



Year B (2024) – Season after Pentecost, Series 2

MEANINGFUL MINISTRY

NOTE TO THE PREACHER: Liturgical Preaching and Planning

This series on Meaningful Ministry allows us to continue the philosophical discussion about a key question. What determines the main thrust of the sermon? (Addressing this question gives us—WELS Congregational Services—the opportunity to share our philosophy behind the production of the *Foundation* resources.) It's a discussion about the difference between *textual* and *liturgical* preaching, as well as what is considered in *liturgical* preaching.

We all know that preachers (perhaps ourselves in an overwhelming week!) sometimes latch onto a phrase in the sermon text and expound on it, even if what is said in that phrase isn't the main point of the text. What the preacher says in that sermon might be doctrinally accurate and perhaps even helpful. Yet, the sermon probably could not be called *textual*.

Then there are those preachers who do careful exegesis of the entire sermon text. They search for the specific law in the text. They preach the gospel, not in cliché fashion, but in the terms and pictures provided by that text. They make the applications the text itself suggests. It is a *textual* sermon. Hearers gain a better understanding of what that text has to say to them. They are blessed by that. Their faith has been fed; their conscience eased; their motivation to live for Christ empowered. However, it is possible that the preacher's message is not easily connected to the other two readings. There are some preachers who might say, "Who cares if the sermon's message didn't align with the other readings? I wasn't preaching on them." And, let's be honest, the way the pericope was set up often made it extremely challenging to find a common thread running through the readings, due to the *lectio continua* sections.

The new *Christian Worship* lectionary pivoted away from *lectio continua* precisely so that each week would have three readings that carry a common theme. This encourages preaching to be not just *textual*, but also *liturgical*.

When we speak of a sermon being *liturgical*, we mean that in considering the messaging of the sermon, the preacher looks at more than just the sermon text. He looks at other aspects of the liturgy: the other readings of the Proper, the Prayer of the Day, the placement within the Church Year, and *even the framework of the other Proper readings that surround that weekend* (i.e., readings that come the weeks prior and after, which form the basis of a series).

This series on Meaningful Ministry is illustrative. The theme for this series obviously indicates it's about ministry. Why? Simply because many of the readings for Year B, Proper 9 through Proper 13, focus on ministry. Sometimes, the connection is obvious.

For example, in all three readings for Proper 9B, we see that gospel ministry is always going to invite opposition.

- First Reading: The Lord tells Ezekiel most won't listen to him.
- Second Reading: Paul writes to Timothy while in chains but assures him the gospel cannot be chained.

- Gospel: Jesus himself is rejected in his hometown as he does ministry.

In Proper 10B, the readings all revolve around the fact that believers are sent out to do ministry with God's own authority.

- First Reading: Amos admits he was just a shepherd and arborer, yet he also was called by the LORD to prophecy.
- Second Reading: The worker's authority is rooted in the fact he holds to God's Word and proclaims sound doctrine.
- Gospel: It specifically says Jesus gave authority to the Twelve when he sent them out.

However, other times, the connection isn't quite as obvious. We see that in Proper 12B.

- First Reading: The Lord promises Moses he will rain down food to provide for Israel.
- Second Reading: Paul assures us that God provides "all things at all times."
- Gospel: St. Mark's account of the feeding of the multitude.

If one looked *just* at those three readings and didn't look at the readings of the weekends prior or after, one could decide that the focus for that day would be on God's gracious provision. Yet, this series deals with ministry. So, that broader context could shape the preacher's message. It's a slight pivot FROM a more general message about God's provision TO a more pointed message about the purpose of that provision. FROM: "Our gracious God is the giver of all good things. Everything we have comes from him." TO: "Our gracious God provides generously for us *so that we might have what we need to serve him and others in love.*" Throughout the previous weeks, "ministry" will have been repeatedly defined as "service." And that narrower focus even fits the Prayer of the Day, in which we thank God that he "[provides] for all our needs of body and soul." Why? That we might "serve you (and others) in willing obedience."

