

On Monday, I made the long drive around the bay to the University of Wisconsin-Marquette to receive my second covid-19 vaccine shot. While I was driving, I was doing some radio surfing and for a bit, I landed on the Christian radio station.

They shared that there was a recent study that came out that centered on the 3-worst words that you can say to a woman. The top 3-word phrase was “You Look Tired”. Ladies, you can share with me later if you agree or if you have a different 3-word phrase that would be worse.

However, the station flipped the question and asked the callers to call in and give their most positive 3-word phrase. There were some good ones but none that really “wowed” me. I think that there is a 3-word phrase in our 1 John text that could rise to the top though. It is the following:

“Children of God”

I think those 3 words are so beautiful and I think that they are the words that we need to remind ourselves of and that we need to remind others of in our daily conversation. So, let me remind you of that right now.

You, yes, You are a Child of God.

Now, we did not read the rest of the 1 John 3, the lectionary breaks up chapter into three readings. We hear verses 1-7 today, 10-16 tomorrow and then we hear 16–24 next Sunday in the lectionary reading, not in church service. However, I want us to look ahead because the verses after 7 is the application and over the years, I have found that most church members want some application. I often hear, “So, what now Jeff?”

Well, let’s explore that.

The book of 1 John is a fascinating book on love and living our life in the manner that is the purity of Christ. For us to live into this world, our lives must be manifested in concrete acts of love.

So, here is the thing. As a Child of God, you are not called to love in word and speech; which is all good **BUT** you are to love in truth and action. Our love is to be embodied in concrete acts of giving and service.

I have been preaching and living here for six weeks. I am hoping that you have come to realize that I attempt to be very open and transparent in my life and the happenings of the church. So, I wanted to take a moment and explore the ideas of giving and service as it is related to Bay View Lutheran Church.

Overall, the giving from a financial standpoint was good for the month of March. We, as a church, gave \$25,000. Our giving was about \$3,000 less than our expenses. Thus, we have work to still do but we are moving in the right direction, I believe and as we begin to open up the church building and have in-person worship; I think the excitement will build. In addition to our general giving, there has been giving to reduce our mortgage and then donations to the loose change offerings that helps with our emergency fund and I have been thankful that I have been able to see funds go and help those in our community and all of this does not even scratch the service of the endowments.

Service is a hands on approach and I have heard many stories of the church here serving in a variety of ways. The service mission board is working hard and dreaming big on ways that we can make an impact on our community and the world and they will be inviting you into service opportunities.

One of the opportunities is about 5 weeks away. Luke was able to contact Crossroads at Big Creek in Sturgeon Bay and they would welcome Bay View's help with removal of invasive species and planting trees, shrubs, etc. Crossroads is going to be very accommodating with whatever will work best for our group. Crossroads already has an existing working party in the works; so we are going to partner with the work crew. I want to encourage you to participate, if you have the capability. The event will be held on Saturday, May 22 from 9:30 - 11:30 am. Watch for more details from Luke and the servant team from bulletin announcements, weekly updates, the newsletter and probably a Conversation with PJ. I hear that the goal is 30 participants. Will you be one of them?

As many of you know LuMin is very close to my heart. LuMin is the Lutheran Campus Ministry across the nation. The organization has four pillars and one of the pillars is inspiring service; thus service is a cause that I will be championing and when it is in our lectionary text; you can be guaranteed that I will lift it up.

I want to circle back to some of our liturgy that we have already spoken and some liturgy that is still to be spoken in the blessing.

I have mentioned to you that I search deep and wide for the liturgy that we use in our time together. I do this because I want to make sure the liturgy stresses the ideas and concepts that I believe should be lifted up and that is meaningful to us at Bay View.

In the opening, we were reminded of the importance of witness and that we are children of God. Hear the three phrases one more time:

- We are witnesses to everyone we encounter
- You called us to be your witness to all the world, UNAFRAID of what others may think or say about us
- Beloved, we are God's children now.

This service is about love and in the sending blessing we will hear: May God grant us the gift of an extraordinary love.

I want to close the sermon today with actually a Facebook post of mine from Friday because it should wrap this sermon up with a pretty bow. I made the post because I was reminded of the following quote as I saw the waves roll into the bay and read the 1 John text within hours of each other. Hear these words:

*"Your life and my life flow into each other as wave flows into wave, and unless there is peace and joy and freedom for you, there can be no real peace or joy or freedom for me. To see reality-not as we expect it to be but as it is-is to see that unless we live for each other and in and through each other, we do not really live very satisfactorily; that there can really be life only where there really is, in just this sense, love."*

**AMEN**