



# Pastor Ken's Sermon

---

**SERMON – 23<sup>RD</sup> PENTECOST  
PSALM 22:30-31 & ROMANS 8:22-25  
NOVEMBER 13, 2022**

## **“THE CONGREGATION”**

In 1530 German princes and theologians loyal to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther presented to Roman Emperor Charles V a document called “The Augsburg Confession” – stating what the congregations influenced by Luther’s writings believed. The 7<sup>th</sup> article of that confession is one of its most important – it defines the church as “*the congregation of the saints*” – based on Psalm 149:1 which says, “*Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly*”. Article 7 defines what a church is simply and eloquently – it is a assembly where the gospel is preached, and sacraments administered “correctly” according to the faith handed down from the Apostles.

In 1957, a congregation that choose the name Calvary formed on the western edge of Milwaukee in the slightly swampy landscape of Brookfield. Pastor Marcus Lewis was our first *gospel preacher and sacrament administer* – he was followed by Ray Mehl. Other preachers have included Fred Hallanger, Ron Pechauer, Gary Liedke, Ted Youngquist, and by golly, now yours truly. Calvary congregation grew in numbers with its surrounding community and as needed, a section at a time in our building. You only need to notice how many different styles of roof we have overhead to be reminded of that! In the six years I’ve been here I think we’ve replaced roughly 5/4 of those roofs, and we still have one to go!

65 years hence, we’re still at it – doing the very same things the founders of this congregation did in 1957 – gather week by week under the promises of Jesus through His gospel and His sacraments – and although comforted by the grace of those gifts – straining to understand Jesus in all his glory and mystery, struggling to conform our thoughts and lives to his. That does not make us today so very different from the congregations in Saxony who first called themselves - or rather were dismissively called “Lutherans.”

In our tradition, the congregation is where the action is. It is (we are) the front lines of the kingdom of heaven, defined, as Matthew intended it, to mean wherever Jesus Christ is - that kingdom coming to whomever, Luther said in his Small Catechism, “*our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit so that by grace we believe his word and live godly lives on earth now and in heaven forever.*” The human heart is where God starts, and from there steers those hearts into congregations to continue to hear His gospel and receive His sacraments.

That such congregations may exist to do this exceptional, vital, indispensable work – people of faith give – they appoint (and provide for) folks to preach and administer, like me, and to teach, like Kyle, and to lead in worship, like Nicole, and administer like Sue, Cindy and Cindy, and maintain, like Kate. And to serve on our behalf, like Lutheran Bible Translators, Serenity Inn, World Mission Prayer League, Broom Tree Ministries, and Care Net. And so, the gospel, defined broadly as all “God breathed Scripture” - the “whole counsel of God” tells us to be givers – even sacrificial givers, so that such work is continued.

I am asking you to pledge yourselves to this work – the congregation is a place where nothing else like it is done – preaching and administering the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. I am asking you to once again experience “*the joy of generosity*” – I can’t possibly imagine how a widow could offer her last coin if she somehow didn’t feel the joy of giving.

And I am asking you to take to heart the counsel of Psalm 22 – a Psalm that begins with the very words our Lord Jesus spoke as he hung from the cross, “*my God my God, why have you forsaken me*”, and ends promising that the posterity of this “forsaken” one will be told to generations yet unborn. We do lots of things in congregations these days – sometimes I wonder if we try to do so much, we practically resemble community activity centers. But the one thing needful is we remember those yet unborn who if we press on will hear of what God has done in Jesus Christ.

I ask for your pledge to support our gospel work at Calvary. I asked you earlier to give to our ministry partner Care Net. So, as long as I’m at it, I’ll ask you to give something to the North American Lutheran Church, a congregationally focused church body that does not see itself as a body to be served, but as one who exists to serve congregations like ours. They ask us now to support them in that work, to ensure a legacy of faith today, tomorrow and forever.

The eyes of faith always strain to see that which is not. Paul in Romans 8 says we even hope in spite of what we see – a world groaning for the glory of God to be revealed. We hope because of what we have heard – Jesus the crucified is Lord. Giving is everything we do after we say, “*we believe that.*” What you give is to his glory. Thank you for doing it. AMEN