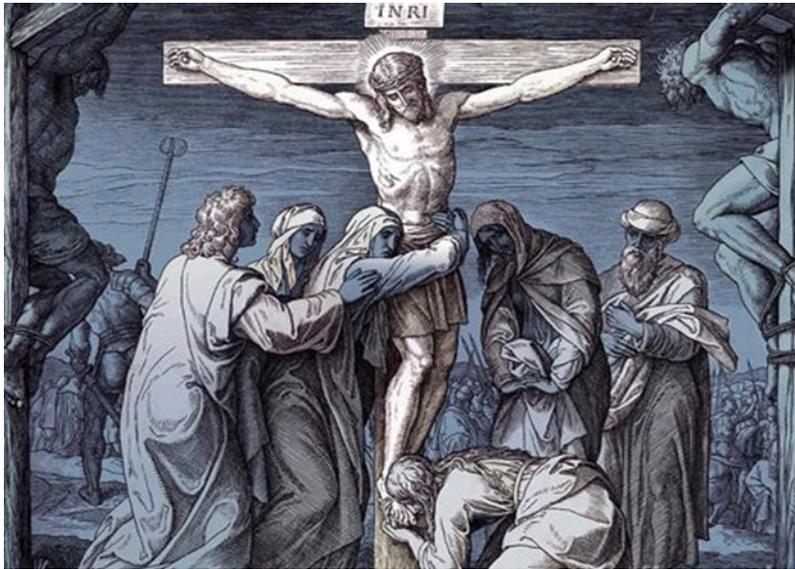


Redeemer's Christian Connection

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March Newsletter

Pastor's Page



The Message of the Cross Draws Us Into God's Presence

In some of my sermons recently I have been emphasizing how the Lord, who gave us saving faith through Holy Baptism and His Word, continues to draw us to where He promises to be present to also strengthen and keep our faith alive throughout our lives in this valley of the shadow of death. To further emphasize this Good News, I want to share with you a devotion I recently read which points out a comforting difference between the Old and New Testaments (<https://www.unveilingmercy.org>). The following is an adaption of that devotion.

When Moses approached the burning bush, inside of which was the Messenger of the LORD (Yahweh), God tells Moses, “do not come near” (Exodus 3:5). This exact Hebrew phrase is also used in Joshua when the Israelites are about to cross the Jordon River. The Levitical priests were called by God to carry the ark of the covenant (using poles, Exodus 25:13-14). But the rest of the Israelites were told to follow the ark of the covenant at a distance. “Do not come near it,” (Joshua 3:4).

Even Moses, who spoke with God “face to face” still had to keep his distance. As is well known, in the tabernacle and later the temple, only the high priest, once annually, entered the Holy of Holies. Even then, he burned incense so “that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, so that he does not die” (Leviticus 16:13).

Under the old covenant, you could only get so close to the immediate presence of God. And when you did, you were in a highly hazardous, potentially fatal, position. Remember Uzzah who died when he touched the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:6-7).

In the Greek translation of Exodus 3:5 and Joshua 3:4, the word used for “Do not come near,” is the same verb used in Luke 15:1, “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Jesus.”

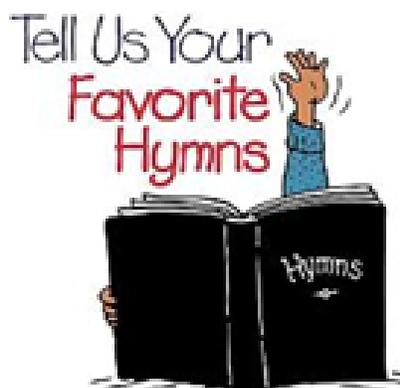
The moral rejects of society, the hated, the rejected, the “unholy” ones, were coming near to Jesus. And to them, Christ never said, “Do not come near,” or “Keep your distance.”

Rather, He beckoned them (and all of us!) with open arms, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt 11:28-30).

