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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

OCTOBER 30, 2005

PASTOR MARK FRY

ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

1 PASTOR MARK FRY: I'm apologetic about time  
2 oftentimes, and I confess I look at my watch and I'm like,  
3 boy, we aren't at the message yet, so it's good thing I only  
4 have an hour and a half sermon today.

5 (Laughter)

6 But I want to kind of marinate in one of those  
7 versus that was from that Thessalonians text, so if you have  
8 your Bible there, 1st Thessalonians 2, I think my favorite  
9 verse in there is that 8th verse, which forms the basis of  
10 where I'm going this morning, I hope. It starts there right  
11 in the middle.

12 "So deeply do we care for you that we are  
13 determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but  
14 also our own selves, because you have become very dear to  
15 us."

16 It's not just the words we say, and that's the  
17 basis then of where I am going today.

18 As I mentioned earlier, not a lot of us are in  
19 Thessalonians a lot, but we need to know the context of  
20 where that letter is written.

21 So if you want to just have a quick Bible glance at  
22 the Book of Acts, 17th Chapter, because this is really key  
23 to understanding I think Paul and why he loves these people  
24 so much.

25 It's likewise in the New Testament and in my Bible

1 it's on page 130, Chapter 17, the first verse.

2 "After Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis  
3 and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a  
4 synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom,  
5 and on three Sabbath days argued with them from the  
6 scriptures."

7 Paul had this methodology. He had met Jesus on the  
8 road to Damascus and he had turned from being a Jewish  
9 ardent believer to being an ardent Christian believer.

10 And so as he would go to a new city he would just  
11 go in and open up the Bible and he would say, all right, you  
12 guys, give me your best shot, and they would argue about the  
13 scriptural text. That's what he's doing here.

14 "And on three sabbaths he argued with them from the  
15 scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for  
16 the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead and saying,  
17 "This is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you."  
18 Some of them were persuaded and they joined Paul and Silas,  
19 as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of  
20 the leading women. But the Jews became jealous, and with  
21 the help of some ruffians," I love that word, some  
22 knuckleheads, "some ruffians in the marketplace they formed  
23 a mob and they set the city in an uproar. While they were  
24 searching for Paul and Silas to bring them out to the  
25 assembly, they attacked Jason's house. When they could not

1 find them, they dragged Jason and some of the believers  
2 before the city authorities, shouting these people, who have  
3 been turning the world upside down, have come here also, and  
4 Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting  
5 contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is  
6 another king, named Jesus. The people and the city  
7 officials were disturbed when they heard this and after they  
8 had taken bail from Jason and the others, they let them go."

9           The reason I wanted to throw that out, that's  
10 really the only other time that Thessalonica is mentioned,  
11 and what I want to say about that is those were scary times.

12           And Jesus was born in scary times when the  
13 government was out to get him, Herod, and the Christian  
14 church oftentimes is born in scary times.

15           That was the case in Thessalonica. This was a  
16 violent community.

17           And so Paul planted a church there and then  
18 probably fifteen or so years later he's writing this letter  
19 back to them, hey, you guys, I love you. Don't ever forget  
20 that. I know that this world can just beat the tar out of  
21 you, but I love you so much. Remember the ways I have loved  
22 you like a parent and his children, like a father and a son,  
23 but also like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children,  
24 and that's kind of a misfit in some ways.

25           I don't normally think of Paul that way. He's

1 ardent, he's hard core, he's a hard-charging male guy, alpha  
2 male Paul.

3 But he's using those metaphors of parenting, and  
4 like a nurse with her own children, and nurses are so  
5 compassionate, and father's can be so compassionate.

6 But it's scary times. That's why the church is  
7 formed.

8 A woman who had ten kids was asked, "Which one of  
9 the children do you love the most?"

10 And do you know what she said? "The one that needs  
11 me the most at the time."

12 And I want to say to you that these kids that are  
13 being confirmed today need you the most right now in their  
14 lives.

15 They might not say it, but they need you. You have  
16 not delivered them and done all you can do for these kids.

17 I say that to parents, grandparents, uncles,  
18 cousins, friends, you have not done all you can do.

19 I have not done all I can do for them. It's just  
20 starting, because, you see, these are very scary times.

21 One of the things our kids need from us, and these  
22 kids need from us, is that we believe in them.

23 That we believe in them. That we think they bring  
24 hope and challenge and change to this world, because they  
25 do.



1 power.

2           There is something in this album that needs to be  
3 taken with ultimate seriousness.

4           "I'm the son of rage and love

5           The Jesus of Suburbia

6           From the bible of none of the above

7           On a steady diet of soda pop and Ritalin

8           No one ever died for my sins in hell

9           As far as I can tell

10          At least the ones I got away with

11          And there's nothing wrong with me

12          This is how I'm supposed to be

13          In a land of make believe

14          That don't believe in me"

15

16          The Jesus of suburbia doesn't scratch where this  
17 kid itches.

18          He has been raised on soda pop and Ritalin,  
19 alcohol, marijuana, and somebody else's cocaine. The Jesus  
20 of suburbia does not work for this kid.

