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Our Saviour Lutheran Church
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Pentecost 20

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, let us pray...May the words of my mouth and meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. AMEN.

So, sisters and brothers in Christ, today, this sermon is, as the saying goes...my Swan Song.

It is my farewell address to you all, as I transition to a new call.

And as a swan song goes, this will be short and sweet; this will be somewhat shorter than my typical sermon.

And, out of curiosity I looked up the meaning of "Swan Song," and discovered that it was believed by the ancient Greeks that a swan would sing a beautiful song right before its death.

Kind of morbid, when we think about it, but there it is.

Nonetheless, this is my "swan song," my final sermon here at Our Saviour.

But even though it is my swan song, it is not God's swan song for you.

PAUSE

I remember hearing at some point along my seminary training, way way back, sometime around the invention of fire...I remember hearing the practice of weekly preaching described as a conversation.

Conversations, of course, have their highs and lows.

Conversations ebb and flow, as the case may be.

We can think of conversations we have had with other people, where maybe there has been a lull, where maybe there has been an awkward pause, or where maybe there has been just some banter about nothing of significance.

And we can ALSO think of conversations we have had with other people, where there has been sparkling repartee, where there has been witty and lively dialogue, where there has been clever and insightful words back and forth.

Preaching is like that. The process of hearing sermons can be like an ongoing conversation.

And sometimes the sermon might fall flat on a given Sunday, the equivalent of a lull in a conversation.

And sometimes the sermon might be spot on on a given Sunday, the equivalent of a highpoint in a conversation.

But it is a worthwhile analogy, that preaching is similar to an ongoing conversation.

But, I think we can expand this analogy, so as to say that congregational life as a whole is an ongoing conversation, between members and the pastor, and between members and other members.

AND...AND between the church as a whole and God Almighty.

The Holy Spirit moves and stirs among us, and so then proceeds the ongoing conversation about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and so then proceeds the proclamation of the Gospel out into the world.

Walt Whitman said it this way, but he was not speaking in relation to the church so much as to so many individual lives, but Walt Whitman says, “The powerful play goes on,” he said, “and you may contribute a verse.”

The powerful proclamation of the Gospel goes on and Our Saviour’s congregation may contribute a witness.

The powerful proclamation of the Gospel goes on and Our Saviour’s congregation may contribute a witness, so that others may see the hope that is in us, and so then come themselves to believe.

PAUSE

We are in conversation with one another and with God. That is the experience of the church.

And now Our Saviour will be in conversation with other voices, with other pastors—substitute pastors, an interim pastor, and an eventual called pastor.

And so, yes, think of it like this.

That there will be new voices entering the conversation.

That there will be new individuals with whom to dialogue.

That there will be new insights, new brainstorm, new visions to talk about and to explore.

PAUSE

There is a reason in Genesis, chapter 2, our first reading today... there is a reason why God created human beings to be in relationship.

God saw that it was NOT good for the first human being to be alone.

Human beings need to be in dialogue, in conversation, in discourse, because a brain trust, the collection of minds, is that much more powerful than that of an individual mind.

Perhaps, that is why God created human beings in the plural, as opposed to the singular.

We need mutual conversation, especially within the church, for the betterment of the proclamation of the gospel and for the betterment of the world.

And so, I want to express my deepest gratitude for the opportunity to be part of the conversation with all of you for these almost sixteen years.

Again, thank you for welcoming my family and me into your lives.

And as the conversation continues to go on here at Our Saviour, please be assured that part of my conversation with God, part of my ongoing prayers with God will be for the well-being of Our Saviour moving forward.

So, once again, thank you and God bless. Amen.