

Sermon for Sunday, May 19, 2024
Senior Recognition Sunday and Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-13

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer.
Amen

Pentecost Sunday AND Senior Recognition Sunday: that these two events occur on the same day opens up some great opportunities for my sermon. There are two phrases that you will hear me use this morning. The first is: *for the common good*. The second is: *let your life speak*.

At the annual meeting in February the congregation agreed to do some remodeling work on the kitchen in the Lutheran Center. The plans were laid as carefully as possible; the cabinetry was ordered, replacement flooring was chosen, and we started the process this week. Over the last ten days the kitchen has been completely demo'ed. Right now it is an empty room. But the demo was not without needs for specific skills. Here are some of them and the people who utilized their skills for our benefit.

- Sue Hedeem, master manager of the kitchen, recruited a couple of people to empty out the cupboards.
- Andrew Featherstone and his painting crew did much of the demo work
- Greg Rathman, electrician, came in and disconnected the stove and convection oven.
- Andy Nelson, plumber, came in and capped off a leaky valve.
- Chris and Barbara Weigman, restaurateurs, helped to design the cabinetry that we needed and then along with Faye, Andrew, Marvin, and Sue came in to do pre-liminary assembly work.
- Chris Finne was in measuring and planning for the installation of countertops and sinks because he knows how to work with sheet metal and stainless steel.

And that's just over the last ten days! Now, you may not even know who all these people are but they are all members of Vasa who pitched in to get the project started. They all have talents and work skills that they use primarily to earn a living but utilized those skills to help Vasa along on this project.

Here's the point I want to make: each of us is given gifts, talents, and skills by God. We utilize those skills for the benefit of people in the world. God pours out the Holy Spirit on us to do just that: to allow us to help others *for the common good*.

Graduating seniors, you have been given gifts by God. Your post-secondary plans are amazing:

- Studying molecular biology
- Working at an LSS group home
- Studying water conservation & marine biology
- Pursuing a degree in special education

And if we all pause for a minute and give it some thought, it's easy to imagine how each of these career choices will make a difference in the world. *For the common good*.

Parker Palmer is an educator and author who has written several books. One that I especially like is called *Let Your Life Speak*. It may seem that his title is encouraging us to *make a difference in the world*. But his primary point is quite different. His primary point is that we need to take the time to pay attention to who God has created us to be. When we do so we will discover that which God has designed us for. In doing so we will discover satisfaction and contentment for we will be accomplishing that which God has shaped us to accomplish.

Now, worshippers, pause for a minute and consider how each of you has been given gifts, talents and skills by God. Consider how you have utilized those skills for the benefit of others. And thank goodness we are not all identical—like robots—because identical people just cannot contain all of the skills that are needed to make our world successful. The apostle Paul said it this way: *for the common good*.

As Dr. Palmer explains in his book, when he graduated from high school he thought about being an aeronautical engineer or going into advertising. He learned in college that he wasn't suited for either field. When he graduated college he went off to seminary to become a pastor but after a miserable year he dropped out. He wasn't suited for ministry either. He doesn't consider these failures. He considers them experiments from which he learned what he was NOT created to do or be.

Each of us has been given gifts, talents, and skills by God's Holy Spirit that are intended to be used for the common good. That means that we are given those gifts so that the people that we come in contact with will be lifted up, healed, fed, encouraged, and

enabled to grow. Here's the thing: God expects us to do the work. That's why God created us. That's why God created you.

Graduating seniors, you are about to head out into a new stage of life. It's a very exciting time. Go with grace. But don't be ashamed or upset if you discover that what you think you want to do or be isn't a good fit. Let your life speak to you and trust that God will cause way to open so that you will be who God has created you to be and you will do that which God has designed you for so that it will be of benefit for the common good.

Finally, remember your roots; remember where you come from; remember your family and your church. Wherever you find yourself, I would encourage you to find a faith community to be a part of. Use your gifts, talents, and abilities for the benefit of that faith community. They will welcome you with open arms (and if the first community isn't a good fit—find another!)

Let your life speak, my friends. I assure you that when you do that, God will utilize you and your gifts for the common good of the world. Amen.