

# Struggling thru' the Maze of Semantics

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by Jon Stern

The title of this paper, "Struggling thru' the Maze of Semantics," expresses the frustration this writer has felt over the past few years regarding some of the terminology being used in our midst. It's not that I'm unfamiliar with the words being used, but more so the way, the context, in which these words are being used.

Semantics, of course, is that area of language that has to do with the development and changes of the meaning of words. A few examples may be in order.

We're all acquainted with the Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons. They come to our homes - and if they know it's a parsonage, it seems they come more often - but they come in twos. At first, when you're talking to them or they're talking to you, it appears that they are in full agreement with what you've been saying; but when the conversation is over and the door is closed behind them, you're well aware that they weren't talking the same language as you were. There is a problem in semantics - not too mention all the other problems they have.

Or think about that Roman Catholic spouse in your Adult Class. She, too, is familiar with words like grace, justification, etc, but the meaning she associates with them, is quite different from the scriptural use of the words.

And who of us hasn't spent some time talking to our LCMS counterparts about fellowship - only to find out that they are as concerned about fellowship as we are. And they even practice "close-communion." But while the words sound the same, they attached a different meaning to them. There is a problem in semantics.

Walter Martin, renowned for his book, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, writes: (Under the heading: The Riddle of Semantics ....)

The problem of semantics has always played an important part in human affairs, for by its use, or abuse, whichever the case may be, entire churches, thrones and even governments for that matter, have been erected, sustained or overthrown. P. 19

The last thing any of our WELS brethren wish to do is to talk with a forked tongue. That's the devil's language - not our risen Lord's. Rather, our concern is that we who have the Truth speak it faithfully and clearly. Yes, our concern is that we, who are one in doctrine and in work, communicate that doctrine as one and carry out our work as one. Therefore, as one of old veterans of the cross put it, "Our statements (words) should be so clear that they are not only understood, but that they are also not misunderstood."

If, of later, you've attended seminars, read articles from Synod publications; and if you've caught yourself saying, what in the world are they talking about, or "this is enough to choke a camel;" then maybe it's time to study these words that cause confusion. That is why this paper was assigned. I'm not clear, though, why it was assigned to me.

The man who made that last infamous quote, kindly asked me to deal with these four words: Ministry, Vision, Discipleship and Evangelism. The scope of this paper is to see how those words are used in Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions and how they are being used today in our midst. The question was, Has there been a change from their historical meaning to the present? To clear the air on that question, the answer is, Yes!

There has been a definite switch in how we WELS pastors & people have historically understood those words. Is such a switch wrong? No, not necessarily. Not as long as we understand how those words are being used. Was the switch wise? That's a whole other ballgame.

The switch began when a Committee was appointed to study the 1969 Statement of Purpose, Objectives and Policies of our Synod. Pastor em. Theodore Sauer presented the findings of that study at the Administration/Seminar Workshop at Oconomowoc, WI on September 11, 1988. As the men at the Seminar studied the "old" they believed that such a statement structure gave ammunition to the We/They syndrome which had a negative impact within our Synod. The Committee concluded:

"any recasting should emphasize the "We" and utilize to the extent possible verbs denoting action rather than the somewhat passive language of the 1969 Statement."

So, when our Synod in its 1989 Convention adopted the "Mission-Vision" Statement, words like Ministry - that we historically equated with the public preaching/teaching ministry - got its springboard to equate the universal priesthood of all believers with their ministry. So let's begin by taking a closer look at the word:

## I. MINISTRY

Before this paper was assigned to me, my associate, the Rev. B. McKenney, had presented his findings on the word, diakonia, to a special task force. Some of the following information is gleaned from his work.

There are basically two Greek words, that can be translated as ministry. The nouns are diakonia and leitourgia. The latter being used much more than the former. As a verb form, leitourgew, means to perform a (religious) duty, such as in Hebrews 10: 11, day after day every priest stands ministering (NIV 'and performs') his religious duty. Concerning the coming birth of John the Baptist, Dr. Luke writes: "when Zechariah's time of service (KJV, ministration), was completed, he returned home (1:23). And when St. Paul states the only reason why anyone should/would pay taxes on/by April 15<sup>th</sup>, he writes in Romans 13: 6, this is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants - KJV, ministers. Thayer gives these definitions of the word in its various forms:

1. to serve the state at one's own expense;
2. to minister, perform a work - of the priests, Levites & apostles;
3. a service to the needy and for the needy.

