

# CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

## *Share God's Word and Share Christ's love*

June 24, 2018

How to grow a church a lot. Part 2

Luke 1:57-80

Planting the seeds of God's Word is the first step in growing your church. But embodying that message is so much more. Whose you are makes more of an impact than what you say. And the more you say about Jesus, the more your church will grow.

Elizabeth, John's mother, was old, not to mention barren. Her pregnancy was a sign that something was about to happen. And since Zechariah doubted John's birth and became mute, everyone soon wondered, what is so special about this child John.

You would think, as Zechariah's ability to speak finally returns, he would immediately address the wonder of his son's birth. But amazingly that is not the first thing that comes out of His mouth. The first thing that bursts out of his mouth is about Jesus. In fact, if you read the song straight through you wonder if he is even going to talk about John at all.

Then, what we've all been waiting for to here about how great John is going to be, we find out that John's sole purpose is to merely talk about Jesus. That's it, prepare the way for Jesus, announce the coming of Jesus, and say more about what Jesus is going to do.

The theme for this last year surrounding the anniversary of a denomination we call the LCMS was, "It's still all about Jesus" That's exactly right, it's still all about Jesus. It's not about our church, in fact, it's not our church. It's Jesus's church. It's not the LCMS's church. It's not the people who pay the bills church.

I gave a message one sermon years ago and I said this very same thing about the church. After the service a parishioner came up to me and said that I was wrong. He said that this was his church because his family built it. I have never had such a strong negative reaction to any sermon I ever had. I think that says something about how much we think we possess a local congregation.

To take it a step farther, we are not our own, we were bought at a price. Jesus life is now his. He rescued it, redeemed it, saved it, and did everything to it so that we are living and breathing children of God right now, and through God's never-ending grace we will also be his forever.

That means everything we "own" is God's, not ours. Everything we are about is about Jesus. We might serve God out of obligation or because we owe him or even for fear that if we don't, God will punish us.

Zechariah speaks about serving God, but in a different tone. He says we do it, not out of fear of punishment, but out of the freedom of no longer being enslaved to sin. Let's listen to his words again.

[68](#)“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.[69](#)He has raised up a horn of salvation (Jesus)for us in the house of his servant David(Clearly Jesus)[70](#)as he said through his holy prophets of long ago,[71](#)salvation from our enemies(Given by Jesus) and from the hand of all who hate us—[72](#)to show mercy to our ancestors(Through Jesus) and to remember his holy covenant,(Jesus body and blood covenant) [73](#)the oath he swore to our father Abraham(That Jesus would be born) [74](#)to rescue us (Through Jesus sacrifice) from the hand of our enemies, “and to enable us to serve him without fear

in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” Did you hear that last line. Serve him without fear. This means that as we give our lives to God, it is out of the freedom to do so. As Jesus says in another passage. [Matthew 10:39](#)

Whoever finds his **life** will **lose** it, and whoever **loses** his **life** for my sake will find it.

John lost himself to find his life in Jesus. His sole purpose on earth was to proclaim the coming of Jesus. Although we are all different, each one of our has the sole purpose of sharing Jesus.

In some ways we can be like Jesus. We can have kindness and compassion like Jesus. But in many ways we can't be Jesus. We can only talk about what Jesus has done. He died for our sin. He rose from the dead. He lived a perfect life in our place. Only he is ultimately Holy and Righteous.

The more we can talk about Jesus the better. I would love if someone said about me, "That guy just loves Jesus, he talks about him all the time." And hopefully it's not like I am blasting people with a Jesus hose. Instead I'm mostly talking about Jesus for the sake of talking about Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 4:13** Since we have the same spirit of **faith** according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also **speak**, A reference to psalm 116:10

Talking about the greatness of Jesus is only one way of talking about him. We also cry out to him in prayer when times are tough. And when time are tough for others we can pray for them too, in the name of Jesus.

Don't you want to be like John. You my child will be the prophet of the Most High. You will speak of Jesus. You will speak of the forgiveness of sins won by Jesus. To tell about the salvation of Jesus. And just like John, proclaim to others the Jesus will come again to take us to be with him in heaven.

There was a lady, who, was in her nineties. She was one of those faithful ladies in the LWML. She was one of the those faithful ladies who came to church every Sunday and raised her kids in that same faith. But those times were gone

since she was too old to serve, and too old to even go to church, besides most of her children had moved far away.

As she became older she developed a series of problems, pneumonia, heart problems, infections and the like. She became gravely ill the first time. Doctors figured she was dying. The family came from all over, California, Arizona, Virginia, all to be with her in her final days in Ohio.

The Pastor stood over her, she was unresponsive, as he looked at what some Pastor's see as the look. The look of death. And so the family visited although she was unresponsive, they went to the waiting room, prayed, read scripture, and of course speaking about how she would be in heaven soon with Jesus.

Two days later, much to everyone's surprise, she bounced back and was ready to return home, just like nothing happened. The family got back to life as usual, and after a few days flew home to their different states.

A year later she became ill again, this time a different illness, a different set of doctors. The time had come this time. The Pastor knew she could not escape the look of death a second time. The family again was called in from around the country. The process was repeated while she was unresponsive. Pastor prayed, read scripture, talked about Jesus.

Then guess what, Pastor and doctors were wrong again. She bounced back, in her nineties and went back home. Family gathered for a short time after, getting her settled back in, and one after the other returned to their home states.

You guessed it, a year later, she was back in the hospital, certainly near death, and the process happened for round three. This time not all the children came. The child from Arizona stayed back, thinking it was like an involuntary crying wolf from the pastor. But this was actually her final days. She died. So all the children were there for the funeral. And the pastor, joyfully proclaimed how

she was about as close to Jesus as anyone, since she escaped death twice. But like all people Jesus rose for her so that she would rise to eternal life.

The family, consoled with Jesus love, finally returned home. That old lady, who was literally unresponsive, unable to speak, created a scenario, somewhat because of her past, spoke Jesus to her children via the Pastor, but also to and through her church family. Who knew you could say so much without speaking a word.

John the Baptist summed up his life in a simple phrase. [John 3:30](#) “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Proclaim Jesus is about being the least, being the most humble and placing Jesus before us. And [Luke 7:28](#) says something about each person. “I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

Be like John, live and breathe Jesus. That will grow a church. If you reflect Jesus, Jesus makes his own church grow right then and there. It’s not about us, it’s about Him, Jesus. Stay tuned next week for the wrap up of this series on “How to grow the church, a little, a lot, and all the way.” Amen.