

Sermon followed by Service

October 23, 2022

Ephesians 1:3-14

Where's your best place for good ideas? I get some really good ideas in the shower, but by the time I dry off, they're usually poof and gone. Sometimes my shower ideas stack up and they fit together into genius plans - "this is going to work!" Sometimes I'm even able to get those ideas, that new master plan, out of the shower, and past the toilet. But when I try to put it all down on paper or into my computer, what happens? Those beautiful ideas and plans that stacked and fit so well in the shower - instead of fitting together, they crash and mash into each other and crumble. Not all of them. Sometimes my ideas and plans survive and turn into promises, promises that break.

Sound familiar? What's the answer? Some would say, "Longer showers." Others might say, "Forget the plans; you don't need plans; you don't have time for plans. Just do it; just wing it. If it doesn't work, so what? And if they don't like it, that's their problem." For some things, that can be the right answer. But is "So what? That's their problem" really the right answer, the loving answer, for "When I die, who will take care of my children, my family?" Is "So what? That's their problem" really the right answer for "When I die, what will happen to my money and stuff - will it go where I want it to go?" Some things are too important to blow off planning. Some things in life are too precious to trust to "So what? That's their problem."

My parents were planners. I remember when I was young, before school would start, Mom and Dad would take me and my three younger brothers shopping for school clothes. We went to the discount store and got shoes from the bottom shelf where they had cut

off the labels. We got the jeans made out of polyester. So when Dad brought home that new Impala station wagon, I looked at it: “How in the world?” Dad must have seen my look; he said: “Mom’s been saving money out of the checking account each month so we’d be ready when we needed this.” Later in life, years before he died, Dad planned ahead and made sure to set Mom up in a good place with good neighbors so she wouldn’t be alone when he died. Mom and Dad planned ahead. They planned ahead for each other; they planned ahead for their family; and they planned ahead for Jesus. You may remember me saying this. I don’t remember how old I was; it was years and years ago. I was visiting home, and out of the blue, Mom dropped their estate plan on me. “We’ve always prayed, ‘Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.’ We’ve always thought of Jesus as part of the family, and so that is we did with our will. We divided things up six ways; five parts for our five children, and one part for Jesus.” Mom and Dad were planners.

Where did they get it from? I could say they got it from being smart, but being smart isn’t what drove them. So why were they planners? They got it from God; they got it from the way God loves them with a plan; they got it from the way God loves us with a plan. And that’s what drove them to have a plan, to take care and love with a plan.

We see God’s plan in our lessons. From before all time - yea, he didn’t wait until the last minute; he didn’t wing it; it wasn’t just some flash idea. From before all time God chose you. He chose you to be his. He chose you to know his love. He chose you to be holy and special like him, holy and special with him. And he didn’t just leave it as an idea. He made it his plan. He turned it into a promise. And then he worked his plan. And shared his promise.

He worked his plan leading up to Jesus. And he shared a string of promises pointing ahead to Jesus - the promise of a Champion to fight for us and crush Satan's head, the promise that God would bless the world through Abraham, the promise of a forever King in the line of David, the promise that "the virgin would conceive and give birth to a son." God didn't just have an idea; he didn't just wing it. He had a plan and he worked his plan and Jesus was born.

It wasn't always smooth and easy. Satan was always trying to distract God's people, tempt them and turn them off God's plan. Then when Jesus was born, Satan turned his sights on Jesus; he tried to distract Jesus; he tried to bully Jesus; he thought he could use the world to get rid of Jesus. But from Christmas to the cross, God worked his plan in Jesus, and after the cross, God kept his promise with Easter. Today Jesus lives, and the blood he shed on the cross covers over and forgives our sin. Today, Jesus lives, and the life he lived of sticking to God's plan, and working God's plan, and keeping God's promise - that life Jesus gives to you in baptism - so God sees you sticking to his plan, working his plan, living in his promise.

Yes, God sees you with Jesus. Not just by chance, not by accident, and not by some good idea or plan of our own. God sees you with Jesus today, because God saw you with Jesus long before time began. Because God saw you with Jesus long before time began, from long before you were born, God has been working his plan for you in this world, in your family tree, in good times and in tough times to turn evil to good. From before you were born, God has been working your history to bring you to the right time and the right place for the Holy Spirit to connect you to Jesus.