The word, diakonia, and its various forms appear 75 times in the New Testament. In its verb form, diakonein - to serve, it is used 28 times. This verb is used in a general way in the sense of caring for or providing service for physical needs. Mk 1:13 ..and the angels "attended" him. Or again in Lk 22:26, ..and the one who rules like the one who "serves." When Matthew (20:28) records Jesus' words, just as the Son of Man did not come to be "served," but to "serve", the word is used also for providing spiritual needs to people. The word can be used for serving both the spiritual and physical needs. However, my associate, states the following: "The only time diakonein is translated in the NIV as "ministry/minister" is in the context about the work of the public office of the keys.

As a noun, diakonia - the service one performs - is used 32 times in the New Testament. It is a word that is used again for taking care of both the spiritual needs and/or physical needs of someone. It is also used in a context that refers to what we call the public ministry. Paul told young Pastor Timothy (II 4:5): "Discharge all the duties of your ministry." Or again when the work at St. Jerusalem was much and the workers were few, they elected seven men full of the Spirit and wisdom so that they would not neglect the ministry of the Word, Acts 6:2,4.

The sense of the noun in Colossians 4:17 is somewhat unclear when Paul says: Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord." Also it's questionable whether the word, diakonia, in Ephesians 4: 12, "...to prepare God's people for works of service", is a reference to the public ministry.

In the Lutheran Confessions, the word, minister, is used 27 times and the plural, ministers, is used 33 times. Four times it is used as a verb; 56 times it refers to those individuals who are entrusted with the public office of administering the Means of Grace. The word, ministry, is used 53 times and each time it is connected to the office of the public ministry.

Now that we're getting somewhat closer to where the confusion comes in, it is important to point out that Scriptures do distinguish between the office of the ministry and the priesthood of all believers. All true believers in Christ are made kings and priests who bring spiritual sacrifices. Romans 12:1, Hebrews 10: 19-22; I Peter 2:9 are some examples. And to these kings and priests have been given all the rights and powers of His kingdom. Matthew 18: 18-20, I Corinthians 3:21-23.

But God has also established Christian congregations and has instituted for their well-being the office of the Holy Ministry. When Christ called the 12, and later the 70, he made provision that the New Testament Church might perform its work in the world through His people. His people could call qualified men/women to be servants/ministers of the Word. If Scripture did not distinguish between the Public Ministry and the universal priesthood of all believers, do you realize the impact Jesus' words, "only in his home town among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor" Mk 6:4, would have on 90% of our WELS congregations.

So, yes, historically, we have used the words, ministry and minister, to refer to the Public office of the Word and the men who hold those offices.

Pastor Ron Roth delivered a paper to a conference on the title, "The Theology of Lay Ministry." No date, no time, no reference to whom it was delivered was stated. In it, though, he makes this comment concerning ministry:

We are to invite all the people of God to a personal commitment to live out their identity as his own people by responsive obedience to a God whose voice calls each one to minister and to serve . . . P. 8

The application of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers in the Bible is the designation of all Christians as ministers All Christians are called by God into ministry: all are called to serve. P.14

Let us seriously examine the terminology we use in our congregations. Lay and clergy are terms freighted with secular meanings of amateur and professional respectively. It would seem more Biblical to give the laity the title of ministers and to refer to those in the public ministry by the office to which they are called - pastor, teacher . . . P. 25

Also, in the 1989 BoRaM, we see a swing from the somewhat passive language to the verbs denoting more action. Under the title: Tentative Elements of a Strategy, we read:

A series of workshops for pastors in late 1990 and early 1991 will provide a forum for sharing plans and resources related to ministering for spiritual renewal. Central to these workshops will be an introduction to the "Training Christians for Ministry" curriculum which will be the primary tool developed for the spiritual renewal project. In order to develop an appreciation for spiritual renewal without also creating premature expectations, the project will rely on the The Northwestern Lutheran as its only vehicle of direct communication with the synod's embers. Prof. Mark Braun's recent series on (lay) ministry provided an excellent introduction... P. 101

The April 1 NWL contained the article, "Revitalizing parish ministry" written by Dorothy Sonntag. Notice how the word ministry is used:

....time to rethink our approach to ministry;  
....more effective ministry  
....it's necessary to adapt ministry to today's society  
....involving more people directly in ministry  
....member ministry is essential  
....we don't all do ministry the same way  
....There's diversity in ministry.

