

Sermon

Date: August 3, 2008

Place: Lutheran Men in Mission (Omaha, NE)

Sermon Title: What's it all for?

Text:

Song **Speak to My Heart**

Prayer

Good and gracious God, the one who sits high but looks low, it is once and again that a few of your children have gathered together, to pray and sing, fellowship, learn and study, and now as we are about to depart share in a meal, we've come to remember what is really important and essential, to prioritize and put you at the top of our list. We've come cause we had some ups and downs, and we don't know what tomorrow will bring, all we know is that we need to lean and trust in you God.

I know that I'm here for a purpose, which I am at the right place, at the right time for all the right reasons. Lord you brought us from a mighty long way, and so LORD, we want to loose our minds in you. We want to worship and praise you. We want to be ready, cause we know you are looking for a prepare people, and the reality is when we leave this place, **cause we can't stay here**. It's a good Kodak moment, but we've got to leave this place and when we do, Satan will be waiting to kill, steal and destroy. But we've got something for him, cause when we leave this place, we are going to be girded up, worded up, and psyched up, so that when our trials come, and when test come, cause they will come, we can stand having done all that we can do, and let Jesus take the stand.

We just want to thank you in advance this morning, for who you our, and all that you have done, all that you will do, and even what you are doing right now. We thank you for waking us up this morning, with the activity of our limbs, No Lord I didn't say that everything was alright, I didn't say that every now and again the blood clot in my leg doesn't ache, that my diabetes doesn't go high every now and again, but I'm like Paul I thank you for the thorn in my flesh, I thank you for little aches and pains, I thank you that I can't do what I use to do, cause it reminds me that I'm still in the land of the living, and the blood is still running warm in my vain, I didn't find myself on some undertaker's slab. So thank you.

Now Lord, now Lord, let me decrease that you word might increase:

What we know not teach us.

What we have not grant us.

And where we need too go, please lead us.

Let the church say Amen. Let all God's people say Amen. Amen

Giving honor to the Most High God, to whom all honor is due, to God who is the head of my life, the chairman of my board, my Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Priest of my temple, to God the creator of the universe, who simply spoke and every thing came into being, the earth, the sky, the stars, the moon, creeping and crawling things, God separated light from darkness, and water from land, earth from sky and night from day, and then God evaluated and God said, its all good! Then God created them, in God's image, male and female, he created them, and morning and evening, and God said it was Good!

To Jesus my COO, Chief Operational Officer, and CFO, Chief Financial Officer, my money man, my audit team, who keeps all my business in order, the word which was made flesh and dwelt among us, we have beheld his glory the glory of the father's only son, Jesus, the one who is a **chip off the old block**, God from God and light from light, true god from true god, (I wish I had some confirmation students, up in here, up in here) of one being with the father, there is no substitute, begotten not made, through him all things were made, he is the one, go and tell John that you don't have to search an further, God's only son, Son of man, Son of David, alpha and omega, my beginning and my end, he was and will be, he's the same, thank you Coach Osborne, yesterday, today and forever, and without him there will be no end, he is the desire of the nations, a rock in a weary land, a balm in Gilead, **and Jesus** is his name. Doug, there is something about that name, the name that is above every name, and at that name, demon tremble, at that name lame our healed, at the name, dead arise, at that name, men are change, and they tell me that **every knee shall bow** and **every tongue confess**, Jesus, king and kingdoms will all pass a way, oh but there is something, about that name,, Jesus, Joshua, Messiah, Christ.

And last but not least, to the Spirit of God, not any old kind of spirit, but a spirit who blows and it sweeps, a spirit that shows up and brings the power, the one who gets the party started, the one whom Jeremiah says is like **fire** shut in my bones, causes us to have power, dynamos, dynamite power, my tongue talking, fire starting, personal motivator is in the house. Ya'll gonna make me loose my mind up in here, up in here.

I feel like Peter, James and John, it's good to be here, and all these men, Good God from Zion, I thank God for your brothers, and my sisters.

