

It's Not About Me

Putting Life into Perspective

October 1, 2023

Introduction

It's only fitting that on this LWML Sunday, our series, Putting Life into Perspective, is focused on looking to the interests of others. That's what the LWML is all about. From Mite Offerings to Mission Projects to Rally Days to Event Fundraisers for Missions, the LWML is constantly looking to the interests of others. Every woman who is a member of an LCMS church is automatically a member of the LWML. But not everyone participates. Only those who have a heart for others will be involved. Ladies, I salute you. That's what Paul tells us to do today, as we continue Putting Life into Perspective. Look to the interests of others because **IT'S NOT ABOUT ME**.

Posing – Look at Me

They're always coming up with new rules in college football. The game clock used to stop whenever a first down was made until they got everything set to go. This year, it keeps running after first downs, except in the final two minutes of the half. What I'd like to see is a rule against posing. Everyone feels like after running for a first down, he must get up and help the referee out by pointing for the first down, but they try to look like a statue of a Greek god. And I've seen players score a touchdown and stand there with feet spread and hands on hips as if to say, "Look at me and what I just did." All these things call attention to the individual, and the last time I looked, football was still a team sport. If you didn't have those ten other guys doing their part, you wouldn't have made that first down or scored that touchdown.

Fairness

But that's the way our society is going, it's all about the individual, it's about me. We want things to be fair. And fairness is making sure I get everything due to me. That's what last week's Gospel lesson was about. The men hired at different times of the day all got paid the same amount. Of course, what would have been fair would have been for those who were called to work earlier to get paid more. These men complained because they wanted their fair share. How can we get away from this focus on ourselves?

One Mind

Paul says we are to be *of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind* (v. 2). We are to love each other. Love is not about a feeling. Remember what we said a couple weeks ago, love is an act of the will. We choose to love. This love is achieved when we are united around one common doctrine. That was why the **Formula of Concord** was written. Several controversies had threatened to tear apart the Lutheran church in the first sixty years of its existence. Chemnitz and others went back to the **Augsburg Confession** and the Bible to write out the **Formula of Concord** for these controversies that was consistent with the teachings of Luther from the very beginning. The idea was that you didn't have to endorse or subscribe to this **Formula**, but if you didn't, please don't call yourself a Lutheran. Sadly, today we have many who call themselves Lutheran who don't adhere to the Lutheran

Confessions. Paul calls us to put aside our petty differences and come together around the same doctrine.

Humility

Then, he says: *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves (v. 3)*. Some people have the notion that being humble means to put yourself down. But C.S. Lewis says: *Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less*. Being humble isn't about putting oneself down. If anything, that's reverse egoism because it brings attention to yourself. The thing about humility is that the less we feed our ego, the easier it is to be humble.

Without Grumbling

The same goes for grumbling. Paul tells us to *do all things without grumbling (v. 14)*. Grumbling and complaining doesn't do any good. All it does is make us want to grumble and complain more. In reality, the more we think about ourselves, the more damage we do to ourselves. There is a great emphasis today on pastors *taking care of themselves*. To think about others is one way of taking care of ourselves.

Hold Fast to the Word

So, how do we get away from these self-destructive behaviors? Paul says to *hold fast to the word of life (v. 16)*. The word of life is the Bible. When we hold fast to the Word of God, He shows us how to live, how to get away from thinking about ourselves and looking to the interests of others.

Hold Fast to the Body and Blood

The Word is also one of the means of grace, by which God gives us His grace to save and strengthen us to live as He would have us live. The other means of grace are Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. At Holy Baptism, God forgives our sins as the Holy Spirit works faith in us to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. During Holy Communion, God forgives our sins and strengthens our faith as the Holy Spirit continues to empower and lead us in the way we should go, that is, to **PUT LIFE INTO PERSPECTIVE** and be able to look to the interests of others because then we can know that **IT'S NOT ABOUT ME**.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
