

SERMON  
First Lutheran Church  
Aitkin, Minnesota

Genesis 2:4b-7, 15-17; 3:1-8  
September 11, 2016  
Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen

### **KIDS' MESSAGE**

Kids, **welcome** to this new year of Sunday school. Today we have our **Rally Day Parade** and **Picnic**. Next week Sunday school classes begin. We are planning a great year of learning and fun.

When you were **baptized**, your parents promised to raise you as a part of God's family. And all these people promised to welcome you into God's family and to love and care for you. Your parents and we are keeping those promises here today. And Jesus promised to love, protect and walk with you all the days of your life and forever! Right here today, Jesus is moving to make sure you know that nobody loves you more than he does. Jesus loves you more than your grandparents or your parents even. **Jesus loves me this I know**. Coming here is one way to love Jesus back.

Kids, look at the screens overhead. That **little bird** was orphaned, lost its mom and dad somehow. It couldn't fly. A friend, **Marilyn**, found the little bird and knew that it would die if it didn't get some worms to eat, etc. So she brought the bird into her house, gave it worms and water and named it "**Baby**." Baby got stronger. Marilyn brought Baby outside and pretty soon the little bird was flying around. Then it would fly back to her, eat out of her hand and spend the night in her house, safe and sound.

The other day our friend posted this message. "**This is my final update on Baby. This is difficult for me to share, how to say that Baby is gone. I came outside in the evening around 8:00 to get Baby and bring him in for the night and as I called to him in the garden, a hawk took off from the ground. All that was left were some of Baby's feathers. Baby was special, a unique experience that I will forever remember. For a moment in time I was a mother robin and Baby looked to me as his caregiver and friend. He knew my voice and would fly to me when I called him. We would sit side by side in the garden on the bench, and I would talk to him, he would look at me so intelligently and cock his head. I felt as though he understood every word that I said. We were bonded by love for each other and I'm sure God looked down and smiled to see such an odd couple. I will never forget you Baby.**"

Kids, Marilyn tried to love and care for a little orphaned bird so that it could have a good life. Unfortunately, a **hawk** came along and ate Baby. But at least Marilyn tried. And they had a **special, little time to love each other.**

Kids, terrible things happen to **human children** too. **Sickness, accidents,** or **bad people hurting children.** Your family, your faith family here at church, and Jesus – **we are all working together** here and out in our community to **love, protect and care for** each and all of you. That's why we have Sunday school, Kids' Messages, nursery care, Bible school, Bible camp, parades and picnics. Together, we are trying to help you to have the **best life you can in this big world.** And **we want to make sure** that you **know and love Jesus, because Jesus knows and loves you.** And Jesus is with you every day, everywhere you go, no matter what happens to you. And we want you to know and to trust that Jesus will never leave you or let you go.

Thanks kids and families for being here. Thanks church family for embracing these precious little ones. May God draw us all close to God and to each other. Thanks be to God. Let us pray. **Come Lord Jesus and be our guest. Raise up your people to bring your love to every little life. Amen.**

### **ADULT MESSAGE**

Did you see the "**PEANUTS**" cartoon? Linus walks up to Lucy who is busy jumping rope. He says, "**Here's something I'll bet you didn't know, the Bible contains 3,566,480 letters and 773,893 words!**" The next frame shows Lucy still jumping away. Then, final frame, as Lucy continues to jump, Linus says, "**You're just not interested in theology, are you?**" Theology means "**thinking about God.**" Many people think that the Bible is just a book full of **words which don't have much to do with everyday life.** Our narrative reading from **Genesis 2** makes it clear that the Bible brings us the assurance that God is the **source, foundation and hope** for **each and all of our lives.** **Linus** was interested in **details about the Bible.** **God** is interested in **details about you.**

When Lutherans read the Bible, we always look for the **basic truth** God wishes to share with us. In today's creation account, it is very clear, we, as humans, are **God's beloved handiwork, gifted and blessed** by our

Creator. You can see loving God kneeling in the dust of the earth, scooping and shaping the soil from which God formed us. You can see God breathing life into us. We were created, way **back in the beginning**, and **at our own conception**, to **home in God, each other and the earth** where we live. **Everything and everyone** that you love and care about in this world has been **gifted to you by God**. **Here's the free gift**. It's all yours to **enjoy**, to **love and care for**, to **flourish in**. God invited the earliest people to love and trust God to care for them. Then God set those humans free to **love God back and to thrive** in the world with God.

And **they gave it all up**, for the power of “**me**”. Basic truth? They were **tempted to doubt God**. To **not trust God**. To **try to be God themselves**. Their **disobedience** said that they decided they **didn't need God**, that they **could take perfectly good care of themselves**, that they themselves **were God**. I don't need such a story from thousands of years ago; **I do the same thing every day**. I may start out my morning reading a hopeful word from the Bible, pray and ask for God's help. However, a half hour after I hit the office – phone ringing, people stopping by, emails to read, worship services to prepare, sermon to write – I forget that God is there. I get to thinking that I have to **handle all of the world's problems by myself**. I get to **thinking that I am all alone in the world**. Do you know anything about that in your life?

Our text shows **Adam and Eve hiding** in the bushes, **afraid** of the very **God who loved them into existence**. That's where God finds those first people – hiding in the bushes. That's a joke in the ancient Hebrew language. God didn't need to look for Adam and Eve. God knew all along **what they had done** and **where they were hiding**. It's just that **they didn't know where God was**. They didn't know **how big and loving God is**. They didn't know **that God wasn't going to give up on them**.

