



Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 Ramsey Road, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho  
Pastor Neal Buckaloo  
Sunday, October 10, 1010  
Make It Simple: Acting Together

How will my neighbor know that Jesus Christ is Lord of my life?

How will the world find out that (John 3:17) 17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

Maybe the place to begin is to ask, "How will I know that Jesus Christ is Lord of my life?" A relationship begins with the building of trust and confidence. It takes time, time spent together. Trust and confidence in Jesus Christ is built in being at the manger, entering into the gospel story; seeing the trust others place in Jesus and beginning to more deeply trust him ourselves. At rock bottom, it is developing a trust and confidence in the promises of God in and through Jesus Christ. Does that mean we have no questions, no doubts? No. Even as we believe, trust and seek to obey, we are prompted to ask questions, seek answers, and our trust and confidence will be tested. Remember, even those closest to Jesus ran, abandoning him when he was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

I cannot 'prove' in any specific way that God and the promises of God in Jesus Christ are a living reality. Now I know and experience that living reality, but I cannot pull it out of my pocket and give it to you. You see this trust and confidence in God and God's promises is born of a relationship through the work of God's Holy Spirit in your life. It is born of God being at work in a community of faith like this. You are being addressed by God and this assembly is being addressed by God daily. The question becomes are we listening? Are we paying attention?

The Old Testament reminds us, [Deuteronomy 6:4-9] 4 Hear, O (people of faith): The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. 5You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

And then some practical advice follows: 6Keep these words that I (God) am commanding you today in your heart. 7Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 8Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, 9and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

We are asked to saturate ourselves with the presence and gifts of God. This includes God's commands and God's words of mercy and forgiveness at home and away, sleeping and rising, as we look in the bathroom mirror and the rearview mirror, as we enter and leave our homes, when we spend time with our children. And when we come together and act together.

When we act together as a part of the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we can together establish 41 new mission congregations this year. We come together with resources to enforce the malaria initiative as efforts are made to eradicate malaria throughout the world. Together the people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) have sent 11.8 million dollars for recovery in Haiti.

Let me tell you a true story; a story of community and acting together. It comes from The Rev. Dr. Stephen Paul Bouman, Executive Director of our Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission in the ELCA. Lisa was a 15 year old from the Congo. Most of her family had died in the civil war. Her mother escaped to Canada. Lisa was rescued and on a plane to be reunited with her mother. When she got to Kennedy Airport to transfer planes, she was taken into detention (by U.S. authorities). Dental records were used to try to prove she was an adult but she was 15. When I went to visit her with other religious leaders, she was in tears and ultimately told her story through an interpreter. I asked her one question: "has anyone been here to pray with you?" She fell apart. Through an interpreter she told us she was Roman Catholic and that no one had been to pray with her. The next day the pastor and members of the East African Lutheran congregation in Queens, New York, went to visit her. They came every day. We also accompanied her to her immigration hearings. Every day they prayed with her until finally the authorities let her go and she was reunited with her mother (in Canada). Mission is all parts of the church working together with singular focus.

Mission is joyful but it is also serious. How will we hold on to one another and support one another in the mission of the church in these difficult times is a test of our faith and our commitment. This assembly is a teaching community. You are one of the teachers. You are a walking illustration of faith; of sin and forgiveness, of justice and mercy, of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in daily life; and together we are a witnessing and teaching community.

John 13:34-35 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

In the upper room, at the Last Supper, Jesus gives this new commandment to his disciples, to love one another. They (we) are to love one another "as he has loved" them (us). It is about witness to the world. It is how the world around us will see and know that we are disciples of Jesus. That ending malaria matters. This commandment is about community. It is about the common good. It is about our living as disciples of Jesus. He commands that we follow him together. He commands us to love one another.

These are strange and foreign words to a culture that worships individualism. It is an odd concept in an economy that is based on the premise that the one with the most "toys" wins. In this drive for "more" we often find ourselves isolated and feeling alone, striving

against others, striving for false gods. Then we are driven to protect our stuff. So we are prompted to fear our neighbor, build higher fences and security systems. The community in Christ tells us to be the opposite.

Jesus commands us to love one another—he calls us into relationships, he calls us into his community. His command is to love one another “as he has loved us!” In this community we move into relationship with Jesus and one another. This truly is a radical command—in our culture of individualism, none of us has enough. In the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the gracious gifts of God, we have all we need to love and serve the Lord and our neighbor, no matter how near or far. And so we are literally stewards of the gifts of God. That is our individual and corporate calling from God; to manage and share the gifts and resources that are ours.

In the community of Jesus' disciples, we begin to see that God provides us with more than enough! And we are made free in Jesus Christ to use and distribute as stewards of the bounty of God.