

LIFELINES

of

LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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God on Trial

This month the season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14th. Lent is such an important season of the Church Year, where we break from the routine and focus on repentance and fasting and the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus. There is wisdom to celebrating while the bridegroom is present (Mark 2:19) but also in setting aside good things for a time to focus our attention and then to increase our joy when the fast is over.

The idea of having a season for fasting and repentance is largely lost on many of our Evangelical brothers and sisters. For many of them, every Sunday (and every day) is another day to just praise the Lord. That is, the emotional setting is always joyful, happy, and upbeat. Not that there is anything wrong with that, but the Christian experiences much more than these emotions. As someone once put it, **“there is a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.”** (Eccl. 3:6) Peruse the Psalms for a moment and you will find that not every emotion expressed is joyful. Some Psalms are specifically psalms of penitence or lamentation and when we pray them, we experience the same sadness that reflects on a world broken with sin and filled with sorrow. See for example, Psalm 130 which begins, **“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!”**

I suppose some people are turned off by this and don't want to hear bad news and complaining, nor do they want to listen to dirges sung in minor keys when they go to church. Instead, they want everything about the worship service to be happy and inspiring. Some even

refer to their worship as the praise service. But others find that approach superficial and shallow. They know there is a time for praising God with a joyful noise and a time for repenting in sackcloth and ashes. If you know of someone who has complained about shallow Christianity, or whose worship life only consists of praise, then consider inviting them to join you for worship and experience something different this Lent—especially on Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday.

This year our Lenten theme is: *God on Trial*. It is a forensic themed series that considers that God was literally on trial when Jesus was arrested and brought before the Jewish and Roman authorities. The series was created and published by Northwestern Publishing House—the official publishing house of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Speaking of Northwestern Publishing House, a new daily devotional called *Meditations*, will be available in the Narthex in March. A request was made to have something with a little more substance to it than *Portals of Prayer*, and this was recommended. In my brief experience with using *Meditations*, I have found it

much more engaging than *Portals of Prayer*. You might as well. And if you need a good excuse to start doing daily devotions, then now would be a good time to get started.

PrS





prepare for worship in february

February 4: Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Texts: Is. 40:21-31; 1 Cor. 9:16-27; Mark 1:29-39

Hymn of the Day: "Hail to the Lord's Anointed," 398

February 11: The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Texts: 2 Kings 2:1-12 or Ex. 34:29-35; 2 Cor. 3:12-13 (14-18); 4:1-6; Mark 9:2-9

Hymn of the Day: "O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair," 413

February 18: First Sunday in Lent

Texts: Gen. 22:1-18; James 1:12-18; Mark 1:9-15

Hymn of the Day: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," 656

February 25: Second Sunday in Lent

Texts Gen. 17:1-7, 15-16 Rom. 5:1-11 Mark 8:27-38

Hymn of the Day: "Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart," 708



2/14 Ash Wednesday/Midweek 1:

Accusations Job 42:1-6

2/21 Midweek 2:

Restraint Luke 22:47-53

2/28 Midweek 3:

Testimony Matthew 26:57-75

3/6 Midweek 4:

Misconceptions Luke 23:1-12

3/13 Midweek 5:

Truth John 18:33-40

3/20 Midweek 6:

Sympathy Luke 23:26-34

3/24 Passion Sunday:

Evidence

3/28 Maundy Thursday:

Respite Luke 22:7-20

3/29 Good Friday:

Tenebrae Service

3/31 Easter Sunday:

Vindication Mark 16:1-8

Service Times
during
Lent

Sunday Services

8:00 and 10:45 AM

Wednesday Services:

1:00 and 7:00 PM

Maundy Thursday

1:00 and 7:00 PM

Good Friday

7:30 PM

Never enough...and yet all that we need!

The Christian life is in certain respects a paradox. For example, we are simultaneously Saints and Sinners. Each of us understands that this is true whenever the circumstances of our lives remind us that we are incapable of avoiding sin no matter how well we are aware God's commandments and desire to keep them. On this topic, Luther wrote: *If I examine myself I find enough unholiness to shock me. But when I look at Christ in me I find that I am altogether holy.*¹

Those who are outside the faith often cannot get past this dichotomy. They may say:

- *The church is full of hypocrites – of people claiming to be holy who are no better than me.*
- *Why would I want to go to worship each week to be reminded of my sin and told I'm not good enough?*
- *Why would I want to serve a god who makes up arbitrary rules and then judges me for not following them?*

For those of us in the faith – who live the Christian life – we see things altogether differently. We know that we do not go to church thinking ourselves holy of our own making or less sinful than any other, but we go to church to be reminded of our need for God and to receive His life-giving gifts.

This stark contrast in perceptions between those outside the faith and those of us inside the faith is described as follows by St Paul: *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* 1 Corinthians 1:18

As it says in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession: *The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.*² We go to church because that is where we hear that Gospel and receive those sacraments. That is where we find God's grace, mercy, peace, the forgiveness of our sins and the promise of life eternal.

Let us consider again now how God's gifts are conveyed to us when we attend church.

- In the Absolution:
*Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I **forgive you all your sins** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*
- In the Words of Institution:
*Take, eat; this is My body, which is **given for you**. Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is **shed for you for the forgiveness of sins**.*
- In the post-Communion dismissal:
*The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. **Depart in peace, your sins forgiven.***
- In the Benediction:
*The Lord **bless you and keep you**. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be **gracious to you**. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and **give you peace**.*
- In the Dismissal:
*Go **in peace**. Serve the Lord.*

That peace which we receive through our worship attendance is not a human peace. It is God's peace. As St Paul writes: *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Romans 5:1a and also *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Philippians 4:7

May each of us who calls Lord of Life our church never tire of coming to worship and never have enough either of being reminded of our need for God or of receiving His gifts, and, may each of us know with certainty that trusting in His promises and in Him, that we have all that we need.

