

LIFELINES

of

LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Pastor's Thoughts

Last month marked the 25th anniversary of my ordination, and as such, it gave me the opportunity to reflect on being a pastor for the last quarter of a century. The following are some random (but hopefully interesting!) thoughts.

Before I was ordained, I thought I should serve as an associate pastor. I felt as though I had more to learn and the idea of preaching every Sunday seemed impossible. Thus, I interviewed with a number of churches while I was at the seminary, expecting to get called as an associate pastor to a larger congregation where I would serve under a senior pastor. That was the plan, but the Lord had other plans.

I was assigned out of seminary to a small urban congregation in Los Angeles County. St. Paul's Pomona, California was a great congregation in a terrible neighborhood. The church was surrounded by every possible social malady: prostitutes and johns, homeless heroin addicts, gang-bangers, and illegal immigrants keen on avoiding the police. As a Midwest boy from Iowa, it felt like I was a long way from home. But there was the church, God's people, and that was familiar and wonderful. There I learned a lot about being a pastor by just serving as a pastor. (Some things you can only learn by doing.) The people were incredibly gracious and patient with me and didn't expect me to have it all figured out.

I also learned early on that the people I am privileged to serve have a lot of knowledge. At seminary they teach you a great deal of theology, but that does not make you the smartest guy in the room at Bible class or the expert in all things Christian. It is astounding to me that at age 26, I was ordained and teaching and preaching to Christians who had been Christians for three times as long as I had been alive! While I'm no longer a third of the age of my parishioners, I continue to teach Christians with much more life experience and with great depths of knowledge on Biblical and spiritual matters. It has been a great privilege these years to be in God's Word with so many pious and devout Christians.

One such devout and faithful Christian was Hester Dieter. She was the first Christian whose funeral I presided over, nearly 25 years ago. I have done many, many funerals since –each one a unique experience and precious to me. Funerals can be difficult and unexpected, but they are also a very important part of ministry that stands out in my mind because it is usually the last time the deceased is in church and it is a time to proclaim hope in Christ and His resurrection that usually finds attentive ears of family and loved ones who are considering important matters of life and its earthly end. Similar highlights are baptisms, confirmations, and weddings.

There isn't much to say about baptisms, just that they are awesome and a true miracle that I get to participate in. Confirmation is something I take very seriously, not just the ceremony at the end, but the entire process of teaching the catechism. I like seeing the light bulb go off when people understand a



concept or idea they hadn't considered before, and I think it is extremely important that we don't simply go through the motions in order to make people members, but rather, actually help all our members know solid Biblical doctrine so they can confess it faithfully and boldly put it into practice. I had our Office Manager, Cindy, check the other day and I have confirmed over 90 people since I've been at Lord of Life (53 adults, 40 youths) and I would guess about half that many in my previous years in California. That means a lot of time spent in the Small Catechism over the past 25 years!

I could go on with fond memories of ministry over the years, but I will simply conclude with this: it has been and continues to be a privilege to serve as a pastor and to work for and with God's people. It has been a fulfilling and fruitful career and one I hope continues for years to come. Thanks for acknowledging my 25 years last month and for being such an important part of them.

PrS

Below is the gift presented to me on August 3rd. It is a beautiful cross of olivewood and resin that reads: "And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding." Jeremiah 3:15 Presented to Rev. Joel A. Shaltanis by Lord of Life Lutheran Church Plano, TX Commemorating 25 years July 9, 2000-July 9, 2025."



prepare for worship in august

August 3: Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: Eccl. 1:2, 12-14, 2:18-26; Col. 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21

HotD: "Gracious God, You Send Great Blessings," 782

August 10: Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: Gen. 15:1-6; Heb. 11:1-16; Luke 12:22-34 (35-40)

HotD: "O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe," 666

August 17: Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

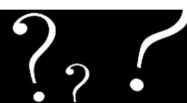
Texts: Jer. 23:16-29; Heb. 11:17-31 (32-40), 12:1-3; Luke 12:49-53 (54-56)

HotD: "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word," 655

August 24: Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: Is. 66:18-23; Heb. 12:4-24 (25-29); Luke 13:22-30

HotD: "A Multitude Comes from the East and the West," 510



Bible Quiz



According to Peter, at what time of day did the Holy Spirit come upon the disciples on Pentecost?

- A. 9 a.m.
- B. Noon
- C. 3:30 p.m.
- D. 9 p.m.



Answer: A (See Acts 2:15.)



