

Pentecost 19 – October 4, 2015

Text: Mark 10:2-16

Theme: Reaching Out with God's Love

**It ain't the good old days anymore. Every generation has had to face the reality that the world moved on without them. In our Old Testament reading, the Lord God himself faced the reality that he had created a social being with no society and so he immediately remedied that by creating woman from whom would come the society for which man hungered. Women have always been the heart of civilization forcing men to combat our innate savagery and settle down to become husbands and fathers and heads of whole communities. Without women, we would be little higher than the beasts we subjugated.**

**Jesus slapped his generation full in the face by teaching them that women are to be treated not according to rules manipulated by man but according to the expectations of God himself. The Pharisees were writing certificates of divorce anytime a wife displeased them thereby making her a beggar or a prostitute in a male dominated society. He told them that God does not intend for women to be treated that way but that they are to be honored and loved like Christ loved his own bride the Church. Women are not now and were never intended to be male property. They were God's holy gift to man and intended to be held in the highest esteem. So when feminists strive for equal treatment today, they are actually striving for several steps lower than God intended. Men, why do we hold doors for them? Why do we carry their luggage? Their arms work just as well as ours do! And while some men may be stronger than some women, every healthy woman is capable of opening her own door. We do these things as a symbol of how highly esteemed they are, that they are not just the mothers of our children but the mother of our whole society.**

**Then Jesus further slapped them by honoring children. Rather than treating them like they are premature adults who one day might be worthy of notice, he cleared the adults out of the way and took them onto his lap and treated them as precious gifts from his Father. The word indignant does not fully convey the Greek idea here. Jesus was greatly agitated, afflicted, emotionally pained that his prized children were being ignored and treated as second class people. I cannot imagine what he would say to churches who do not welcome children in worship or yell at them for making a mess in the fellowship hall. Jesus was nicer to the thief on the cross than he was to the disciples that day.**

**So what does all of that have to do with today? Today is Lutheran Women's Missionary League Sunday. In our Epistle for today, the author of Hebrews says,**

**"Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it." Pay much closer attention. Jesus did not die on the cross for the sins of a few. He did not do all that he did for a few fairly righteous German Lutherans in Villa Park, IL. He died for the entire society to whom Eve gave birth. The whole concept of Adam and Eve, Man and Wife, flesh of my flesh, bone of my bones is all tied into Jesus' death and resurrection. This society was created to eventually deliver Christ to the whole world. Adam and Eve may not have imagined where all this was going, but God knew from the first moment that sin would enter the world and he would send his Son to redeem the world.**

**Now, our challenge is to get the people for whom Christ died to believe it. And it ain't the good old days anymore. The world has moved on and whatever we were doing to reach our society in 1960 will not work in 2015. In 1960 this place was bursting at the seams! But it was not just because of our amazing evangelism. We were lulled into a false sense of security by a high birth rate and a flood of white people running from the city.**

**So time to let the past be passed. We still have the most powerful message of love and forgiveness that the world has ever heard. And we have an entirely new community who needs to hear that God loves them just as they are. Here in Villa Park, we have Islamic people, especially women and children, who need to know that Christianity honors them as the precious gifts from God. They are not the possession of any man but gifts from God. That little poor child playing in the dirt of a vacant lot needs to know that we and Jesus Christ absolutely adore her and want her to be part of this family. Our African American and Hispanic brothers and sisters need to be drawn into the family and made to feel welcomed. Correctly or not, they have often perceived from the Lutheran Church judgment and a sense that they should feel honored to be allowed to worship in our church building. And most importantly of all, all those young adults who grew up in a society that was changing too fast for the churches to keep up need to hear that although we said some stupid things along the way, we know that God wants us to love and include all people in this family and while we will never agree with every choice each other makes, the family is stronger and more powerful than any group of individual choices. We need them to come home and serve with us.**

**I know that most of us harbor no ill will towards people who are not like us but I also know from the diversity of this congregation that we're not working real hard to find people who are not like us. Having Swedes, Norwegians and Germans does not make us a diverse congregation. This ain't the good old days. If we are to thrive as a congregation for the next 100 years, we have to start reaching people who were not raised Lutheran and people who feel that their church left them.**

**I have never served a congregation that is more accepting of people than Trinity is. If any Lutheran congregation can thrive in this new world, it is Trinity and on this day on which we honor the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, we would do well to listen carefully to the LWML Pledge that we confess as our creed.**

**“In fervent gratitude for the Savior's dying love and His blood-bought gift of redemption we dedicate ourselves to Him with all that we are and have; and in obedience to His call for workers in the harvest fields, we pledge Him our willing service wherever and whenever He has need of us. We consecrate to our Savior our hands to work for Him, our feet to go on His errands, our voice to sing His praises, our lips to proclaim His redeeming love, our silver and our gold to extend His Kingdom, our will to do His will, and every power of our life to the great task of bringing the lost and the erring into eternal fellowship with Him.”**

**Our hands to work for him. Our lips to proclaim His redeeming love...Whatever we have to learn to do. No matter what prejudice we have to overcome. Regardless of our fears and apprehension, there are people all around us who need to hear of His love and forgiveness and it is our calling to tell them that they are his precious, wondrous creations. They need to know our Father's love.**

**This ain't the good old days. This is our day. This is our day to proclaim the love of God in a world where all the traditions are collapsing. This is our day to proclaim God's forgiveness to a world that cannot find enough self-help to heal themselves. This is our day to reach out to people and touch them, invite them, embrace them and set them to task in reaching others. This ain't the good old days. This is our day.**