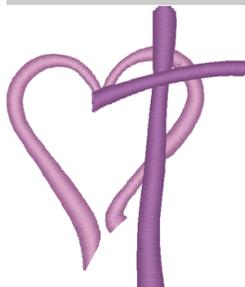


February
2014

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HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Words from the Cross

***Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!***

***Know that the Lord, he is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.***

***Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
And his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!***

***For the Lord is good;
His steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.***

Psalm 100

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Psalm 100 is such a joyful, exuberant song of faith that I felt I had to share it with you this month. To be sure we can all find plenty of reasons not to be joyful, especially in light of the bad things that are going on in the world, in our nation, and in some of our own personal circumstances. But it is clear that God wants us to be joyful, and we as Christians have every reason to be happier than most because of all that our Lord has done for us. Even if the world is crumbling around us, we have been given the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, who has conquered sin and death for us.

One of the ways that we can show and share our joy is through our stewardship of the many gifts God has poured out upon us so richly. Love, gratitude, and appreciation always uplift the heart and spirit. Prompted by the motives of self-denial and sacrifice, our acts of service become pleasurable and exhilarating experiences. Just think of a child who happily helps his or her mother and father. The feeling of satisfaction is almost greater than can be expressed.

It has been my experience that on those occasions when I have found no joy in my stewardship, it has not been due to a lack of anything God has provided, but rather a lack of thankfulness and trust on my part. If I look at natural or man-made disasters, or at the bad economy, or at the high unemployment rate, and throw up my hands and say, "What's the use, things are never going to get any better!" then I am the one with the problem. But if I see a need, whatever it might be, and ask how I can serve God and my neighbor, then it is no longer a problem, but a joyful opportunity for me to shine forth the love that God has shown me through His Son.

As we ponder all our Lord has done for us during this season of Epiphany, what can we do but respond to His love by showing it to others in our words and actions, so that they might see and know Him better. God grant us His grace to ever do so, in Jesus' name. Amen.

In His love,
Pastor Skelton