That concept could be shared, no matter what reading was chosen for the sermon. The Gospel ultimately is about a need that arose while Jesus and the disciples were carrying out gospel ministry, i.e., the crowds were hungry. The reading demonstrates the compassion of Jesus, that he cares for the whole man, both soul and body. It also shows that God will provide whatever we need in our service of him and our fellow man. (If he *hasn't* provided something, it's because our ministry doesn't really need that something.) Or consider the Second Reading where Paul explains that the reason God provides for us abundantly is "so that you can be generous on every occasion." The preacher can share that the reason God provides generously is so that we might serve others, both their physical and spiritual needs, as the Lord provides opportunity.

The miracle of Jesus feeding the multitude is recorded in all four gospels. When you look at where it falls in the lectionary in other years, there definitely are times when the main focus of that day is simply on the fact that God provides daily bread. It falls in a collection of Propers in Year A that lend themselves to a series about God's provision, as that topic is touched on for several weeks in a row. But in Year B, it falls in a series of Propers which keep referencing ministry. Thus, the focus this week in our worship plan is more about how God provides the physical resources we need to minister, i.e., to serve God and others. (This is also how Proper 12 is handled in *Commentary on the Propers: Year B*, which has Proper 9B through 13B comprising a series titled "Jesus Prepares Disciples to Share the Gospel." For the *Foundation* we've distilled that down to Meaningful Ministry.)

Please do not read any of the above to mean that if, on Proper 12, the preacher focuses more on God's gracious provision without mentioning ministry, he's done something amiss. Not at all! All three readings speak to that topic of God's provision. It is simply that his sermon wouldn't align with the

overall theme of this series, which comes not just from Proper 12, but from things seen in the Propers in weeks prior and after.

Again, this Note to the Preacher is simply meant to explain the thought process that went into CW21, *Commentary on the Propers*, and the *Foundation* suite of resources.

Jon Hein, Coordinator of Congregational Services



Year B (2024) – Season after Pentecost, Series 2

MEANINGFUL MINISTRY

SERIES EXPLANATION

“Ministry” is one of those churchy words that is often used, yet perhaps not fully understood. Ministry comes from the Latin word for “service.” Ministry involves serving others with love, compassion, and empathy. Helping someone with physical needs is sometimes called “compassion ministry.” Helping someone with their spiritual needs, sharing the good news of Christ, is generally called “gospel ministry.” We misunderstand ministry if we think of it as something only ministers do. While pastors are called to perform gospel ministry on behalf of others, ultimately every believer is called by God to reflect Christ-like love and share the message of salvation as God provides those opportunities.

In this worship series we will see our efforts to meet the needs of those God brings into our sphere of influence as meaningful ministry. In our service to them, those people see God’s love and God sees our faith. Our worship follows this pattern.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Not Glee and Gratitude, but Rejection and Resentment

Sent with God’s Own Authority

Jesus Models a Compassionate Shepherd’s Heart

God Meets Our Needs to Meet Others’ Needs

Fear Not, for the Lord Is with You



Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 7, 2024 (Proper 9B)

MEANINGFUL MINISTRY

NOT GLEE AND GRATITUDE, BUT REJECTION AND RESENTMENT

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

If ministry involves serving others with love and compassion, you would think that people would respond only with glee and gratitude for the help they received. Sometimes, but not always. If you offer to help a family member who is having trouble paying his bills, he might be offended, wondering if you are implying that he is not a good provider. Likewise, if you try and share the gospel with someone, he might resent the message that he is a sinner in need of salvation. You are trying to minister to this man's greatest need. Your intentions are loving. Yet he responds with rejection and resentment.

