify us from our sins.

And you notice that the hymn that we sang today was all about our baptismal life. I am a baptized child of God. That is the purification that we've all received. That is how we are to start our life by being ready. You notice the cover and the theme for the LWML this year is "For Us and With Us". The most beautiful words that we ever hear is that God died for us. That He gave us the waters for our salvation and that we receive the body and blood for us, for the forgiveness of our sins. The idea that God is for us is amazing, even though when His presence is there, Isaiah shakes with fear. And when we look at the 10 Commandments, we realize we have fallen short. We still know that God is for us because He has given us these gifts of baptism, confession, the Lord's Supper, and we know that we are purified through them all.

And so that is the first part of it. To be ready and to be watchful for the coming of God is to recognize that God is already for us through His son and with us through His Word and His sacraments. And so as we are called to be ready to pay attention and to serve Him faithfully, this is where I found it interesting about the Gospel. It says that the master is coming home from the wedding feast. Now, we talked last week again about that wedding in Cana and how the best is yet to come. That He is preparing a wedding banquet for us in paradise. So we are called to be ready. We are called to be His servants. We are called to share the Gospel with those around us. But what changes this from a law message of be ready or else is thinking about what the master is coming home from. He's coming home from the wedding banquet.

It's very much like a bridegroom coming to greet his bride and bring the bride back to the wedding celebration. In the old days, in Jewish days, the bridegroom spent years preparing for his marriage and set up the house and prepared everything. And then when he was ready, he went and got his bride and had this wonderful, beautiful banquet where they celebrated for all times. So when He tells us as servants to be ready, He's telling us to be that anxious bride waiting for the bridegroom to come. Because when He comes, what a joyous day that is going to be. We as the church are the bride. So when it says watch and be ready, it's that same anticipation of a bride and groom waiting and anticipating for the joy of their union and their life together.

And only much more so because this is God we're talking about, and the reward of paradise that we're going to live with, the life that we have with Him is going to be perfect without blemish or spot. All tears wiped from our eyes, no fear of death. Or as Paul says, no fear of anything, death nor life, nor angels, nor 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 God that is in Christ Jesus.

So while we are waiting for the bridegroom to come to bring us home to our reward, we are called to be aware and watchful because our lives are His. We have already been given everything that we could possibly imagine and more that we can't even think to ask for. You remember, if you were here last week, about the Amos passage where the sower is going to be overcome by the reaper and the guy planting the seeds is going to be overcome by the treasure of the grapes. In other words, we can't get the rewards out fast enough before they're ready for us to get more. The best is yet to come. So be watchful and be ready so that you have the opportunity to go into this glorious kingdom, this bride wedding celebration that He is preparing for us. That's what it means to understand that God is for us and with us. And so therefore, when we are in this world, we desire to serve Him because He has already served us so greatly in all that He has given to us. Through the strength that He gives us by the renewing of our minds, through His Word, by the refreshing of our souls, through the body and blood of Christ, we are then able and willing and excited about sharing the love of Christ with those around us so that they might know the joy of the anticipation of the Lord coming again.

His second coming is nothing to be afraid of for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. It is rather something to rejoice in, to be enthusiastic about because His wrath has been appeased and all we have is His love and His joy and His peace. And what a glorious thing that is.

So we have signs in all of our driveways. It says, "You are now entering the mission field." I want you to think about how you act and what you say in every single interaction that you have. Not, again, God's watching over you and He's judging you, so you'd better do it right. But no, you have received the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins. Now it is our job to share that love with those around us, to be kind and generous to everybody that we come in contact with, to see everyone as a possibility, of a mission prospect, to share the love of God with them. Either your nextdoor neighbors or the guy in the line at Walmart or wherever it might be. So let us rejoice, even imagine the glory and majesty of God. I mean, we're excited just to see and hear thunder and lightning. It affects everything, but how much more glorious will it be when God comes into our presence and we will see Him face to face. We won't be afraid. We won't startle and jump with fear, but we will look with joy and thanksgiving for His coming. So be ready and be watchful because He is soon to come, and what an exciting day that will be.

May His grace, mercy, and peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, unto life everlasting. Amen.