



*Inset: Our potential first-floor offices inside weekday entrance*

## **“A Future with Hope: Bold”**

Fifth Sunday of Easter  
Saturday and Sunday, April 28 - 29, 2018

All Services  
The Reverend Dr. Guy S. Edmiston, Jr.  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Acts 8:26-40; Psalm 22:25-31;  
1 John 4:7-21; John 15:1-8

Joy and peace to you my sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus.

And I can say that because I have been a member with you in this vineyard of God since 1983, and with you I have been an honored member of this congregation as we have celebrated our 120<sup>th</sup> birthday last week. You know all of you are part of God's honored past. Whether you have been a member here for a lifetime or whether you're just a recent member of this congregation. We're all part of God's honored past. And tomorrow we all will become part of God's future. A chapter in the new book, new history of Trinity Lutheran Church.

One of the things that I've always loved about Jesus' teaching is that he gets right to the point. He doesn't pussyfoot around you know, he doesn't say, well maybe this or maybe that or listen to me, you can make your own decision. He tells it like it is and he expects us to listen and then to do what it is that he is telling us about.

When he said God loves you and you should love one another, he means it. He means it. He is speaking to disciples just a few days before his death and resurrection in this particular gospel lesson.

I am the true vine and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. That's telling it like it is. And you and I can give thanks this morning that we are bearing fruit for God's kingdom else we would not be here. If we were not bearing fruit, we would one of those cut off branches piled up at the end of the vineyard waiting to be burned. That's what Jesus said.

The fact that we are here testifies that God has found fruit on our branch and we have been pruned. Did you feel the sharp blade of the pruner's knife cut away the unkind thoughts about other people that run through our loins? Did you feel the sharp blade of his knife cut away that nasty word you said to someone who offended you, or did something to you that you just couldn't get a hold of?

Our days rush by so quickly that we often are not aware of the things that we think or say or the things that we do could earn the pruner's knife.

When we gather here each Sunday we are pruned as we confess our sins. We are pruned as we lay before God those sins of which we are aware and perhaps not aware. Jesus tells us that we have been cleansed by his word of forgiveness and that our attachment to him is firm and secure. And that's a great blessing, isn't it?

And if we honestly confess our sins and they are pruned by the love of God in his desire for us to live with him and be with him in our ministry and Jesus promises us forgiveness, what a great lesson that is. But being cleansed is not where it ends. Jesus says, "Abide in me as I abide in you." The question I think for each of us is what does it mean to abide in Jesus?

So often we hear words in scripture and we're not really sure what they mean. What does it mean to abide in Jesus? Abiding in him he says means we will bear much fruit which I will interrupt to mean the ministries that we support, the ministries in which we are involved as members of this congregation, whether it be musical ministries, teaching ministries, administration ministries, members of committees, all the different and variety of activities that are available to us and in which we commit ourselves here at Trinity Lutheran Church, that's the fruit we are bearing on our branch that is deeply embedded into the vine of Jesus Christ.

We all have a positive impact and we're having a positive impact on those that we serve, those we care for, those we pray for. All that we feel called to do will be blessed by God and grow in the impact that we have on others. Jesus abides in us as we are strengthened by the hearing of his holy word from the scriptures or from this pastor's sermon. All of us are strengthened by him as we receive his body and blood in the communion services. Being pruned helps us grow, and our ministry grows here as we share God's love with each other.

Most of us I would guess can point to another person, perhaps more than one, but at least one person who in our life time has had a significant impact when bringing us into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

It may have been a parent, it may have been a grandparent, it may have been a pastor, a teacher, a neighbor, a friend, an author of the book that we read that spoke deeply into our lives.

I am going to share with you a story this morning of a man that had a great impact on my life and if we think about it can be an inspiration to all of us. His name is Ludwig Nommensen. Now I am not going to ask how many have heard the name Ludwig Nommensen before, because these folks down here would all stand up and raise their hand because they heard about it at the early service. Pastor Horner nailed me over at the contemporary service because he heard the sermon last night. So, he had heard about Nommensen. But I won't ask you whether you heard about Nommensen.

Nommensen, Ludwig Nommensen was a German missionary in the late 1800's and early 1900's who felt called to take the ministry and the love of God in Jesus Christ to the Batak People on the Island of Sumatra in Indonesia. He was a man of great faith, Bataks were uncivilized, cannibalistic people, actually, who had rejected other

missionary attempts to convert them. I came across Nommensen's name in 1983 when I was visiting in Sumatra and came across Nommensen University, I got in a conversation with the leader of this University and said tell me the story of Nommensen. Why a university named for him, why are there monuments all throughout Sumatra lifting up Nommensen as a blessed man of God? He said well Nommensen landed on the Western shore of this Island of Sumatra, he went up to a high mountain and he looked down into the valley and there he saw the Batak communities, villages, and he knelt down on the top of that mountain and prayed that God would bless his efforts in bringing these people to know Jesus Christ, and then he went down into the valley and preached and taught them and lived among them. And I said to the man I was speaking with, I said, why Nommensen? What did he do that was different from other missionaries? Because there was a story about two Baptist, if there are any former Baptists here I am sorry, but there were two Baptist missionaries that the cannibals had for lunch. Truth, truth.

Anyhow, here goes Nommensen, why did he have success, why are there millions of Christians in Indonesia and Sumatra? Why is there a large church which is a member with our church, the ELCA in the Lutheran World Federation? What did Nommensen do that was so different? And he looked at me with sort of a twinkle in his eye, and he said because Nommensen was willing to sit and pick lice with us. Nommensen was willing to sit and pick lice with us. He went into their villages, he trusted in God, he trusted his future to his Lord. Certainly, he must have had fear in going to a strange land, to a people in a culture totally different from himself. Certainly, he knew the fate of the other missionaries before him and the threat to his own life, and certainly he remembered and took with him the words of St. John that we heard read in the first lesson this morning. *That there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.* Nommensen knew what love is and was for him.

For John tells us that God is love and God's love was revealed among us when God sent his only son into the world. And since God loved us so much we also ought to love another. Not just love someone like us who shares our history and our culture, but we are to love another whoever they might be, wherever they might be from.

I have been inspired in Nommensen's life in my own ministry to go boldly without fear into new calls, new opportunities, to be a pastor both in congregations and in our Synod. To allow people to be who they are and learn from them about their faith in Jesus Christ, to learn new ways of being the church in different parts of this county and the world. To know how other people, have experienced the love of God in Christ and how they have shared that in their communities and with friends.

So Nommensen's life has given me a deeper understanding of Jesus words *Abide in me, as I abide in you.* So, each of us as we move into the future of Trinity's vineyard will have new experiences and deal with changes and some new people coming in our community with new ideas, different experiences from churches from which they've come. The questions for us; will our lives grow as pruned branches in ways that show God's love for strangers who will come seeking to be accepted, cared for, taught, and invited to grow their own fruit for our mission? Will our love for those who have been bearing fruit for so many years, or perhaps for just a few years continue to grow and

share the future history of our vineyard? Are we willing to be bold in having God's love perfected among us, so the teaching of Jesus will be realized? My Father is glorified by this; that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. Amen.

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