

# LIFELINES

of

## LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Vol. 39, No. 2

Plano, Texas

February 2025

A few weeks ago, our Sunday morning Bible class studied 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 6, which includes the shocking story of Uzzah. In case you don't recall, Uzzah was helping to transport the Ark of the Covenant using a cart pulled by oxen. When one of the oxen stumbled, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, **"And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God."** (6:7) The story is a stark reminder that God's commands are not to be ignored and that He may inflict severe judgment on those who disregard Him. (As we discussed in class, at least three specific laws were violated in the way in which Uzzah interacted with the ark.) So, to send a message, God turned what was intended to be a big celebration into a hard lesson for King David and the people of Israel.



THE DEATH OF UZZAH.

Now I bring up this Old Testament account not to dwell on this particular story, but rather because I heard this text used to teach something about the way we practice Holy Communion.



The origin of the comment was a podcast by Rev. Dr. Jordan B. Cooper. Cooper is a faithful Lutheran pastor and scholar with the American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC), a small Lutheran church body in full fellowship with the LCMS. He has produced hundreds of podcasts on his YouTube channel. If you search nearly any topic of Lutheran theology, you will likely find a video on the subject produced by Dr. Cooper.

The particular comment that caught my attention, was in reference to Holy Communion and specifically the practice of Closed Communion. He compared the punishment God inflicted on Uzzah to what happens when someone receives the body and blood of the Lord in an unworthy manner. Or, to put it positively, he suggested that the same reverence that Uzzah should have had toward the ark is what all communicants should have toward the Body of Christ in the sacrament of the altar. Now Cooper didn't go on and on about this point, as I recall it was just something said in passing, and to be honest, I don't remember on which particular podcast he made this comment. But the point he was trying to make is that at least one of the reasons we ought to withhold the sacrament from people (ala Closed Communion) is that we need to protect them from harmful and potentially even deadly results that come from communing unworthily. Like I said, I don't remember where he said it, but I do remember thinking at first that this comment was way over-the-top. ... But then I got to thinking about it some more.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:17-34, St. Paul criticizes the Corinthians for the way they celebrate the sacrament and specifically that they seem to confuse the fellowship potluck with the Lord's Supper. **"Now when you come together at the same place, you are not really eating the Lord's Supper. For when it is time to eat, everyone proceeds with his own supper. One is hungry and another becomes drunk. Do you not have houses so that you can eat and drink? Or are you trying to show contempt for the church of God by shaming those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I praise you? I will not praise you for this!" (20-22 NET)**

From here, St. Paul teaches the Corinthians the right way to celebrate the sacrament, carefully recounting the words of institution (verses 23-25) and

*That is why many of you are weak and sick*

making it clear that this meal is something sacred, **"For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."** (26) But then the Apostle goes on to make this solemn warning about those who commune in an unworthy manner: **"For this reason, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself first, and in this way let him eat the bread and drink of the cup. For the one who eats and drinks without careful regard for the body eats and drinks judgment against himself."** (27-29)

What is perfectly clear from these verses is that there is a wrong way to receive the sacrament. The Lord's Supper is not just

any ordinary meal, and the man who communes in an unworthy manner is "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," and "eats and drinks judgment against himself." But just how serious is this judgment and what does it look like? Paul answers these questions in the next verse: **"That is why many of you are weak and sick, and quite a few have fallen asleep."** (30)

I have understood this verse in a figurative sense, namely that people were "spiritually" weak and sick and have fallen asleep (i.e. *died*) in a spiritual sense. Which is to say that some of the Corinthians weakened their faith, and perhaps, some even lost it altogether because they were communing unworthily. But this interpretation

is probably not what Paul was saying. Rather, it seems the words translated "weak and sick" are almost exclusively used to describe physical illness, and the word for those who have "fallen asleep," is used to describe the death of a believer. Thus it appears that St. Paul is informing the Corinthians that the reason so many are ill and have died is because of their unworthy reception of the sacrament! [See: *Concordia Commentary 1 Corinthians*, Gregory J. Lockwood, CPH 2000, page 409.]

Cooper's comparison of the death of Uzzah with unworthy reception of the sacrament is apt. In both cases we have

God rendering a special judgment for failing to recognize the holiness of His presence. Both instances are unique judgments, but also timeless examples. Which is to say that not everyone who ever touched the Ark of the Covenant was struck dead and not every unworthy communicant at all times will get sick and die, (just like not every liar drops dead like Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.) Nevertheless, we can learn from these examples never to receive the sacrament flippantly, or irreverently, or without recognizing Christ's bodily presence in the sacrament. Which is why Paul says, each person should examine himself to see if they are truly repentant of sin and whether they trust in Christ for His forgiveness.

