

SERMON  
First Lutheran Church  
Aitkin, Minnesota

John 17:20-26  
Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen  
May 12, 2013

## **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**

### **ADULT MESSAGE**

**Ninety two year old preacher** – “When I was asked to come here today and talk to you, your pastor asked me to tell you what was the greatest lesson ever learned in my 50 odd years of preaching. I thought about it for a few days and boiled it down to just one thing that made the most difference in my life and sustained me through all my trials. The one thing that I could always rely on when tears and heartbreak and pain and fear and sorrow paralyzed me... The only thing that would comfort was this verse...

“Jesus loves me this I know.  
For the Bible tells me so.  
Little ones to Him belong,  
We are weak but He is strong...  
Yes, Jesus loves me...  
The Bible tells me so.”

**Woven together in Christ** – It works for quilts, for pants that need patching and for lives, families and churches that need healing and strength. Little bits and pieces are taken from chaos and pieced together in such a way that they become more durable and beautiful than ever they could have been alone. That’s how the quilters did it. That’s how God does it.

**Senior Recognition** – Gathered here with their faith family, these two beautiful young adults peer into the future to see what adventures, challenges and opportunities await them. We stand with them. We peer into the future with them. We embrace them at the same time as we prepare to send them out into the world, not alone, but with Jesus as their constant, faithful and loving partner in life.

The heart of God beats for you, for me, and for God’s whole world. Is First Lutheran a heart transplant center? Are you using your new heart? Are

you needing a heart transplant? Do you know of someone else who could use the heart of God? Do you know someone who could use your compassion, understanding, support or encouragement?

Do you need a new heart? Do you have a new heart? Does the heart of God beat within your chest? Somebody had to die in order for you to have that heart – Jesus. He died – for me, for you, for the next person who walks into your view, your day, your life...

**Our Gospel text** for today comes from Jesus' last prayer before going to the cross. He prayed for the wellbeing of his disciples and of his whole world. What did Jesus ask for? In six verses, Jesus prayed...

- That God's people might all be one, unified in Christ x 4.
- That we might be in him and him in us x 10.
- So that the world might believe that Jesus is God with us x 2.
- That our unity with God might all be wrapped up with love x 5.  
(This is the "**agape**" kind of love that is totally undeserved, sacrificial and life-giving.)
- . That we and our world might "**know**" God x 5.  
(This is the term for an intimate relationship, not casual, but deep and committed.)

And all of this, Jesus prays will happen "**so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.**" That sure sounds like a heart transplant kind of a deal to me...

Alyssa Sandeen needs a new heart. Her own God-given heart went bad from cardiomyopathy. She was considered to be a day or two from death's doorstep when little Matthew was hit by a truck and his parents allowed his heart to be donated to save another person's life. That person was Alyssa. Her new heart got her through high school, first kisses, and proms. In 2010 Alyssa had to have a kidney transplant, dialysis and actually died twice in one day. Doctors performed CPR for two hours to bring her back. But now, at age 23, she's back in the hospital, heart again failing, and on a waiting list for the next available heart. She has to stay in the hospital, Rochester, ready for an instantaneous transplant. She leaves that hospital floor only to attend church services. "Sandeen says her faith means a lot to her, which is evidenced by the picture of Jesus on the wall behind here, close to her bed. It stays even when coloring book pictures given to her by well-wishing kids are taken down to make room for the flood of new pictures, cards and posters that come in regularly."

“Sandeem says she’s curious about the next person who will ultimately have to die to allow her to live. What kind of a person will it be, she wonders, will it be a guy or a girl, will they be like her, will they understand how important their gift is?”

I know of an amazing heart transplant surgeon. This surgeon is amazing, because in order to help his dying patient, he gives his own heart, dies to give them new life. His name is Jesus of Nazareth. He is known as “the great physician.” He knows his patients better than they know themselves. He knows their strengths and weaknesses. He knows their doubts and fears. He knows their delights and triumphs. He knows their hopes and dreams. And he loves them, sacrificially...