21          When I was a kid one of the popular albums was  
22 "Tommy" by The Who.

23          It was a rock opera about a kid named Tommy who was  
24 deaf, dumb, and blind, but he was a pinball wizard. He had  
25 a gift to share with the world.



1            "I beg to dream and differ  
2            From the hollow lies  
3            This is the dawning  
4            Of the rest of our lives."

5            You probably hear this song on the radio, but you  
6 might not recognize the lyrics.

7            That's an empty nest song. It's a millennial song  
8 for these kids.

9            "I beg to dream and differ from the hollow lies."

10           Pastor Wenda said you guys renounce the forces of  
11 evil and the devil and all of his lies.

12           And some of the lies are the people who believe in  
13 some sort of a Jesus of suburbia, that doesn't take with  
14 ultimate seriousness the cross.

15           These guys got a whiff of the ugliness of life the  
16 other night when they sniffed that vinegar instead of the  
17 wine and grape juice.

18           That's the world as we are living it, and what  
19 these kids need is they need somebody to believe in them.

20           They need to believe in somebody that isn't just a  
21 Jesus of suburbia.

22           I read part of a book this week, just an excerpt  
23 actually, that describes the hollow lies, part of them in  
24 this way.

25           "Living in the fast lane means being chronically

1 short of both time and breath. When you have to gulp your  
2 air, there is no time to savor it, no time to let it linger  
3 in your nose. You might as well try listening to music  
4 wearing earmuffs, or looking at art from behind dark  
5 glasses, for we live in a world whose odors are as rich and  
6 as varied as its sights and sounds, but those who rush  
7 through it end up smelling nothing beyond their own sweat.  
8 Slow down is to discover that in more ways than one you  
9 smell better."

10 The body of Christ needs to work on its body odor.  
11 This world can be pretty smelly.

12 But we are called to take with ultimate seriousness  
13 the gift that God has given us in our kids, and in our  
14 Savior, Jesus the Christ.

15 There is a recent ad that Kodak put out in the new  
16 "Rolling Stone".

17 "We have made digital photography so easy to use  
18 you won't have to ask your kids for help."

19 We have an empty nest now and we have a VCR that  
20 still doesn't have the right time on it.

21 (Laughter)

22 But, you see, these young people can do more than  
23 program VCRs, and get your computer downloaded, and get your  
24 voice mail to work, and get your cell phone to work.

25 That's the only thing we go to them for, but they

1 have so much more than that.

2           These are children of the light, and children of  
3 God's grace.

4           Children who bring hope and challenge. They need  
5 us to believe in them.

6           They need us to learn from them and along with  
7 them.

8           The name of the word is disciple, and it means  
9 learner, and you don't graduate from that when you go  
10 through confirmation.

11           Learner.

12           Jesus is constantly trying to teach his disciples  
13 of every generation and bring them into the future.

14           They are not voting members of this church, heaven  
15 help us, I hope that they do that, but that's not what we  
16 promote people to do.

17           We challenge people to become Jesus's disciples and  
18 this is one step in that journey. I pray for these kids.

19           Throughout Jesus's ministry he distinguishes  
20 between childlike and childish.

21           The adults wanted to know who is the greatest in  
22 the kingdom?

23           Jesus showed them a kid. The adults in the group  
24 are like no, no, we said who is the greatest?

25           And Jesus said, "Do not stop them, for it is to

1 such as these that the Kingdom of heaven belongs."

2 They're roaming high school and middle school  
3 halls.

4 A confirmation gift idea for you is a book by a guy  
5 named Gary Chapman. It's called "Five Love Languages".

6 It's an awesome book. He has about five of these  
7 books, different ones.

8 There's "Love Languages for Kids", "Love Language  
9 for Teenagers", "Love Languages for Couples", "Love  
10 Languages for Seniors", I think, and now there is a new one,  
11 I just went to Borders the other day, "The Love Languages of  
12 God."

13 Same author, same five love Languages, and those  
14 love Languages are these five things:

15 Physical touch; quality time; gifts; service; and  
16 affirming words.

17 Those are the five love languages, and it's  
18 Gary Chapman's premise, and I believe him, that if we learn  
19 what some of our loved ones' primary love languages are, and  
20 we can speak them more clearly, their tank is going to be  
21 fuller.

22 Their life is going to be better. They are going  
23 to feel better about themselves.

24 They aren't going to think that everything is just  
25 based on hollow lies.

1           And so the challenge of these books is to figure  
2           out which one of those my wife speaks the best, which one of  
3           those my kid speaks the most clearly, and then to speak that  
4           language with them.

5           That's the premise of the book, and it's a  
6           fascinating book, but it's interesting to me, too, because  
7           we are going to look at this Wednesday night when we study  
8           the Lord's prayer, too, it's interesting to me that in those  
9           five love languages there is only one of them that uses  
10          words. The last one. Affirming words.

