**God’s Approval**

Day of Encouragement for Pastors and Wives

St Johns, Wheaton, Friday 7, August 2015

1. God the Father says to each of you, “You are my beloved son/daughter; I am well-pleased with you.”

* Jesus says, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”
* Do you realize how pleased Jesus is with you?

1. Nothing is as discouraging and disheartening for us as pastors as persistent criticism and withheld approval by our people and our leaders.

* Nothing is quite as encouraging and invigorating as words, “Well done! That’s great.”
* I don’t just want people to approve of me; I want them to approve of the work I do, my ministry

1. Well, what about you?

* Is your congregation pleased with your ministry and your wife pleased with your work as her husband?
* Is your husband pleased with your work as a wife and mother and member?
* Is Jesus pleased with the work that you do?
* Paul’s goal in 2 Cor 5:9: **we make it our aim to be well-pleasing to the Lord.**
* Paul’s claim in Rom 14:18: **Whoever serves Christ with righteousness and peace and joy in/by the Holy Spirit is well-pleasing to God**
* Not successful pastor or pastor’s wife
* Whoever serves as empowered by the Holy Spirit
* To do what is right, to make peace and to bring joy from Jesus to others
* Two sides: God pleased with me as a person and pleased with what I do.

1. Well, is Jesus pleased with your work at home, in the church and in the world?

* Let me tell you that he is well-pleased with your work, just as well-pleased as His Father was well-pleased with the work of Jesus: John 8:28b-29.
* Do you serve God by leading your congregation faithfully in worship according to God’s word? Then He is well-pleased with you.
* Do you pray for yourself, your spouse, your children, your family, your members, and other people? Then He is well-pleased with you. And he is even more pleased with you when you pray for your enemies.
* Do you meditate on God’s word and listen to it, and do you preach and teach God’s word? Then He is well-pleased with you.
* Do you honor your parents and those set over you in the LCMS and your workplace? Then He is well-pleased with you.
* Do you care for the physical needs of your family and other people in need?
* Are you faithful to your spouse and do you love, honor and cherish your spouse? Then He is well-pleased with you.
* Do you respect the property and assets of other people, and do you take good care of the property of your congregation? Then He is well-pleased with you.
* Do you speak well of others and defend them when others slander and defame them? Then He is well-pleased with you. He is even more pleased when you speak well of your critics and your enemies.
* Are you content with your spouse, your house, your salary and your congregation? Then He is well-pleased with you.

1. Well how do we know that our work is pleasing to him?

* The gospel tells us that God is well-pleased with you as a person.
* The Ten Commandments tell us which works are well-pleasing and good and holy in God’s eyes: work with God by obeying them.
* See 1 John 3:21-22: **Beloved, if our heart (conscience) does not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what please him.**
* We can be sure that God is pleased with what we do when we do what God commands.
* Audit of wellbeing or happiness
* Use of Decalogue for a pleasure audit, God’s pleasure with me
* Yet even your obedience in doing what Jesus gives you to do does not depend on you but obedience to God in asking him for help in what we do: Decalogue as Prayer Book/Aid
* He supervises and perfects your work through Jesus: spell check or editor
* See Heb 13:21: **Now may the God of peace …equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is well- pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.**
* See Eph 5:9-10: **Walk as children of the light, (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.**
* Nothing about success or failure
* Picture of a fruit tree that stands and grows and bears fruit in the sun
* What’s the secret of a fruitful life?
* Life and work that honors him and is fully pleasing to him
* Life of discernment: doing what is good and right and true
* No template or road map but a matter of trial and error: learning from experience, eg. pleasing my wife
* God does not call you to be successful but faithful.

1. Conclusion: our prayer for you from Col 1:9-12:

**we ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will**

**in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,**

**so as to walk in manner worthy of the Lord,**

**fully pleasing to him,**

**bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God,**

**being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might,**

**for all endurance and patience with joy,**

**giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.**

* Fruitfulness in good work and personal growth
* Borrowed power for endurance and patience: long view
* Joyful work by thanksgiving: discernment of hidden dimension by seeing what God is doing and giving rather than focus on success or failure of yourself and your congregation