When our ministry efforts are met not with glee and gratitude but rejection and resentment, we are in good company. The prophets, apostles, and even Jesus himself all had those who responded negatively to their ministries. When that happens to us, it doesn't mean our ministry is no longer meaningful. For if others do not appreciate our efforts to serve them, God still appreciates our efforts to serve him.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

*Ezekiel 2:1-7 – The LORD sends Ezekiel to prophesy to the Israelites, knowing that most will not be grateful for the prophet's message but resentful.

2 Timothy 2:1-13 – St. Paul's ministry resulted in him being chained like a criminal. Yet God's Word cannot be chained.

Mark 6:1-6 – Many in Jesus' hometown rejected his ministry.

Note to the Preacher

The first reading was chosen for the sermon text because it does such a wonderful job of illustrating our primary goal when engaging in gospel ministry—*not* the salvation of souls (which only the Spirit can do) but the glorification of our gracious God. Why would the Lord send Ezekiel to the Israelites if so many were going to reject his message? *"Whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them"* (2:5). Even those who rejected Ezekiel would admit one day that God, in his grace, had tried to help them by sending his spokesman. God would ultimately be glorified, proven good and gracious. Likewise, churches engage in gospel ministry not because it always results in many coming to faith but because that ministry gives glory to the Savior who served us (and who himself suffered rejection). A believer attempts to share his faith with those God brings into his sphere of influence even if that believer sees zero individuals reached by his witnessing efforts. That doesn't matter. His ministry is still meaningful because it gives glory to God both now, as God sees us serving under the cross because of our love for Christ, and in the future, when those individuals realize that God sent his spokesperson to them.

HYMNS

Opening	895 Preach You the Word
HOD	639 God Has Spoken by His Prophets
Third/Distr	900 Lift High the Cross
Closing	774 God Bless Our Native Land

SERVICE OPTIONS

Another "Nation" hymn could be slotted into the third hymn slot if desired. Also note that *Service Builder* contains two responsive versions of the Prayer of the Church that focus on the nation.



Eighth Sunday after Pentecost July 14, 2024 (Proper 10B)

MEANINGFUL MINISTRY

SENT WITH GOD'S OWN AUTHORITY

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

When a child asks a sibling to do something there isn't much certainty as to the results. The sibling might simply ignore the request. However, if that same child goes to a brother or sister with "Dad said so," it's a very different story! Now the father's authority is behind the child's request.

As believers carry out gospel ministry, encouraging others to turn to Christ in repentance, people might push back. "What gives you the right?" Maybe we ask that question ourselves. "I'm far from perfect. So, what gives me the right to talk about things like sin?" This week we are given the answer to that question. "Dad said so." When our God calls us to do ministry, he also gives us authority. In calling us to ministry, God isn't asking us to share our advice or our opinion or even our values. We are sharing God's own authoritative Word. Gospel ministry is conducted by believers but with God's own authority behind the effort.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

Amos 7:10-15 – Wicked Amaziah questions the prophet's right to rebuke the king. Amos explains that he has authority only because the LORD told him to speak on God's behalf.

*Titus 1:5-9 – St. Paul establishes qualifications for those who serve in public ministry and stresses that their authority comes from holding firmly to God's Word.

Mark 6:7-13 – Before Jesus sends the Twelve out to do ministry, he gives them his authority.

NOTE TO THE PREACHER

The second reading was chosen for the sermon text because it provides perhaps the best opportunity within this series on Meaningful Ministry to describe the relationship between public/representative ministry and the ministry to which all believers are called, including the Ministry of the Keys. They are simply two sides of the same coin—gospel ministry. The preacher might note that the qualifications for public ministers delineated here are not ethical characteristics which God only wants to see in called workers. Ultimately, God would have *no believer* be given to "drunkenness" or "violent" or "pursuing dishonest gain." Both the average member and the called worker are to live as salt and light, letting others see the power of the gospel within them.

Obviously, the heart of this reading is verse 9. It shares from where the authority for gospel ministry derives. Whether it's a pastor preaching in a pulpit or a member of the universal priesthood witnessing across a fence, their authority is derived from the fact they are sharing "the trustworthy message as it has been taught." That is part of the relationship between clergy and members. When the overseer shares God's Word with members, Christ's intent isn't to absolve members from that responsibility but to empower them to do the same.

