

St. Matthew Newsletter

Our Vision: Connecting the world with Jesus Christ

Our Mission: Faithfully living as the Body of Christ, and sharing the Gospel that brings salvation

❖ Pastor's Message

Rev. Steve Andrews Jr.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the Good Friday sermon, we looked at the parallel of Mt. Calvary to the request of a couple of Jesus' disciples. The idea that Christ was crucified with a criminal at His right hand and another at His left hand.

In Matthew 20 and Mark 10, we see two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, also known as the Sons of Thunder (Boanerges), request from Jesus that they would get to sit at His right hand and His left hand when He was lifted up. They wanted the positions of distinction, honor, and glory.

This is something that Jesus consistently and constantly had to teach His disciples. They were enjoying the power of Christ, seeing not just His miracles, but also the way people responded to those miracles. And then they, at the right time, even got to do some miracles themselves! It would be easy to get consumed in the quest for power, and to forget everything Jesus had taught them.

In Matthew 16:24, Jesus taught that His disciples must deny themselves. In Luke 9:24, Jesus taught them that they must lose their life if they wish to live. In Matthew 18:4, Jesus taught that we all must humble ourselves like a child, realizing that we bring nothing to the table, but rather that God provides and cares for us. Or in Matthew 23:11, that the greatest among the disciples would be the one who serves.

The teachings of Christ are quite clear, and stand profoundly in contrast to our own sinful natures, just like those Sons of Thunder. We struggle to humble ourselves, to make ourselves last and a servant, to lay down our own lives, and our own needs, to serve and love those around us. By contrast, we are prideful, constantly seeking to garner attention for ourselves, to grow our possessions, businesses, and reputation. We want people to love us. We covet their affections. It is no easier for us to let go than it was that rich young ruler.

We even get caught up in a race for the life to come! The Scriptures have a few hints that our lots may not be equal in Paradise. And so, many Christians strive in the here and now intentionally seeking their own good in the life to come. The love for their neighbor then really isn't a love of the neighbor, it's a love of the self. They serve in order to reap a personal reward, rather than simply for the good of their neighbor.

This is the point that I wish to drive home here: we are but humble servants. Each and every one of us. We have the same functions before us: to love God and to serve our neighbor. Now, granted, this will look different depending on whom your neighbor is. My life, with my wife and three daughters, may look different that your life as a wife, or a grandparent, or a college student. But look around you. Find someone that you can serve, both with the love of Christ that puts others before yourself, and also with the good news of what that ultimately looks like, as Jesus put our needs before His own on Good Friday. *(Continued on next page)*

❖ Pastor's Message *(continued)*

Now, what about those varying rewards in heaven? Matthew 6 is often misused here. Go ahead and read it. It's God's Word, so you know it's good! But, the reward of Matthew 6, even the treasures laid up in heaven, aren't monetary or wealth of possessions. The reward is Jesus. It's an everlasting life spent with Him in His paradise!

Another one commonly referenced, that doesn't apply, is Paul's discussion of the third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12. There aren't different levels of heaven corresponding to our works in this life, at least, not according to this passage. Paul is simply speaking in the mindset of most ancient cultures. The Hebrew word for "heaven," "shamayim," can also be translated "sky." This helps understand Genesis 1-2 where we see God making the "birds of the heavens." The Jewish people considered the 1st layer of heaven to be what we consider the sky, the 2nd layer of heaven to be what we think of as outer space, and the 3rd layer of heaven to finally be the same as our thinking about where God's throne is. Paul is referring to the receiving of a special and direct revelation of God coming from His throne.

There are others like this. But, there are perhaps a couple that aren't, Scriptures that may hint that perhaps our lots in Paradise won't look all the same, like some cookie-cutter, suburban neighborhood.

The first is the Parable of the Talents, from Matthew 25. There, we see the master (God) entrusting His resources to some of His people, that they would make good and proper use of these things. To the one, He gave five talents, to another two talents, and to the third, a single talent. The one who received five gained five more. The one who received two gained two more. And yet, both received the same reply from God, that they were faithful, and could enjoy the rest of their Master. Now, when the third failed, and had his one talent taken away, it was given to the one who had ten talents, leading to the line, "For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance." I am okay with understanding this verse the same way as we did Matthew 6, that the reward is Jesus, and we're just overstretching a parable here. But, I do admit, to think of varying rewards in Paradise is a legitimate way to read this section. If so, it would be as simple as this, those who made good use of what God entrusted to them in this life, God will entrust more to them to care for in Paradise than He will to those who were not good stewards in this life.

Then there's one final set of verses, like 1 Corinthians 3:8 "and each will receive his wages according to his labor." 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Revelation 22:12+23 are a couple more examples of similar sounding verses. While these can once again be read, in light of Ephesians 2:8-9, that Jesus is our reward, there could be a varying rewards idea here as well.

Ultimately, though, for our sinful natures, this idea of varying rewards isn't helpful. It becomes a trap and a snare, as our hearts covet power and authority just as James and John did. We stop actually caring for our neighbor, and instead see them as a stepping stone to better things for ourselves. This is not the way of the followers of Christ! Instead, we simply trust in God, knowing that He provides for all of our needs. And, even if the rewards in Paradise differ, there we will be perfectly restored into His image. There will be no jealousy, no longing for the gifts of another. Together, we will all be praising God and glorifying His name!