11          And this morning we used words, and we also used  
12          applause, way to go, you guys.

13          But there are four other different ways that we  
14          need to love these kids.

15          Physical touch; quality time; a gift; doing service  
16          together.

17          I listen to Garrison Keillor oftentimes on  
18          Saturdays when I'm not doing the 5:30 service and he talked  
19          last week about in his church in Lake Wobegon, Minnesota,  
20          how you look around and it's comforting, because everybody  
21          is like you, he said.

22          But then you look around and you see one of these  
23          kids. They aren't like us at all, he said.

24          They look like a walleye that broke the line. They  
25          have got hooks in their foreheads and they have spikes and

1 tattoos.

2 But I love that expression, like a walleye that  
3 broke the line.

4 (Laughter)

5 Those are the greatest in the kingdom. That's  
6 probably the one Jesus put right in the middle of them when  
7 they said who is the greatest?

8 He brings the kid and puts him in the middle. No,  
9 no, no. That's not what we want to hear. We want to see a  
10 beautiful little baby. Maybe it was a teenager.

11 Today we give our kids back to Jesus. Are they old  
12 enough now to make their decision for Christ?

13 No. They never will be. Nor will we.

14 Hopefully we are always saying yes in our lives to  
15 God's grace and acceptance, because Jesus says you guys  
16 didn't choose me; I chose you, that you would bear fruit  
17 that would last, the Gospel of John.

18 Jesus uses kids to feed the world. There is a  
19 great story in John 6.

20 Everybody is kind of hungry and all the adults are  
21 like what are we going to do to get something to eat?

22 And one of the disciples says, hey, there is a kid  
23 over here, but he doesn't have very much, he only has five  
24 fish and two loaves.

25 Jesus goes right around what the adults's

1 observation is and he works the circle.

2 He's at least willing to give what he's got to me,  
3 he blesses it, multiplies it, and feeds five thousand men  
4 and their families, and everybody else, but, you see, that  
5 is who these kids are.

6 It's a good thing probably that my dad is not still  
7 alive in some ways.

8 He would see the way some of these kids dress and  
9 he would just be, pull your pants up, turn your hat around,  
10 and get a job. That was my dad. He was pretty old school.

11 But I would invite you to sit at your children's  
12 feet today.

13 Maybe you are going to have them over for cake and  
14 coffee, or a lunch, or whatever, with grandma or their  
15 Baptismal sponsors, God bless you, but don't just talk to  
16 them; listen to them.

17 Sit at the children's feet and listen, and ask the  
18 question, who is the greatest in your lives? Who is the  
19 greatest?

20 And then, if you get real creative, hand them a  
21 mirror and then say you are the greatest today.

22 And I want you to know that in my words and in my  
23 time and in my actions, in all the different love languages  
24 that I am challenged to say to you.

25 But who is the greatest? It's probably the kid

1 with the marginal grades and the lousy skin.

2 It's the kid with marginal athletic ability and a  
3 huge fear of the dark, even on Halloween.

4 It's probably a kid with a dirty room and a noisy  
5 car.

6 These are kids that don't need friends; they need  
7 parents.

8 And they need mentors in the faith that are willing  
9 to stand up and say I don't believe in the hollow lies  
10 either, the devil and all his empty promises, he can go back  
11 to hell, where he does his best work.

12 But you, my friend, are the greatest, you kids, and  
13 we love you.

14 Parents who teach about righteousness and  
15 repentance and forgiveness and love in action.

16 Of the five love languages, only one of them uses  
17 words, and we use it today, way to go, you kids.

18 But I hope and I pray that maybe those others will  
19 be spoken in your families, if not by your parents, by true  
20 friends who stand by you in the darkest of nights and the  
21 greatest of days, and so way to go.

22 Together we have to use all five of those  
23 languages, for they are the language of love.

24 Jesus sent us the personification of that in Jesus,  
25 who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. Nobody

1 comes to the father except by me."

2           So as a father, I thank you kids for teaching us  
3 today. I may have appeared a little like Paul, too, kind of  
4 an old school parent, but I'm repenting of that, and I'm  
5 growing through that, and I'm a learner, like the rest of  
6 us.

7           Let's pray for a moment, could we?

8           Gracious God, we are really grateful for these  
9 kids. They are beautiful.

10           A lot of them need that gift of physical touch,  
11 even when, Lord, sometimes we think they don't act like they  
12 do.

13           They don't act like they want quality of time, but,  
14 Lord, we live in a fast-paced suburban lifestyle that  
15 oftentimes doesn't slow down long enough to live and love.

16           So can we have some time today to put the brakes on  
17 and love these gifts you have given us, and I'm not talking,  
18 Lord, those of us that have biological kids, but those of us  
19 that have neighbors, those of us that have kids that you  
20 have just kind of put on the horizon for us, may we embrace  
21 them today and speak the language of love and forgiveness.

22 In Jesus's name. Amen.

23

24

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