

Immanuel Lutheran Church

Sunday, June 10, 2018

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Service Leader and Sermon by Bob Henning

Sermon text from Mark 3:20-35.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you God and in your sight we pray, Amen.

When pastor asked me to do this that was quite a few weeks ago and I told her I would. Then some things came up and I didn't know if I wanted to again or not. You always question if you should do something like this, yet I realized that was part of the reason I went to the Lay Academy to be able to once in a while express myself from the pulpit and the sermon lesson today is very easy and similar to the puzzle that I presented with the kids with the seven nails. It's a very popular puzzle. I found out while I was District Governor for the Lion's Club. It actually is an old bar trick for getting drinks and I was like should I bring that in to church or not but in the good old days that's what they used to do. There are many puzzles out there like the bent metal nails and I got a collection of puzzles at home that my granddaughter used to take all apart and I'd have to put them back together again because she could never get them back together when she was younger.

When Mark writes chapter three he builds the verses in seven episodes. The commentary that the pastor shared with me explains it this way; that basically look at it like a sandwich that opens up with the crowd, then comes in the family, then the scribes as they accuse Jesus of being the ruler of demons that's casting out the demons. Then Jesus goes into his parables in terms of how things go. To me it's always been fascinating to work and teach from parables and I like to use stories when I have a chance to do speeches and to prove a point. I think parables are basically a dialogue that's easy to understand. I think Jesus was very good at that. Then it goes back to the scribes again. Now we're up to level four and it starts going back down again that the scribes are guilty of unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit because they have said that Jesus was an unclean Spirit. Then it goes back into the family again, then, it ends with the crowd again. So that

also brought to mind about those seven nails and why you can use them as a good example. While I was going around as District Governor for the Lion's I visited 55 clubs and I presented that puzzle at every one of visits using the principles of servant leadership. What does it mean to be a servant leader? Each one of the nails represented one of the seven pillars of servant leadership; but I didn't write them down so I do not have them with me at this time. It was a good example to talk to them about leadership and how it works that once you develop a team and if they work together and stay in balance things are going to go well. As I read; a house divided by itself cannot stand and I think most of you probably know and understand that if there's problems within a family or a house it's not going to last too long. I guess as I thought about that and I'm thinking about the changes we've gone through over this last year and as President of the council that we have a house to get in order. We need to get ourselves back on our solid foundation and get our balance back because I think we've been out of balance for a number of years. There have been some things going on that we have to adjust to and we were given what I call a gift, a great responsibility to educate a new Pastor. I feel so grateful for Pastor Niveen because she was there for me when Vonnie passed and I was over to her ordination and she's such a great person. To be able to be a part of her life and help her build her foundation is indeed a great honor. If I can use the example of the seven nails again we need to help add balance to her life here in America that makes it richer in whatever happens to her in the future. As she goes forward what we help her with and what we teach her is going to be what I consider a blessing to her. To me God is so great with so many blessings and so many good things happening and to be given that responsibility to take a Pastor from a foreign nation and get her hopefully on the road to a successful pastoral ship and do what she wants to do is very critical. I know it's been tough on some of you and it's been tough on me once in a while when I get these calls about this is happening and that's happening but I think we have to remember that this is our house and we need to take care of each other, we're a family. I know about family. I have seven brothers and four sisters and right now I don't know if I even really have a relationship with them or not. We still talk once in a while but I haven't seen some of them in five to six years. I have a sister up in Fifield that I haven't seen since 1984. We were always doing our things and they were out doing their things but this church has become my family. That's the same thing I told Pastor Niveen that Friday night she showed up at the hospital and the whole family was

there. She came into the waiting and said “Bob, I can see you’re with family, I’ll come back a little bit later.” I turned to her and took her by the shoulders and looked her straight in the eyes right there in the guest waiting area and said “Look once you signed that contract with Immanuel you became part of my family and you’re welcome to stay.” She did a fantastic job and the girls fell in love with her. It’s just one of those things that happen in a relationship. Relationship’s take a lot of responsibility, a lot of introspect and a lot of time to develop. You have to give it time. I’m one of the great believers not to let first impressions influence me when starting new relationships. I don’t like to go by first impressions because first impressions to me are often very, very, misleading. If you accept the first impression I think you’re not opening yourself up to what I like to call an enriched life, a more balanced life. We should keep our minds open and give the relationship a chance. Some of you have heard this great Indian saying before, “don’t let me judge another person unless I’ve walked in their moccasins for seven days.” When I was teaching that’s what I would like to do with my problem students. I would try to understand where they were coming from and what they were doing. So as we work and build together I guess the message I’d give you today is let’s not divide our house. Let’s rebuild our house on a solid foundation of friendships, relationships, and education. We’ve always been a strong educational church. I’d like to see that kind of come back a little bit. With that, I don’t know if I want to share any more with you. At this particular point I might run into another example somewhere. I’ll give you one more example in my life why I believe what I believe. God put us here for what I consider a reason. Many, many, years ago Vonnie and I were coming back from my parent’s house; Laura was just maybe one year old. I had a 64 Ford Fairlane 500 with the 289 engine with the five speed on the floor and two door hard top. That was my first major purchase after I started teaching back in 1965. We were coming back, I think it was right after Thanksgiving, there were snow flurries on the highway and we were just south of Fond Du Lac, WI on 41. There was a car pulled over, they had the trunk open. The one thing I learned from my dad was that if you see someone on the roadside see if you can offer assistance. So I pulled over and of course Vonnie was a little mad at me at the time because it’s snowing out, it’s cold weather. As it turns out the fellow had just bought that car. They were driving back up from Chicago to home and they had a flat tire. When he opened up the trunk there was no jack and guess what? The jack in my car fit his car because they were both Fords. So I was able

to help them out. He wanted to pay me something for my troubles. My response was no and it was no trouble. I also asked him to pass the favor on and wished him a safe journey. Every time something like that happens to me and it does a number of times, my response is the same. I could go on and on about this with a number of stories. Where service to one another or just being aware of the needs of others has helped me; I consider it a blessing from God. That's why I've dedicated my life pretty much to serve others in doing what I can. They were so grateful and of course they wanted to pay me and my line is "No, no, you just go ahead and have a safe journey home." We went on our way and nothing happened and of course Vonnie lectured me on the way home about what could have happened and I hadn't even given some of them a thought, cars hitting cars, and stuff. It's the way it is when it comes to helping someone else out. Their needs come before my needs and it's a lesson I've learned. The other part is when I was teaching with Tom Peterson in Sunday school we did the book of Mark. We studied it that whole year. It was such a pleasure and he was such a good teacher. I have a great deal of respect for him still. As we grow, learn and struggle together you have to remember it's like a marriage, if you're going to have a happy marriage sometimes you have to overlook the faults of the other and forgive them. Then you have a successful marriage. If each of you can overlook the flaws in the other person that you see you will have a happy marriage.

God bless each and every one of you.