

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
November 25, 2012
"Christ's Love, Our Calling" –
True riches**

Galatians 6:7-10

Week 4: Opportunity Knocks

- 1. There is something special about opportunity!**
- 2. Something Special Given to God's People**
- 3. The door is Not Open Forever**
- 4. The Door Is Not Easy to Get Through**
- 5. As We Have Opportunity, Let Us Do Good!**

Hymns: 472 – 488 – Closing: 214

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:7-10

The young man had not seen the light of day for over two months. During that time he had not eaten more than bread, and sleep was something that he only remembered but no longer experienced. The smells were so foul that they would never leave his nose and he didn't care to think about what was in the water that was constantly sloshing around his ankles. Every day, a new person would find themselves sick, and this man figured it was just a matter of time before he caught something dreadful. However, despite those terrible conditions, this young man could not contain the nervous excitement that was in his stomach. Despite all that was around him, there were days that would go by when a great big grin would not disappear from his face. Why such a sunny

disposition in such a dreadful scene? This man was on a crowded boat headed to Ellis Island and the United States of America. He had left all family and possessions behind, and had nothing certain ahead, yet he was filled with optimism because he was headed to the Land of Opportunity.

There is something pretty special about opportunity, isn't there? After all, there are people who spend their entire lives hoping for opportunity to present itself. Applicants might end an interview with a plea, "All I need is an opportunity." A person down on their luck might spend their days begging for an opportunity from every person that they meet. A young athlete might go to his coach pleading for an opportunity to make a play.

And when opportunity comes, it is often viewed as a special treasure. Think of the hope that filled that young man, along with millions of others who have come to this country over the years. Think of the woman breaking down in tears after receiving a phone call that her application had been accepted and she could start work tomorrow. Think of the television shows that are built on the premise that when opportunity is given, people will react in spontaneous joy. As we think about opportunity, there can be no doubt that it is a truly special blessing for each life into which it comes.

Today, as we finish our look at *True Riches*, and as we consider for the last time the ways in which God calls us to live in response to the love that he has heaped upon us, we think about a special blessing that has been given to God's family of believers here in this place. "Opportunity Knocks!" And by God's grace, at this moment, doors of opportunity are there to be opened. And let us consider those opportunities in light of the Apostle Paul's words which we heard before in Galatians, chapter 6. Listen again to what Paul says in verses 9 and 10, "*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*"

As you have heard about for the past few months, opportunity knocks for Evergreen Lutheran High School. For so many years, its identity has been closely tied to that of Holy Trinity as it has shared this campus with us. Now, they have their own home and their own identity in front of them, in what has been called a one-time opportunity. It is a chance to not just own their own piece of land and their own beautiful facility, but it also is an opportunity to have their own plans, to find their own success, to look to their own future, not just as the school behind Holy Trinity, but as the hub of activity for all the Lutheran churches of the Pacific Northwest. Opportunity is knocking loudly for Evergreen Lutheran High School.

And at the same time, opportunity also knocks for Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and its ministry of strengthening its own people in the Gospel and spreading that Good News to many others. As Evergreen leaves, opportunities for ministry expansion swing open in front of us. Does more room mean growth for our grade school? Does a less packed calendar mean more programs to build our flock and reach out to others? There are many unknowns right now, but there is also a sense of excitement for our leadership as we discuss the many options that a more open campus might bring for our church.

And opportunity knocks for our Christian brothers and sisters in the Korean Lutheran Church as well. For many years, they have been relegated to the corner spaces of the campus or given the leftover slots in the calendar. Too often, I have seen Pastor Park searching for a place to meet. It is exciting to think that perhaps we can now give them a spot on our campus that they can call their own, a place where they can feel like they have a home, a place where their ministry can grow.

For all who currently call this campus home, opportunity is knocking at the door. For all who pray for opportunities, God has said, "Here it is." And while opportunity brings a great sense of excitement; while opportunity stirs our minds to think about the many, many new possibilities; we must also recognize two realities that always ring true when opportunity knocks.

See, though opportunity comes, it does not mean that the door will be open forever, or even for very long. And that is why Evergreen has made their sense of urgency so very clear as they have said, "The Time is Now!" And they have shared that message of urgency with you because this matters to each of you. One of the great responsibilities that God has given to his church is to feed his lambs. Evergreen gives all of us the opportunity to take part in that task as we encourage and mold young adults with a Christian education. We feed them so that they will be rooted in God's Word, so that the church will carry on through them as they grow into Christian adults. There is an opportunity to do good for the family of believers.

There must be urgency for Holy Trinity as well, as we find ourselves in a unique situation. As religious grade schools drop in enrollment all over the country, we have consistently turned people away from our classrooms over the last few years. Which of those children missed out on hearing the message of the Bible each and every day? Which of those parents went elsewhere in their search for a church home for their family? People will not always be knocking on our doors asking to come in, yet right now, that is precisely what many are doing. We have an opportunity to let more of them in, but our

leadership needs to know if that is the direction you want our church's ministry to take. They need to know if that is an area that you want to financially support. In so many ways, the time is now, for Holy Trinity as well.

And though there is such great urgency, though there seem to be so many opportunities, the harsh reality is that this door of opportunity will not be easy to get through. The opportunity that has come to Evergreen has come with a price. They are looking for what can only be described as eye-opening numbers: \$200,000 by the end of the year and \$600,000 by next summer. And Evergreen has gone to each of the churches, each of the members in the Pacific Northwest and asked for their help, they have asked for their offerings. It will take a great amount of sacrifice from many people.

And while that door of opportunity might look tight for all the churches in the Evergreen Association, it is certainly most imposing for us at Holy Trinity. While Evergreen's departure opens up opportunities, it also leaves a sizable financial hole as we will lose the \$60,000 in rent that they pay us each year. So, while we are asked to give, we are also faced with the reality that we will need to increase giving here as well, and that just to maintain ministry. More than any other church, this will take sacrifice from us. And sacrifice is never easy. It requires us to willingly give up the extras that we enjoy, the extras that we work hard for, all for the benefit of others. It requires us to take a hard look at our lives and decide what is really important. It requires us to put down our doubts and apprehension. As Paul says, doing this kind of good is something that can cause us to become weary; it can lead us to want to give up. It can move us to wonder whether the goal is something that is worth the work. And the devil will work to have us scale back or go into survival mode. Yet God puts the opportunity there as a challenge to push forward and do more. If we keep our eyes on what will result, the pains of sacrifice can be ignored. Think again to that young man on the ship. His sacrifice was real. The circumstances of his situation were unpleasant. Yet he knew that if he did not lose hope, he would find real rewards.

As we consider sacrifice, let us not just look to the opportunities and the results as we have done so far, let us also remember that we have a far different motivation as we consider how we might sacrifice. At a time of year when we are often so willing to dish out a little more for those that we love, can we do the same for the One who so loved us? It is not just the plans and wishes of men that we are sacrificing for, it is the work of God's kingdom for which we are asked to give. As you are about to remember how your God acted in love to bring his Son into this world; as you are about to observe how Jesus sacrificed to live for

you in this world, consider how you might now do the same for him.

“As we have opportunity,” Paul said, “let us do good!” Brothers and sisters, opportunity knocks. I urge you to prayerfully consider how you might answer as God seeks to use you to accomplish his work! Know that the sacrifices you make in giving to God will reap a harvest for him. Amen.