To you, you and even you, my co-conspirator in this thing we call the Gospel, evangelical of Jesus Christ, the good news. Cause if we ever need the Lord before, we sure do need him now. I don't know about you, but I need some "good news," cause bad news is all around. With gas prices on the rise, just below \$4.00 a gallon, morals and ethic at an all time low, divorce on the rise, 22 million children whose father's are not active in their lives, the rise of the cost of eggs, butter, rice, essentials, the floods in the Midwest, fires and earthquakes in California and China, a drought in Georgia. War rages on in Iraq, and Afghanistan, and this is not good news. So, Let me get off that nerve, and stop meddling and get to preaching.

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I am the **Rev. Lawrence J. Clark**, and I am unashamedly African American and unapologetically Lutheran, and I am both, humbled and honored to serve as the Executive Director of the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta, and we work with all 8 (eight) ELCA Seminaries: PLTS- Pacific, Luther, Wartburg, LSTC- Chicago, Trinity, Philadelphia, Gettysburg and Southern, LSPS – Seminary of the Southwest, and others, and the Lutheran Center that exposes those who are preparing for leadership in this church, especially those interested in serving the church in urban and African American, and Multicultural contexts. Our primary purpose is to develop leadership for the church through diverse experience and intensive theological study. The Center equips the whole people of God – candidates for ministry, members of congregations, youth, young adults and rostered leaders out of a perspective that is Lutheran, ecumenical, contextual, multicultural, urban, inclusive and global.

I really don't want to be long this morning, and Doug Haugen told me to take my time, **but** if I am long, it just got so good I couldn't help myself.

For those of you with your bible, yes I did say your bibles. See if we every man is to have a growing relationship with Jesus Christ through and effective men's ministry in every congregation, then we need to be inn the word, the logos, sola scripture, the word alone, I'm in Lutheran country this morning. Bulletin inserts are nice, but see I don't know of any solider (guide me Holy Ghost) who would leave their weapon at home. (Somebody's gonna catch that on the way home!) Bring your bibles, Cause Lutheran will be reading the Bible – The new book of Faith Imitative, so get use to bringing Your Bible. **The B-I-B-L-E yes that the book for me, I take my stand on the word of God, the B-I-B-I-E** – the Book of Instruction before leaving the earth, my instruction manual, my constitution and all of its by-Laws and continuing resolutions.

To Bishop Tom Skrenes, Doug Haugen Executive Director, the Officers of LMM, who is now incorporated, members, and friends. Thank you for extending the invitation to me to break the bread of life. I am honored and humble. To this band, Dakota Road, and all the presenters who have blessed us, Dick Hardel, Paul Hill, David Anderson, workshop leaders, panelist, and then the Coach, Tom Osborne who reminded us to put God first. To the prayer ministry team and partners who prayed for all the leaders, speakers, musicians. And to you the many man who shared your stories, who have cried, and laughed, thank you because you have blessed me in so many ways, and have touched my heart this weekend. So I'm just glad to be here to teach and preach, see preaching is proclamation, and teaching is explanation. So let me teach, but by the time I end the sermon I will be a preaching. Amen. Here we are in this ordinary time, in this long season we call Pentecost.

The **Season of Pentecost** begins in late spring with the **Pentecost Sunday** and ends in late November with **Christ the King** Sunday. After Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, his disciples met in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish feast of *Shabuoth*, the Day of First Fruits, or Feast of Weeks, which falls fifty days after the Passover.

When the disciples had gathered (Acts 2: 1 - 41), the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and tongues of fire rested on the heads of everyone in the room. All the people began to speak in every language that had ever been heard in Palestine at that time.

Because Pentecost is the day that the Holy Spirit touched ordinary people, but the Season of Pentecost focuses on the Spirit and the way in which it touches everyone in the world. Not a day, but a season, not a week, but a season, not simply a month, but a season. It's a season in which the Spirit reaches the world in and through the church. See I stopped by the Big O, to tell some men it's your season! To get you ready to go back home and change a home, change a church, change a community, change a synod, change this ELCA, and the world.

We have grown and this is the largest Lutheran Men gathering that we had, we have raised 1.5 million for the endowment, and many of you will be pledging for the next 3 years. God is up to something, when we are down to nothing, God is up to something. So watch out world because the "Men are Coming," and a good man's steps are ordered by the Lord. It may have been rough, but now is your time.

Turn with me to the second book of the Gospel writer Luke, that is Acts 2nd chapter and the 12th beginning with:

And when you get there somebody ought to say Amen.

