

# LIFELINES

of

## LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Phone: (972) 867-5588

Fax: (972) 985-5588

Internet Home Page: <http://planolutheran.com>

---

Vol. 40, No. 3

Plano, Texas

March 2026

---

### On Fasting

*Are we supposed to fast? Is fasting just an Old Testament thing? I thought fasting was something only Catholics do? What did Jesus say about it?*

**"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."** (Matthew 6:16-18)

This passage from Matthew 6 is read every year on Ash Wednesday to coincide with the beginning of Lent –a time when many Christians participate in some sort of fast.

Notice that Jesus does not say to His disciples: "If you choose to fast..." twice He says: "when you fast." He simply assumes that fasting will naturally be something His disciples do, just as He assumes they will pray and give to the poor, saying in the same passage: "And when you pray..." (vs. 6) And, "Thus when you give to the needy..." (vs. 2)

This entire lesson of our Lord is introduced with these words: **"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."** (vs. 1) The main point of the lesson is about hypocrisy and not doing righteous acts like prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in order to impress others, but rather, Christ urges us to do them genuinely and in secret knowing that God knows our true motives.

Interestingly, when it comes to proper prayer, Jesus not only warns against praying to be seen by others, but He gives detailed instructions of how to do it correctly. In this passage He teaches the Lord's Prayer and gives us the very words to say (verses 9-13). With giving to the poor, he warns His disciples against making a big scene with their gifts like the hypocrites do, but advises that they, **"do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing..."** (3) He does not prescribe a certain percentage or amount to give, He only instructs that the giving be done with the right motive and intent. The same is true with fasting. There is no command to fast twice a week or to give up specific foods or drinks or anything like that, but only the warning to fast with sincerity and not to do so with an eye toward impressing others.

In the Old Testament, fasting was not optional. For the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur,) self-denial was commanded: **"This is to be a perpetual statute for you. In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you must humble yourselves and do no work of any**

**kind...**" (Lev 16:29, NET) A footnote explains that the Hebrew literally says: "you shall humble your souls" and that the verb "to humble" here refers to various forms of self-denial, including but not limited to fasting. Other examples of self-denial may be abstentions from bathing or using oil to moisten the skin. Compare, for example, King David's fasting and self-denial upon being confronted by the prophet Nathan (2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 12:16-17, 30.)

Fasting is mentioned and commended throughout the Bible in both the New and Old Testaments. See: Judges 20:26, 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 7:6, 31:13, 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 1:12, 12:16, Ezra 8:21, 23, Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 9:3, 10:2, Luke 2:36-37, Acts 13:2-3, 14:23 and many others. Since so many examples are commended to us throughout Scripture and Christ Himself refers to fasting in the context of discussing "practicing righteousness" and He even assumes His disciples will keep this practice, why is it that Lutherans don't emphasize fasting like other Christians? (For example, the Roman Catholics have several feast and fast days prescribed by the Church and they forbid the eating of meat on Fridays in Lent. Some of the Orthodox churches boast that they fast half of the days of the year.) So, why don't Lutherans do something like this?

Lutherans are the true Church of the Bible and since Scripture nowhere prescribes a universal fast (just as it nowhere prescribes a universal amount of offering or time spent in prayer) we cannot announce that a fast *must* be done. Such a statement or prescription coming from the church would go against the Bible. Still, couldn't the Lutheran Church urge people to fast or make helpful suggestions about it? It certainly could, but the reason we typically don't is because at the time of the Reformation, fasting was terribly abused and people were turned off by it.

Martin Chemnitz wrote in the 1570's: "On account of the papalist abuses some are so afraid of the teaching about fasting that they shrink back when they only hear the term "fasting" mentioned, as though they had heard either murder or adultery; and some reject the whole teaching about fasting without discrimination among human traditions." From here, Chemnitz goes on to write another 150 pages on the topic! He cites many examples of fasting in the Scriptures and says it is good, but he also warns against the many ways in which the practice is abused and misunderstood and explains that it is not in and of itself true worship of God. Yet he goes on to say: "But if fasting is joined to repentance and prayer, that is, if fasting is practiced and ordered to this end, that the flesh may be coerced, subjugated, and reduced to servitude, ... so that the spirit may be able the more ardently and willingly to give and devote itself to repentance, prayer, and other exercises to this end, then finally, it is pleasing to God."