In Jesus, we do not have a God, wrapped in flames, who says, “Stop! Do not come near.” Rather, we have a God, wrapped in flesh and blood, who says, “Come! Come near to me.” Through the message of His undying love for us, which led Him to drink the cup of suffering (Matthew 20:22) until it was “finished”! (John 19:30), He gives us a faith that draws us into His presence.

While the Lord is always with us as He promised (“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:20), and certainly blesses us on our journey through this world, the specific places He promises to be to give us His greatest blessings are His Word and Sacraments of Holy Baptism [“Baptism now saves you” (1 Peter 3:21); “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27)], and the Lord’s Supper [“This is my body...this is my blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:26-28)]. What a privilege, joy and blessing to be able to come near to our almighty and merciful God through Jesus Christ, every time we read or hear His Word, and receive the Lord’s Supper; and for Him to enter into us not to overpower us but to empower us and continue to draw us into His almighty and merciful presence.

Thanks be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Pastor Van



Before I talk about our hymn of the month for March, I would like to make a request. **Please let me know your favorite hymns from our two hymnals** (The Lutheran Service Book and One and All Rejoice).

Thank you! Pastor Van

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good;
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by his precious Blood.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

O dearly, dearly has he loved,
And we must love him too,
And trust in his redeeming Blood,
And try his works to do.

Tiny Treasures Preschool

This week the preschool children are learning about Zacchaeus. It is always a good reminder to hear familiar Bible stories because we can forget details, or worse, the meaning and significance of the lesson. As preschool director, I make a daily conscience effort to look at my job description that the Parish School Board has provided me to make sure that I am fulfilling the duties they have given me and that I said I would fulfill. However, I have never really looked at our Constitution to see what the Parish School Board has been tasked to do by the congregation of Redeemer Lutheran Church. Just like revisiting Zacchaeus, it was interesting to read what the members of Redeemer asked the Parish School Board to do for them on their behalf. I encourage everyone to take a look at that section (which implies you know where your copy of the RLC Constitution is). Also, it is also good to remember what the philosophy of Tiny Treasures is and how we work together to execute it:

We believe that children learn best by actively pursuing their personal interests and curiosities. Children at Redeemer's Tiny Treasures are encouraged to make choices about the materials they use, and the activities they participate in throughout the day. As they pursue their choices and plans, children explore, ask and answer questions, solve problems, and interact with children and adults. In this environment, children naturally engage in key experiences as they involve themselves in activities that foster growth of developmentally appropriate skills and abilities.

As the congregation revisits their five-year ministry plans, I pray that we will all move forward putting Scripture first, then building on what those who have gone before us have done, and finally adding the needs of our community into our relevant and blessed plan. We will have opportunities to be reminded of what we have done and what now needs to be done. Hopefully, it will be as enjoyable experience as it is to revisit Zacchaeus each year.

On April 14, 2005, the Voters' Assembly of Redeemer Lutheran adopted a Strategic Ministry Plan (SMP) as our best understanding of God's calling (work) and plan for our congregation. This is a remarkable document, resulting from gathering as the Body of Christ and prayerfully asking God to reveal His purpose (mission), boundaries (values), direction (vision), and first destination (goals) for our congregation, along with our best response to this calling, His plan.

Redeemer adopted this plan to focus our attention on God's work for us. Without this focus, it would have been far too easy to busy ourselves with our own agendas, work of our own creation, born of our own good intentions . . . but still plans of our own making. Scripture tells us that this will only wear you out and deplete your resources (*Hag 1:5-6*). Instead, we chose to serve God's agenda, to join God at work on His plan instead of asking God to join us in the work we define.

This was not always easy. We have most certainly faced challenges of every kind - from financial shortfalls to a lack of willing servants. But we were assured of one thing, that God always supplies His will for us. We lacked nothing needed to carry out His work, His way, in His time (*Psalms 34:9-10*). Many wonderful things came about as a result of this SMP but it is way past the time when we as a Congregation review and update our Strategic Ministry Plan (SMP).