Concerning lay ministry, Paul Kelm writes:

All God's people need to realize and be equipped for their role as ministers in family and community (the universal priesthood of believers) ....

a) That ministry means serving and that all Christians have a ministry needs emphasis in our teaching. Luther's "Table of Duties" once made the universal priesthood of believers specific. Today's Lutherans may need such a definition of a disciple's ministry-in-life. (Parish Renewal paper, p.3)

There definitely is a lack of consistency in how the word, ministry, is used even among the various Boards and officials of our Synod. For example, our Board for Worker Training states in the 1990 Report to the 12 Districts:

A second major proposal from the BWT focuses on providing necessary training for church workers of the future who will be involved with various forms of staff ministry in our congregations. Originally termed "alternative forms of ministry," the title has been changed to avoid any impression that these forms of ministry would serve as a substitute for the regular pastoral ministry or as a shortcut to it. (Worker Training, p.5)

Or look at some of the phraseology used by the Board for Home Missions:

The purpose of the package is to have the subsidy from our SMO determined on the basis of the prayerful planning for ministry by the congregations involved. (Home Missions, p.79)

Then there is:

the “Taste of Ministry” for the professor and to enhance the targeted mission’s ministry without the long-term commitment of money and manpower. (Home Missions, p.81)

But then look at the very next paragraph which says:

We hope, the above gives you a feeling for some of what your BHM is doing in the service of our Lord and you.

That’s the kind of clear language we’ve been accustomed to. And in the President’s newsletter of March 1991, Pastor Mischke clearly writes:

Most of us learned to know our Savior in a congregation that owes its doctrinal position, perhaps its very existence to the WELS. Our training for the ministry was heavily subsidized by the WELS.

What can you say? The switch in the word, ministry, is there. It appears that how the word is used depends entirely upon the discretion of the individual writer/essayist. Context will have to decide if the word is used in its narrow sense, referring to the Public Ministry; or in its wide sense, referring to what any and every Christian does as they continue to serve their Lord in their appointed vocations.

Before we get on to the next 3 words, it might be helpful if we discussed a topic that could (7) shed some light on how the words, vision, discipleship and evangelism came to the foreground.

We are all acquainted with the word, pietism. And while it is true that there is such a thing as “Reformed Pietism,” the term generally refers to the movement in behalf of practical Christianity within the Lutheran Church of the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the Lutheran Church it received its momentum from Spener’s, *Pia Disideria*. Basically Pietism was a reaction to what was perceived as a dead orthodoxy and a lack of piety in the Lutheran Church. Pastor John Brenner, Dean at MLS and presently holding a Call to WLS, wrote an excellent paper on the subject. He writes:

In some academic circles there was an overintellectualization of religion with little concern for practical application to the lives of the common people. Confessional Lutherans always need to be on guard against those dangers. (Pietism: Past & Present, P.3)

Spener then went on to spell out a 6-point program for improving the conditions in the Lutheran Church. He got full support from the top orthodox theologian of his day, Abraham Calov. His 6-point program has a modern ring:

1. Thought given to more extensive use of the Word of God;
2. Attention should be given to the establishment and diligent exercise of the universal priesthood of all believers.
3. Christian faith must be put into action. For it is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice.
4. We must beware of how we conduct ourselves in religious controversies.
5. In the schools and universities attention must be given to the moral development and moral training of future pastors.
6. Ministerial students should be taught to preach sermons aimed at the heart and directed towards the life of the hearer.

These proposals were received favorably at first, but when orthodox Lutherans began to see what he really meant by what he said and the course of action he was taking, opposition developed.

Also, the *collegia pietatis* - the gathering of the pious (small Bible groups) - were developed. These were pocket groups of God-fearing people who were to serve as leaven for improving the spiritual condition in the congregation. But it back-fired. Spener himself did not use them in his ministry at Dresden or Berlin.

One could say that Pietism shifted gears. The shift was from justification to sanctification. The emphasis was placed on what Christ does *IN US*, instead of what Christ has done *FOR US*; on holy living rather than on the forgiveness of sins. What prompted them to shift gears?

Spener, Franke and their followers were really looking for the power that they felt was lacking in the Lutheran Church of their day. They were bothered by the slow progress of the Gospel. God's promises were not enough. They needed visible proof. And so, they developed what might be called the forerunner of today's success theology. They found that visible proof or validation of God's Word in the success that they believed God has promised to every rightful undertaking.