You aren't here by accident; you aren't here by chance; you aren't here because you had a good idea or a good plan. If it were up to you

and your good ideas, if it were up to me and my good plans, we would all be damned. But we are here, you are here because God has been working history, his story, your story, to connect your story to his story - so you can live in his Jesus promise - **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** Everlasting life - back before time began, when God saw you with Jesus, he didn't just see you with Jesus here in this life. God saw you with Jesus in heaven living and enjoying life the way it's supposed to be. That's the plan God is working; that's the promise God is keeping.

God has been working that plan from before the creation of the world. He's been keeping his promise for nearly as long. Keeping his Jesus promise to Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Moses, David and Bathsheba, and countless more. At the same time, working his Jesus promise through Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Moses, David and Bathsheba, and countless more. And now? Now God is keeping his promise, his Jesus promise to you and me. And he is working his Jesus promise through you and me.

That's right. God isn't just working his Jesus promise for us, God is working his Jesus promise through us. Through you to the family he gives you. Through you to friends and neighbors he brings into your life. Through you, God is working to connect and reconnect people with Jesus. Through you, God is working to keep people connected with Jesus. Through you - yes, God is including you in working his plan and keeping his promise so that people you know and people you don't yet know - so you can see them like he sees them - alive with Jesus in heaven.

God's not winging it; he's not making it up as he goes along; he's not leaving it for someone else to deal with. He's not thinking:

“Too much time, too much work to figure this out.” He sees you as worth it; he sees keeping his promise to you as worth it; he sees working with you as worth it - worth his planning and worth his working.

That’s why we plan and work our plan with Jesus. That’s why we plan our weeks to be here with Jesus. That’s why we plan our finances to work here with Jesus. That’s why we plan our days to have time to listen and talk with Jesus. Yes, that’s why we take the time to think, really think, about what we want to do with Jesus. Sure, some of our idea will poof and be gone. And some of our plans will smash and crash. And some of our promises will break. But that doesn’t stop us. It’s not stopping God from keeping his promise to us; it’s not stopping God from looking to work his promise through us. Why? He’s a planner, and he’s got a plan for you with Jesus! Amen.

October 23, 2022

SERVICE OF THE WORD

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... how many of our good ideas pop like a bubble into nothingness ... how many of our plans fall apart and fizzle, how many of our promises break?

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we amaze at God's great idea, plan, and promise - and we are inspired!

OPENING HYMN

"Speak, O Lord"

Hymn 633

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you to receive the food of your holy Word;
take your truth, plant it deep in us, shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.

Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us all your purposes for your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience, holy reverence, true humility;
test our thoughts and our attitudes in the radiance of your purity.

Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.

Words of pow'r that can never fail, let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds,
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us,
truths unchanged from the dawn of time,
that will echo down through eternity.

And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.

Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built,
and the earth is filled with your glory.

INVOCATION

- M: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.
- C: **And also with you.**

+ CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION +

- M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.
- C: **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**
- M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.
- C: **Amen.**

SCHOOL CHILDREN SING (GRADES 3-8) *"I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light"*

Hymn 713

Children vs. 1 & 2

Congregation v. 3

I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus.
God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus.

Refrain

In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

I want to see the brightness of God. I want to look at Jesus.
Clear Sun of Righteousness, shine on my path,
and show me the way to the Father.

Refrain

I'm looking for the coming of Christ. I want to be with Jesus.
When we have run with patience the race, we shall know the joy of Jesus.

Refrain

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, we thank you that you don't leave us to chance, but you have a plan that you are working for us. We thank you that you don't leave us in the dark, but you give us your promise. We thank you that you don't leave us on the sidelines, but you include us in working your plans and sharing your promise. Now, we ask, give us your wisdom and love so that we follow you and your example, so that all our plans fit in your plans - for your glory and the good of your people.

Amen.

FIRST READING

Ephesians 1:3-14

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHOIR

"He Will Hold Me Fast"

Hymn 813

When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast;
when the tempter would prevail, he will hold me fast.
I could never keep my hold thro' life's fearful path,
for my love is often cold— he must hold me fast.

Refrain

He will hold me fast; he will hold me fast;
for my Savior loves me so, he will hold me fast.

Those he saves are his delight; Christ will hold me fast;
precious in his holy sight, he will hold me fast.
He'll not let my soul be lost; his promises shall last;
bought by him at such a cost, he will hold me fast. *Refrain*

For my life he bled and died; Christ will hold me fast;
justice has been satisfied; he will hold me fast.
Raised with him to endless life, he will hold me fast
till our faith is turned to sight when he comes at last! *Refrain*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia! These words are written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing this you may have life in his name. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 24:44-48

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us”

Hymn 566

Father, God of grace, you knew us, chose us, named us as your own,
through eternal ages planning to redeem us in your Son.
Praise the Father, God who loved us ere creation was begun!

