



**Redeeming Life Ministry Sunday 2023 *and/or* Third Sunday after the Epiphany
January 22, 2023**

Sermon Prayer: Let us pray. Heavenly Father, You so loved the world that You sent Your only-begotten Son to die for our sins and to rise for our justification; open our hearts to receive Your love, and to faithfully embrace the gift of our redemption. Shine the Light of your truth into all the world and enable us to have fervent love for one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

In the name of Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer, amen.

We know that this world, deep in the darkness of sin, will produce for us difficult and troubling days. Jesus said that in the world we “will have trouble....” When difficulty and trouble arise there are several choices that we could make in response. One choice, a sinful one, would be to blame God. Another is to call upon Him by faith in prayer, asking for His help in our time of need. King David prayed during a time of trouble:

*“In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!”
(Psalm 31:1-2 ESV)*

When facing trouble, we too should call upon God by faith in prayer. God hears the prayer of His children. God loves us and cares about us.

One of the ways that God answers prayers for help, is through other people, especially the church. I love seeing God at work through the church. Don't you love seeing the church in *action*! Do you enjoy being a part of the church in action? What do I mean, well, where have we seen the church in action recently?

We have seen our church join other congregations in Hurricane relief. Just last Fall we helped raise money to help congregations and church workers who were affected by Hurricane Ian. This financial gift was sent to the LCMS Florida-Georgia District office who distributed the relief funds quickly to those in need.

***[This is a great place to Insert the actions of your local congregation, how you have been serving others locally, nationally and/or internationally – Soup Kitchen, Food Pantry, Youth Service Event, Missionary, Mission Trip, Bible Translation, Prison Ministry, etc.]

The church of God in action is nothing new. The church has always served others in love. In Acts chapter two we see a generous and growing church:

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

Disciples of Jesus devoted themselves to Word and Sacrament. They received the gifts of God. In love, they used their possessions to help anyone who had a need. This is the legacy of the Christian church; faithful, but also merciful, gracious, and generous. The church serves others in love.

We also see the generosity of the church evident in the missionary work of Saint Paul. When writing to the church at Rome about his future trip to visit them, he shares with them his current plans to travel to Jerusalem to deliver a financial gift:

25 At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. (Romans 15:25-26)

What can we say about the actions of the church then and now?

The Christian church acts in loving service for others. What's the motivation? Why would we love others? The answer has everything to do with Jesus. We love because God has first loved us in Christ.

Sometimes we doubt God's love for us. In this dark, sin-stained world, difficulties and troubles arise, and we wonder where is God? Does God really love me? The proof of God's love is always the cross of Jesus – the proof of God's love is never the absence of trouble or difficulty; it is always the cross, the sacrifice of Jesus for our redemption. When we look to Jesus, we see God's love. God demonstrates His own love for us in this, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

We love others because God has first loved us in Jesus. John says it this way:

*16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 **Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.** (1 John 3:16-18 ESV)*

Today is our opportunity to consider how we love others through Redeeming Life Outreach Ministry (RLOM). We are the family of God, and we want to love, serve, and help other families. This is what RLOM does in the name of Jesus. Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries is a Christ-centered maternity home offering love, hope, and a future to single pregnant women in crisis. Hear how Redeeming Life loves others in action and in truth:

***[Insert here a recent story from RLOM or a video clip about RLOM]

RLOM helps us provide hope and a future for a mother and her child. It is a way that the Christian church can serve others in love. We know family is important to God. Jesus, at His crucifixion, is concerned about His mother Mary. From the Cross, Jesus commends her into the care of John, the disciple. Jesus demonstrates His love for His mom.

Family is important and to be cherished.
Moms are important and to be cared for.
Children are important and need to be loved.
Pregnant women in crisis are important to God and they should be important to us.

As the family of God, as church, we are called to love and serve others, not only with words, but **in action and truth**. (1 John 3:18)

It is true that we do not always love or serve our neighbor in the way God has gifted us. We have sinned. We have not loved God with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. But thanks be to God that He has sent the Light of Jesus into our dark world.

In His words and actions, Jesus shines the Light of God's love into our hearts. Jesus tells us that He loves us, and His actions prove it. At the Cross we see Jesus' love for us in action. He pays our debt for sin – even the sin of not loving Him or others as we should. Jesus suffers abandonment so that we will never be alone, forgotten, or forsaken. He works hard to make us a part of His family.

There are women dealing with a crisis pregnancy right now. They often feel unwelcomed, alone, forgotten and abandoned. Their troubles and difficulties seem to abound. The Christian church has an opportunity to provide hope in the name of Jesus. We have an opportunity to serve and love others as God has loved us. Will you join me today in action and in truth? Will you pledge financial support for RLOM? ***[Or you can mention specific opportunities to help – Baby bottles, Door offering, etc.] Will you pledge your powerful and effective prayer for this ministry?

We know that this world, deep in the darkness of sin, will produce difficult and troubling days for each of us. Women in crisis pregnancy face difficulties that we have an answer for. So, we ask God for His blessing, *Shine the Light of your truth into all the world and enable us to have fervent love for one another*. Amen.

This sermon was written by Pastor Bob Geaschel from Trinity Lutheran, Burr Ridge, IL in celebration of Life Sunday and the ministry of Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries.

Redeeming Life was founded in Sanford, FL to offer a Christ-centered maternity home for single mothers in crisis pregnancy situations who choose life for their babies. RLOM provides a safe and secure place to live, programming to learn life skills for independent living, and an opportunity to grow in faith with our Savior. The home is run by a deaconess and a house mom trained in leading women. RLOM added a transition home in Florida for women to practice the skills for successful independent living with support from the ministry.

In 2023, RLOM will open its second maternity home in suburban Chicagoland's East Dundee, Illinois. Each location partners with a local LCMS church to provide a family of faith for the residents and staff. Future plans include opening new maternity homes throughout the United States.

For more information, visit rlom.org.