The timing is perfect! Synod has a program available to all congregations called RE:Vitality. Here is a brief overview of what this RE:Vitality is: Revitalization is doing what we do because we are the Church. Young or old, small or large, rural or urban, your congregations are vital. Wherever God's Word is proclaimed in purity and the Lord's Sacraments are rightly administered there is vitality. This Christ centered vitality is the focus of RE:Vitality. It asks and addresses the following questions:

- WHO in our community does not know the love, mercy and grace of Jesus?
- WHY has God put us in this place, at this time, for these people?
- HOW do we increase Word and Sacrament ministry (vitality) among ourselves and share it with others?
- WHAT has God invested in us to do the work that He has given us to do?

Pastor Van and the Board of Elders after reviewing this program made recommendation to the Church Council that Redeemer adopt this program. This proposal was accepted by the Church Council.

So now how do we get started? It all begins with CADDSS (Congregational Assessment of Development/Decline Status), which is a no cost, no obligation self-assessment that helps congregations objectively answer the question "Where are we...really?" Once our assessment is received we can proceed with self-directed Modules. More information will be shared regarding the Modules at a later date.

While participation in CADDSS does not create any further commitment to the Re:Vitality program, it is the first step should we choose one of the training modules for our congregation's "Next Step."

Redeemer's Church survey will be open from **Sunday, March 14 – April 4.**

A few points about the survey and the congregation's participation in it:

- In order to ensure the accuracy of the assessment, we need to hear from as many people as possible. We need lifelong members and brand-new Christians. We need confirmed members and other regular attendees.
- It is important that all participants complete the assessment by **April 4.**
- Because every congregation has individuals who do not have internet access, we will make available printed copy of the survey. This will be entered into the website. We may also utilize our computers or set up several computers in a lobby, narthex, or fellowship hall and invite congregants to participate in the survey at the church.

As our survey start date approaches we will share with the Congregation the website link to access the survey.

After the survey is closed, a CADDs Report will be generated within one to two weeks, based on the answers provided by the congregation.

Please prayerfully consider participating in this survey.

Lenten Season

Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of the Lenten fast for the Early Church. Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert. In memory of that, Christians fasted for forty days. But since Christians didn't fast on Sundays, because it was the day of resurrection, and a day of great joy, they had to start on a Wednesday in order to fast for forty days before Easter. What does it mean to *fast*? It means to willingly abstain from something that in itself is both permissible and good. You abstain from it in order to free yourself to serve Christ. You show both yourself and your Lord that you can take this earthly thing or leave it. This is the right way for a Christian to live. We should use this world and its goods as if we didn't need them.

Q: Do Lutherans have to give up something for Lent as some other denominations require?

A: From the perspective of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, "giving something up for Lent" is entirely a matter of Christian freedom. It would be wrong, from our perspective, for the church to make some sort of "law" requiring its members to "give something up for Lent," since the Scriptures themselves do not require this. If, on the other hand, a Christian wants to give something up for Lent as a way of remembering and personalizing the great sacrifice that Christ made on the cross for our sins, then that Christian is certainly free to do so--as long as he or she does not "judge" or "look down on" other Christians who do not choose to do this.

Q: What is the significance of Lent?

A: Early in the Church's history, the major events in Christ's life were observed with special observances, such as His birth, baptism, death, resurrection and ascension. As these observances developed, a period of time was set aside prior to the major events of Jesus' birth and resurrection as a time of preparation.

During Lent, the Church's worship assumes a more penitential character. The color for the season is purple, a color often associated with penitence. The "Hymn of Praise" is omitted from the liturgy. The word "Alleluia" is usually omitted as well. By not using the alleluia--a joyful expression meaning "Praise the Lord"--until Easter, the Lenten season is clearly set apart as a distinct time from the rest of the year.

Additionally, it forms a powerful contrast with the festive celebration of Jesus' resurrection when our alleluias ring loud and clear.