The present Church Growth movement has its roots in the Reform camp of Christianity. It contains much of the spirit of Pietism. Also, Church Growth theology makes an unbiblical distinction between ordinary believers and disciples. Such was the statement by the LCMS in a report entitled: "Evangelism and Church Growth - With Special Reference to the Church Growth Movement."

The reason for that interlude is that the next 3 words for our consideration are words that stem from the Church Growth circles. Not that they're wrong to use, in and of and by themselves. However, what needs to be clear is how we are using them.

## **II. VISION**

This word has been placed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position largely because it seemed to follow in a progressive pattern. Let me cite an example from the *Parish Renewal - Thesis and Implications* by Pastor Paul Kelm:

Ministry is focused more effectively when the church has a "vision" for its future. Such a vision is based on the promises of God, shaped by the church's ministry needs and opportunities and established with a "Deo volente."

a) A concrete picture or vision of the church's future will coordinate and target the congregation's planning and energy. Without such a "ministry target" competing agendas tend to fragment the church's effort. (P.2)

When the KJV & NIV translators used the word, vision, they are translating the Greek word, optasia (noun) or the verb form, optavw. The word is only used 4 times in the New Testament. For example in Luke 1:22, they knew that Zechariah had seen a vision. The verb form means "to look at, to behold." When used as a noun it is "an appearance presented to one awake or asleep." In the Lutheran Confessions, the word only appears once in the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration. Its meaning is "one's physical sight."

The meaning of the word, vision, as it is being used in our midst today comes from the business world. In the language that we're familiar with, I would put it under the category of stewardship - being wise caretakers of what the Lord has entrusted to us. This was the sense as it was stated in 1989 BoRaM on P. 138:

Finally, the Mission-Vision statement Let it be said that this is not an attempt to program the Holy Spirit. No one can do that, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." But that hardly excuses us from doing careful planning .....

It isn't careful planning that Scripture condemns, but planning that fails to make God an essential component of the planning equation. It's planning that forgets the little phrase that is so much a part of our German heritage: "so Gott will."

Therefore, the definition of the word, vision, that was proposed to the 1990 Synod Convention was stated in the Vision 2000 Statement:

1. An outline of what, under God, we hope our Synod will be and do.
2. An instrument to focus, prioritize and coordinate planning;
3. The application of faith in the Lord's promises and stewardship of His resources to His church's future. (P.5)

As to the why of such long-range vision, that was stated at the "Revitalizing Parish Ministry" seminar in Appleton on January 21, 1991:

- a) It establishes the "point B" of planning, where do we want to be and why.
- b) It focuses boards and committees on significant common ends.
- c) It promotes consensus, ownership and expectation among members.
- d) It establishes priorities.
- e) It focuses on what we ask God to accomplish through the Means of Grace, not what we do because we are a church. (P. 6)

Then, as to the use of such a vision-statement/document:

The vision document becomes the primary planning tool of the council and boards. It is repeatedly referenced in communications to the congregation. (Parish Planning, P.7)

I can understand the use of the word, vision, in such a context. But is that word being used the same way when in the March 1991 issue of outreach, we read: "In the 1980's the vision for campus ministry became clearer." P.1 And then again on P. 2 of the same article: "Earlier I asked you to look into the future. By looking at the present campuses and ministry maybe we have a better vision of the future." Or again when Pastor Ron Roth states in His paper, "The Theology of Lay Ministry":

We are a church body looking for a cause. In the 60's it was purity of doctrine. In the 70's a mission planting church. And while we continue to be both of the above, in the 90's it must be lay ministry. May we, who are leaders in God's church respond with vision, zeal and dedication. P. 29

Going back to the Parish Renewal Theses and Implication, Pastor Kelm writes:

- b) Developing a vision for the church's future can help rally people to prayer and action, trusting the Lord to bless their role in his work. Without such a gospel-vision, members may become comfortable watching others carry on their ministry.
- c) Establishing a vision for the church brings optimistic confidence in God and realistic assessment of the church's situation together. (P.2)

One wonders if Noah, a preacher of righteousness for 120 years, would agree that the reason he wasn't successful- at least in the numerical sense -was because he didn't have a "vision." Maybe Noah, instead of Leah, should be referred to as "weak eyed?" Putting away the sarcasm, the word, vision, could be understood clearly if it is used in the context of being wise caretakers of what has been entrusted to us. But such a vision needs to be God-centered. First, we must look at His clear promises. After all, the Church is His and He's got a lot invested in her. And isn't it nice to know that our Lord isn't sleeping at God's right hand. Rather, He continues to rule this entire world for the sake of His blood-bought Church. Just think of all the parables Jesus told concerning the growth of God's Kingdom - cf, Mark 4: the Sower, the Growing Seed, the Mustard Seed, etc ....