HYMNS

Opening	897 Lord Jesus, You Have Come
HOD	898 Send, O Lord, Your Holy Spirit
Third/Distr	901 O Christians, Haste
Closing	640 God's Word Is Our Great Heritage

SERVICCE OPTIONS

Service Builder has a responsive Prayer of the Church for the mission of the Church that would fit well this Sunday.



Ninth Sunday after Pentecost July 21, 2024 (Proper 11B)

MEANINGFUL MINISTRY

JESUS MODELS A COMPASSIONATE SHEPHERD'S HEART

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

In the ancient Middle East, a shepherd needed certain skills to do his job well: knowledge of edible grasses, ability to trim hooves, capacity to fend off predators, competency to birth lambs. However, the greatest qualification of a shepherd is much simpler. A good shepherd needed to care for his sheep. Without that, none of those other skills would be fully utilized.

In Scripture meaningful ministry is often pictured as a compassionate shepherd caring for his sheep: Jesus' care for us; a spiritual leader's care for his "flock." Certainly, gospel ministry requires specific skills: ability to actively listen to people, aptitude for applying the gospel to someone's situation, etc. But ultimately, meaningful ministry requires a compassionate heart—a profound caring for others. An individual might know God's Word backwards and forwards. But if they lack compassion, they will not fully perform meaningful ministry. Today, we ask the Spirit to see how Jesus models a compassionate shepherd's heart so that we might be filled with that same compassion.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

Jeremiah 23:1-6 – The LORD chastises spiritual shepherds for not bestowing care and compassion on their flock and promises to raise up good shepherds who would tend God's people.

Hebrews 13:7-8,17-21 – In the first reading, the Lord promised to raise up faithful shepherds. That promise is kept when the Lord provides spiritual leaders who point us to the great Shepherd.

*Mark 6:30-34 – Jesus is filled with compassion for those who go through life like sheep without a shepherd.

NOTE TO THE PREACHER

The first two readings really slant toward application about public ministry. Not only was that discussed to some degree the previous week, it's also hard to preach about in one's own congregation! (It is perhaps better for a pastor to show his heart is full of compassion for his people Monday through Saturday than to describe it in a sermon on Sunday.) The gospel reading certainly has applications for public ministry, but it can also be applied to all Christians, who are just little Christs. Let people see Jesus' heart here! He and the apostles are exhausted, having worked long hours without food or rest. They try to pull away, but the people are desperate and follow. Jesus feels a love for them that is profoundly emotional; he can't *not* help no matter how tired he may be. There's application here for the lay person who is exhausted dealing with work and kids and life in general, but a neighbor is desperate for spiritual help (without perhaps knowing their true condition). What moves that lay person to expend time and emotional energy to help? It will take Christ-like compassion. Ministry (service) flows from compassion. And that compassion is produced in us when we see Christ's compassion for us.

HYMNS

Opening	554 The Lord's my Shepherd
HOD	551 Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep
Third/Distr	766 Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service
Closing	736 Lord, You Call Us As Your People - v1-3

SERVICE OPTIONS

If 554 has not been previously/recently utilized, consider having a cantor sing verse 1 to introduce the melody.



Tenth Sunday after Pentecost July 28, 2024 (Proper 12B)

MEANINGFUL MINISTRY

GOD MEETS OUR NEED TO MEET OTHERS' NEEDS

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

King David explains, “The earth is the LORD’s and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1). That word “everything” doesn’t leave any wiggle room, does it? That word “everything” means that your home and all its furnishings, your vehicle and all that’s in the trunk, your bank account, the twenty-eight dollars in your wallet, the wallet itself, and the pocket in which you carry your wallet *all* belong to God. Everything you have was given to you by your good and gracious Father. We need to understand that.