Growing up Lutheran, I do not recall ever hearing about fasting, much less hearing it commended to us. My thought is that it was merely a superstitious Catholic thing and not something Bible-following Lutherans do. But my thinking has changed. There's an old Latin maxim that says: **Abusus Non Tollit Usum**, which means *the abuse of a thing does not negate its proper use*. In this case, that means the response to hypocritical or self-righteous fasting is not to give up fasting altogether, but to do it with sincerity and in proper humility. I, personally find value in laying things aside for a time in order to mark the time as special. During Lent we also add several more opportunities for worship: Wednesday midweek services, and Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Increased devotion and worship along with fasting mark this as a holy time of year, a time dedicated to sorrow over sin and remembering the awful price paid for our salvation. This penitential season also recognizes that not every season is a time of joy and celebration. So, perhaps give some thought to fasting. If you decide to try it, don't make a big deal about it and certainly don't advertise it. Let it be between you and the Lord. **"And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."**



## A Letter from Our Deaconess Intern

*Who is your favorite disciple?*

Have you ever thought about it? Come to think about it, can you even name all twelve disciples? Let's see... There's Peter, James, John, Judas, Andrew, Bartholomew, Matthew... and five more. It's pretty easy to forget their names, since they are listed only four times in full throughout the New Testament. Even so, there's one disciple who always stands out to me as a "favorite:" Peter.

Peter is the outspoken disciple. If there's something to say, you can bet he's going to say it. Scripture cites more dialogue between Peter and Jesus than between any other disciple. So that should mean Peter has all the answers. He never makes snap judgments or says anything he later regrets. He is the perfect disciple. Isn't he? Well... not really. You see, just because Peter talked a lot did not mean he actually knew what he was talking about. He knew a great deal, that's true, but he always came up a bit short in his understanding. That's why Peter is my favorite disciple: he's just like you and me.

Let's take a look at Peter and his interactions with Jesus throughout Scripture. The fishermen Peter and Andrew, his brother, were the first two disciples Jesus called. They were there for the entirety of Jesus' ministry. They watched him heal and teach. They stood by him as crowds gathered around him, hoping to experience the one they called "Jesus." They were tossed about by the wind and waves on the Sea of Galilee, pleading for Jesus to save them. They were sent out by Jesus to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. They came back to learn more from Jesus. Then one day, the big question was asked: "Who do you say that I am?" And boy did Peter have the right answer: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." He was spot on. He knew exactly who Jesus was. I imagine he may have been standing there waiting for his gold star, listening to the blessing Jesus gave to him (Matthew 16:13-20). Instead, what he got was a Lord who told His disciples that He was going to suffer and be killed. What? The Son of God? Killed? Not on Peter's watch! Peter told his Lord, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." (Matthew 16:22) In the span of two mere verses, Peter goes from "Blessed are you" to "Get behind me, Satan!" Peter wasn't listening to the mind of God anymore. He was listening to the mind of man.

Peter is my favorite. For as many times as he makes a bold confession of Who Christ is (think especially of the walking on water incident), humanity creeps in. Peter knows who Jesus is, but he also turns in on himself. He confesses Jesus to be Lord, yet denies the path to salvation. He trusts in Christ enough to walk out to Him on the water, but then fear grabs hold of his heart, and he starts to sink. He witnesses the Lord's Transfiguration, but fails to grasp that the type of glory shown there is not the purpose of Jesus' coming. Peter says he will never fall away from Christ, yet denies Him three times. The man is a walking contradiction. He has all the right ideas, but fails at the execution.

