

"Walking in the Word"

Psalm 119:105

October 3, 2010

19th Sunday After Pentecost – LWML Sunday

When was the last time that you went for a walk? Walking is something that we do for various reasons. Some of us walk because it is good for our health. Others may spend much of the day walking because of what their job entails. Others of us may walk just for the pure enjoyment of being outside in God's creation. Regardless of the reason we may walk or the reason we don't walk, most health experts will tell us that we need to do more walking to stay healthy. Walking can provide some great benefits to our health if we do it consistently. It helps us keep the weight off, strengthens our heart, and helps control blood pressure as well as many other benefits.

While we may know the benefits that walking provides us, that does not mean that we are going to do anything about it. Many folks think, "I should really get some exercise, I should go for a walk," but then simply sit down again. It is not enough to just desire to go for a walk. You have to actually do it. You are free to walk or to sit still, but the decision you make will affect your health. The less exercise we get, the less healthy we will be. If we got no exercise at all, it could lead to obesity, illness and conditions that could cause death.

But this is not a lecture about physical fitness. It is a sermon and sermons deal with spiritual fitness. God's Word has much to say about spiritual fitness. Psalm 119 tells us, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." What exactly does this mean? Life is like a walk down a path. As we proceed down this path of life, God declares how His Word can help us in our walk down that path of life.

In an article on physical exercise, one author encouraged people to walk at least 30 minutes a day. He asserted that just 30 minutes can make a huge difference in your health. While spending 30 minutes a day focused on our physical health would be good for all of us, what about our spiritual walk and health? What would happen to your spiritual life, to the life of this congregation, if those who

loved the Lord spent 30 minutes a day walking in the Scripture and having their lives illumined by it? Would that not make a huge difference in your spiritual health to take advantage of the opportunities we are given to study His Word in Bible studies, in small groups, through personal devotions, and the like?

Many Christians have been sitting too long without being active in the reading of the Living Word of God. Their faith is flabby and they are spiritually out of shape. As a result, some have given up disciplined study of God's Word the day after they were confirmed. Others have wandered from the faith, despite the fact that their names are still on the membership role of some congregation. Many ignore or care nothing for the gifts God gives in His Word – forgiveness, life, and salvation, thus pushing themselves precariously close to the path's precipice and certain death below. Does this describe you or anyone you know?

It is easy to deny that we are spiritually out of shape and in need of the Word of God, just like its easy for the obviously overweight individual to deny he/she is physically out of shape and in need of exercise. Denial is not reality though. Perhaps some are not in the Word because they do not want to hear what the Word has to say to them. The Word of God says, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Heb. 4:12)

The Word of God judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart of man—your heart and mine. It cuts through the baloney of life and lays it out on the line. That is how the Word of God in the law does its work. It exposes the disease of sin, as ugly as it is, so that the healing can begin with the Gospel. Without that exposure, the sin can fester, grow, and lead to death. But when brought to the Light of God's News in Christ, the healing begins.

Psalm 119 speaks to us and says *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.* His Word, in Holy Baptism, has put us on the path to eternal life by uniting us to Christ's death whereby we receive forgiveness for our sins. That takes us out of the quagmire of sin and death around the

path of life. It unites us to Christ's resurrection whereby we receive a new life. That puts us on the path to life.

His Word in the Holy Absolution, the Scripture readings, and the sermon all work to restore us to the path of life from which we daily wander. His Word in the Lord's Supper strengthens us for our daily walk on the path to life.

Those are great gifts which the Word of God gives. However, sin is such that we need those gifts, not only on Sunday morning but throughout my week. His Word is the lamp and light every day because He knows the pathway that I am on. He sees the snares and things that would trip me up along the way. And He sees the detours that would tempt me to turn aside.

We need His word in our lives life to keep us walking in the light and in the truth of his Word. Sometimes that truth convicts us because it points out the sin in our lives, yet we need to hear it. That Word of truth calls us to repentance, reminds us of the truth of a Friday that we call Good on which Jesus died for our sin, and, just as importantly, reminds us that the victory won on Easter was for us. We can walk in the truth that Jesus' blood was shed for me so that life now and life forever with him is assured.

So how much or where do you walk? It depends on how healthy you want to be. Do you need to change the way you walk in God's Word? Change is not always easy. We are naturally resistant to change. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to change our poor habits of walking in God's Word for good ones. When a child is learning to walk, there are many times he or she falls down and then gets up again. But there is a determination to get it right! Maybe you have fallen down in the study of the Word. Now is a great time to get up again. Only instead of relying upon your determination to get it right, receive the forgiveness of Christ for having fallen down and rely on the Holy Spirit to get you up and walking again in the Word.

I believe that as the children of God called to be His very own through baptism we truly have a desire to hear from our Father. Our struggle, like many things in life, is that we have the best

intentions and plans until it actually comes down to how to begin that walk. A person does not enter a marathon without lots of training and building up to that event. So, too, as we explore God's Word on our daily walk we can start with small steps.

Let me make a suggestion on how to begin those small steps. This week, just like last week, has seven days including today ahead of you. Now I would challenge you all to spend 30 minutes every day in God's Word. It would be awesome to spend 210 minutes this week with God. I am sure it sounds good to you, too. But I also know it might be a little overwhelming, so let's start with some small steps by saying 5 of the 7 days this week we are going to spend 5 minutes a day with God in His Word to hear from Him. Read a chapter or two from one of the Gospels. Meditate on a Psalm. Pick up a *Portals of Prayer* and try that. Start with these small steps and listen to what God would have us hear from His Word.

What comfort, strength, guidance, and love we will find in the Word of God! Yet there are many in our neighborhoods and world who do not know the Word. Jesus prayed for his disciples and for us, the children of God the Father, on the night that he was betrayed when he said in John 17:17, *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.* As those who know the truth of that Word, our calling is to go to our neighborhoods and throughout the world to proclaim the truth of that Word. In that same passage Jesus says *My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* As Jesus sent the disciples into a world in need of the Word, so also today, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are sent into the world to proclaim the story of Jesus as Savior.

Sometimes that involves walking across the hallway from our apartment to be the hands and feet of Jesus to a neighbor in need. Maybe that involves walking to the cubicle or office next to yours and proclaiming the hope of Jesus to a coworker, inviting him or her to worship with you. Perhaps

that involves walking onboard an airplane and going to another part of the globe as a short term missionary for two weeks to teach another person English while using that opportunity to share the word of Jesus.

Groups like the Lutheran Women's Missionary League exist to help equip people to proclaim the love of Jesus throughout the world. Mission grants help raise money for supporting the work of those walking in the path of Jesus around the world by helping to train pastors, equipping youth to restore homes while sharing the love of Jesus, and providing medical care in the name of the great physician Jesus Christ. There are many ways that we can walk in the Word to make an eternal difference in the lives of those around us, but it all starts with our own connection to Jesus. He is the one who gives us the strength through the Spirit to know the truth of the Word and to proclaim that truth in Word and deed in our lives and through the lives of people throughout the world.

The apostle Paul writing to the church in Rome quotes from the prophet Isaiah when he declares, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Sisters and brothers in Christ, we have some beautiful walking feet here this morning who have been given a wonderful message to proclaim in the world. We proclaim that Word by supporting the work of our congregation here and through organizations like LWML, making sure that all people can hear the Word of God, the message of sin and grace, the Good News of Jesus as the Savior of all people. What a great honor our heavenly Father has given us to be the beautiful walking feet in this world. May God strengthen your walk this week as you spend time with Him in His Word and as you go forth to proclaim the joyous Word of Christ in your families, neighborhoods, schools, and world. Amen.