In Christ,
Mike Kunschke, Elder

¹ <https://www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/gal/web/gal3-10.html>

² <https://bookofconcord.org/augsburg-confession/of-the-church/>

Caring for My Neighbor

If any of the Ten Commandments might tempt us to think that keeping the Law is easy, it would be the Fifth Commandment. After all, how hard is it to get through life without murdering somebody? The vast majority of people can handle that!

But Jesus famously blows up this notion by pointing out that the command, “you shall not murder,” goes much deeper — down to the heart.

You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.” But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, “You fool!” will be liable to the hell of fire. (Matt. 5:21–22)

Hatred and disdain come from the same sort of crookedness of heart as murder. With both murder and hatred, you look down on another person and think them of little worth.

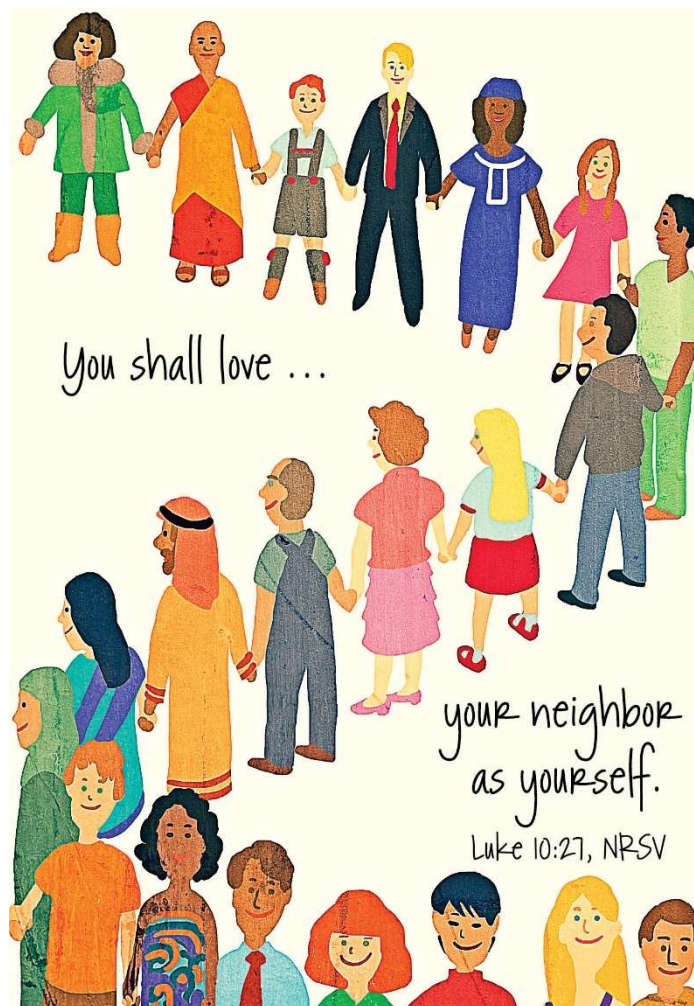
In the Small Catechism, Luther also points out that every “do not” in the commandments also includes a “do this:” “We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body but *help and support him in every physical need*” (SC, Fifth Commandment, emphasis added).

We are not called merely to avoid evil; we must also do positive good.

So when Jesus drew near to us and became our neighbor by taking up our humanity, He came not only to avoid harming us, but He came to positively help us, bless us and serve us.

We are now called to show the love to our neighbors that Christ showed to us. Your neighbor is yet another gift that God has given you that requires your stewardship. We are called to show mercy, to be kind, to love and serve our neighbor. One aspect of this stewardship is financial: our neighbors need us to support the church’s work so that they can hear the Gospel and come to faith. Our neighbors need the church’s alms and mercy work. Our neighbors need our faithful service in all we do in the name of Christ.

LCMS-Stewardship-Ministry-Newsletter-Article-February-2024



Lord of Life Small Groups

EPIC PARENTING

- † For 30ish couples with kids
- † For info contact Ben Scarth
BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com
- † Usually meet 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
- † Will meet Fri., Feb 9 at 6:30 PM

GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974
- † Will meet Sat., Feb. 10 at 6:30 PM for Bible study

COLLEGE GROUP

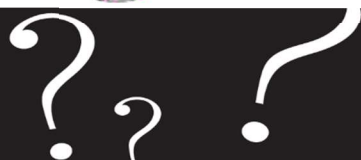
- † For students in college or recent grads
- † For info contact Pastor Shaltanis at
PastorShaltanis@yahoo.com
- † Usually meet after the late service for lunch and Bible study



FEBRUARY

Birthdays and Anniversaries

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 [59]
14	Jerry & Winona Parish [18]
15	Kevin Doughtie
19	Paul Grabow
19	Charles Hacker
19	Rebecca Short
20	Catharine Borck
23	Sarah Loewecke
27	Ernie Gromatzky
27	Bailey Lund



Bible Quiz



Use one word (perhaps in different forms) for all the blanks to complete this Scripture passage:

“Dear friends, let us ____ one another, for ____ comes from God. Everyone who ____ has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not ____ does not know God, because God is ____.”

- A. believe
- B. help
- C. love
- D. forgive



Answer: C (See 1 John 4:7-8, NIV)