Jesus finds me in the bushes too. Whenever we hide out in places that we think are far removed from God's presence, “**Oops, here God is**.” Here comes **God's rescue mission** for **Darrell Pedersen**. Again and again.

Linus **counted** the **words** in the Bible. Jesus **speaks to us personally through the words** in the Bible. When I am in trouble, afraid, lacking will power, hurting – **Jesus comes to rescue me** with **God's Word of life, hope and newness**. Jesus says, “**Here I am, 'for you.'** I give myself ‘for

**you.” We can do this!** Jesus is God’s rescue mission for you and me and for our whole sometimes limping, broken, fearful, hateful, disgusting world.

The hawk ate Marilyn’s little adoptive bird. Who is there for us when we find ourselves **orphaned** by the world, when the **hawk circles overhead** in our lives, when **Twin Towers fall**, when the **remains of stolen children** are discovered, when drugs or alcohol place a **strangle hold** around our necks, when our own **kids are in danger**? Every little kid is in danger.

**Joel Abenth**, director of our Voyageur’s Lutheran Ministry, sent out a plea to the members of our Christian camping community. A dead tree fell on his son **Isak’s** head. This six year old experienced a badly fractured skull. He was in mortal danger. **The prayers started to go up**. How much better for child, for parents, if **everyone already knows, loves and trusts Jesus** when trouble comes? How much better to be in a **daily conversation** with God when we need rescue? Jesus will show up either way. Jesus is there all along. But, how much better to know in our heads and our hearts that we are never alone – greatest triumph or darkest moment. **Jesus loves me, this I know**. That’s all that really matters, now or in the end. Again, that’s why we do worship, Sunday school, prayer, Bible reading, picnics, confirmation, offerings, hospital visits, attend funerals...

**Tony Klee** put it like this after we spent time together making arrangements for his **Grandpa Warren Talaska’s funeral**. “Hi Pastor, it’s Tony. I wanted to thank you for all of the support that you have given us. Warren was a wonderful man on this earth and I’m sure that he has already given God many laughs up in heaven. I had quite a talk with my kids tonight about **‘how this goes.’** Many questions of course, about death and heaven and cremation and burial. **My point is, it is much easier talking to them about it when I can tell them that he is in paradise and that some day, God willing, many many years from now, they will have fun with him again.** Thank you for being there for him and for us.”

**How much better to know that we don’t face the world, or even death, alone.**

It was this past Thursday. I was headed for work, just outside of Brainerd. The speed limit was 60. I was going 65. Sewer construction trucks and equipment lined the ditch beside the highway. I was appreciating the

amazingly beautiful day. **“Thank you Lord, for the blue sky, the sunshine, the green grass. Thanks for Jennifer and Leah and her boyfriend, Julien.”** Just then, a big gas truck pulled out of the ditch and into my driving lane fifty yards ahead of me. Oncoming traffic was heavy. Squealing brakes, skidding tires, **“Lord, I’m yours.”** Then, as quickly as he had popped in front of me, he swerved his truck back into the ditch, and I passed by him. **“Lord, thank you. (pause) I am yours either way. If I died today, it would be okay. I’ve had a wonderful life here. And I know I’ll be with you again on the other side. Thank you Lord. Amen.”**

I am so thankful that my parents, pastors and Sunday school teachers, my relatives and fellow church members **introduced me to Jesus**. I’m so glad that I **know and trust how much God loves and cares for me - whether I hit the gas truck or not.**

It is **wonderful to wear #11** on football helmets and jerseys in memory of **Jacob Wetterling**, but we need to go beyond to help the kids we have with us today. We need to do the best we can to **surround them with God’s love and care. We are these kids’s best hope!** I don’t want to guilt anyone. I am simply reminding us of the **promises we’ve made in baptism** and of the **mission we have with Jesus**.

We as parents and as faith family have promised to help Jesus to love and care for our kids.

How many of you are in **5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade**? How many in **3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade**? How many in **1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> grade**? How many in **Kindergarten**? How many are **age 3 or 4**? Thank God for giving us all of you children to love and care for. We have **no teachers for 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> grade** yet. And every one of the other grades still needs at least one more teacher. We are asking people to **team teach**. That means each person only needs to teach one or two times per month. It would be wonderful if **groups of parents, couples**, would team up to share a class, four families, each doing one Sunday per month. It would be great if some **grandma or grandpa types**, whose own grandchildren live in distant places, **joined the team** to teach our kids. We have **good teaching materials**. We have **substitute teachers**. We have **great leaders** to support our teachers. Teachers **don’t need to know everything about the Bible**. They **learn along with the kids**. Today is the day. Our kids **need some good, loving people to bring them to Jesus**.

**Jesus** - there for us when **Grandpa dies**, when our **marriage struggles**, when our **kids are in danger**, when **money is short**, when **health fails**, when our **home burns**, when our **job evaporates** - **Jesus**. **Jesus loves me, this I know**. **And that is all I need to know, believe, hang onto and celebrate** as I live out my days as a child of God in God's world.

Charlie Brown's little friend, **Linus**, **cared about the words in the Bible**. **The God of the Bible cares about you**.

It's **Rally Day**. Once again, parents and Body of Christ, you and I, commit to **passing the Good News of Jesus along** to each other, our kids and the world beyond these doors. God **dreamt us into existence**. Jesus **died for us**. The Holy Spirit has been **living in our hearts** since our baptism. That ought to be enough to **bring us back to God and to each other, again and again and forever**. Either way, **God will be there for us**. Thanks be to God. Amen.