

Before I begin this sermon I would like to add to the report on World Hunger that we just heard. We heard about some of the good things that are happening because of the work of the Lutheran church. Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Relief and the Lutheran World Hunger Appeal are ways our church is active in helping to relieve suffering. I can testify that when I was in Liberia there were three types of trucks I saw most often – the U.N., Doctors Without Borders – and Lutheran World Relief. The people of Liberia know of the faith of the Lutheran church through the work of LWR; and through the Liberia Project based here in Holy Trinity. We are about to begin a new initiative through the Liberia Project to provide scholarships and eventually build a school in Foyah, Liberia. We are living out our faith and making a difference.

Rick Warren rightly begins his best-selling book “The Purpose Driven Life” with the first truth we need to accept in order to live the life God has created us to live. The first thing we need to acknowledge is simple: “It’s not about me.” The most important thing is what God wants *for* me, and what God wants *from* me.

But the temptation is always there to make it about me. Just as the temptation was for Jesus to accept a lesser goal, to follow his human desires - to give in to the desire for power, wealth, and acclaim.

We think – “I need to... I want to... I can.....Me, Me, Me!”

It is about hunger:

I think I need more, while 1.2 billion people live on \$1 dollar a day or less.

Everyday 800 million people go to bed hungry.

Every day, 28,000 children die of poverty related causes.

So, each Lent we begin with the temptation story.

Three temptations, wrapped in logic and delivered when Jesus was most vulnerable

They are the temptation - To have, to do, and to be - To have food for the belly, to do a spectacular stunt to gain attention, To be in charge of my world.

It is temptation when we focus on ourselves

It is sin that causes us to forget about others and our God-given vocation to be light for the world, and to care for our neighbor.

It is about education:

115 million children are not in school.

133 million young people can not read or write

only 37 of 155 developing countries provide primary education to all.

In Liberia, where average income is less than \$900 a year, it cost a family over \$100 to send a child to elementary school. And as I said, we at Holy Trinity, in partnership with others, plan to do something about that!

We hoard natural resources and withhold our abilities to help.

Gender based inequality stifles half of God’s children

It is about discrimination:

2/3 of the world’s illiterate are females. Employment rate for women is 30% that of men.

Illness too, strikes the poor and women disproportionately

It is about health care:

In developing nations, 1 child in 10 dies before his or her fifth birthday. That compares to 1 in 143 in high-income countries. Over 11 million children under the age of 5 die each year, approximately 70% of those deaths are preventable.

14,000 women and girls die each day from causes related to childbirth. 99% in the developing world.

We are hearing much less about HIV and AIDS in this country, but it is still a great threat worldwide.

8,000 people die every day of AIDS related conditions

13,000 people become infected with HIV every day.

15 million children around the world have lost one of both parents to AIDS

Hunger is a terrible problem Poverty is a painful scourge on our world

We need an answer to the temptation to make it about us.

We need an answer to the temptation to settle for less than God's desire for our lives

The answer is ---- what is the answer students? ----

That's right, the answer is God. (I always teach my confirmation students that if they aren't sure of an answer try Jesus.)

The answer is to focus not on our own desires, and not on the temptations around us

But to focus on God – God's will and God's way and to see our sisters and brothers who are created in God's image.

We use the Lenten season to help us focus on God – to remember that God is in charge.

And like Jesus, to develop our solidarity with those who are poor and hungry, the children and mothers, the lost and the lonely.

And to help feed, not with bread alone, but with bread, grain, technology, systems, advocacy, financial aid, and health care and most importantly with compassion for all of Gods' children.