

**Sermon Series: From Bethlehem to Calvary to Heaven—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—3/14/2004**

**Title: “Sweating the small details”**

**Text: 1 Thessalonians 4: 1-12**

**Intro.: Ills.: Discerning the Details**

**Theme:** In a culture which promotes excellence for the sake of excellence, God urges us on to excellence for the sake of holiness and love so that we might be fully devoted to him and to his heart to reach the world through us.

*A snapshot of the Pastoral Epistles – 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*

- **A word to pastors and people** –the relationship between people and their pastor is an image of Christ’s Body to the world — what picture are we giving
- **Living a life “worthy of your calling”** – not to earn a place with God but to reflect a respect for him and his holiness
- **An honest look at “taking up your cross”**-- no sugar coating a believer’s walk but neither is it a pessimistic viewpoint

**Walking the talk of discipleship (Print and read 1 Thessalonians 4: 1-2)**

- A common theme of Paul’s is a Greek word which is translated “*conduct your life*”
  1. Christianity is **not the sum of what you do** but **who you are** and **why you live** because of **whose you are**
  2. **Excelling** in the business of pleasing God
    1. Twice in this passage Paul talks about **excelling** (God pleasing-vs. 1 and love-vs. 10)
    2. This is not excellence for excellence’s sake—a form of self-idolatry
    3. It is excellence because you serve the high and holy King Creator and Savior of all the Universe
    4. Ills.: Collin Powell interview: “*I serve at the pleasure of the President.*”
- Know and do what “pleases God”= His will
  3. Sexual purity and abstinence from evil (**Print and read 1 Thessalonians 4: 3-8**)
    1. Scripture paints it as a faithfulness to Christ (His Church/people are His Bride)
      - *Don't you realize that your bodies are parts of Christ's body? Should I take the parts of Christ's body and make them parts of a prostitute's body? That's unthinkable! . . . However, the person who unites himself with the Lord becomes one spirit with him.*” 1 Cor. 6: 15, 17
    2. Not accommodating or tolerating sexual impurity in our midst
      - **Control your body** --what view, talk about,do (*Present your bodies as instruments of righteousness*Rom6:13)
      - **Discipline your thoughts** – not giving time or room for your thoughts to be led in polluted fantasies
      - **Support sanctity of marriage** – protecting own/others fidelity to marriage; refusing intimacy outside marriage
  4. “**Brotherly love,**” especially to the household of God (**Print and read 1 Thessalonians 4: 9-10**)
    1. Paul urges the Thessalonians on to be known for their **excellence in loving** each other (**phileo--adelphos**)
    2. **Ills.: City of Brother Love**
    3. Evaluating every thing we do—rooting our selfish ambition (get something); refusing reciprocated love (I’ll wait)
    4. Love defined not as an action but a way of life (*We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4: 19*)
  5. Conducting your life in godly rest and peace (**Print and read 1 Thessalonians 4: 11**)
    1. Is your life full of “striving?” — **simplify it so that you can rest** (*quiet life*)
    2. *"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength."* Is. 30: 15
    3. Is your life full of “strife?” — **disengage through reconciling peace** (*mind your own business*)
    4. *Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.*” 1Th5:15
    5. **Ills.: Dividing Discussion or Sum of all Fears movie clip**
  6. Aware of your witness out in the world at all times (**Print and read 1 Thessalonians 4: 12**)

1. Developing a winsome, godly life style (attracting others to the One who has transformed your life)
2. Removing fear that you will be take advantage of because God promises to provide for your material needs stands
3. *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” Phil. 4: 19*
7. Living with a proper balance of holy fear and forgiven joy
  1. It protects from callousness toward a sinful conduct of life leading you away from God
  2. **Print and read Romans 6: 15-18**
  3. It prevents crushing guilt because your human efforts will never measure up to God’s holiness; but Jesus’ does

### **Discerning the Details**

The floor of the Princeton gym was being resurfaced, so Princeton basketball standout (and later U.S. Senator) Bill Bradley had to put in several practice sessions at the Lawrenceville School. His first afternoon at Lawrenceville, he began by shooting 14-foot jump shots from the right side. He got off to a bad start, and he kept missing them. Six in a row hit the back rim of the basket and bounced out. He stopped, looking discomfited, and seemed to be making an adjustment in his mind. Then he went up for another jump shot from the same spot and hit it cleanly. Four more shots went in without a miss, and then he paused and said, "You want to know something? That basket is about an inch and a half low." Some weeks later, I went back to Lawrenceville with a steel tape, borrowed a stepladder, and measured the height of the basket. It was nine feet, ten and seven-eighths inches above the floor, or one and one-eighth inches too low. *Citation: John McPhee, A Sense of Where You Are (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1965); submitted by Kevin Miller, Wheaton, Illinois*

### **City of Brotherly Love**

The motto, The City of Brotherly Love, came from William Penn, the English Quaker (1682), who envisioned the area as a place where anyone of any color or background could live together in peace and harmony, thus, the motto about brotherly love. **Sum of all Fears** (movie clip showing nuclear standoff)

### **Dividing Discussion**

Comedian Emo Philips used to tell this story:

In conversation with a person I had recently met, I asked, "Are you Protestant or Catholic?"

**My new acquaintance replied, "Protestant."**

I said, "Me too! What franchise?"

**He answered, "Baptist."**

"Me too!" I said. "Northern Baptist or Southern Baptist?"

**"Northern Baptist," he replied.**

"Me too!" I shouted.

We continued to go back and forth. Finally I asked, "Northern conservative fundamentalist Baptist, Great Lakes Region, Council of 1879 or Northern conservative fundamentalist Baptist, Great Lakes Region, Council of 1912?"

**He replied, "Northern conservative fundamentalist Baptist, Great Lakes Region, Council of 1912."**

I said, "Die, heretic!"

*Citation: New Republic. Fresh Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching (Baker), from the editors of Leadership.*

### **1 Thessalonians. 4:1-12**

<sup>1</sup>Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to conduct your life in a way that please God (just as we taught you), and that you may excel still more. <sup>2</sup>For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of* the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup>For this is the will of God, that you abstain from sexual sin as a mark of your devotion to him; <sup>4</sup>that each of you know how to control own body and live in holiness and honor, <sup>5</sup>not in lustful passion, as the pagans do, in their ignorance of God and his ways; <sup>6</sup>*and* that no person cheat a fellow Christian in this matter by taking advantage of his or her spouse because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. <sup>7</sup>For God has called us for the purpose of living holy lives, not to live impure lives. <sup>8</sup>Consequently, anyone who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. <sup>9</sup>Now as to brotherly love among God's people, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are God-taught to love one another; <sup>10</sup>for indeed you do practice it toward all Christians who are in all Macedonia. Even so, we urge you, dear brothers and sisters, to excel still more, <sup>11</sup>and to aspire to lead a quiet life and minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we commanded you; <sup>12</sup>so that people who are not Christians will respect the way you live and you will not have a need to depend on others to meet your needs.

### **Romans 6: 15-18**

<sup>15</sup>So since God's grace has set us free from the law, does this mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! <sup>16</sup>Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval. <sup>17</sup>Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you have obeyed with all your heart the new teaching God has given you. <sup>18</sup>Now you are free from sin, your old master, and you have become slaves to your new master, righteousness. (NLT)