A Letter from Our Deaconess Intern

Hi! My name is Paige Rebber, and I have been placed at Lord of Life to serve as Deaconess Intern for this year. I am a part of the Deaconess formation program at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and am excited to put everything that I have been taught to use to serve the Lord and His people. This is my first time this far south! I am from the Midwest, living in Ohio for most of my life. My Dad is a third-generation farmer, growing corn, wheat, and soybeans (with no cattle or any other farm animals to worry about!), and my Mom is the secretary for our family farm, which has recently grown to just over 600 acres. I have two siblings: a sister (who is also my twin- fraternal, not identical) who teaches second grade in a Lutheran school in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and a brother who is three years younger than I am and is poised to be the fourth-generation farmer once my Dad retires (but farmers never retire, so who knows when he will be running things by himself).

A little bit more about me: I love theology and digging into the Word of God! One of my main interests is Baptism and its importance in living our redeemed and sanctified lives. Besides my love for theology, I am a Disney lover, book reader, and consumer of the arts. I especially like to go to the ballet and opera, and am very excited to discover all of the other beautiful artistic endeavors that the Dallas-Fort Worth area has to offer. I also sew costumes and crochet blankets, although I've let my sewing fall to the wayside in favor of crochet recently. I enjoy singing and playing the flute, and have a ukulele that I'm trying to figure out how to play! I love learning new things and discovering new hobbies. Of course, you all will have to meet my dog Mina, who absolutely loves people and will pop up in my office from time to time. She is my companion, and I'm so blessed to have her in my life.

I am so excited to be here and look forward to meeting and getting to know everyone here at this faithful congregation! Thanks be to God that I have landed in this place that is so welcoming. It already feels like home.

To Him Alone be All Glory,
Deaconess Paige



Teen Times

Our youth ministry trip to Higher Things in Grand Rapids, Michigan on the campus of Calvin University took place the last week of July. The theme for this conference was based on Revelation 21:5.

*He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making **all things new!**" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

It was once again a great experience for all who attended. There will be a slideshow presentation on Sunday, Aug. 17 during the Bible class hour to share pictures and stories. The following are a few of the thoughts and reflections of those that attended;

Highlights from the Scarth Family;

Melanie -

The highlight of my time at Higher Things really revolved around watching the youth of our church. Out of our group there were 5 of us who had never attended a Higher Things conference, or really anything quite like it. I know there were nerves and apprehension from each of these 5 going into it. Watching them open up and become immersed in the joy of the gospel as well as finding that there are other youth out there who enjoy hearing the Word and making connections with them was a blessing to me.

Emily -

I enjoyed the sermons. I felt they did a wonderful job of connecting the topic of the conference to the Word. I could easily understand the messages that each Pastor was trying to get across and I enjoyed this. As well as seeing so many people my age enjoy listening and participating in the Word. I also LOVED the singing. It was at times overwhelming in its strength. (In a good way)

Ana -

I most enjoyed the Plenary Sessions. The depth of the topics yet the clarity that each speaker gave was comforting to me. That even in the most difficult life experiences they made it clear that Christ died for us. Not to make life easy, but to give us the comfort of his gift of salvation. The singing was amazing, and I loved the compline, just the serenity of being there with so many others that believed the same thing as me was just breathtaking.

Jack Cleavenger –

I loved the circular architecture of the chapel because it made the music bounce off the walls which sounded awesome. All the breakaway sessions were good but if I had to choose the one titled "how to thrive as a Lutheran in the military" would be my favorite. The highlight or things I will remember most are definitely the quality of people I met. At Higher Things people were very friendly and encouraging. Attending Higher Things 2025 was one of the highlights of my year.

I have been struggling with fear for most of my life, but God used the messages I heard at Higher Things to bring a lot of comfort and encouragement to trust in the Lord with my future.



Rachel Shaltanis –

1. *What I remember most about Higher Things was all the love and community built around being part of the LCMS denomination. I was blown away by the number of people who traveled from all over the US to be a part of this conference. They came to explore their faith and learn more about being a Lutheran, and I think that is an awesome and beautiful thing. Higher Things has a very rigorous and intense schedule, which allows the attendees to get as much as they can in, and there is so much potential to be understood.*

2. *In this specific conference, one thing I will remember most is the amazing memories made. I cannot choose one specific thing, as there were so many fun and awesome things to remember. From playing 9 squares after dark, to the early morning Matins, all the activities and lessons experienced were wholeheartedly the best. Meeting people from all over the US who had similar ideologies to mine is really cool. I come from a place where no one knows what a Lutheran is, but here at Higher Things, I am surrounded by brothers and sisters in Christ who share my faith. It feels like coming to a family I never knew I was missing!*

It gives me abundant joy to see our youth engaged in worship, hearing and learning God's Word, and growing spiritually at Higher Things. Thank so much for your prayers and support of our Youth Ministry!

