

Epistle Texts for Life Observance Sunday

(Series C)

18th Sunday in Pentecost

Theme of Day: The greatest price we should be concerned about is the ransom Christ paid to reconcile us with God.

Epistle Text: 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Theme: Be a Lutheran for Life

- Care for people=s physical needs
- Learn a high regard for life (Matthew 6:31-33)
- Know that God holds us accountable for human life (Genesis 9:6)
- We are to pray/be concerned for all life
- Care for people=s eternal need; God wants all to be saved
- It does people no good to have the world, yet only the world (Mark 8:36)
- Take every opportunity in stewardship to evangelize! (Colossians 4:2-6)

Focus: One of the strongest rallying cries of the Lutheran church is the doctrine of justification by faith. The free grace that was provided for each of us is also provided for the entire world. As Lutherans, we are privileged to share that message with others regardless of their physical needs or quality of life. In fact, those physical needs can be an avenue to share the Gospel and reflect the love of Christ.

Facts: According to the Alzheimer's Association, approximately 4.5 million Americans are afflicted by Alzheimer's disease, about double the number from 1980. By 2050 the number is expected to grow to between 11.6-16 million Americans.

According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), more than a half million Americans are expected to die of cancer in 2006 (over 1,500 people each day). One in every four deaths in America results from cancer. Just under 1.4 million new cases of cancer are diagnosed each year.

Over 10 million Americans have visual impairments, according to the American Foundation for the Blind.

Over 28 million Americans are hearing-impaired, according to the government-funded National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders.

20th Sunday in Pentecost

Theme of Day: Faith, worked by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, allows us to do great things for the Lord and see eternal life as our ultimate goal.

Epistle Text: 2 Timothy 1:5-10

Theme: The Legacy of Motherhood

- To reflect Christ's love
- In all daily activities/duties a mother does
- In the selfless caring for the family

- By the tireless witness
- To instill Christ's teaching
- By a modeling of the first point
- By helping their children through work (passing it on, tradition)
- By passing on the same truth she learned

Focus: Celebrating motherhood and the blessings of mothers are wonderful, but they are not the message of Paul's words. The focus was Timothy's faith, which was passed on from his mother and grandmother. Today's typical family is not the same as it was in the past. Roughly half of the children in the U.S. do not live under the same roof with their biological mother and father. The need to teach children the truth of God's Word seems to fall more and more on the mothers. The true celebration should focus on the plan of salvation and how mothers are a critical component in passing these truths on to their children.

Facts: The proportion of children living in a traditional nuclear family with their biological mother and father decreased to 68 percent in 2004 from 77 percent in 1980, according to childstats.gov in its biennial report on the condition of children in America.

23rd Sunday in Pentecost

Theme of Day: God's blessings to His children are often beyond our imagination because His will is not limited by the possibilities that limit us.

Epistle Text: 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Theme: Christian Endurance

- Your time will come
- The hammer that pounded the nails into Christ has become the gavel that proclaims your innocence
- Physical death is something that will come to all sinful mankind. While Paul can logically presume his death is near, he never advocates taking his own life. Rather he says, "...will award to me on that day." He doesn't know when his end is coming.
- Euthanasia is not something to be taken lightly. The race we run is one which God puts in front of us. Saving faith in Christ will see us through any difficulty - even medical ones.
- Your crown awaits
 - The victory is worth the wait. The faithful runner receives what God his judge has - righteousness
- Heaven is a real place, not just a feeling in the mind. Here it is a gathering place for all believers, faithful runners
- Emphasis even at the end of this text is on life! Not only being a "faithful runner" on earth, but the reward of faithfully running in righteousness in God's kingdom forever.

Focus: End-of-life discussions often focus on quality-of-life issues and concerns about suffering. Changing that focus is not easy, but it is necessary. Rather than quality of life, present the truth of absolute value we have because of Christ=s sacrifice for us. Now, regardless of the stage or quality of life, it is still possible to serve the Lord with our lives. In spite of the general attitudes from society, those who are elderly, disabled, or infirm can still glorify God in their lives. The second issue of suffering is one that also needs clarification and refocusing. Physical suffering is controllable by trained physicians. Emotional suffering is overcome by loving friends and family, and by the sharing of the Gospel.

Facts: As of 2006, three governments in the world allow legalized physician-assisted suicide: Belgium, the Netherlands, and the state of Oregon.

Oregon's statistics regarding physician-assisted suicide reported deaths:
1998 – 16, 1999 – 27, 2000 – 27, 2001 – 21, 2002 – 38, 2003 – 42, 2004 – 37, 2005 - 32

Short summary of physician-assisted suicide action in various states:

1991 - Washington state defeats Ballot Initiative 119 by a 54% to 46% vote

1992 - California defeats Proposition 161 by a 54%-46% vote.

1994 - Oregon approves Measure 16 by a vote of 51%-

49% 1997 - Oregon voters uphold law by a 60% to 40%

vote 1998 - Michigan defeats Measure B by 70% to 30%

vote 2000 - Maine bill is defeated by 51% to 49% vote

2002 - Hawaii Senate votes 14-11 to defeat bill that would legalize physician-assisted suicide

2003 - Vermont considers the issue
2004 - California legislature turns down the “California Compassionate Choices Act” after back-room maneuvering into separate two-year bills.

Third Sunday in End Times

Theme of Day: The resurrection from the dead for all believers is a source of great hope and joy

Epistle Text: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Theme: Talk to your God!

- About spreading the Gospel
- Give background about prayer: not just mumbling or rote repetition
- Maybe even emphasize the importance of missions, stewardship, overseas congregations, your own neighborhood. Emphasize there is always something Christians can do to spread the Gospel.
- That more may come to know their Lord, and also how to live for Him
- That the devil, the world, and our flesh obstruct our lives with abortion, euthanasia, hardening of hearts; also that we are not immune to falling into some of the same thinking

- That these may not place barriers in the way of the Gospel
- That God might even prevent danger/sin from entering our church and homes

Focus: The end of a person's life is typically reflective. It is a time for healing relationships and putting affairs in order. Most people don't see the urgency to address these issues until they themselves face death. The same urgency should be evident in all Christians when sharing the Gospel with the world. The End Times Sundays provide the setting to discuss our need to realize the urgency and to respond accordingly.

Facts: The use of statistics in your particular area is most effective. Survey your local newspaper for one month and count the number of people who are listed in the obituaries. Some of those people likely died in unbelief. How many more people will die in the coming month? Those people are part of the mission field that God has provided for your members.

Someone once said, "Unlike most people, I want a lingering death. There are relationships I wish to heal." How many of us neglect such matters?