Secondly, before anyone can carefully plan ahead, they need to consider the past and the present. And as the Lord has blessed us in the past and in the present, so we can look into the future confidently knowing that what our risen & ascended Lord said to the apostle Paul, so He says to us: "my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." II Cor. 12: 9 Is that not also true concerning us, as Christian individuals, Christian congregations and as a Christian Synod? Absolutely) Which brings us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> word for our consideration:

### III. DISCIPLESHIP

The Greek word that we are dealing with here is: mathetes. As a noun it means "a learner, a pupil, a disciple, one who follows one's teachings." The word is used in both referring to Jesus' disciples, Matt 9:14 and in regards to John the Baptist's disciples, John 3:25. In the Book of Acts, oi mathetai refers to all who confess Jesus as Messiah, 6:1; 9:19 & 11:26.

The verb form is matheteuw, which means to be the disciple of; to follow someone's precepts and instructions. In the familiar Matthew 28:19 passage, it means "to make a disciple, to teach or to instruct." While the word is never found in the Old Testament, the New Testament

writers do use it. However, as a noun or as a verb it is never used in the epistles nor in the Book of Revelation. There, the emphasis is on the word saint. The Gospels, Luke 14:33 & Mark 8:34, also speak of the “cost of being Jesus’ disciples.” But there is no critter in Scripture called “Discipleship.”

Perhaps that’s the reason why you never find the word in the Lutheran Confessions either. The word, disciple, is used once in the Large Catechism and the plural is used 18 times, also in the Large Catechism. Each and every time it refers to the followers of Jesus, those who believe Jesus’ teachings.

My guess is that the word, discipleship, came about when a shift in emphasis was put on the verb, instead of the formerly held imperative in Matthew 28: 19. For decades we viewed our Lord’s Commission by saying, “Therefore, GO and make disciples of all nations...” Presently, the emphasis seems to be on, “Therefore, go and MAKE DISCIPLES of all nations.” If that is the case, then you can understand where we get the word, discipleship, and why that word is becoming more and more common.

However, if you put yourself into the sandals of those early disciples, gathered around the Mt. of Olives on Ascension Day, the word that must have stuck out like a sunflower plant in a carrot garden, must have been the word, GO - not “making disciples”. For centuries the Jews had been “coming” to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the center of worship. On Ascension Day, however, Jesus re-routed their direction. Then came Pentecost, then came persecution and then went the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Prof. David Vallesky from WLS delivered a paper to the 49<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention, gathered at NWC from August 3-7, entitled, “Equipping the Believers as Disciples.” In it he states:

People become disciples through baptism or through teaching, but that is not to be the end of the matter. Jesus doesn’t say, ‘make believers’ of all nations. He says, “make disciples of all nations.” There is a certain difference between the words. The latter word includes and adds to the thought of the former. A disciple is a believer, but a disciple is also a learner.

He goes on to explain what the word, disciple, means:

There is, however, a similarity between a disciple of Jesus and disciples of men in various other fields: The disciple of Jesus is also a learner, he is not a finished product. There is always something incomplete about him. The incompleteness is not in his justification. There are no ½ or ¾ justified disciples of Jesus. When the Holy Spirit leads a person to call Jesus, “Lord”, God credits to the individual’s account all of Jesus’ holiness ..... What is unfinished, though, is the believer’s sanctification.... P. 12-13

Pastor Ron Roth in his paper, "The Theology of the Laity", defines the word as follows:

The word, disciple, means basically a learner, one who accepts the teacher’s beliefs, lifestyle and mission. Sometimes in the Bible, disciple is used to designate a follower of Jesus, regardless of the levels of commitment. Generally it implies a marked degree of maturity in the Christian faith .....Discipling begins with a few and by stages it extends to the whole. P. 23

So when we read, “Youth Discipleship”, “Adult Discipleship”, “Discipling Youth with the Word” etc. etc. etc, they, I think, are reechoing the words of St. Peter, who encourages Christians\believers\disciples of all ages and of every age “To be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure (to yourself). For if you do these things - the study of the Word - you will never fall.” II Peter 1:10

Peter also gives us the flip side of that passage when he writes in that same epistle, 3:18: “Grow (and keep on growing) in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” If a Christian is not growing in their faith by using the Means God has given him, he is dying away from Him. In other words, no Christian, on this side of eternity, can claim to be in the ‘cruise mode.’

