19th Sunday after Trinity
Sermon on Evangelism
West Henrietta - 1961

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. John 9: 6,7 And when He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

MUCK WHICH THE LORD USES

In only seven short days our Lutheran Open House Week will be upon us. As you look over the schedule of activity, you, perhaps, are wondering how so much can possibly be crammed into those five days. Some of you probably still have your misgivings about calling on people, telling them about Jesus, and inviting them to come and learn about the Savior. You are offering to yourself all kinds of excuses for not going. You are too busy with other things, or you do not know enough, or you -like Moses - cannot speak well. All this brings to mind the comment of the pious Christian man who was being praised publicly for his Christian mercy and kindness for people. He said, Really now, we are only the muck, the clay, the mire, the mud, which the Lord uses to help the needy. Evidently he was reminding himself of the words of our text. Certainly he was expressing the basic feeling of all truly Christian people. WE ARE ONLY THE MUCH WHICH THE LORD USES TO HELP THE NEEDY.

I emphasize this first: We are only the muck! The Savior saw a beggar, born blind, sitting by the wayside, and He had pity on him. Previously He had allowed the hem of His garment, or a few loaves and bread and some fish, to help the distressed. This time, however, he wanted to use the very lowliest means to prove the greatness of His power. The day was hot, and on the street there was a great deal of dust - dust and dirt which was trodden under the feet of the people. This dust of the ground was not mingled with gold or with powerful healing minerals. It did not come from especially rich ground, but it was just the plain, ordinary dust and dirt of the highway. This is just what our Lord wanted to use - the lowliest, most despised thing on earth - dust, dirt, muck, mud!

Will you feel offended if I campare you with this dust and say, We are this dust? Did not the Creator make Adam out of the dust of the ground and remind him at the time of the Fall: Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return? Did not Abraham confess before his Lord when he pleaded for the men of Sodom: Behold

now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes? Are we more than Adam and Abraham?

Dust clings to our clothing. We brush it away as something that does not belong there, as uncleanness, dirt. Even there we are like the dust. Does not the prophet Isaiah plead: We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags? Are we better than Isaiah? We are just like the dust of the ground - as you go out to make calls for our Open House Week, never forget that. Some of the homes into which you will go will be poor homes. In them you will find the worst sort of sinners, perhaps even criminals. Shall this actually cause your pride to be wounded when you know that you are only the muck of the road? Undoubtedly you will sit down with some who are aged and infirm, the distressed and the suffering. Shall this be called a sacrifice when you know that you are only the dirt of the road? You will meet some who have not had the learning or education that you have had; you will meet those who are sick of mind, who will lay bear their very souls before you. Is this asking too much when you know that you are only the muck and the mire of the road? Will you be able to draw yourself up proudly and look down on them when you know you are nothing more than dirt? Jeremiah declared at his call into the prophetic office, I am unworthy. Isaiah declared, Woe is me!.. I am a man of unclean lips. And our own distinguished man of God, Martin Luther, wrote in the year of his severest testing, 1527, a deeply moving letter to his frien Justus Jonas, in which he signed himself Martin Luther, the mud of Christ. These men of God had the right viewpoint. The Lord could use them in His church, and He did great things through them. I can think of no more fitting banner for you to wear across your life than this, The mud of Christ!

Let me emphasize, in the second place, We are only the muck, WHICH THE LORD USES.

The Lord bowed down to the ground, to the dust of the street. From the spittle of His mouth He let a little fall into the dust, and then He stirred this spittle into a salve which He laid on the eyes of the blind man. This Jesus did - the everlasting Son of God, the great Lord of heaven and earth, who with one word raised up the dead and stilled the storm and sea. Yet now, He used this humble,

lowly muck as a means of performing one of His greatest miracles. This is an amazing thing; yet, I know something even more wonderful: this only Son of the livin God came down in love and mercy to us, who are only the dust of the ground; He united Himself with our flesh and blood: He dwelt among us here on earth and worked among us here. Through His Word His Spirit has been poured out over us; through His working in us, we have become new creatures. He did all this in order that He might use us to perform the miracles of His grace. The Lord uses you and me to serve Him in His Kingdom here on earth - a task for which even the angels do envy us.

You certainly cannot expect that you will be received everywhere with open arms or that you will be welcomed with music and song, or heralded as heroes. You must certainly know by now that many will scoff and some will despise you and say, What does this fellow want to tell us? Should this discourage you, when you know that the Almighty wants to use you? Can you give up trying or become indifferent, when you know that you are a means in the hands of a wonderful Lord, who can work miracles with mud and can make something out of nothing? Remember always, We are only the dust of the ground which the Lord uses!

In the third place let me emphasize: We are only the muck, or the mire, which the Lord uses TO HELP THE NEEDY. What a hardship it is to be born blind, to sit in wind and weather by the wayside begging, at the mercy of passers-by - and that, day after day, year in and year out, hopelessly beyond medical care, because you were born blind. But this wretched man the Lord helped. And to bring such marvelous help, He used the dust of the ground, made into mud, and laid it on the eyes of the blind man to be washed off in the pool of Siloam. Keep in mind what we are called upon to do in the church. The wretched and the needy must be helped - those poor people whose wretchedness is so much greater than the misery of this poor blind beggar, even as eternity is longer than time; those wretched ones who, just as the blind man, are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, who know nothing of God and heaven; who like those born blind cannot help themselves; who if nothing is done, in time will be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth - in hell forever!

The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. He wants every single human being to be brought to the eternal light; He wants all to be fill with peace and joy, all to recognize their Lord and Savior, all to come and see their everlasting, blessed Lord. He wants to use you, the muck and the mire; use you to make seeing people out of the blind, to make rich men out of beggars, to make sinners righteous, to make the dead alive, to make the miserable blessed, to make the sorrowful rejoice. Therefore He says to you: Preach the Gospel to every creature. God used Joseph to feed the hungry, David to free Israel, the angel to lead Lot and his family out of Sodom - those were great things. But think how much greater it is that He wants to use you to lead the immortal souls of men out of darkness into His marvelous light. Many people think that the greatest thing in life is to become rich and wealthy, to possess great things, to make great names for themselves. Do not envy them. What is that compared with the thought that you are using your time to win precious souls, bought with the blood of Christ, for eternity? Seen in the light of eternity, that which the Lord does through you for the godless, needy people of our world is rated higher than all the achievements of the great, the famous, and the celebrated of this world, even as heaven is higher than the earth, and this is no exaggeration!

The angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner that repenteth! Here am I, send me, send me, cried Isaiah when he recognized that there was need in the work of the faithful. I want most of all, stammered a dying missionary after 40 years of faithful work - I would like very much - he could not finish the sentence. Finally he summoned up all his last strength and said, I want very much that all souls might be saved, and so he died. Even on his deathbed the old fire of love for the needy glowed in his heart. Oh, that this fire might burn in you, in bright flames now, and never die down until your last day! We meet this afternoon at 2:30 to help you to prepare for calling on more than 100 such needy families in our community during our Open House Week. Will we see everyone of you back here for this important work. Remember, We are only the muck and the mire, the dust of the earth, which the Lord uses to help the needy. Amen.