Peter is sinful, just like us. We say and do all the right things, yet fail to follow through when it counts. We confess that Jesus is Lord, but we shy away from talking about religion anywhere outside the church. We say we trust God, but maybe our idea will be better. It's those little denials, those little arrogances that plop us firmly in the "sinner" category- just like Peter. But also like Peter, we are firmly saints. Just as Peter ran from Christ before His crucifixion, he ran toward his risen Lord on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias after He had risen from death (John 21:15-19). There, Jesus doesn't punish Peter for failing; He redeems him. As many times as we fail and fall into sin, Christ will redeem us, too.

So we look to the cross for our redemption. We look to the nail-marked hands and spear-pierced side of Christ and recognize that it is by these wounds that we are healed. Just like Peter. Just like all of the other disciples. Just like all of the saints that have come before us. That same sacrifice on the cross still atones for our sins to this day and forever. We don't have to have the perfect answer. We don't have to be the perfect disciple. We just have to have faith in the perfect Jesus who suffered, died, was buried, and rose again so that we may be counted as righteous. Still sinners, but also saints. Thanks be to God.



LWML Dal-North  
 Spring Event  
 Sat. April 18, 2026

09:00 - 09:30 Registration (\$15)  
 09:30 - 10:00 Welcome, Devotion  
 10:00 - 11:00 Coventry Reserve  
 11:00 - 11:10 Break  
 11:10 - 11:45 Business Meeting  
 11:45 Lunch

Hosted By:  
 Faith Lutheran Church Wylie

Location:  
 Faith Lutheran Church Plano  
 1701 E Park Blvd, Plano, TX

Ingathering:  
 Supporting Coventry Reserve

**One Body.  
 Many Members.**

1 COR 12:12

RSVP By:  
 Sat. April 4, 2026  
 To Hannah Dysart:  
 hannahnicolene  
 som@gmail.com  
 (662) 401-8342

## Stewardship Is an Act of Worship

As a kid, I remember my Grandma and Grandpa Diepholz' home with extraordinary joy. Family fun. Great food. A legacy of faith. One of my lasting memories of that house was the table that sat between their twin beds. It contained a lamp, a Bible, a catechism and a hymnal. These were well-worn, as Grandpa read to Grandma every night before they went to sleep! What a treasure these tools of faith are! Let us spend some time this month in the hymnal to help us better understand our life as Christian stewards! To do this, we will use LSB 785 "We Praise You, O God."

*We Praise You, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;  
In grateful devotion our tributes we bring.  
We lay it before You, and kneel and adore You;  
We bless Your holy name, glad praises we sing.*

Stewardship is an act of worship. It flows from the grace and mercy we have received in Jesus! Faithful stewardship can never start with us. Our sinful nature will make us and our desires the center of our worship. Our tributes, our giving and our serving only flow from how the Lord Jesus has given of Himself for our sake! When we have this in clear view, our knees bow and our praises flow freely! All this flows from the Name that has been placed on us in Holy Baptism!

*We worship You, God of our Fathers, we bless You;  
Through trial and tempest our guide You have been.  
When perils o'ertake us, You will not forsake us,  
And with Your help, O Lord, our struggles we win.*

Our stewardship that flows from what God has done for us in Jesus Christ is rooted in history. Passed from one generation to the next, stewards of the Gospel connect God's provision in the past to His continued care in the present.

So often, the struggles we face are self-inflicted. While there are indeed perils that can shake us from outside of ourselves, we are more likely enduring the suffering that comes because of our own choices that are outside the Word and will of God! But even in these situations, the Lord who loves us will never forsake us. When we become selfish, self-serving and self-destructive, the Lord NEVER abandons! The Lord helps us to overcome the struggles in faith and win the victory the steward rejoices in!