Now, whether or not the word, discipleship, carries that kind of weight & understanding, is up for debate. But I think it’s safe to say that with our BPE and BPS making use of the word, it’s here to stay. Which brings us to the 4<sup>th</sup> and final word for our consideration:

#### **IV. EVANGELISM**

The Greek word is a word that we’re all familiar with. At the Seminary every morning we saw these words inscribed above the archway in the chapel: Kerexete ton euangelion, Preach the Gospel or good news. The verb form is used both in the OT & NT meaning “to bring good news.” After the resurrection the term comprises the preaching concerning the life, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord. In the NT the euaggelistes are those “heralds of salvation” who are not apostles, Acts 21:8; Eph.4:11; II Tim. 4:5. The Lutheran Confessions never use the word, evangelism. You will find the word, evangelists, 4 times and the word, evangelical, 24 times. When the word is capitalized (6), it refers to the confessional statements of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Going to a paper that was delivered to the 49<sup>th</sup> Synod Convention gathered at NWC in August of 1987, Pastor Paul Kelm - our then executive secretary for evangelism - states:

The noun “evangelism” doesn’t occur in Scripture, perhaps because God wanted His church to do His mission, not debate it. Our English word is the transliteration of a verb meaning “to bring or announce good news.” The noun, evangel or gospel, is used with a verb meaning, “to proclaim as a herald.” More than 50 times in the NT such evangelizing verbs are used. Closely related are a family of nouns and verbs meaning “witness” & “testify,” with the English derivative, “martyr” - being an indication of the commitment implied. P. 2

He then proceeds to define the word in its broad & narrow sense:

In its broad sense, evangelism encompasses the entire mission and ministry of the Church - outreach to the lost with the Gospel and nurturing of the saved by the Gospel.

In its narrow and common meaning, evangelism is bringing the Gospel to those whom are unChurched and unchurched. At the risk of adding to an already confusing list of definitions, let me be more specific about the narrow sense:

Evangelism is everything that Christians, individually and corporately, do to confront the lost with Law and Gospel, so that by the Gospel the Holy Spirit would bring them to faith in Jesus Christ and make them disciples. P. 2

More light (?) is shed on the word when phrases such as:

While Scripture uses 'seed scattering' as an illustration for proclaiming the Gospel, the mission emphasis is on 'harvesting.' P. 2

...evangelism is the ministry of every believer and of every church. P.4

The same thought was shared in our recent Northern Wisconsin District Newsletter, Vol. 4, #4:

Evangelism is part and parcel of everything believers do to the glory of God. It is living our faith and sharing our faith..

Or maybe you have heard it said, or maybe you have even said it yourself:

"The only reason our Lord still lets us take up space on His earth is to share His Word with others."

Now those statements can rightly be understood - as long as you explain what you mean by the word, evangelism. But isn't it much simpler to explain the word, evangelism, as "one sinner telling another one who the Savior is?" After all, it's that Savior, and only that Savior, that sets me apart and keeps me apart from this unbelieving world. Did not St. Paul recognize this truth when he said, I am what I am by the grace of God! I Cor. 15:10

And didn't this Savior redeem me so "that I would be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him ....?" And certainly one way in which we DO serve our Lord is by telling others about Him. But it is not the only way! My entire life - thoughts, words and actions - every minute of every day - is to come under the lordship of the Master. But that's sanctification! Evangelism is an area of sanctification. Evangelism is an area that all Christians can grow in. The only One, though, who can provide that growth is God. And He does that through the Means of Grace.

Yes, this word, like all the others that we've talked about this afternoon, can be rightly understood - even by someone like myself. Will I use that kind of terminology in talking to God's people at Bethany? Chances are, no! My reasons for not using them, though, are not because they're wrong, but because they can be confusing to them.

Also, I shall continue to strive to show people that while there is a business end to the church, the church does not dare not operate like a business. And while my Christian liberty permits me to wear a Roman collar, I would not wish to give my people, God's people, the impression that we're in agreement in anyway with the Roman Catholic Church. The Church of Rome still remains the enemy of the Gospel.

For your sake, we've reached the end of the maze. If you noticed the maze on the front cover, the center of it contains a book. "Your Word, O Lord, is Truth", exclaims the Psalmist. Therefore, may our risen Lord continue to help us preach, teach and share that Truth in all its clarity to the praise of His Name.

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