

FROM THE PULPIT

Excerpts from messages being presented at area places of worship this weekend.

Rabbi Mordechai Levin, Beth El Synagogue

Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) is a time to fix what must be repaired in our personal lives. Just as we spend time weighing the important factors of buying a new house or taking a new job, we also must consider what is important in our life. So on this day of Rosh Hashanah, let ask ourselves some questions.

First: Have we lived our lives to the fullest or have we wasted our time? Have we concentrated too much on



Levin

what we lack instead of what we have? Have we taken for granted the blessings we enjoy? Have we been chained to resentments and hatreds, petty thoughts and harsh words? Rosh Hashanah is our opportunity to repair ourselves and to

refine and improve our character.

Second: Have we been readily available when loved ones and friends needed us? Have we hurt others by being unkind or unfair? Have we mistreated people who work or study with us? Have we humiliated others? Rosh Hashanah is our opportunity to repair our relationships with others.

Third: Jewish prayer, the celebration of Shabbat (Sabbath) and Jewish holidays, the study of Judaism and acts of loving kindness are bridges between each individual and God. Have we attempted to cross these bridges? Rosh Hashanah is our opportunity to repair our relationship with God. Rosh Hashanah provides us with a new beginning; the opportunity to reflect and to repair ourselves to live a better life

The Rev. Ronald E. Holling, St. Paul and Bethany Lutheran Churches, Omaha

To lots of people winning is everything. Vince Lombardi is quoted as saying "Winning is not everything, it's the ONLY thing."

We all have that desire to be winners, to be great, to be the best there is, to be number one. That's what drives any person and every team.

Even the disciples of our Lord Jesus had it. As they were traveling from the northern part of Galilee going to Capernaum they had a discussion



Holling

to be recognized. They wanted to make a difference. They wanted to do something of significance. And there is nothing wrong with that as long as we don't mistreat others or do something unkind. People who want those things, many times are the people who get things done. However, Jesus' desire is for them to be ambitious in the right way.

So, He instructs His disciples, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." Being number one, being the greatest isn't jumping around flashing one finger, shouting "We're number one. We're number one!"

Rather, according to Jesus, being number one, being the greatest is working as servant of others. It is as Paul says in Ephesians, "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

And Jesus demonstrated that kind of servanthood as He came to take our sins upon Himself. He became the number one sinner for us so that He could take all our sins and suffer for them. As a result He died for us on that cross but rose again, now truly making us number one when it comes to receiving the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.

Winning isn't everything. But in Jesus Christ we are winners as we receive the gifts which God wants us to have in faith.

The Rev. Don Hammond, First Central Congregational Church, Omaha

Mark 9:30-37

Your Love? Nah, Jesus Wants More Than That.

How often have you heard "I found Jesus and I love him" or something close to that? Jesus' disciples also found Him and loved Him, and Jesus thought them to be pathetic. Jesus wants more, and when His words were not penetrating the disciples' heads, He lifts up a child and says, "Here is what you need to do if you are going to be mine. This little kid that you nearly stepped on and over and was nothing more than an obstacle in your way is what you and I are about. Love and

among themselves about who was the greatest.

Some of the greatest people who ever lived were among the most ambitious. Michelangelo, Abraham Lincoln, Michael Jordan.

The disciples were, too. They wanted

tend to the 'obstacle' people and then you will be one of mine."

Dr. Arnold Peterson, Calvary Baptist Church, Glenwood, Iowa



Peterson

1 Thessalonians
1:3

**Cart and Horse
Faith, Love and
Endurance**

Years ago, people often said "Don't get the cart before the horse." If the priority of life is wrong we will not see good results.

Under the guidance of its master, a horse will pull a cart to its destination. However, if the horse gets behind the cart, there is very little chance of a successful outcome.

The same is true of spiritual growth. Our text praises people for their "work of faith, labor of love, and endurance of hope." We think we must work, labor and endure in order to have faith, love and hope. But the text really says it is our faith, love and hope which produce praiseworthy work, labor and endurance. Don't put your work before your faith, your labor before your love or your endurance before your hope.

The Rev. Thomas Schmitt, Zion Lutheran Church



Schmitt

Mark 9:30-37

Why do we think we can lift up ourselves by tearing others down? This makes no sense, but we continue doing it every day — at work and play, at home and away. Selfishly, we demean others when we boast and

brag about ourselves.

Christ teaches us a better way. When the disciples argued this way, He had them sit down and listen. "You want to be great?" He asked them. "Then serve others." Still seated, He had a child stand and said, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

Christ is the only one who could lift others by first lifting Himself. Of course, that heavy lifting was done on the cross, and you and I reap the benefits of that lifting. Built on Christ's service, freed and forgiven, let us serve as He served us.