

Last Sunday of the Church Year – November 20, 2016

Text: Colossians 1:13-20

Theme: "Quadriplegic Jesus"

Today is the last Sunday of the Church year, so today is a good day to ask ourselves how we have done this past year. And by "how we have done" I am not speaking of worldly achievements. If you made a 4.0 good for you. If you were promoted at work, yay! But so what? What do any of our worldly achievements really matter in the long run? Unless. Unless we are using those achievements to glorify God and accomplish the work he has given us. See, every achievement in life is a gift from God. So, as a gift from God, it is a new tool for our toolbox that we use to accomplish his will in this world. We need that toolbox because the world is sin fallen and set against him and set against us.

We are coming to the close of President Obama's time as president of this nation and we all know that he was elected to be the president who would bring change to our world. Well, he made a few changes, but none that really fundamentally changed the substance of the world. It is still a fallen, broken place. I have lived long enough to see that how good or how bad a president was is not clearly seen for many years but the best of them can only put a band aid on the brokenness around us.

But I know one thing for sure. There are over 2 million Missouri Synod Lutherans in this country and only one president, who for now at least, is not one of us. What's more, 70% of the USA, some 225 million people, claims Christianity as their religion and there is only one president. The Church is the body of Christ. Christ is our head and we are

the body, but it seems as though Christ's body is a quadriplegic. If we want change in this nation, then we, the body of Christ, need to effect that change. But of course that requires two things that we don't like. One is that we have to actually speak with one another and come up with a plan to address the problems. That means, folks, that we might actually have to discuss and debate politics without being angry with one another, judging one another or demeaning one another. I know that politics are a taboo discussion in the church but that is because people like to hide their beliefs that are contradictory to the Word of God behind their politics. We are safe from having to defend those views if we hide behind the ban on discussing politics. If you're a Republican, a Democrat or a Whig for all I care, if you are not concerned with laws and policies that improve our ability care for peoples' physical, mental and spiritual needs, you are wrong. There is no perfect political party so we have to give up this blind allegiance to some political philosophy and start working together to help all people traverse the difficulties and challenges of life.

If you are a Republican, theoretically, you are opposed to regulations that interfere with business and free trade. If you are a Democrat, theoretically, you believe that business must be regulated to protect the workers and improve the living conditions for all people. If you are Independent, you align yourself with any number of philosophies that you think will improve life in this nation. But regardless of how you identify your political leanings, here is the challenge. We have to find our common ground first as Christians and then work from there. I'm not

living in la-la land. I understand that we will never achieve perfect harmony in this life, but a government in deadlock because no one will budge, or a government that enacts laws and policies that make the Church's mission more difficult, is certainly not helpful to the Church. We, my friends, are the body of Christ and our head has commanded us to get some work done.

Our head speaks clearly. We are to love God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind AND we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. We need real change in this nation so that we can more effectively love our neighbors. We need political leaders to be less concerned with guarding their kingdoms and more concerned with the good of their people. But what we need most of all is for the body of Christ to wake up. That's the second thing we don't like: having to do something.

It is so much easier to sit at home and complain than to actually do something. Imagine what would happen if 225 million people said "No, we will not allow a bloated bureaucracy to grow while there are senior citizens who have to choose between buying their medicine and eating." Or "Yes, we will raise taxes to care for children whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them and we don't care if you have to give up your fancy vacation in order to pay those taxes." But as long as Satan keeps us quiet and divided, our voice is muted and all of our accomplishments are like chaff that will be burned up and blown away when the end comes.

How did you do last year? What are your dreams for the years to come until Christ returns and our work here is through? Are we going to continue to settle for a quadriplegic Jesus, or are we going to empower his body? Are we going to rise up and start putting this body of Christ to work? Are we going to commit ourselves to hearing and studying God's Word and receiving his body and blood? Once we do that, it's not hard to know what is right and what is wrong. Love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and ...here's the body's job....love your neighbor as yourself. Take that love poured into you from God's Word and Sacrament and pour it over your neighbor.

We can't change the world today. But pouring out God's love on our neighbor will begin making ripples in this political wasteland. This is not rocket science but it is hard work. We have a new president and some new representatives in Washington, but if we don't feed, nourish and exercise the body of Christ, I think it will just be four more years of the same old stuff. We cannot fix this broken world, only God can do that on the day of the Resurrection. We cannot fix it, but we can make our presence known within it. We the body of Christ can rise up and proclaim what is right and what is wrong. We are not called to balance the budget in Washington, but we are called to love our neighbor with the very love of God. As this body of Christ moves in that direction, we might just create a little ripple here in Villa Park and that ripple, with God's help, might just set off a Tsunami in Springfield, or even Washington D.C.