

## **Walking Together Sunday**

November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Grace mercy and peace to you as my teammates in the body of Christ, chosen by God, trained by God's Word and equipped with God's Spirit to make a difference in this sinful dark world.

NIV 1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Introduction: Leading up to the Vikings/ Packer game last Sunday they asked Brett Favre, "Is this the best team you ever played for?" Of course it was a loaded question to create a rift between loyal Packer fans and the best QB in franchise history. A great team is not just a collection of great players, of superstars. A great team is a collection of great teammates. Great teammates are united in their goal, picking each other up when they're down, rejoicing in each other's successes and always, always putting the team first before themselves. I have a hunch but will have to wait till heaven to ask him myself, that the Apostle Paul is a team sports fan. He uses the picture of a team to help the Corinthian church overcome their problems and temptations. The Corinthian church was constantly under attack by the devil. One of the devil's strategies was to use the world around the congregation. The sins of the culture around the Corinthian Christians broke through the walls of the church. The church was divided by sinful pride and inflated egos over spiritual gifts and God-given roles to men and women. The apostle Paul reminded them of their calling into the Holy Christian Church, the body of Christ, God's Kingdom Team. He taught them what a losing team looked like and what a winning team looked like, encouraging them to make a difference in this sinful world by living as the communion of saints – the greatest team ever assembled!

### **You are Members of the Greatest Team Ever Assembled!**

What does a losing team look like?

What does a winning team look like?

1) What does a losing team look like?

14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

Bad teams are made of bad teammates. They have inflated images of themselves and they deflate their teammate's spirit by belittling them, blaming them for loses and just not caring about their teammates. There is plenty of "I's on a bad team. The result of all these bad "I's is a team full of "defeatists" Defeated players have a super low image of themselves and their team. They failed in the past so they think they will fail in the future. They think they are defeated before they even attempt. They don't believe their captains, their coaches, or their own ability. You could say they just have a loser mentality.

This could never happen in Christ's Kingdom, His Team, could it? After all, every member of the Holy Christian church has been specially hand picked and chosen by Jesus Christ. He lived and died for each of his teammates. We all know what it is like to be picked first at recess, for the job promotion, as a husband or wife. It is special. We are special to be members of Jesus team. It feels great to be chosen by God as a member of His Royal and Holy Team. But like in school that special place can inflate our image of ourselves. We actually start to believe that we were picked because we are better than others. It also happens in God's Church, the very body of Christ. He inflates the egos of God's people so that we actually think we are better than others because of what we do. We look down on others because they don't do what we do in God's family. And then others of us assume the loser mentality and revert back to thinking we are losers and can do nothing good for God's kingdom. We don't trust God's Word that says we are specially chosen members of his family with gifts to serve His people and save sinners.

The solution to being a bad teammate in God's Kingdom is to remember our captain, our team leader, the head of the Body. In John, chapter 10, Jesus used the picture of a flock of sheep being cared for by their shepherd to show his great love and concern for his people. Could we not also see in that picture the imagery of

a team? Jesus Christ is our leader in the contest. He has already won the victory. He has already given to us his game plan. His teammates know his voice and they follow his directions. Jesus our captain knows all our abilities and he puts us in the perfect position to succeed and win for ourselves and also for our team.

2) What does a winning Team look like?

At the very beginning of his letter to the Corinthians the apostle Paul wrote:

1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Paul wanted nothing more than the Corinthians to be an effective team for Jesus Christ. And what would that perfect team look like in serving Christ's goal of winning souls? Smooth and seamless like a well oiled machine always one step ahead of the opposition. Everyone single one of them focused on the goal – preaching the gospel to save sinners.

When I think of the good teams I have been on in my life. They all had the same qualities – unity on a goal, friendship within, complete trust in each man to do his job. Oh, and when your team is in the zone...it's a beautiful thing. A well oiled machine – the opposition is caught looking, they are on their heels– they don't know what hit them. A team in the zone isn't thinking, they are trusting their teammates, executing the game plan, trusting their coaches strategy and following their captain's lead.

26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

What are you saying when you stand up and confess I believe in the Holy Christian Church the communion of saints? We are one team so aligned with God's Spirit, His Way of doing things, that we are dialed into His grace so much so that a part of heaven might be seen on earth, like a lighthouse on a dark and stormy night. I'm talking about being dedicated to the mission of the Kingdom –saving sinners. How often is our team in the “zone”, dialed into God's grace so much so that everyone is doing their god given part, trusting their team leaders, following Jesus Christ's example, carrying out the game plan of God's Salvation for sinners? Sometimes? Not always. Sometimes we, God's team, are being assimilated into the world just like those Corinthians. Sometimes we think that because we are members of St. Luke's that we actually have found a safe place to hide from using our God given abilities as a member of God's team. We must be very careful not to become “watchers” or “bystanders”. Don't think that being on Christ's team means becoming a member of a group, paying your offering and then going about the life you want to live. We are united in the one common goal of serving Christ. Christ as the head of the church, our team, says we are to be about saving sinners for heaven. We are to live on earth with an eye for heaven – strangers here, travelers here. Heaven is our goal. Don't go through the motions of being a team player as if you were fulfilling some sort of requirements in a club. Have you bought in to Jesus leadership? Are you grabbing your cross, training with all your might and making a difference for sinners? Snap out of it. Look at your family and friends – the fields are white for the harvest of souls!

I read online about the history of St. Luke's in Oakfield and found out something very interesting to me. Did you know that St. Luke's started because of a Lutheran family that moved here from Watertown? They gathered friends and family at their home around God's Word and the Augsburg confession. After they got too big they met at the Presbyterian Church in town until they could purchase some land on 2<sup>nd</sup> street and combined with some families from Van Dyne and called a professor from Watertown to serve them as he had time. The sacrifices of our fellow teammates over the years have given to us a great blessing in Oakfield. We have a beautiful parcel of ground and a beautiful building. They sacrificed many hours and dollars to procure these things, but why?

Our forefathers knew what Christ's team was about – teammates working together for one common goal, saving sinners. There is a reason why we sing in church “Lord have mercy on us.” Even though we are the special chosen teammates of the Lord, we fumble, we drop the ball, we quit on the Lord, acting more like watchers than teammates. Thank the Lord for his mercy to us over the years here at St. Luke's. Thank the Lord for giving us more opportunities to serve him as a winning team united around the gospel. In spite of our failings in the past, by God's mercy and grace, we can do better. We can be a better team for saving souls.

Strive with me to be better as Christ's team. Each with different gifts but we are united to save sinners. We will win. We will make a difference here in Oakfield and across the globe in our Synod.