

I don't like the word "should". When someone says to me, you should be more patient, you should be more cheerful, you should have a positive attitude, you should be more involved in the community, I feel angry, or guilty, or upset. Their word should shouts at me, "I can't trust you to do what is best. I can't trust you to have good judgement, I must show you the way. I think of a preacher who stands over me and looks down on me. Should.

Worse yet is when the word should gets attached to the word Christian. A Christian should be happy. A Christian should be a cheerful giver. A Christian should pray whenever there is trouble. A Christian should witness for Christ I hear these statements and I must ask myself am I really a Christian? ~~Yes~~ Christian should be and do those things will God have room for me? I'd be ashamed if you knew how often I get down in the swamp, discouraged, better, I forget to pray or sometimes ask, "What good will it do. Friends die, lose their farms, their businesses, gossip and hurt one another and me. And just when I'm feeling most unable to live myself in any way someone uses the word should on me, like a slap in the face. I know I should, but I can't.

I believe that if I am going to make it through and learn to love and forgive and pray that God is going to have to do it in me. Whatever God wants of me, he will have to do in me, I can't do it. I trust he will.

But that word should. It shouts at me, "It's up to you, Lynn." Pull yourself up, take charge, do it. Should, drives me to despair.

I needed to say that this morning before I speak of our second lesson. For so often I experienced this lesson as a should. Paul writes, "Rejoice in the Lord, always, again I will say rejoice. Have no anxiety about anything but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Someone has said, 90% of our lives are habit. Day after day we do and say and think what we have done before. One is in the habit of seeing the

rose, another in the habit of seeing the thorns, both simply doing what they have done the day before and the day before that.

I in my life have often been in the habit of being a trash collector. The kinds words spoken, the thoughtful deeds, the gifts given I have discarded from my mind. But the trash, what has been false, and dishonorable, and unjust and impure and the failures and deeds worthy of condemnation, these I have collected and kept and stored in my heart and mind. The garbaged.

Sometimes we as a community of believers get into the same trap. We hear the bitterness or the dissatisfaction of a few and we get into the habit of thinking that way about Hettinger Lutheran. Then the words, "I don't like become so much more important and powerful among us than the words, I do like. We keep the trash and dismiss what is true, and honorable, and just and pure and lovely and gracious and excellent and worthy of praise.

Our God is not a God of trash.. The world greets him with a cross, with our sin and unbelief and unfaithfulness, and rebellion. In your life and in mine the trash is all there for God to collect. But for the cross he returns us Easter. He refuses to judge us by the trash. He gives us life. The trash he throws away, he forgives. And you and I he keeps, embraces.

None of us choose what we feel. When our friends aren't there when we need them we are disappointed. When My wife got cancer I was angry and bewildered. When my children fight and hurt each other I am upset and sad. These feelings in me are not right or wrong, they simply are. In this experiencing feeling we are like God. Scripture tells us that God sorrows, and grieves and has anger. And I know that when I am harsh with my children that he is saddened, and when I forget to speak to him he is disappointed. But he promises me that he will not cling to these, setting his heart and mind on the trash, but will in hope see me as I will one day finally be.

So he desires it to be for us. Not that we pretend, denying what we feel, but that we do not cling to the trash, this is his desire. ~~As he speaks to us~~

through Paul

Finally Brethern, he says through Paul, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which is of more worth than all human understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.