We, your creatures, sinned against you, and our guilt was crimson red.
Son of God, you came incarnate, crushed the crafty serpent’s head,
died our death, now live triumphant: praise the firstborn from the dead!

Counselor, you bring as promised from the Father and the Son
righteousness fulfilled, accomplished, free forgiveness, heaven won.
Praise the Spirit! He assures us our salvation’s work is done!

Lord, your changeless Word has fed us, spanning time, transcending space.
Water, bread, and wine sustained us when the darkness hid your face.
Keep us with you, faithful Shepherd, by your saving means of grace!

Forward lead us; Christ, we follow, drawn by Word and promise true:
“To all nations preach the gospel; I am evermore with you.”
Keep us faithful! Then, Lord Jesus, quickly come; make all things new!

SERMON

HYMN

“Take My Life and Let It Be”

Hymn 695

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice and let me sing always, only for my King;
take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect and use ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine, it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart, it is thine own, it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure store;
take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Lord God, our maker and preserver, we praise and thank you for all that you give us day after day.

C: We are not worthy of all the mercies you show us.

M: You have given us your precious Word to nourish our souls and to protect us from the temptations of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature.

C: We thank you for those who teach and preach your saving truth at this place and everywhere. Grant them a rich measure of patience, wisdom, and love.

M: Heavenly Father, we pray that you shield us from every kind of danger: sudden catastrophe, terrors of crime, and the pain of disease. Watch over those who travel by land, sea, and air. Keep our loved ones from whatever perils may threaten them.

C: Heal those who are sick, cheer those who are sad, calm those who are distressed, and comfort all who are old and infirm.

M: Bless our land, our people, and those who hold offices of high trust. Keep our government and schools upright and strong for the advancement of good citizenship and useful vocations, that we may enjoy your gifts of peace, security, and well-being.

C: Grant your blessing to every nation on earth. Where there are wars, may there be peace. Where there is hatred, let it be healed. Where there is poverty, danger, or disaster, come with your almighty power to help and restore.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring to you our private petitions.

Silent prayer.

M: We bring these requests before you in the name of Jesus our Lord, and ask you to hear us. Take all that we have, our bodies and minds, our time and skills, our ministries and offerings, and use them to your glory.

C: **We give ourselves to you that we may serve you in whatever way is pleasing in your sight. Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

M: O Lord God, our heavenly Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep us strong in your grace and truth, protect and comfort us in all temptation, and bestow on us your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another. Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

"Onward, Christian Soldiers"

Hymn 869

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
with the cross of Jesus going on before.
Christ, the royal master, leads against the foe;
forward into battle see his banners go!

Refrain

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
with the cross of Jesus going on before.

Like a mighty army moves the Church of God;
brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod.
We are not divided, all one body we,
one in hope and doctrine, one in charity. *Refrain*

Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,
but the Church of Jesus constant will remain.
Gates of hell can never 'gainst that Church prevail;
we have Christ's own promise, and that cannot fail. *Refrain*

Onward, then, ye faithful, join our happy throng,
blend with ours your voices in the triumph song:
Glory, laud, and honor unto Christ the King;
this through countless ages saints and angels sing. *Refrain*

OFFERING

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Tuition Grant Fund envelopes are available in the pew rack
to support affordable tuition for our school.)*

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Conference of Presidents holds its fall 2022 meeting

The Conference of Presidents (COP) met for its fall meeting October 4-7. The COP welcomed two new members, Rev. Daniel Leyrer, president of our Southeastern Wisconsin District, and Rev. Michael Seifert (Sarah Lofsness' brother), president of the North Atlantic District.

As a part of its meeting, Rev. James Pope was installed as the new executive editor of *Forward in Christ*. Pope succeeds Rev. John Braun, who is retiring after 15 years in the position.

The COP approved a recommendation to shift the responsibilities of deferred giving counselor Scott Wagner from another district to our Southeastern Wisconsin District. Mr. Wagner has agreed to this change.

Currently there are **155 vacancies** in pastoral positions, 141 of those in parishes. The remaining positions are in retirement calls (two), foreign mission positions (three), professor positions (five), and other pastorally trained positions (four).

The COP determined a mechanism will be put in place to gather suggestions and questions regarding the restatement on the roles of men and women. A decision will be made later as to whether the statement will be submitted to the 2023 synod convention or whether additional study is beneficial.

The COP heard an initial report from the task force studying **teacher shortages**. That [task force](#) will continue its work. Mr. Jim Rademan, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools, also provided an update on the development of a new K-12 religion curriculum.