There we find these words:

"¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.' But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷"In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

May the Lord God Almighty, add a blessing to the reading and hearing of God's word, for the edification of our minds bodies and souls. May God in heaven be glorified, may the body assembled here, may you be edified, and may the devil, evil with a d, and all his imps, simps, and wanna be pimps may he be horrified.

This morning I invite you for just a few moments to pray with me on the subject:

What's it all for?

Turn to your neighbor, and say Neighbor: **What's it all for?**

I thought you never ask.

From time to time, people are kind and they bring us gifts, Dr. Lance Watson shared with us at Hampton, sweets, coffee cake, cookies and the like, but one day, Someone came and left a box of fresh Krispy Kreme donuts

And they left a note on the top

"Whom so ever will...."

I did not bother them,
Until I heard one of them call my name
I know I didn't believe it either
Until it called my name and my title

Pastor Clark
And it called it over and over again,
Until finally, I went in and opened up the box and said
What!

I didn't call you in here to eat me....

I called you in here cause I heard that you were preaching at the Lutheran Men in Mission Gathering in the Big O, Omaha in a few weeks, and I wanted you and need you to give the men a message from me. A message?
What could you a box of donuts say to the Lutheran Men in Mission, Director Doug Haugen, Laying there all fluffy and sweet...
The donuts told me to tell you this

“Before my life ever got sweet...
I had to go through the fire...”

Ya'll don't hear me...

Doug, Lutheran Men and women its about to get sweet, up in here up in here
I know it hasn't been easy, you are trying to build, reform this institution, you've been preparing them for the real world, and so I stop by this morning to encourage you and remind you that you are right at the brink of something sweet – cause he's sweet I know

God's about to “Make your stuff sweet!”

I want to theorize and theologize, that is think with the mind of God (*if that is at all possible*), that this is a historic time in the life of the church and in particular, Lutheran Men in Mission as you celebrate 20 years of ministry, as you remember the past, celebrate the present, but not stay there, but continually plan, prepare and engage the future. **You are Coming of Age**, and it's about time. You are all grown now and we, which includes me, we together are expecting great things out of you. You've come a long way, but you have a long way to go. Now that you've come of age, you've got to take some more responsibility, you have to take these thing up a notch, time for the next level, a still more excellent way, which is rooted and grounded in love as we continue to engage young men. We have a good start, a good showing, but this is only beginning, as a matter of fact, I stopped by to tell somebody, that eyes haven't seen, and ears haven't hear all the good things that God is going to do to and for you.

But let's not get to comfortable, because we, we have work to do; we have to pay attention, and utilize the giftedness that exist in the body. There is good news and bad news, which do you want first, I like good news, the good news is Doug, Lutheran Men in Mission, that we have all the resources we need

right here and right now, all the (time, energy, ability and money) cause we are a TEAM. We can make it happen with the folks in the room this morning. So can I tell you the bad news, all the resources are in you, in your bank accounts, in your hands, in your minds, but if we work as a TEAM, together everybody achieves more. We can't stop with the folks in the room, cause we have some good news to share. And the reality there are some folks that are missing and we need to engage. We need to engage men of color, Thank you Pr. Long, that look like me, brothers that are Latino, American Indian, African National, Pacific islanders, Asian, Arab, and Middle Eastern and African Americans, but we also need those who are Irish, Danish, Swedish, Scandinavian, German and the like, we need one another. Because we have something great and we can't keep it too ourselves.

So what's it all for?

I want to suggest this morning, that there are three things that we need to be doing which I think fit well into your Mission and your vision, Your mission is that that we are a ministry of the ELCA, that's who we are, but our vision is what we see – and what you see is to have every man, no matter the age, every man, no matter the color, every man, young and mature, to have a growing, growing, not stagnate, not the same it was 10 years, ago, but a growing relationship with Jesus, Mary's baby, Jesus, the Lilly of the Valley, Jesus but not only him, but with other men, cause the Jesus in me, meets the Jesus in your, through an effective men's ministry, what ever that looks like, but it should be in every congregation.

And what I want to suggest is, that it is all about Glorifying, Edifying, and Horrifying.

