

SERMON
 First Lutheran Church
 Aitkin, Minnesota

Ephesians 4:1-16
 Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
 July 30, 2017

KIDS' MESSAGE – **"I Have Enough Stuff,"** by Connie Beyer Horn

ADULT MESSAGE – **"A Day in the Life of the Church"**

Friday, July 28, 2017, Aitkin, Minnesota – First Lutheran Church

7:30 a.m. – Men in Mission Breakfast/Bible Study – We looked at a passage from **II Kings 4:1-7** where a man of God died - leaving his wife and two sons broke and owing lots of money. All his widow had left was a little pot of oil. The creditors insisted on making the two sons serve as slaves to pay off the debt. The widow begged God's prophet, **Elisha**, for help. Long story short, Elisha instructed her to gather as many pots from her friends and neighbors as she could. **Pots were precious** in those days. **But, people shared.** Then, following Elisha's instruction, the woman proceeded to pour oil from her little pot into all these other pots. When the borrowed pots were all full, the oil stopped flowing. Then Elisha instructed her to sell the precious oil to pay off her debt and to support her and her sons into the future. **It is a miracle. One woman trusted God. Neighbors shared. God provided. Her family was saved** from slavery.

We spent much of the rest of our time together at Men's Breakfast talking about **us sharing our own pots.** We talked about who amongst or around us right now, **who could definitely use some more of God's oil** to meet their life's needs. We talked about the three suicides that have happened in our community in the past month. We talked about how many other terrible things happen to people in this world. We talked about how many kids, how many families, how many people are living **desperate, seemingly hopeless lives right here in Aitkin.** **They need God's life-giving oil.** We were done by 8:45 a.m.

11:00 a.m. – Funeral for a 92 year old child of God – It was our third funeral in four days. Once again the sanctuary was filled with members of this faith family

grieving, comforting, supporting each other and the families of the departed loved ones. Once again, the women and men of this church prepared a fine meal, served and cleaned up afterward. Spit-shined the building and welcomed close friends and strangers with the embrace and comfort of Jesus.

1:30 p.m. – **Pre-surgery visit for an 8-year-old child of God** - She and her family have been battling a serious health problem for 2 ½ years with little success. The scheduled surgery has a history of hopeful percentages of success. This little girl is proud and excited that her name has been included in our **bulletin**, and in our **hearts**, for **prayers of healing**. And we pray for her parents and siblings as well.

3:00 p.m. – **Contested Omnibus Hearing for a 30 something child of God** – This young person and their family are battling to be spared from a sentence that could mean this individual spending double digit years locked away in prison. Brothers and sisters in Christ sat in the courtroom too, seeing the need for **justice**, but also **hopeful for compassion** and a **new and forgiven start** for the future.

5:00 p.m. – **Relay for Life event at the Aitkin County Fairgrounds** – Hundreds of people gathered to join in solidarity with the dozens of cancer survivors who were honored. Hundreds of others, who lost their lives to cancer were later memorialized with candles burning in the darkness. I have no idea how many different people helped to plan and carry out the event. I saw many of your brothers and sisters in Christ setting up displays, staffing booths, serving food, placing luminaries and walking in the parade of survivors and caregivers. Tens of thousands of dollars were raised in the fight for an end to cancer deaths.

By 8:00 p.m. I was home. I went for a walk and thought about the events and people of the day. I soaked up the beauty of the setting sun. I felt the love of God lift the weight of the world from my shoulders. By **10:00 p.m.**, while the television droned on, I'd fallen asleep reading the paper. I went to bed and prayed for God to help us all, and to keep us safely in God's loving care. Especially my own family and all those in special need.

At 1:00 a.m., the last of the **Relay for Life folks** shut off the lights at the fairgrounds and went home to bed. **Some of God's people** stayed up all night – at

the hospital, jail, nursing homes, in the police cars and ambulances, loved ones standing vigil near death beds, young moms nursing newborns, and who knows how many others. And God waited with them.

In our text from his letter to the early Christians in Ephesus, Paul taught that:

- God is moving to weave our amazing, God-given diversity as human beings into an even more amazing, God-given unity as children of God.
- God is moving to build up God's family.
- God is moving to equip and empower us to change the world.

Jesus came here to embrace all the people of this world with the everlasting love of God. Then Jesus invited us to individually love and trust God. Jesus invited us to stand together as one with him and with the whole Body of Christ of every place and of every time.

I found this little photo/quotation from Mr. Rogers. It reads,

“I believe that appreciation is a holy thing – that when we look for what’s best in a person we happen to be with at the moment, we’re doing what God does all the time. So in loving and appreciating our neighbor, we’re participating in something sacred.”

Fred Rogers

We learned this again on Friday, 7:30 a.m., as some of God’s people gathered together in God’s Word. Someone in need trusts God. Neighbors share. God provides. Lives are saved, right now and for all of eternity. All one in Christ. Thanks be to God. And thank you for being a part of the Body of Christ here in this place. Amen.