God's Blessings,

Pastor Andrews

❖ Altar Guild

Thank you to everyone who helped during the Lenten season and Holy Week! We are always grateful for the help we receive from Rick Shafer for climbing the tall ladder to drape the large cross several times during this season, with help from Tony Velasquez and Caryl Froeschle! Thank you to Jake Langsdale for all the heavy lifting of the thorn pots, Baptism font, palm pots, etc. to prepare for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter! And a special thank you to Carla Homan and Rebecca Gottschamer for making the beautiful quilted banner of the cross on the hill in the Narthex -- a stunning gift for us all!! The Altar Guild members will meet on Saturday, May 11th, at 10 a.m. in the library. We will continue our discussion on the items being considered for purchase with the memorial donations and a campaign to encourage new members to join the Altar Guild.

❖ Mary Martha Circle

Mary Martha Circle of LWML met on Tuesday, April 30th for a delicious salad supper. Ann Femrite shared with us about growing up on the mission field of Nigeria. Christy Chambers (Vice-President) and Patty Bechel (Treasurer) were installed as new officers. Please join us on Tuesday, May 21st (note the earlier date), at 7 p.m. in the meeting room of The Family Life Center. Patty Bechel will hostess and have the closing devotion. Pastor Andrews will join us for Bible study. Hope to see you there.

❖ Lydia Circle

Lydia Circle met on April 11 at 12:30. The highlight of the meeting was the installation of the Vice-President and Secretary for the coming two-year period. Also Pastor gave a very interesting lesson on the twelve Apostles, with a promise of more to follow in the next months. Our next meeting in May will be on a different schedule. We will go out to lunch on May 16. Meet at the church at 11:15 am.

❖ LWML Women in Mission

Quarterly Society Program—Saturday, May 4th, St. Matthew Family Life Center:

ALL ST. MATTHEW WOMEN ARE INVITED!

9:00 AM—Refreshments; 9:30 PM—Speaker; brief LWML meeting following speaker.

The program will feature, Pastor Ken Greinke, board member of Lutheran Bible Translators based in Concordia, MO. He will be sharing how LBT makes God's Word accessible to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts. We are also pleased to have the LWML Kansas City South Zone President, Carol Haesemeier, join us on the 4th. Election and installation of officers will follow the program.

❖ Classics Gathering

Thanks to Ginger & Robert Lyle and Ann & Don Wesselschmidt for hosting our wonderful (pre) Easter brunch on April 4. A special time, with delicious food from all our *Classics and great music from The MoKan Band*. Our next luncheon comes May 2. And there's another treat in store for us—Historian John Brackman will review the Civil War History in the Kansas City and Concordia areas. We invite our *Classics friends to bring a favorite dish, dessert, or beverages*. Come and join us **Thursday, May 2, at 11:30 AM in the Family Life Center.**

❖ 2019 Senior Graduate Recognition

This year, St. Matthew has a high school senior class of five young men and women. As a congregation, we will be recognizing our graduating seniors in a worship service on Sunday, May 19th. Each of them will receive a gift from the Church that morning. We've managed to keep that gift a surprise so far, so you'll have to wait just a while longer to find out what it is!

We congratulate each of them on their hard work, and wish God's blessings to them as they begin preparations and study for their future careers. It is an exciting time, as they build and learn many skills that they can use to serve their neighbors for years to come!

Sophie Berning ...

Lillie Bock will be attending the University of Missouri-Columbia and is currently undecided on her major.

Connor Ours will be attending Metropolitan Community College his freshman year and then plans to attend the University of Missouri to study Agricultural Business.

Ethan Tanner will graduate from The Lutheran High School of Kansas City. He will be attending South-west Missouri State University in the fall and will be studying Computer Science.

Aaron Wedel will graduate from Blue Springs South High School. He is looking forward to attending the University of Missouri in Columbia this fall. He plans to pursue a business degree with an emphasis in entrepreneurship.

❖ Sunday Bible Class – “The Gospel of John”

We gather in the Family Life Center every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. Coffee and donuts available. During the Spring we are watching a brief clip of the movie, “The Gospel of John,” which covers the chapter we will study that day. Pastor Otto then leads us through study and discussion of the text itself. You are invited to come and learn. Being at Sunday Bible class also gives you the opportunity to visit with others at your table and get to know one another.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Video length</u>	<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Special notes</u>
May 5	7	8:10	Pastor Otto	Confirmation-10:45 service
May 12	8 <i>part 1</i>	6:30	Pastor Otto	Mother's Day
May 19	8 <i>part 2</i>	4:30	Pastor Otto	Senior Graduates' Recognition
May 26	9	8:10	Pastor Otto	Memorial Day weekend

❖ Fellowship Coordinator Position Needed

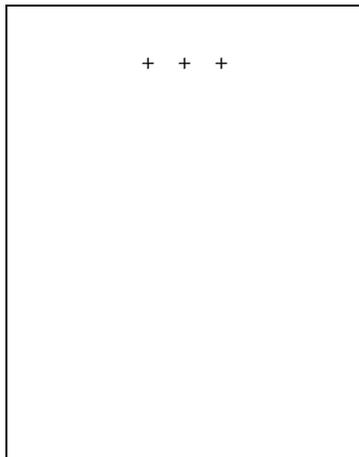
Do You Like to Organize Events? We are looking for a volunteer who is interested in facilitating the fellowship mission of St. Matthew. With the help of a volunteer committee, the individual would gather ideas for meals, events, and outreach activities that involve our members and coordinate the scheduling of those events. This is an elected position to our Board of Directors, but we currently have a vacancy, so we are asking for a volunteer to assist us with possible events for summer and fall. If interested, please contact Pastor Otto (otto@gracefaithlove.org) or our congregation president, Bob Borgelt (bobb76@kc.rr.com). Thank you!

St. Matthew



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MAY 2019 NEWSLETTER

- ❖ St. Matthew Prayer Partners
Do you have a prayer request? Are you interested in being on our e-mail list notifying you of prayers of the congregation? Contact Carrol McAllister at cammac2@swbell.net or 816-763-4535.

