September 30, 2018 Acts 11:27-30

ACTS 27587 Series: Christ Cared Enough To Act

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This sermon isn’t about you, or about us. This sermon is not about our church, about our mission here, or about the needs of our community and state and country. This sermon is not about the people of Hope Lutheran Church caring for the people of our 27587 community – even though we’ve been telling you for the past three weeks that’s what this sermon series is all about.

Today’s sermon is not about us. It’s about Christ. It’s about the active, caring love of Christ for us. Because it’s only the active, caring love of Christ for us that can properly move us to active, caring love for others. That’s how it always works – that’s how it has to work -- in Christ’s church.

From the very beginning, the Bible tells us, our Lord put his caring love into action because his people were in desperate need. We know about Adam and Eve’s sin, and how their sin brought a curse upon our world and our humanity. But, in precisely the same way, our sin messes up our lives, and our relationships, in countless ways every day. Does it not?

God could so easily look down, shake his head, and wash his hands of me, on account of my sin. He could, right now, snap his fingers and obliterate the human race on account of our sin. But he doesn’t. God never gives up on his people, or stops caring. He cares so much – he loves so dearly – that he took action. God promised a Savior, a Rescuer. From the family of Abraham and the nation of Israel, one would come, the Lord God pledged, to be a blessing for all the nations. This Messiah would come with healing, with compassion, with a mandate to make right what was so horribly wrong, to restore fallen humanity to fellowship with God.

And then Messiah came. Not just a human king, or a relatively holy man. Not a mere teacher, prophet, pope, or pastor. God himself came to us. God cared enough to act himself. The Son of God took on our human flesh, was born of a virgin, and he accomplished our rescue. Christ sacrificed his holy, perfect life as payment for our lousy sins. He put his caring into action – into the ultimate action of love – on the cross.

And, friends, we gather here in front of this cross week after week to rejoice, and to revel, in that active, caring love of Christ for us. We’re forgiven, only because of that active, caring love of Christ for us. We’re given the gift of faith, we’re saved and confident of life after death in heaven, only because of the active, caring love of Christ for us. We’re part of this family of God today, this wonderful church of ours, only because of the active, caring love of Christ for us.

And it is only the active, caring love of Christ for us that moves us to active, caring love for others. When we Christians help out after a disaster, or volunteer for the Touched By Hope community clinic, or train to be a Stephen Minister, it’s not our good nature, our charitable hearts, our need to be heroic, our generosity, or our guilt that motivates and inspires truly active, caring love for others. It’s Christ! It’s Christ’s love for us! It’s only Christ continuing to actively care and love his people through us.

So this sermon is not about us, about you or me, about our church, and our willingness to embrace and serve this 27587 community. It’s about Christ, who loves and cares for us so deeply, so passionately, so powerfully, that we can’t help caring for and loving others. The Bible says we are the body of Christ here in this place. You’re his hands. You’re his feet. You’re his eyeballs, and his esophagus, and his ACL, and his collarbone. And Christ is still eager to show his active, caring love to the people of our community through his body, through you. Using you. Employing his church. Moving, inspiring, motivating, and empowering us to active, caring love for our neighbors, and especially for those in need.

That’s how it’s always been. Acts chapter 11 tells about the very early days of the Christian church. The believers had been scattered because of persecutions in Jerusalem. The Christians in Antioch heard about a famine in Judea. What did they do? *“The disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so ...” (vs. 29-30).* Christ had such an active, caring love for them that they could pass it on to others in need.

This active, caring love for others? It’s not an optional activity for us, you know. Christ’s active, caring love for us compels us, constrains us in the church. Not that he lays a big guilt trip on us. Not that Christ expects us to prove ourselves by caring enough to act. Rather, it’s Christ who cares enough to act! Christ is the head of the church, and he is always picking his body up and moving us to do for others what he’s done for us.

This sermon is about Christ. And when I look around at the ministry of this church, I see the ministry of Christ. I see the active, caring love of Christ at work in our groups, in our programs, in our relief efforts, in our community service, in our mission trips. Oh, I do see a bunch of imperfect, defective, unrighteous sinners here – myself at the head of the list. But I see Christ at work in us, and through us. It’s the perfect love of Christ that moves imperfect Christians to active, caring love for others in need.

So today, here in our church, rejoice and revel in the active, caring love of Christ for you. And let’s pray that Christ moves his body, moves us, his church, in the days and years ahead, to share his active, caring love with others.

*prayer*