Until next time,
Scott Peters



Jesus' transforming presence

"But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost'" (Luke 19:8-10 NIV).

Who knew, all those kids sitting in Sunday school were getting a lesson in stewardship! Generations of children have very often heard lessons based on the familiar account of Zacchaeus. The diminutive tax collector's curiosity surrounding the person and ministry of Jesus is what the Holy Spirit used to set him on a collision course for a total stewardship transformation. This transformation, according to the text of Luke 19, is not just about this life. This stewardship transformation is about eternity as well!

Remember the story: Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Do not think of friendly neighborhood IRS agents. This was more like a toll booth operator, but the governing authorities did not set the toll. They would contract men to staff roadside booths and tax the commerce that was passing along the road. This was an enterprise full of greed and graft. The tax collectors would take as much as they could and only pass on a portion to the government. The rest did not go into the community chest either! It went into the pocket of the tax collector.

This is why the people had such disdain for *Jewish* tax collectors. They were seen as both crooks and traitors. They were crooks in that they extorted their compatriots and others in the toll process. But worse, they were seen as traitors because their efforts supported the occupying Roman authorities. That is the real reason that the people would not make way so that short Zacchaeus could see Jesus.

For this reason, he runs ahead and climbs a tree. He had heard all the stories. He wanted to see this Jesus with his own eyes. Mercy is on display. This hated crook and traitor gets a direct audience with Jesus — at Jesus' own request! Jesus invites Himself to Zacchaeus' house. This is where the transformation is about to take place!

Notice how Jesus does it. He does not preach a three-week sermon series, nor does He ask Zacchaeus to make a pledge. There is nothing programmatic about Jesus' approach. But Zacchaeus is completely transformed! The transforming force is the very presence of Jesus! Direct time with Jesus takes a crooked, selfish, criminal and makes him the most faithful steward.

This new life of stewardship is marked by the promises made. First, he gives half of his ill-gotten gains to the poor. These are people whom he would not have defrauded at all! Yet, after spending time with Jesus, they are His first concern. Only after this does he double the requirement of the Levitical law on fraud. And what does Jesus say is the result? Salvation!

Doing the acts of stewardship does not save. Rather, the faith in Jesus that is created by the Holy Spirit is what saves! This is critical for us to confess. Failed stewardship can and will cut you off from God. The only antidote for failed stewardship is the presence of Jesus.

We do not need to run ahead and climb a tree for this presence of Jesus. He makes Himself available to us every week in the Divine Service. He speaks His Word of invitation to us in the pages of Holy Scripture. This, and this alone, transforms us from sinner to saint, from owner to steward of all that belongs to the Lord.

Do you want to become a more faithful steward? Spend more time with Jesus. Make the Divine Service a weekly priority. Feast on Christ's body and blood weekly! This is the great gift that brings salvation from God's House to yours!



PSALMS SCAVENGER HUNT

Each day, enjoy reading the psalm. Then search for the answer and try the activity below.

1 Psalm 1

Find: What two contrasts appear in this psalm?
Activity: Write one way you can "delight in the law of the Lord" today.

2 Psalm 8

Find: According to this psalm, what is mankind's place in creation?
Activity: Spend 5 minutes outside observing nature and reflecting on God's creation.

3 Psalm 19

Find: What two ways does God reveal himself in this psalm?
Activity: Journal about one aspect of God's creation that reveals his glory to you.

4 Psalm 23

Find: In this psalm, what are three ways God shepherds us?
Activity: Reflect on how God has been your shepherd in the past week.

5 Psalm 27

Find: What does David say about his source of strength and confidence?
Activity: Memorize Psalm 27:1 and recite it when you feel afraid today.

6 Psalm 32

Find: What is the main theme of this psalm?
Activity: Pray a prayer of confession. Then reflect on the joy of being forgiven.

7 Psalm 34

Find: Who does the Lord hear?
Activity: Share with someone a testimony of how God has been good to you.

8 Psalm 37

Find: According to this psalm, what 4 things can you do instead of worrying?
Activity: Choose one action from Psalm 37 to focus on today.