I am going to address that in that order, the first thing that we need to continue to do is glorify God, the creator of the universe, not the creature, but the creator, the one who spoke and. It is the Ruach, the same one who gathered the people on that first Pentecost Sunday, and the same ones who they were amazed at and perplexed by. Amazed that God would show up, and show out, show nuff, and set the place on fire... Kind of what happened this weekend, as the presenters and presentations the music, Peter Mayer, Dakota Road and others who have joined the band this week, Benny and Kim. We had the opportunity to pray, hear our story again, see some of us forgot when we fell in love with Jesus, and the bonus was we also got to hear the stories of other brothers, so thanks for sharing, we paused to re-think and pray about our own relationship with Jesus.

Amazed and perplexed, as they remember, didn't God divide the tongue, so that they couldn't hear one another, with the tower of Babel and now we have a restoration, when all are together again, and we are all on one accord. And then those gathered ask the question that some of you are asking... "So what does this mean?" So what you had a high time. So what you won't be the same. So what, so what!!!!

But, others still others were not amazed and perplexed, they just sneered and said; these men are filled with new wine - Merlot, Boones Farm, MD 20/20

But there's that word again, any English teachers in the house, but is a conjunction that hooks up.... **but** is a conjunction, along with yet, and, and or that connects, that hooks up, I've got the hook up! That connects clauses and phrases, and see when I was growing up they used to sneak teach us on Saturday mornings. (Oh you don't believe me). In between the cartoons – Kimba King of the Jungle, and Speed Racer, Go speed race Go.... they taught us about civics, math, social studies, science and English, history, and the like. (Oh you still don't believe me)

"I'm just a bill,

Yes I'm only a bill

And I'm sitting here on Capital Hill"

But my favorite was,

"Conjunction Junction, what's your function?

Hooking up words and phrase and clause."

But is a conjunction that connects words together.

But Peter, the rock, Peter, petros, the one with the big mouth, Peter who doesn't know how to hold his tongue, Peter the same one who is told is get behind Jesus, Now is standing their with the other eleven apostles, raised his voice and began to address them, he said, Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, in other words, listen to what I have to say. Indeed these are not

drunk, as you suppose for it is only 9:00 am, it's too early, cause it's only 9 o'clock in the morning, it's too early for it is only.... It's too early LMM, Men of the ELCA it's too early, to predict what the future will be, but he goes on to say, that these men are just filled with the spirit, they ain't drunk, but they are high on God. They had a high time, and people can see it, they not only see them, they hear them, they might be amazed, perplexed, some might sneer or even think that these men are drunk, but they are filled with the power the Holy Spirit.

And then Peter does a remix of the torah. **Somebody just missed that**, you see a remix, is taking something old and making it new, something that we know and making it modern.

A remix is an alternate mix of a song different from the original version, made using the techniques of audio editing. It may incorporate elements of dance music. It is often used to create an upbeat version of a song for playing by disc jockeys in nightclubs. Normally it is based on a musical theme of the original song, either introducing new themes and adding complexity or following the opposite path by removing many elements. It's what Dakota Road did last night with Labamaba (O You don't believe me)

Rev. Otis Moss the III reminded us that the bible can take something "old school," traditional and making it new school, contemporary

See we remix all the time. See some of us will take some of my words that you heard today and re-mix them and make them your words next week, remix

You see Jesus would say...
You have heard it said, but I say.... A remix

Jesus in the wilderness, and the devil, tempted him, but Jesus says, let me remix Psalms "man does not live by bread alone" he did a remix

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me— a remix of Isaiah

In the last days, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh a remix of Joel

In the last days, here it is a teaching moment, a history lesson, see in the last days, the day of the Lord and it's a coming, no one knows the day nor the hour, but it's a coming, and God declares that I will do three things. I will pour out my spirit, not any old kind of Spirit but the Holy Spirit

up-on, and on all flesh, and the result of that is that your sons and daughter, they shall prophesy – in other words they will - predict or reveal through, divine inspiration, they shall preach: (somebody just missed that) they, who are the they, sons and daughters, and they shall deliver the word a sermon; The good news, so that God can be glorified. That's the story

But more than that, your young men shall see, shall see, shall see visions – and a vision is a vivid mental image that is not yet, but God gives us the ability to see; the perceptual experience of seeing – Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

And your old men, your elders, and we need some dreamers, those who see mental images in their sleep, who don't want to dream too big, but know that God is able.

