

**Sunday, August 11, 2019 – “The Results Are In!” Vision Statement Reveal
“Who We Are: God’s Chosen People”**

Matthew 28: 18-20; Matthew 26: 26-29; John 20:22-23

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Central Image/Multiple Focus Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
Amen.

On a February weekend a dozen college students drove from the Twin Cities to a fellow student’s farm in southern Minnesota to go winter camping. A couple of feet of snow greeted us as we went to set up our tents. The only place with light enough snow cover that would require minimal digging out was the frozen creek bed. That night, complete with below zero temperatures, made for a wonderful science lesson on heat transfer between sleeping bags (with the human bodies therein) and a solid ice surface underneath. That inviting-looking location was about the coldest, most dangerous, worst place we could have been – which is probably why, by the time the sun rose, all but four of us had trudged a quarter mile back to the warmth of the house.

When you’re planning for the future taking care to make the right choices at the beginning can save a lot of pain and discomfort down the line. About six months ago our Board of Directors decided to enter a process called “Ministry Clarity” with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund that would engage Mountain View in a process of strategic planning leading us seeing both who God says that we are and what His purpose for us is. A team was created for a process we called “Beyond 2020.” That team planned a special night back in April where almost 100 of us gathered to speak into this process – between conversations at your tables and pages upon pages of your notes that team met three more times to boil down the essence of what was learned, informed by what God has been doing through you in His Word and prayerfully discerned, into this statement: “We are God’s chosen people, adopted in baptism, forgiven through His Gifts and sent on His mission to love and disciple others.”

I have to tell you, I was encouraged by the wisdom of the congregation, giving such valuable material with which to work at that Beyond 2020 night event and the Beyond 2020 leadership team’s discernment of the data because the foundation is good. I know that it’s good, because it’s in keeping with God’s Word. The basis of the foundation is all about what God does for His people.

Frankly this is a struggle that humans have in life, to keep the focus on God and what He is doing for us. We want to take the easier path, like those college kids seeing a smooth, flat space to

put up their tents but ultimately deprived of the lifegiving safety, warmth and insulation the gift of bountiful snow around them would provide.

This can happen so easily when we skip God's counsel and try to go it alone as His church, too – we dare not enter into future planning with a cavalier attitude and not checking our decisions against all the lifegiving gifts God provides for His people. You heard those Gospel readings earlier today – all focused on God's institution of the Sacraments, Baptism and Communion, as well as the forgiveness of sins that He entrusts to Christians to share with each other, straight from the Word of God itself. When those resources are all right there around us but neglected and in disuse or even just on the periphery the warmth and joy He intends is to have isn't as it could be, sucked away by the cold undercurrent of sin and pride. That's why it's critically important and valuable that you spoke and the Beyond 2020 team responded by rightly listing the driving force, the power in anything that happens at Mountain View as starting with and always staying focused on God and His promises. Word and Sacrament and what God does through them – forgiveness, adoption, choosing us as His – is critical. This is our identity. It's why we exist. Before any decisions are made on any ministry decisions, facility decisions, financial decisions, God's Gospel ministry is everything, has priority in everything!

Other times we can be deceived into thinking a surface is solid when it isn't. On that same trip, a few hours before falling asleep on the creek bed we drove to a small sledding hill. I was driving one of the cars. As we got near that hill I pulled off to the side of the road, the passenger side of the car treading toward a smooth patch of snow just off the road. Suddenly we were tipped at a 30 degree angle in a ditch. The snow had all drifted and filled in the ditch so that it was level with both the road and the fields on the other side. After an hour of shoveling, lots of pushing, spinning tires and someone else making a trip back to the house for bags of kitty litter to give some traction, we got that car back up on the road.

You know what it is to be in that spot. What it is to be deceived, suckered in by our own ignorance, or just plain recklessness that gets us into trouble. We know what it is to be snared by our own sin, trapped and stuck in a ditch.

But God doesn't leave us there. It starts with God and His creative, forming work in us. He is making us into something new, giving us a new identity. He's a potter and we the clay. He adopts us

as sons and daughters. He gives us forgiveness through the Lord's Supper. He provides us with the Church to have the Word preached to us, to provide each other accountability, encouragement, forgiveness, consolation, relationship. Even when we're suckered in and embarrassed by some mistake we've made, there we are – belonging, part of His people through Jesus Christ.

These next couple of weeks and in the months to come you're going to be hearing a lot more about the future. The next couple of weeks during this sermon series we'll dig into His mission for us, His chosen people, sent to love and disciple others. We'll be meeting for another collaborative brainstorming night on August 28th to dream about the future of this campus and how these facilities can best facilitate the ministry taking place. We'll eventually bring a proposed future for this campus, with recommended plans, based on your input, on how to work toward that future.

A quick aside to address something about the work that has taken place so far – you may wonder why in the world we'd choose to replace the school hallways and in the next couple of weeks the sanctuary carpet but not the narthex. Or the gym. Or the classrooms. Or... whatever else you're thinking. This summer's work was only about fixing absolute emergencies for safety concerns and existential threats (like how we can't run a school without air conditioning). But as I hope will be apparent over the next few weeks, as we think about long range facilities plans we wanted to do as little now as we possibly could because frankly, at this stage everything is on the table. How do we want to use the various spaces on this campus? Are we going to be repurposing spaces? Knocking down walls? Adding new things? That narthex carpet is stained and worn out and super ugly but this summer ugly didn't make the list.

Back to our proposed future and recommended plans to work toward that future – every conversation we have about the future is founded on the truth first of who God says that we are. We always start with that! You are chosen, adopted, forgiven, by God's hand. It's not a point of privilege, or pride but a sign of God's love. Moreover His choosing you and me isn't exclusive – Jesus came to redeem the whole world. He died for the sins of all, so that all who believe in Him would not perish but have eternal life. Surprising choices that we are for this gift, God then sends us on His mission to love other people and sends us to make disciples of everyone. More on that sending mission the next couple of weeks. In Jesus' name, Amen.