I bring all this up to remind you of the sacred nature of the sacrament, but not to make anyone afraid of it. Receiving the sacrament is one of the greatest privileges we have as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. There He invites us to commune with Him and He gives us Himself intending to bless and forgive us, and to renew and strengthen our faith. We who know our sins and desire to live in and for Christ, should not fear the Holy Supper, but long for it eagerly. Nor should we be afraid to receive it because we have a weak or imperfect faith, for as the Lutheran Reformers make clear in the Formula of Concord, that is exactly whom it is for:

“For Christians who are of weak faith, diffident, troubled, and heartily terrified because of the greatness and number of their sins, and think that in this their great impurity they are not worthy of this precious treasure and the benefits of Christ, and who feel and lament their weakness of faith, and from their hearts desire that they may serve God with stronger, more joyful faith and pure obedience, they are the truly worthy guests for whom this highly venerable Sacrament has been especially instituted and appointed; as Christ says, Matt. 11:28: Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Also Matt. 9:12: They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick. ... And worthiness does not depend upon great or small weakness or strength of faith, but upon the merit of Christ, which the distressed father of little faith [Mark 9:24] enjoyed as well as Abraham, Paul, and others who have a joyful and strong faith.” [FC, SD VII:69-71]

So, receiving Holy Communion is something to be done with the utmost seriousness. We should approach the altar in reverence and with true repentance over our sins so we receive it the way it was intended because there is a way in which it can actually be received to our harm. (And for that reason we don’t just let anyone and everyone come to the altar, but normally only those who have been instructed and confirmed.) Yet for all who trust in Christ and know that He is the only Savior from sin—even those who are weak in faith- the sacrament is a great and tremendous comfort in which God comes to bless us.

See you Sunday,  
PrS







## A Letter from Our Deaconess Intern

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

At the end of every month, Pastor, Scott, and I joke about the same thing - what to put in the newsletter. I sometimes think I enjoy writing, and I do! Just not when there's a deadline or when I know other people may read what I have to say. Yet, this is part of my duties here as deaconess intern. It's not always mercy work, it's not always visitations, and it's not always Bible studies or small groups. Sometimes it's doing things I wish I could avoid...like

writing newsletters, or handwriting addresses on greeting cards, or being ever at the mercy of our finicky printer.

But really, that's just life! We all have different vocations - i.e. different roles in our lives that God has called us to do. As a result, some of the duties we have within these vocations differ - and we may like some duties more than others. As a daughter, I have a duty to respect my parents' wishes, even when their requests may feel like a burden. As a sister, I have a duty to love and care for my siblings, even when they drive me crazy. As a fiancée/wife, I have a duty to respect and trust Jacob and his decisions for us, even if I may want to push back at times. As a future deaconess, I have a duty to serve all in my care, even when it may be dealing with a situation that I'd rather delegate to someone else.

As Christians, we are "little Christs" - which means we are to do as He did. Some of the things He did may seem simple enough, like loving and serving those around Him. However, this also means that, like Christ, we are to love and serve others even when it's hard. When you were marked by our Lord at your Baptism, you were given the vocation to be His disciple. Yes, even itty bitty baptized babies are called to "thank, praise, serve, and obey" our heavenly Father.

So what does that look like in our day to day lives? King Solomon articulated it well in Ecclesiastes 3...

***"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:***

***a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace."***

*"What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I perceived that *there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live*; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in *all his toil—this is God's gift to man.*" (Ecc. 3:1-13)*

As good Lutherans we ask, "What does this mean?" This means that no matter what season of life we are in, our main duty in our overarching vocation as "little Christs" is to

continue to serve faithfully and joyfully in all our other vocations - as mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, workers and children.

Now this does not mean that we will fulfill all our duties perfectly every single time, nor that we'll enjoy every single season that may come with our different vocations. However, it does mean that with the bad times and burdensome duties, we will still get to experience so much good. We will still have the opportunity to "thank, praise, serve, and obey" our Father during our times of weeping, mourning, dying - and newsletter writing - just as much as during our times of laughing, dancing, and embracing.