I don't know if I am dreamer or a visionary, but let me tell you what I see
I see 8 men, this is 08
I see 8 men

Who will start Bible Studies?

I see 8 men who will pray, cause real men pray
I see 8 men who will who will go into ministry
I see 8 men who will who will commit to leadership in this organization
I see 8 men who will recruit 8 more men for Jesus
I see 8 men who will mentor 8 MIT's – Men in Training
I see 8 men who are going to church regularly
I see 8 men who are showing up to bible study
I see 8 men who are tithing
I see 8 men who are serving on the altar
I see them, can you see them.
I see 8 men that are turning from Pornography
I see 8 men who are back with their families
I see them, can you see them. Do you see what I see?
I see 8 men who will not be the same when they go back?
I see them do you?

But what's it all for? I thought you'd never ask. So that everyone who calls on the name shall be saved.

Cause he's got the name, Jesus, Mary's Baby, the sinner perfect plea, the rose of Sharon, the baker's bread, the builders bridge over trouble water, Ezekiel's wheel in the middle of the wheel, my Lord and Master, Savior and Brother, Abba, Above All, Almighty God, Alpha & Omega, Always Awake, The Amen, Ancient of Days, Avenger, Blessed, Calmer of Storms, Clothed With Honor, Clothed With Majesty, Clothed With Strength, Comforter, Compassionate, Conqueror of Our/My Enemies, Consolation, Consuming Fire, Counselor, Covenant Keeper, Covered With Light, Creator, Creator of the North & South, Crown of Glory, Defense, Deliverer, Dew, Director of My/Our Path, Disciplinarian, Doer of Wonders, Dwelling Place, El Shaddai (God Almighty), Emmanuel, Eternal God, Everlasting Arms,

Everlasting God, □ Everlasting to Everlasting, Everlasting Strength, Excellence, Excellent, Faithful, Father, Father of Lights, Father of the Fatherless, Feeder of the Hungry, First & Last, Forgiving, Fortress, Gentle, Gift Giver, Giver of Good Things, Glorious, Glorious Lord, Glory, Good, Gracious, Great, Guide, Habitation, Healer, Healer of Broken Hearts, Helper, Helper of the Fatherless, Hiding Place, High Tower, Holy One, Holy, Husband, Husbandman (Gardener), I Am, In Us All, Infinite Understanding, Jealous, Jehovah Jireh (will provide), Jehovah Nissi (our banner), Jehovah Shalom (our peace), Jehovah Shammah (is there), Jehovah Tsidkenu (our righteousness), Judge, Just Is,

I'm not finished cause I'm only at J.....

But he is a Keeper, King of Glory, King of All the Earth, Lawgiver, □ Lifter of Our/My Head, Light, Living Water, Longsuffering, Lord, Lord God, Lord of Hosts, Lord of Lords, Lord of the Sabbath, Lord on High, Love, Loving-kindness, Majesty, Maker of Heaven & Earth, Man of War, □ Merciful, Mighty & Terrible, Mighty in Wisdom, Miracle Worker, Most High, Never Changing, Near, Never Weary, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, One Who Sanctifies, Peacemaker, Prince of Peace, Perfect, Physician, Potter, Powerful, Promise Keeper, Provider, Ready to Forgive, Reconciler, Redeemer, Refiner, Refuge, Refuge from the Storm, Repairer of the Breach, Rescuer, Revenger, Righteous, Rock, Rock of Our/My Refuge, Rock of Our/My Salvation, Ruler, Salvation, Satisfier of Desires, Satisfier of the Longing Soul, Savior, Shade on Our/My Right Hand, Shadow from the Heat, Shepherd, Shield, Slow to Anger, Song, Steadfast, Strength to the Needy, Strength to the Poor, Strength, Our/My, Strong, Sun, SON, Sustainer, Teacher, Through All, Trust, Trustworthy, Truthful, Upright, Walks on Wings of the Wind, Walks on Water, is Wisdom, and who is Worthy.

That's not all, but good for the journey. So what it all for!

It's so that all men, women, boys and girls that call on that name, the name of the Lord, shall, will be saved – Young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. So I invite the men of God, and women, to dream dreams and see visions...

Let the Church Amen!!!! Let the Church Say Amen! !