

Chapel of Reconciliation

Augustana College

Chapel Sermon

Michael D. Berven

September 12, 2003

Mark Twain once said: “To be good is to be noble, but to be good and teach others to be good is nobler.” In today’s gospel the nobility of Jesus is clear. He not only lives as God wants us to live, but he teaches others to do the same. I believe there are two reasons Jesus is the greatest teacher to have ever walked the earth. The first is that He cared enough about his students to teach them the right lessons, and the second is that He never taught anyone a lesson that he himself did not follow.

The amazing thing about Jesus’s teaching is that he consistently sought out the worst students imaginable. He didn’t just teach his disciples; men who had devoted their entire lives to him. He instead went out of his way to bring his lessons to people who didn’t want to listen and didn’t care to learn. I’ve done a little teaching and tutoring in my day, so I have some idea as to how hard this must have been.

Unlike Jesus’s job, my job as a chemistry tutor is very simple. Once a week I go to a room with heating and air conditioning. I sit back in a comfortable chair, and wait for students who are eager to come and listen to me. The knowledge I regurgitate I have learned previously, all for my own self-serving reasons. If I were going to teach as Jesus taught, on the other hand, I would go out into the elements, declaring the good news of chemistry for all to hear. I would teach lessons of

chemistry to small children, to high school drop-outs, to English teachers, and to musicians...And I bet that I would have an equally hard time getting people to listen to my chemical gospel as Jesus did getting people to listen to his Father's Word...But Jesus did get people to listen.

With miracle after miracle, people listened to the word of God, and they taught it to others, and those people taught it to others, and the teaching of God's word has been carried on for thousands of years – one person at a time.

I remember the first time I was taught anything about Jesus. I wanted to wear sandals to church, and my grandpa, who is now 92 years old, said to me that "We don't wear sandals in church, and don't tell me Jesus wore sandals. You are not Jesus." When we would finally get to church there were many more important lessons to be learned.

Oftentimes when sermons would drag on, I would lie down, or perhaps put my feet up on the pew in front of me. Immediately my Grandpa would bark, "sit up straight and put your feet on the floor. Would God come into our house and put his feet up on the table?"... Thanks to my Grandpa, by the age of five I felt I knew as much about God and Jesus as I did about our next door neighbors.

Looking back of course I realize I had many more lessons to learn, but luckily my Grandpa was a good teacher. He was a good teacher because he cared enough about me to teach me the right lessons, and he followed the lessons that he taught. He taught me the importance of the sacrament of marriage. My Grandpa has been married to my grandma for over sixty years. My grandpa taught me the importance of forgiveness. He has forgiven me for what he calls "foolishness" for

twenty-two years, and he still tells me he is proud of me and that he loves me.

Finally, he has taught me to teach my children and grandchildren that God loves them, that God forgives them, that he will comfort them when they mourn, and provide for them when they are hungry and thirsty.

Because of my grandpa, I realize that every time I have needed to learn a lesson, God has provided a teacher to help me understand. He has put people in my life who care enough about me to teach me the right things, to serve as examples for me, to comfort me when I mourn, to carry me when I am weak, and to lead me when I cannot find my way.

Though Jesus has not been with me personally to teach me every time I had a lesson to learn, many times throughout my life he has manifested himself in teachers and grandparents, in my Sunday school and chemistry students, and even in some of the professors who are sitting here today. He can also manifest himself in each and everyone of us. If you take only one thing from my message today, it should be to look for Jesus in the places you least expect him. Look for him in the poorest of your students. Look for him in the wise old man who cares enough to teach you life's lessons. And look for him in the young obnoxious child whom no one else has given a chance. If people had not looked for Jesus in me, I never would've made it this far, and I certainly would not have had the privilege of addressing a fine group of people like yourselves.

Let us Pray:

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the opportunity to gather, worship and serve in your name.
Please help us to be good students who are receptive to your teaching, and to fulfill
your will in all that we do. Amen... The hymn is number in With One Voice.

Heavenly Father,

We thank you today for the many gifts and talents you have bestowed on each of us. Please help us to develop and foster these gifts, and to share them with our neighbors for the good of your kingdom...Lord, in your mercy.

We also thank you today for our teachers. Please stir up in your children the desire to not only learn, but also to share the knowledge they acquire ...Lord in your mercy.

Finally Lord we thank you for your forgiveness. Grant us the patience to forgive those who do not appreciate your teachings, and the wisdom to learn how to better serve you...Lord in your mercy.

Lord we commend to you all for whom we pray, trusting that you are constantly watching over your children and teaching them to pray...Our Father, who art in heaven...lords prayer

THANKS to Lindsey Hibma for accompanying our music today.

THIS SUNDAY--campus ministry leaders are installed in worship. Everyone who is involved in any area of campus ministry is encouraged to attend.

FAITH SEARCH. Augie students are invited to a day long exploration of Faith and the rational on Saturday, Sept. 13 from 9-3, at Messiah New Hope Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls. Does faith make sense? Dr. Don Bierle, author of SURPRISED BY FAITH will present. Cost is \$10, scholarships are available. See Pr. Paul today.

FALL BREAK SERVICE LEARNING - Pine Ridge Indian Reservation...Oct. 26-29, 2003. In a spirit of accompaniment we want to know our neighbors! We'll work on a Habitat for Humanity house, assist with the after school program for children, and meet folks from the community to know culture, neighborhood and bridges of and barriers to understanding. Cost is \$40. Registration will open on Sept. 28. Limited to 12 students. Questions: talk to Pr. Paul

SPRING BREAK TRIPS will include Tecate, Mexico; Holden Village; possibly New York, Phoenix, Pine Ridge & Minneapolis.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Sun.- 14th -Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul -**Campus Ministry Installation**

Mon.-15th -Worship, 10 am - Heather Aldridge, Communication

Tues.-16th - Outreach Rally, 10 am

Wed.-17th - Holy Communion, 10 am - Pr. Paul

Wed.17th - Catholic Mass, 9 pm - Fr. Mike Griffin (Confession-8:30)

Fri. - 18th - Worship, 10 pm - Shane Wuebben, Senior Speaker