

Installation of Rev. Steve Kieser  
25 September 2011

Trinity Lutheran Church  
Darmstadt, IN

***The Miracle of a Preacher***

Romans 10: 14-17

We are here to witness a miracle today. This Christian congregation is receiving a pastor. And that's a miracle. Now you may say that there is nothing terribly mysterious about this at all. We worked with the district and followed all the proper protocol. We did the self-study and identified the kind of pastor we need. We did our research. We had read all those information sheets. We had meetings and we deliberated and finally we issued a call and Pastor Kieser accepted it. That's how it is. He came here from Iowa not heaven. He wasn't lowered down in a cloud; he came in a moving van with wife and children. It all seems pretty ordinary and mundane – not a miraculous.

It is hardly anything like the changing of water into wine or the parting of the Red Sea or the healing of a paralytic. But it is a miracle. When all is said and done you are receiving a new pastor today because God sent him. It is not because you picked him out or hired him. And it is not because he chose you over that church back in Storm Lake. You are receiving a man because he was sent to you by God Himself, sent to you with God's own words which will do the Lord's work. Men do not put themselves in the office of the Holy Ministry. It is finally the Lord of the harvest who sends men into His harvest field; He doesn't look for volunteers.

You must be sent. No prophet of the Old Testament, no apostle of the New Testament launches out on his own. They are all sent-sometimes against their will and even while uttering a litany of their own inadequacies. Think of Moses who argues with God that he lacks the gift of public speaking or Jeremiah who thinks that his youthfulness might be a detriment to the prophet office. Nevertheless, the Word of the Lord comes to them and they are sent to speak it. In the New Testament, the Word made flesh still bearing in His body the marks of the nail and the gash of the spear comes into a locked down room of fear-bound disciples in the twilight of Easter evening and He sends them with the same words you will hear this afternoon: "Peace be with you, as the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

That, Brother Kieser, is the only sure ground of your confidence. The Lord is sending you. That is really what mission is about. It is not about sweaty enthusiasms or programs or movements. It is the Lord sending His men, commissioning them as His ambassadors to preach Christ for the forgiveness of sins. You are sent to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified for God creates faith through the preaching of the Word of the cross. Martin Luther put it most succinctly "Preach one thing, the wisdom of the cross."

There are many things that you might think you have to do or need to do. No doubt you will hear of things that the folks in the congregation think you should do. Some of those items you attend to and others you will not. But there is one thing you absolutely must do

and that is preach Jesus Christ saying to sinners that in His name their sins are forgiven them.

You have known that wisdom as from a child you have learned the Holy Scriptures which as Luther says is a book that turns all human wisdom on its head. In a few minutes you will reaffirm the solemn vow that you made when you ordained; it is promise that binds you to the Holy Scriptures for they are the Word of God and it is only through them that sinful human beings are made wise to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. Their message is now your message. The words that the Holy Spirit gave to prophets and apostles are given you to proclaim. You are tethered to that Word; you have nothing else to say but the words of the Lord.

In our text, the Apostle quotes the Prophet Isaiah, "how beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news." Your feet are beautiful for they are set on the path to those who are held captive to their sin and need to hear a word of absolution that sets them free. Your feet are beautiful for they will travel the highway that twists and turns through the valley of the shadow of death to proclaim in the face of the grave the truth that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. Your feet are beautiful for they will walk with the needy and despairing, comforting them with the knowledge that the One whose name is Immanuel has not forsaken them. Your feet are beautiful for they are the vehicle that transports good news. Your feet are beautiful for they are shod with the Gospel of peace.

That Word will travel and it will carry you along with it to every place where people are languishing in the blindness of unbelief. God has put a Word on the lips of His preachers that accomplishes a miracle on par with creation itself. In the beginning God spoke, saying "let there be light" and no one had to grope around for an electrical switch. His Word called light out of nothingness. So also the Word which God gives you to speak creates faith. The Word of God says what it does and it does what it says. You, Pastor Kieser are sent to preach that Word for as the Apostle says, how can they hear without a preacher. And how can they preach unless they are sent?

Today members of Trinity Lutheran Church you are receiving a servant sent today. His feet are set on a steady course for he goes at the behest of the Lord Jesus Christ who has called him through the church to the pastoral office. For a pastor to be sent means that he does not run around with frenzied anxiety as though the church would be built and the kingdom extended through his busyness. To be sent is to go out as a man under orders who takes his directions from Christ. It is His Word He is given to preach and His sacraments he is given to administer. This is the work of the ministry that is committed to you today, dear brother.

It is all for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pastors come and pastors go. That's been going on here since 1847 when Pastor Saupert came here to Darmstadt to organize a congregation. Over the years the Lord would send other pastors. Sixteen of them by my count. Today Trinity receives another one. A hundred years from now he may or may not be remembered. They may name a parish hall after him or maybe not. In the end, it really doesn't matter for it is not about him. It is about Jesus Christ and pastors are His

servants, stewards of His mysteries. It is a good thing when people remember pastors who have served them well, but it is of far greater importance-eternal importance-that people remember the One that pastor's proclaim- Jesus Christ. You may forget the pastor who proclaimed Him to you, but don't forget Jesus Christ. He is the Savior who died to forgive you your sins and He was raised again for your justification. Pastors proclaim Him so that God may indeed work faith in the hearts of those who hear the Gospel.

Today Pastor Kieser is sent to proclaim that one, saving Gospel for faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of Christ. That is the miracle of the Gospel taking place right here, right now. And so we are bold to pray the words of an old Lutheran hymn, a prayer for both the one who is sent and the congregation that receives him:

And for Your Gospel let us dare  
To sacrifice all treasure;  
Teach us to bear Your blessed cross,  
To find in You all pleasure.  
O grant us steadfastness in joy and distress,  
Lest we, Lord, You forsake.  
Let us by grace partake of endless joy and gladness.

Amen.