

**LWML–Canada Sunday, 2009**  
**SERMON**

**THEME:** Shine Like Stars ...in your community and the world  
**TEXT:** Romans 10:11-17

For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” But how are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The sub-theme for this year’s LWML–Canada outreach is *Shine Like Stars ... in your community and the world*. If you look up the word star on the “WEB” you will get a definition that ranges from “a celestial body of hot gases that radiates energy derived from thermonuclear reactions in the interior”; to “any of the celestial bodies visible at night from Earth as relatively stationary, usually twinkling points of light”; to “an artistic performer or athlete whose leading role or superior performance is acknowledged.” Now we know God’s Word tells us He created the stars on the fourth day of creation. When we stop and think about it, the stars in God’s creation reflect His power and glory. But, what do the people whom we regard as stars in our society reflect? Have you ever stopped to think about the message our Hollywood stars proclaim? Their lifestyles tell us, and our children, that it is okay to sleep around, engage in homosexuality, marry and remarry. Those who are religious proclaim the non-Christian religions of scientology, Mormonism, and New Age. When stars like Mel Gibson try to speak out about our Saviour, or even make a movie about His Passion, they are laughed at and ridiculed. The world, the devil, and our sinful nature are in direct opposition to Christ and the good news He has for us human beings.

In the midst of this sinful mess we find in the world around us, it is good for LWML–Canada to challenge us to “Shine Like Stars ...in your community and the world.” St. Paul in our epistle lesson for today makes the observation: *“But how are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?... faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”* God’s Word is the power to accomplish God’s plan of salvation. LWML–Canada members have done many projects throughout the history of their organization to assist pastor’s and lay people to bring God’s Word to needy and hurting communities and a world living in darkness. We thank God today that the ladies of our LWML have been able to witness individually and collectively to the glorious Christ, who died for us and rose again, and who alone is the Saviour of all mankind...the Word made flesh.

Christ is the Word in Person. He is the centre of our faith and life. Jesus is the ultimate Word who has accomplished God’s plan of salvation and eternal life. Our hope does not come from ourselves, but comes from the living Word of God, which has *“achieved the purpose for which God sent it.”* Christ and God’s Word cannot be separated or discussed independently. You can’t read God’s Word and leave out Christ. You can’t look at Christ and ignore God’s Word. Christ is God’s Word of the Gospel to us, to our community, and to the world. The Gospel is the Good News that we have a Saviour who has won for us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

*“In the beginning was the Word”* (John 1:1), who came to die for our sins so we could have a new life *“born of God”* (John 1:13). This Word is Jesus, and Jesus said, *“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*(Matt. 4:4) We use words to convey the mighty acts of God in creation and redemption. The Christian Church has the enormous task and great privilege of using words to communicate the salvation of God through Christ, the living Word. We preach the Good News of the true and living God through the medium of words. Our readings today, and every Lord’s Day, emphasize the Word of God to us. In Isaiah we read about the Word being like the rain and snow that brings forth fruitfulness. In John chapter 15, which speaks to us of the vine and the branches, it is clear how abiding in the Word

brings forth fruit. St. Paul tells us today, *“faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”*

When our Lutheran forefathers wrote the Lutheran Confessions in the 16<sup>th</sup> century there was no question that Scripture was the Word of God. The main controversy centred around salvation by works vs. salvation by God’s grace alone. Today we are confronted with people questioning the authority and power of God’s Word, as well as, thinking that their works are going to earn them a place in heaven. We must make it clear, and I believe LWML–Canada is faithful to this, that we must start with God’s Word as powerful and inerrant, and that apart from this we have no clear and absolute communication from God. If we don’t take God’s Word as powerful and inerrant then we use our own human thinking and reasoning about God and our salvation. Using human thought and reasoning leaves us wide open so the devil, the world, and our sinful nature can lead us down any path they want because then we no longer have the direction and comfort of God’s Word as absolute truth to live our lives. God’s Word tells us that to find righteousness under the Law we would have to live the Law’s demands perfectly, not disobeying a single commandment. It is 100% for a pass not 99%, 98%, nor even 51%. This, of course, is impossible, and God’s Word makes it very clear, *“All we like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way,”*(Isaiah 53); *“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; no one who seeks God ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*(Romans 3). We cannot find righteousness or salvation through the Law. It only points us to our great need of a Saviour. As soon as we dismiss God’s Word of Law as not being applicable in our lives, we take life into our own hands and set our own standards for this earthly life, leaving only doubt and confusion as we reject the good news that God’s Gospel has for us, for our community, and for the world.

Martin Luther made a very important and famous stance of defiance against the leaders of the church of his day, ... ***“Unless you can prove from the Bible that I have made wrong statements and have spoken contrary to God’s Word, I refuse to recant. My conscience is bound in the Word of God. Here I Stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”*** I believe LWML–Canada, throughout it’s history, has stood firmly on the Word of God as did Luther. It is through the Word that we see the Lord and

can get to know Him. It is here where we find out about our salvation won for us by Christ alone on the cross. It is through the power of God's Word working in our hearts and minds that we can take this wonderful and beautiful message to our neighbours in our community and to the world we live in. You know that when other religions make pilgrimages to their holy sites, sadly they find the tomb with the founder of their religion still holding the body of its founder. But, when Christians go to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage they find an empty tomb, for our Saviour is not dead, but lives. Because He lives we, too, shall live!

This is the good news today as we celebrate LWML–Canada Sunday. This good news is not on my authority, but on the very authority of God in His Word. The Christian Church, Lutheran Church–Canada, and its auxiliaries such as LWML–Canada, have the enormous task of using words to communicate the wonderful salvation Christ has purchased for us by His own life and blood. We preach the Good News of the living God through the medium of words ... God's Word ... and hear about the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. May God use our words and actions to tell the Good News of His great love and forgiveness as we shine like stars in our community and the world. Amen.

Footnote:

Definitions of **star** on the Web:

- (astronomy) a celestial body of hot gases that radiates energy derived from thermonuclear reactions in the interior
- Any of the celestial bodies visible at night from Earth as relatively stationary, usually twinkling points of light.
- An artistic performer or athlete whose leading role or superior performance is acknowledged.
- One who is highly celebrated in a field or profession
- To be the star in a performance
- The most important performer or role; "the leading man"; "prima ballerina"; "prima donna"; "a star figure skater"; "the starring role".

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