But it is just as important that we understand *why* God provides for our physical needs. As we have seen throughout this worship series, God has called us to ministry. He asks us to reflect his love in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of others. Believers *want* to serve others in those ways. By providing for us, God meets our need to meet others’ needs. This week Jesus promises that he will provide the resources necessary to conduct meaningful ministry.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

Exodus 16:1-15 – The LORD graciously and miraculously provides for the physical needs of the children of Israel.

*2 Corinthians 9:8-11 – Paul teaches that God blesses us abundantly so that we have the resources to abound in every good work, generously helping others in all their needs.

Mark 6:35-44 – Jesus ministers to people by sharing the good news of salvation and by providing for their physical needs.

NOTE TO THE PREACHER

The second reading was chosen as the sermon text because of how well it connects the concepts of God’s provision to the purpose of God’s provision. “God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things and at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” Then, “You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion....” It is also a wonderful text to proclaim the grace God shows in his provision. We think we have what we have because of our skills and/or hard work, failing to acknowledge that if God had us be born in a different time or place or to a different family, we’d live in abject poverty. It’s all due to God’s grace! As an application, the preacher might choose to use this reading to talk about how compassion ministry and gospel ministry can intersect. It gives God glory when a believer simply meets some physical need of another. However, as we share physical blessings with others, God often provides the opportunity to share spiritual blessings as well. Take the practice of hospitality. As believers intentionalize spending time with unbelievers that God brings into their sphere of influence, those believers will eventually have the opportunity to speak the truth in love. Such encounters would be included in the “every occasion” Paul references in this reading. God provides physical resources so we can do such things.

HYMNS

Opening	749 God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending
HOD	827 Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad and Sing
Third/Distr	506 For the Fruits of His Creation
Closing	507 Let All Things Now Living



Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

August 4, 2024 (Proper 13B)

MEANINGFUL MINISTRY

FEAR NOT, FOR THE LORD IS WITH YOU

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

Shortly before he ascended, Jesus told his followers they were to engage in meaningful ministry—to work their way through the world, sharing the good news of salvation. Our loving Lord knew that was a big and often intimidating task. So, his next words were a promise. “Surely I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). God’s people still need to hear that promise.

For several weeks, we have been discussing the reality that the Lord of the Church has called all believers to meaningful ministry. Ministry will come with challenges. It can cause fears to arise: the fear of rejection, the fear of inadequacy, the fear of persecution. So, listen again to your Savior. “I am with you always.” We conclude our series on meaningful ministry empowered by that gracious promise.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

2 Kings 6:8-17 – Elisha’s ministry had resulted in Elisha and his servant being surrounded by an enemy army. But they didn’t need to fear, for the LORD and his mighty army of angels were with them.

2 Timothy 4:6-8,16-18 – Paul knows that soon he will be executed for performing gospel ministry. Yet he is not afraid, for he knows the Lord Jesus has always been by his side.

*Mark 6:45-56 – Before engaging in ministry at Gennesaret, Jesus comes to the disciples, dispelling their fears with his comforting and powerful presence.

NOTE TO THE PREACHER

While the first reading certainly fits the theme of the day (that God’s presence provides courage as we do ministry), it is the recommended sermon text for the Festival of St. Michael and All Angels in late September. The gospel reading was chosen because it allows the preacher to address all the various things that can cause us to fear. Some would seem rational, like being on the sea in a storm. Others are objectively irrational, like the fear of ghosts. Jesus, in his grace, addresses them all. The imperative “Take courage!” is enabled by his presence.

HYMNS

Opening	820 O God, Our Help in Ages Past
HOD	803 Day by Day
Third/Distr	533 Jesus, Lover of My Soul
Closing	549 Across the Lands

(continued)

SERVICE OPTIONS

549 is an easy tune to pick up. However, if it is new, consider having a cantor sing the first verse. Another option is to have the musician play only the melody line in its entirety.