In Christ's love,

Julie Baumann  
Deaconess Intern

## ***Christ's Life, and Love, and Light***

Open our eyes Lord to see Your love's intent,  
To know with minds and hearts its depth and height  
May thankfulness be days in service spent  
Reflection of Christ's life, and love, and light. (*LSB 788*)

As stewards enter the month of February, it is fitting that we look at the last stanza of the stewardship hymn, "Forgive Us, Lord, for Shallow Thankfulness" (*LSB 788*). It is in these words that we see that the heart of stewardship is indeed love. Love has flowed from our Lord to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This love is then to flow from us to others. Being a conduit of love is really the central task of what it means to be a steward. The Lord entrusts us with His love that reconciles us to Himself, so that we might be stewards of the Gospel reconciliation that is freely given through us to those around us.

If we don't see this love from God to us, then through us, to others, our eyes will be closed not just to the needs of those around us. They will also be closed to the very heart of the Gospel itself. This is why the hymnist prays that the Lord would "Open our eyes, Lord, to see Your love's intent, To know with minds and hearts its depth and height."

Only when we are immersed in God's Holy Word, washed in Holy Baptism's life-giving water and fed on the holy, precious, body and blood of Jesus in the Holy Supper, will the Spirit be able to open our eyes to see the Lord's loving intent for us, and those we know and love. Sin blinds us. It makes us think that we are the center of our world, and our pleasure is the key.

In the Word, the Lord shows us the depth and height of His love. The depth of that love is what moved Him from His throne in heaven into our world. There He would don our human flesh, walk the dusty roads of Palestine, and set His face toward Jerusalem. Once there we get to see the height of His love, as He is elevated on a Roman cross to die a death that we deserve. But that would not be the end. He would be lowered into a tomb for three days. On that third day we then see the heights of love ascended to in His resurrection. This resurrection is already ours too!

The depth and height of this love poured out on us by the Holy Spirit then is distributed through us to others. Christ's servant love is shown in our servant love. The hymn utters the prayer of every Christian steward:

May thankfulness be days in service spent  
Reflection of Christ's life, and love, and light.

This is the task for which stewards were originally created. Bearing the image of creation and redemption, we reflect Christ's love to those around us. The light of Christ shining through us to others is the true stewardship to which we are called. It takes place in our homes. It is lived out in our workplaces and classrooms. As we bear the life, love and light received in Word and Sacrament, we carry it out in service to our neighbor and for the glory of God!

Forgive us, Lord, when our stewardship of thankfulness is shallow or lacking! Fill us with Your life, love and light! Not just for us, but through us to those we know and love, that they may know Your life, love and light for them!.



## prepare for worship in february

### February 2: Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Texts: Jer. 1:4-10 (17-19); 1 Cor. 12:31b-13:13;  
Luke 4:31-44

HotD: "Son of God, Eternal Savior," 842

### February 9: Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Texts: Is. 6:1-8 (9-13); 1 Cor. 14:12b-20; Luke  
5:1-11

HotD: "Jesus, Once with Sinners Numbered," 404

### February 16: Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

Texts: Jer. 17:5-8 1; Cor. 15:(1-11); 12-20 Luke  
6:17-26

HotD: "Songs of Thankfulness and Praise," 394

### February 23: Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

Texts: Gen. 45:3-15 1; Cor. 15:21-26, 30-42;  
Luke 6:27-38

HotD: "My Soul, Now Praise Your Maker," 820

## Lord of Life Small Groups

### EPIC PARENTING

- † For 30ish couples with kids
- † For info contact Ben Scarth  
[BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto:speters@planolutheran.com)
- † Usually meets on 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., February 8 at 6:30 PM for Bible  
study

### YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

- † For students in college or recent grads
- † For info contact Lauren Moudy at  
[laurenemoudy@gmail.com](mailto:laurenemoudy@gmail.com) or (214) 415-8939
- † Will meet Sun, February 16 at 6 PM for Bible  
study and dinner



- 1 Bette Martin
- 3 Julz Cruz
- 4 Cheryl Scaglione
- 5 Becky Armstrong
- 6 Sal Cruz
- 6 Dee Peters
- 6 Tom Womack
- 8 Marty Buckmeier
- 11 Clarice Lundquist
- 11 Paula Prestemon
- 13 Stephen Belcher
- 14 Tom & Karen Ashburn [60]
- 14 Jerry & Winona Parish [19]
- 15 Kevin Doughtie
- 19 Paul Grabow
- 19 Charles Hacker
- 19 Rebecca Short
- 20 Catharine Borck
- 23 Madison Conrad
- 23 Sarah Loewecke
- 27 Ernie Gromatzky
- 27 Bailey Lund
- 28 Wendy Cleavenger



