

First Sunday at Community Lutheran Church
Pastor Marty Jacobson
March 3, 2013

What a privilege it is to be with you this morning, to be called to serve as your pastor, and to be sharing God's Word with you.

Most Sundays I will be preaching from the Gospel or one of the other assigned readings, but today is a special occasion. It's the beginning of many firsts that we get to share together. And for this first sermon, I'd like to share a passage with you that fills me with joy, and it fills me with excitement especially, when I think about what it says to us about the future of Community Lutheran Church.

It's a passage Paul was writing to a church he dearly loved.
And this passage is a prayer.
It's a passionate prayer, a prayer filled with his deepest hopes and dreams for that church.
It's a Holy Spirit filled prayer.

Have you ever heard someone pray with passion?
Could you feel God working through that prayer and touching your heart?

That's the kind of prayer this is.
Listen now as I share with you from Ephesians, chapter 3, beginning in verse 14:

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Do you know who has been praying this prayer for you?
Do you know?
That's right. I have.

There are a lot of churches that get sidetracked by the busyness of all the programs they are running. And there are pastors, who get sidetracked by worrying about all kinds of little things.

But I want you to know... what is at the very heart of my prayers for you.
I commit to you that I will pray each day
... that God will strengthen you in your inner being...
 through the power of the Holy Spirit.
... and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.
... as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

As you face your struggles and your challenges
 at work or at school
 in your families, and in your friendships
 I'm going to be praying... that you don't feel alone
 that you don't feel overwhelmed and helpless.

I am going to pray that you feel the strength of God flowing through you,
 through the one Jesus calls the Comforter... the Advocate... the one who comes along beside you, the
 Holy Spirit.

And I'm going to pray that when doubts begin to creep in,
 and you wonder if God is real,
 or if God even cares about you.

I'm praying that through faith... the gift of faith
 Christ will dwell in you...
 that Jesus, himself will be in your heart and in your mind.

And that happens, Paul tells us,
 as we are rooted and grounded in love.

It happens every Sunday when we come together and hear God's Word, and receive the promises of
 God in Baptism and Holy Communion.

It happens in Bible Study and small groups, in Sunday School and Confirmation, and in our Sr. High youth
 group.

Every time we ground ourselves in God's Word we are rooted and grounded in God's love.

As your pastor, that's what I want Community Lutheran to be known for.
 So whenever someone in this community, meets someone from this church
 I pray they see a person who is grounded in God's love
 a person, who knows that they are loved and forgiven. And because God loves and forgives them
 they forgive others. And extend God's love and grace.

That's the kind of church people want to join.

A church filled with people, who aren't arguing about the color of the carpet.
 but a people who are full of joy,
 the joy of Christ living within them.

That's what I saw in the members of your Call Committee.
 If you could have seen them, you would've been proud.

I saw Jesus in them.
 I saw people who were grounded in God's love.
 And they were excited about the future of Community Lutheran.

This week, I also saw the joy of Christ in the Mag-Pie group and the Men's group ...
 I could hear the Mag-pie group laughing through the wall of my office.
 And that Men's group.... there's some good laughter in that group too.
 Right guys?

And for the other groups in this congregation,
 I look forward to meeting with you...
 and seeing the love of God in your lives... and in your witness.

And coming soon, I also look forward to meeting each of you...
 in some gatherings we hope to set up in member's homes.

During each of those gatherings, I will introduce myself to you,
 and listen to you, and get to know you better
 and build those connections... that keep us grounded in God's love.

Because ultimately, my prayer for you, is the same as Paul's prayer.
 I pray that you may have the power to comprehend...
 and to know the love of Christ.... which surpasses knowledge..
 so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The fullness of God's heart for those who are hurting...

The fullness of God's compassion for those who are carrying heavy burdens

The fullness of God's desire to reach those who are lost...
 wandering through life... without any hope or purpose.

This week, I read about a preacher who sometimes asks people, "Are you a Christian?"
 If they answer, "I'm trying." he knew they didn't really understand God.
 Because being a Christian isn't about *trying*.
 It's about *trusting*.
 Trusting not in what you must do. But in what God has already done.
 And he has done EVERYTHING!
 That's the Gospel.
 There is nothing you can do to make God love you more –
 and nothing you can do to make God love you less. In Christ, God has done everything.

And so Community Lutheran... filled with the joy of Christ, and grounded in God's love
 Remember these two promises as we begin this ministry together:

"Whatever you ask in My name," Jesus says, "I will do it."¹

"Now to Him, who by the power at work within us,
 is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine,
 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, to all generations."² Amen

¹ John14:13

² Ephesians 3:20-21