*With voices united our praises we offer  
And gladly our songs of thanksgiving we raise.  
With You, Lord, beside us, Your strong arm will guide us.  
To You, our great redeemer, forever be praise!*

Stewardship is more than just an individual thing. There is a corporate nature to our steward life. We see this in the Divine Service. There, stewards of all ages, all economic strata and all languages are joined in the singular task of praise. This stewardship of praise flows from the altar to us, out into the world and then back to the altar! God's strong arm leads us in this stewardship 24/7. This makes stewardship, in all times and places, a matter of worship. We praise our Redeemer who has entrusted us with this great stewardship of the Gospel which forgives our sins, grants us new life and salvation. And this treasure we freely share for God's glory and the benefit of our neighbor!



5	Mark Conrad
7	Caroline Loewecke
8	Jonah Sullivan
9	Karen Ashburn
9	Joanna Smith
9	Bob & Linda Hixson (58)
10	Tom & Carol Read (47)
11	Ambrosia Ave-Lallemant
11	Glenn & Marcia Huebel (48)
13	Pastor Joel Shaltanis
14	Shelby Lund
16	Russ & Brooke Wilkerson (24)
18	Greg Kostzewa
19	Steven & Sara Tweedie (15)
20	Sarah Nuschler
24	Richard & Sally Barr (53)
25	Steven Tweedie
26	Scott Cleavenger
27	Mark Ziegelbein
29	Cheryl Tyler

## 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

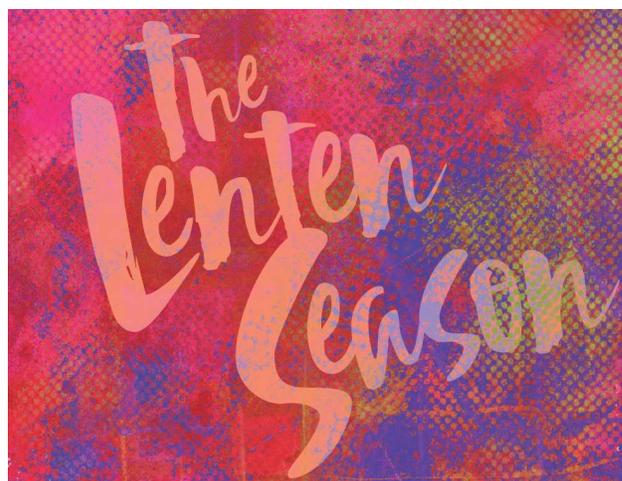
- † For info contact Scott Peters at 972-898-3351 cell or [speters@planolutheran.com](mailto:speters@planolutheran.com)
- † Will meet Sat., March 20 at 6:00 PM for Bible study

### GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974
- † Will meet Sat., March 14 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](mailto:laurenemoudy@gmail.com) or (214) 415-8939
- † Will meet Sun, March 15 at 6 PM for Bible study and dinner



## PREPARE FOR WORSHIP

*In March*

### March 1: Second Sunday in Lent

Texts: Gen. 12:1-9; Rom. 4:1-8, 13-17; John 3:1-17

HotD: "Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart," 708

### March 4: Midweek Lenten Service, 1 & 7 PM

### March 8: Third Sunday in Lent

Texts: Ex. 17:1-7; Rom. 5:1-8; John 4:5-26 (27-30, 39-42)

HotD: "May God Bestow on Us His Grace," 824

### March 11: Midweek Lenten Service, 1 & 7 PM

### March 15: Fourth Sunday in Lent

Texts: Is. 42:14-21; Eph. 5:8-14; John 9:1-41 or John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39

HotD: "God Loved the World So That He Gave," 571

### March 18: Midweek Lenten Service, 1 & 7 PM

### March 22: Fifth Sunday in Lent

Texts: Ezek. 37:1-14; Rom. 8:1-11; John 11:1-45 (46-53) or John 11:17-27, 38-53

HotD: "My Song Is Love Unknown," 430

### March 25: Midweek Lenten Service, 1 & 7 PM

### March 29: Palm Sunday

Texts: Is. 50:4-9a; Phil. 2:5-11; Matt. 26:1-27:66 or Matt. 27:11-66 or John 12:20-43

HotD: "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna," 443