Finally, the penitential character of Lent is not its sole purpose. In the ancient Church, the weeks leading up to Easter were a time of intensive preparation of the candidates who were to be baptized at the Easter vigil on Holy Saturday. This time in the Church's calendar was seen as an especially appropriate time for Baptism because of the relationship between Christ's death and resurrection and our own in Holy Baptism (see Romans 6:1-11). This focus would suggest that the season of Lent serves not only as a time to meditate on the suffering that Christ endured on our behalf but also as an opportunity to reflect upon our own Baptism and what it means to live as a child of God.

"To Live with Christ," Daily Devotions by Bo Giertz, pg. 183

Birthdays

Helen Austin—March 5
 John Moseman—March 8
 Stephanie Sidor—March 12
 Jordan Oeltjenbruns—March 13
 David Wacker—March 15th
 Teagan Scarbrough—March 15
 Holly Kruger—March 17
 Elsa Winkelmann—March 19
 Andrea Van Fossan—March 19
 Klaus Winkelmann—March 23
 Ken Weber—March 28
 Jeanne Nelson—March 30
 Emmett Weber— March 30
 Char Waggoner—March 31



Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 14th, so don't forget to "Spring Ahead" on Saturday night before retiring.

Baptismal Birthdays

Ruby Weber—March 15
 Joseph Cumins—March 24
 Benjamin Cumins—March 24
 Jim Gilleece—March 25

THE LORD'S MINISTRY

Redeemer Lutherans attendance figures and financial blessings that were given for the month of February to further maintain the Lord's ministry.

Date	Attendance	Communicants	Offerings Received Gen./Designated Funds	Needed Operating Budget
2-6 & 7- 2021	88	73	\$4,940.50/\$628.27	\$4,455.06
2-13 & 14-2021	74	51	\$3,405.50/\$144.00	\$4,455.06
2-17-2021	46	43	\$1,839.99	
2-20 & 21-2021	71	66	\$1,854.50/\$145.00	\$4,455.06
2-24-2021	23		\$400.00	
2-27 & 28-2021	90	71	\$3,635.50/\$330.00	\$4,455.06

Redeemer's M & M's



Mary Martha Circle
Annual Spring Luncheon
All Ladies are invited!
March 20, 2021 11:00am

At Redeemer Lutheran Church Family Life Center (FLC)

Please bring a salad to share. There is a signup sheet posted in the FLC.



SUNDAY, APRIL 4TH, following the Church service we will have our Easter Brunch. Please RSVP to Bobbi in the office and there will also be a sign up sheet. Precautions preventing the spread of COVID-19 will be taken. Sign up sheets for Easter brunch can be found in the narthex.

“Life Thoughts in the Church Year”

March 7 – Lent III – Abortion occupies an entire business industry. Assisted suicide is driven by financial considerations. And Jesus objects to nothing more strongly than making life and death a matter of commerce (John 2:15-16). He sacrificed Himself instead (John 2:19) so that “you shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13). Why? Because Almighty God chose the lowly for His own (1 Corinthians 1:28-30)—unborn, aged, impaired, even you and me.

March 14 – Lent IV – Location, origin, and residency can neither improve a person’s worth nor impair it. The Lord God’s worldwide redemption in Jesus (John 3:16) gathers from east and the west, north and the south (Psalm 107:2-3). How then can the confines of a woman’s womb or the bars of a hospital bed or the walls of a laboratory hold Him back when His great love has redeemed the human lives there as well?

March 21 – Lent V – Servanthood supersedes success, says Jesus (Mark 10:42-45). And do not surprise pregnancies and terminal diagnoses provide irreplaceable opportunities to serve neighbors, whether loved ones or strangers? Our Savior suggests that coming alongside them in courage and compassion may be better than sitting in prominent places hereafter!

March 28 – Palm Sunday/Passion of Our Lord – God works salvation in meekness (Zechariah 9:9). He brings glory only in weakness (Philippians 2:5-8). Abortion and assisted suicide attempt to avoid what the world perceives as weaknesses. But if we never enter another’s weakness or acknowledge and endure our own, we cannot know or come near to heaven. Better the peace of weakness with Jesus than any strength bought by such bloodshed (Zechariah 9:10).