Home Missions provided an update on the 100 missions in 10 years effort that will begin in 2023.

World Missions also provided updates on our work in India, Africa, Hong Kong, Thailand, and London. World Missions continues to be the conduit for ongoing relief efforts in **Ukraine**.

The COP asked me [WELS President] to appoint a task force to study ways to identify alternatives to Title IV funding (federal student loans and grants) and to explore possible ways to increase financial assistance to students preparing for ministry.

The recommendations are intended to be placed before the synod convention in 2023. [The Equality Act before Congress could threaten student aid for our students.]

The COP approved the creation of a practical, viable, multi-tiered system of professional and ministry certification to support **early childhood teachers** currently serving in the field. Plans also call for a suite of resources that can be used by early childhood ministries and congregations to better prepare early childhood staffs for teaching in WELS schools.

Home Missions highlights

It's been a busy fall for WELS Home Missions.

- Three home mission congregations in Texas—Christ Our Refuge, Waco/Hewitt; Our Savior, West San Antonio; and Amazing Grace, Amarillo—launched their first public worship services. Learn more in the November *Forward in Christ*.
- The Board for Home Missions met and reviewed what it takes to open a new mission. The Board for Home Missions is made up of the district mission board chairman and one lay volunteer from each of the 14 home mission districts. The Board for Home Missions is anticipating requests for about 30 new mission starts and 17 enhancements in the spring.
- Cross of Christ, North Nampa, Idaho, dedicated its new church building as a second-site ministry of Cross of Christ, Boise, Idaho.
- Zion, Lodi, Wis., launched its first public worship service. Zion is a second-site ministry of Leeds, Wis. Also, Bethlehem, Richland Center, Wis. dedicated its ministry facility, which houses an intergenerational ministry center and an early childhood center.

“As WELS Home Missions prepares for the official launch of its [100 missions in 10 years initiative](#) in 2023, it's exciting to see all the ministry that God is already blessing,” says Mr. Sean Young, senior director of WELS Missions Operations. “We're committed to aggressively reaching lost souls throughout North America with the gospel—today and in the years to come.”

For more information about WELS Home Missions, visit wels.net/homemissions

OWLS joyfully gather for its annual conference

The Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) met at the Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center in Onalaska, Wis., for its annual conference.

Convention goers were treated to a scenic bus tour of historic La Crosse, Wis., on Tuesday morning. Beginning on Tuesday afternoon, attendees enjoyed worship, fellowship, breakout sessions, and three keynote presentations. Rev. Timothy Redfield, whose daughter, Libby, was born blind, shared his family's personal story and the resources available through the Mission for the Visually Impaired. Rev. Curtiss Seefeldt talked about how to provide emotional and spiritual support for those affected by dementia. Rev. Jon Leach from Truth in Love Ministry spoke about reaching out in love to Mormons.

The OWLS again designated its offerings to support the **WELS European Civilian chaplaincy**, which serves military personnel and WELS civilians in Europe. This year, the OWLS presented Military Services a check for \$55,000.

Mr. John Paulsen, OWLS executive director, talks about the appeal of the convention: "We have good food, excellent fellowship, and great speakers," he says. "Every convention has been so well received. That's why people keep coming back." He adds, "It's like a mini-vacation from the world – and a chance to be with other people who are all trying to share the gospel." Paulsen encourages any congregation with a seniors' ministry to look into the OWLS program because it offers meaningful ways for seniors to gather and serve.

Longtime OWLS members were excited to welcome 25 first-time attendees, like Carol Kolosovsky from St. Paul's, Muskego, Wis. "It was a great joy," Kolosovsky says. "The conference reminded me of the wonderful opportunities, privileges, and blessings that seniors have in God's kingdom." Kolosovsky was also moved by the worship services and fellowship: "Whether it was reconnecting with old friends or making new friends, all of them shared their enthusiasm to share Jesus. I really look forward to meeting them all again someday."

The 2023 OWLS convention for seniors will be held Oct. 10-13 at the Holiday Inn in Stevens Point, Wis. The convention is open to all seniors in WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, regardless of OWLS membership.

Learn more about the OWLS at wels.net/owls.

WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help, and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.
- Please join us after Sunday service for fellowship and Family Bible Hour.

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church. We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

We Care about Your Children

- We love to have children with us in worship. Children's "church bags" (with paper, colors, and Bible story books) are available in the Narthex Gathering Area.
- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Large Print** Service Folders are available from an usher.
- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - www.wels.net.