

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: The stories, and other elements of this sermon, contain copyrighted materials. We purchase them and have permission to use them in our parish, but not outside of it. Please do not post this sermon, or the stories in it, on any social media site. That would violate our agreement and subject us to a fine

Pentecost 18 – October 9, 2022 Everyday Disciples

“Liturgy”

Read: 1 Timothy 6: 6 - 16/ Memorize: 1 Timothy 6: 12

When you hear the word liturgy, what do you think of? You might think it's what we've been doing for the last fifteen or twenty minutes. Here's one definition: "Liturgy is a pattern of worship used (whether recommended or prescribed) by a Christian congregation on a regular basis." When we get together, you're pretty much expecting what's going to happen, unless I throw you a curveball. Even then, the variations are likely to be somewhat familiar.

There are settled things like prayers, lessons, and certainly, communion. How could we begin a service without reminding ourselves that we begin it, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?" Lutherans are known as the singing church. How could we not sing? How could we omit the sermon?

We do have a preference about that sermon. Lutherans tend to like them a little shorter than some of our other Christian friends. At the Clergy Association meeting last month one pastor was talking about how it's hard to get everything he wants in a forty minute sermon. I kept my mouth shut. I guess I just have less to say.

Roxann and I read *Liturgy Of The Ordinary* a while ago and thought it would be a great book to read together. I googled the word "liturgy" and here's how goggle described it, "In secular terms, the purpose of the liturgy is to quicken the mind, energize the body, awaken the soul. So the entire being may be braced to action, at once heroic and redemptive." That's not too bad for google. The word liturgy comes from Greek. The Greek means "the work of the people." By that we mean not only the worship we offer, but all that we do to serve God, in essence, our life.

We sometimes divide life into compartments. There's the sacred, that which pertains and belongs to God. Then there's the secular, which has nothing to do with God. I looked up the word "sacred" and here's the first definition according to

the Oxford Languages dictionary, “denoting attitudes, activities or other religious or spiritual basis.”

Pretty simple, if it’s not about God, it’s secular. Do you accept that? Is there truly anything in life, whether you believe or don’t believe, that has nothing to do with God? I don’t think so. He is, after all, the provider of all things, to everyone no matter what they believe or don’t.

That’s the premise of our book: *The Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life*. Liturgy is not just what happens inside the church, it is how people order their lives both in church and out of it. It’s how God uses each and every moment and experience we have to remind us of His love, care, acceptance and devotion, while also allowing us to touch the lives of others.

The problem is we are surrounded by the thought that there is a difference between sacred and secular, which leads us to a mistake. It’s easy to buy into the idea of a sacred and a secular, putting God in one box and everything else in the other. Especially, when you hear it from so many different directions. So, as your pastor and leaders, we wanted to do something to remind all of us of the connection that everything has to God throughout our daily lives.

So how do we do that? The book is based on one day and the various actions and activities that happen in those hours, from waking in the morning to falling asleep at night, with eating, drinking, praying and having a good time thrown in between the beginning and the end.

During the weeks that we walk together, I hope to entice you to try some different practices in your own life, which I pray will bring you closer to Jesus and to each other. Thinking about things rarely results in life transformation. It is when we put our thoughts into action that we experience the life transformation God wants for us.

Here’s one of the things I hope you’ll take up, if you don’t already do so. Sign up for one of the growth groups and/or participate in a Bible study that happens on a Sunday or a Tuesday. They give you an opportunity to strengthen your faith by hearing other people’s stories and sharing your story.

There is something really powerful about gathering with fellow believers and sharing. You would be following the example that Jesus set for us with His disciples, who by following Jesus, shared in every aspect of His life.

I think it's easy to forget that there is no one who is closer to God than anyone else. I had a situation many years ago when a man asked me to write a prayer for his parent's fiftieth anniversary celebration. I told him I thought his parents would appreciate a more personal prayer by their son.

He quickly replied that, "If I wrote it, God was more likely to listen, than if he did." No matter what I said, I could not convince him otherwise. I was concerned because he was as much as saying that I was more sacred, and therefore more likely to catch God's ears than he was. That truly misunderstands God.

It's easy to think that doing something for God is more important than your ordinary obligations of life. It seems odd to me because if we think about it, Jesus taking on flesh means that He became just like us, an ordinary human being. He lived His life just as we do. He even worked for many years.

In the time when monasteries were formed, there was the common thought that somehow those who were behind the walls were more holy than those who plowed the fields and harvested the crops. Luther totally disagreed with that idea, and taught that everything we do is part of our service to God, but I think those distinctions still haunt us.

As disciples, as everyday disciples, we come together and go out to serve God. I hope you hear it each weekend as we end worship, "Go in peace. Love and serve the Lord." And you say back to me, "Thanks be to God," for the opportunity to serve God. Aren't we being reminded that we are each servants of God? We don't lose that servanthood as we go out the door. Isn't that really the mission field God is sending us into?

As we leave worship, we pick up a greater need to serve because we may be serving those who don't know Him. By serving them, we increase the possibility that they'll want to know why we serve them. That can open the door for us to build a relationship in which we get to share Jesus with them.

If you think about it, the fact that we do much the same thing every week kind of makes it ordinary. I know I try to tweak things every once in a while to make you

stop and think. I even have some thoughts for the coming weeks. They're not done to knock you off your feet, but to get you to stop and think about what you're doing.

Think about how God is working in and through us to accomplish His greatest purpose, to call others into a relationship with Him. That's ultimately why we're here, because we have heard the call of God in our lives. We understand the claim that He has on us and have surrendered our own program and agenda to His.

That is also part of everyday discipleship. As we go about that task, we will sometimes succeed; sometimes fail, we'll sometimes succeed wonderfully and we'll sometimes fail miserably. But here's the good news, whether you succeed or fail, there is one constant: Jesus loves you. He always has; He always will.

He gave His very life for you on a cross so that you could live with Him forever. Forever doesn't begin when you die, it begins when you are born, born into faith in Jesus Christ through the power and presence of His Holy Spirit. That power and presence comes through the Word and Sacraments.

In the coming five weeks it is my prayer that you will grow deeper in faith. That's not a new hope. That hope has always powered ministry. You will not be evaluated by how much you do or don't do. As we hear in John 3: 17 "I have not come to condemn the world but to save it" At the same time, the actions and practices we'll talk of have been used throughout the ages by disciples to grow.

We come to a God who loves us so deeply that He would hold nothing back so that we could live with Him forever. It is all by grace that we receive that gift, not by works, so we can't boast about it. We are called to be the humble servants of a God who, in every moment of our life, loves us and gave His Son for us.

Here's your question: - How will you shape your life around God's work?