

February 28th, 2021
First Lutheran Church
Pastor Joshua Graber

Grace and peace in the name of God our loving Creator and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Greetings! I only have a short sermon for you this morning. That's what you get when a pastor is going to get married in a couple days. But Sarah helped me with this message and so I am already experiencing the benefits of matrimony.

The text about the promise given to Abraham and Paul's interpretation of this promise through the lens of Christ are wonderful texts for Sarah and I to think about as we begin our life together. But the gospel text also is interesting to hear for a couple getting married. When you make this type of a commitment to another person and a promise to become a family, it also means giving up some things. Maybe it's the freedom to travel whenever you want or to do the dishes whenever you feel like it, but there are things that we all need to die to in order to bring life and energy to the relationships and possibilities in front of us. So as we think about getting married we know that life will not be the same as it was when we were single. We will need to make decisions together and to negotiate and navigate feelings and frustrations as they arise. But in doing so we are living into a promise that new life and new experiences can bloom through our life together that can be shared and benefit others in ways we don't know yet. I'm excited.

And as we move forward in taking that step I hope that all of you think about how this understanding of losing yourself to save your life is a part of your

Lenten experience and journey. We heard the French hymn that I have fallen in love with Lord Jesus You Will Be My Song as I Journey. But we also remember that this Lenten journey is in the midst and with others. We don't live in a vacuum, we live in the midst of other people and relationships and communities. Our Bible Study on Wednesday will be focused on the Prophet Isaiah reminding us that the fast that God chooses is one within community, we are called to action, service, and to be a part of God's liberation of the oppressed. Our journey brings us into relationship.

At our Council Meeting on Wednesday we began by going over the respectful communication Guidelines recommended by the Greater Milwaukee Synod and remembering that communication is part of journey with each other in leadership groups and in life. How we speak and how we listen is important and is a way that we live out our lives as God's children respecting others as God's children.

At a time in our country when there is so much division, differences of opinions, and sometimes different facts, maybe part of our Lenten journey can be practicing listening to those who we may dismiss or shut down normally. How can we understand the voices of our neighbor in a way that honors them. Every time we listen it can be a practice of dying to ourselves. It's hard work, but it is part of what we are called to do as Christians who journey in community and want to witness to the values of God's reign.

Listening is an important part of relationships too. It can take time and sometimes happen when we least want it to. Sometimes people talk without thinking and it is just chatter to fill a void that makes them uncomfortable. But perhaps in listening we can learn to understand or ask what is really the matter

and what is really going on underneath the service. So often the answer is a desire for love and care. A desire to be valued and not forgotten.

Our relationship with God is a loving, caring, relationship and it is for all. Jesus came to teach us and show us how that love is lived out in real time and real communities. Jesus got interrupted and that was a part of God's plan. Jesus stopped and listening on the way and taught as he journeyed.

We have many lessons to learn on our journey. I am grateful to be on journey with Sarah and I am grateful to be on a journey with all of you who are a part of this congregation and community. But Jesus is with us in the journey and when we stop our busy lives, our opinions and assumptions to listen to him, we learn about God and ourselves. And sometimes Jesus speaks to us through the person in front of us, if we stop to listen. God bless you on your loving journey as you listen and look for God active in the world during these 40 days of Lent!

May the love and peace of Christ be in your hearts and minds as you listen to Christ and our neighbors on the journey! Amen.