9 Psalm 42

Find: What imagery does the psalmist use to describe his longing for God?
Activity: Write down one way you can draw closer to God when you feel distant.

10 Psalm 46

Find: How does this psalm describe God's protection during times of trouble?
Activity: Spend 5 minutes in silence, meditating on the phrase "Be still and know that I am God."

11 Psalm 51

Find: In David's prayer of repentance, what are three things he asks of God?
Activity: Write your own prayer of repentance to God.

12 Psalm 63

Find: In this psalm, what does David say he will do?
Activity: Sing or listen to your favorite hymn or worship song.

13 Psalm 65

Find: How does this psalm describe God's abundant provision?
Activity: Write down three things you're thankful that God has provided.

14 Psalm 73

Find: What does the psalmist realize after feeling envious of the wicked?
Activity: Reflect on a time you needed God's strength and how he provided it.

15 Psalm 84

Find: What does the psalmist say about people who dwell in God's house?
Activity: Write down one way you can cultivate a heart of worship today.

16 Psalm 91

Find: According to this psalm, what are some ways God protects his people?
Activity: Pray for God's protection over yourself or someone you know.

17 Psalm 100

Find: What instructions does this psalm give for worshipping God?
Activity: Create a gratitude list. Then thank God for each item.

18 Psalm 101

Find: What actions and attitudes can we follow from this psalm?
Activity: Take time today to bless the Lord by recalling his goodness in your life.

19 Psalm 111

Find: What does the psalmist say is the beginning of wisdom?
Activity: Think of times in the Bible when God saved his people.

20 Psalm 121

Find: What does this psalm promise about God's care for you?
Activity: Reflect on how God has "kept" you in difficult times. Then share that with someone.

21 Psalm 136

Find: What does this psalm promise about God's care for you?
Activity: Reflect on one specific way God has shown you his enduring love.

22 Psalm 139

Find: What does this psalm say about God's knowledge of you?
Activity: Pray, thanking God for knowing you and your life intimately.

23 Psalm 146

Find: Based on this psalm, who are some people God takes care of?
Activity: Start your day with a song of praise to God.

24 Psalm 150

Find: What instruments and ways of praising God does this psalm mention?
Activity: End the scavenger hunt by creating your own joyful praise to God. Worship in whatever way feels natural to you—sing, dance or play an instrument.



- 1 Paul Rice
- 2 Travis Bennett
- 2 Debbie Olsen
- 2 Carol Read
- 4 Doug & Kathy Hite (24)
- 4 Eric & Elizabeth Wilde (1)
- 5 Sherri Kunschke
- 6 Cathleen Ott
- 6 Emory & Suzanne Smith (63)
- 7 Scott Peters
- 12 Carol Ozlowski
- 13 Earl Lund
- 14 Dixie Hacker
- 14 Phaedra Shaltanis
- 16 Mike Paradise
- 16 Audrey Thiel
- 17 Duffy & Cindy Carter (29)
- 17 Tim & Carol Ozlowski (34)
- 18 Christine Messinger
- 18 Kevin Tyler
- 18 Erica Vogt
- 22 Sydney Peters
- 23 Jessica Gavit
- 25 Gary Bennefeld
- 25 Noelle Kim
- 25 Brian & Gail Wolf (46)
- 26 Jan Doughtie
- 27 Nick & Lauren Moudy (3)
- 28 Joanne Benner
- 28 Bill & Charis Bennett (49)
- 30 Doug Hite
- 30 Tom Read
- 31 TJ Kade

Lord of Life Small Groups

EPIC PARENTING

- † For 30ish couples with kids
- † For info contact Ben Scarth
BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com
- † Usually meets one Sunday a month in the afternoon or evening

FRUITS OF THE VINE CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Scott Peters at 972-898-3351 cell or speters@planolutheran.com
- † Usually meets one Saturday a month at 6:30 PM for Bible study

GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974
- † Will meet Sat., August 9 at 6:30 PM for Bible study

YOUNG ADULTS

- † For those in their 20's and 30's
- † For info contact Lauren Moudy at laurenemoudy@gmail.com or (214) 415-8939
- † Will meet Sun, August 17 at 6 PM for Bible study and dinner

Lord, in my work — whether at a
job, at home or in a service—

help me
to do it with
purpose and
peace.

Keep me from being
overwhelmed, and remind me
that my worth is not in what I
produce, but in

who I am in You.
Amen.

