

Sermon - Our Saviors Lutheran Church- July 15th 2018

Texts- Jeremiah 1:4-10 and Luke 17:5-10

An Offer We Can't Refuse

Grace and peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Today we have two biblical readings that speak to the issue of faith. A very Lutheran concept. When my grandchildren were much younger, quite a bit younger, they used to enjoy my Knock Knock jokes. Now they just moan.

Knock Knock

Who's there?

Dwayne

Dwayne who?

Dwayne the bath tub, I'm dwoning.

Knock Knock

Who's there?

Tank

Tank who?

You're welcome.

In our first lesson from Jeremiah, God is knocking on Jerry's heart and soul. Jeremiah lived about 600 years before the birth of Jesus. The world of Jeremiah was a tumultuous one. It was marked by idolatry, income inequality, and extreme divisions in society. Kind of like 2018. So God knocks and says to Jeremiah, "I have an offer you can't refuse." Like Marlon Brando in The Godfather.

Jeremiah must have been a 600 BC, ELCA Lutheran. Mostly because he gives a Lutheran response to God's call to share the faith. In fact, he covers the gamut of Lutheran responses. * I am lousy at public speaking.* I am too young.* I'm not smart enough. All of us could have helped him and added some of our own Lutheran responses - I'm too busy, I work two jobs, children keep me occupied, the Packer game is on, or let someone else tell the story.

Yes. Jeremiah is just like us. He resists, but the God who knocks on our heart and brain, who gives us an offer we can't refuse, says, 'Yes you will, Jerry. I will be with you, putting words in your mouth, you will build and plant and SPEAK.'

Which leads us to the Gospel where the disciples make a request. Lord, increase our faith. Why did they ask this? Simple. So that they could tell the story. So that they could speak to others about Jesus. You see, God calls us to tell the story.

And therein lies the problem. Lutherans are excellent at preaching Christ without using words. We feed the hungry, cloth the naked, visit the sick and care for broken people of the world, but almost always silently. Maybe it's because most of us come out of a Scandinavian tradition. We only speak and get excited when we talk about the weather, or the Packers, or the color of the jello we should serve at potlucks. When it comes to Jesus we remain silent.

I recall throughout my years in ministry that the hardest committee to recruit volunteers was the Evangelism committee. Maybe it's because we have an image of two young men with ties knocking on doors. Or TV preachers yelling stuff like Are You Saved? Or maybe it's because our parents drummed into us the line - don't talk religion or politics. But maybe we should say the same thing that the disciples said. Lord, increase our faith!

A few years ago I am at a dinner gathering with members of Salam Arabic Lutheran Church in Brooklyn, N.Y. While we are sitting around the table, each of these new Lutherans, who hailed from all over the Middle East began sharing non-Lutheran comments. Stuff like God is good. God has given my family so many blessings. I thank God for this church. Some of it in English, some in Arabic. I thought to myself how refreshing. God talk.

I got an e-mail from a mother who had been struggling with issues involving her son. The son had an addiction to drugs for years. I had baptized this young man and helped as much as I could with the family and their struggles. The e-mail described that the young man was celebrating 186 days of sobriety. The mother said that God blesses her and her son every day. She spoke of it. In words. Wow.

So, can we say 'Lord increase our faith!' And once we realize He will, can we tell ONE? Can we tell one person what is happening to you? Here at Our Saviors? What Worship means to you. What mission trips mean to you. What making quilts means to you. What shut in visits mean to you. What being a part of this congregation means to you.
Tell ONE.

Postscript- Jeremiah did speak and changes occurred. People listened and reforms took place. People saw God in their lives.

It will work for us as well. God knocks and will give us the words.

Tell ONE and we will build and plant.

He's giving us an offer we can't refuse.

Amen- Let it be so.