



Hope Ev. Lutheran Church

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✠ THE HOPE LUTHERAN ✠

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Reason for Hope

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...." (1 Peter 3:14-15)

In this time of the COVID-19 pandemic and being locked down in order to "flatten the curve," we are suffering. We may not be suffering "for righteousness' sake," as Peter said—that is, being persecuted because of confessing Jesus—but we are still suffering. We are suffering *in* our righteousness. At this time, we suffer in eagerly wanting to be fed by God's Word and Sacraments and thus live out our faith. For this time we are not able to gather together to hear God's Word and receive the gifts of our Lord's Body and Blood. But we rightly desire to do so.

The old saying is true—"absence makes the heart grow fonder." As we fast from gathering together and even from the Lord's Supper itself, our Lord is working in us a salutary longing for His gifts.

So we take the words of Peter to heart: "*in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.*" Our Lord Jesus has conquered sin, death, and even pandemics and economic downfalls. By His perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection, He has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Nothing in this world of illness and death can change that! You and I who are cleansed by the blood of Jesus also have hope.

Earlier in his letter, Peter pointed us to this "living hope":

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Our inheritance of eternal life with our Lord Jesus Christ—along with the Father and the Holy Spirit—cannot be shaken. Our Lord is keeping it in heaven and guarding us through faith at this difficult time.

Peter then wrote about how we may have to suffer

"various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6-7)

Such is life in a fallen world—enduring and being grieved by various situations that test our faith. This testing may be very uncomfortable, confusion and disconcerting, but we trust that our heavenly Father is working His will through it all. Just as fire refines a precious metal (gold) to make it pure, our Lord uses times that test our faith to refine us and strengthen our faith.

**BUT HALLOW THE
LORD
CHRIST
IN YOUR HEARTS.**

It is within this framework of hope in our eternal inheritance that Peter also exhorts us: *“always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”*

You and I have the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. However, many people in our lives—family members, friends, next-door neighbors—do not have that comforting hope. What a tremendous opportunity we have to reach out with the Gospel of Jesus to our scared, confused, and hurting neighbors. Jesus has given us the sure and certain hope of life with Him, and now He is giving us unique opportunities to give the reason for the hope that we have.

What are some ways that you can do that while living in lock-down conditions?

Now that Hope is live-streaming our Sunday services,

- you can invite your family, friends and neighbors to watch Hope’s service online;
- you can discuss what is happening in the service in the comments panel on Facebook;
- you can interact with others, in the comments panel, while listening to the sermon; and
- you can follow up with someone after the service to discuss any questions they may have.

Of course, you want to watch the service and listen to the sermon to be fed yourself, but you can also use the time to say, “Come and see” (John 1:46) to those who need the forgiveness and hope that only Jesus can give.

When you talk with family, friends and neighbors on the phone or by email, you can talk about your confidence in Christ even as we all go through this uncertain time. Your witness to someone who is depressed or in despair may be the shining light of hope that they need.

These are just some of the ways that you and I can use this unprecedented time to bear witness to Jesus and the hope that we have in Him. Instead of throwing a pity-party for ourselves that we cannot join together on Sunday mornings, we can freely and joyfully make a defense to anyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us.

Dear friends, we do have reason for hope. Our hope is not in ourselves, or in conquering a virus, or in a newly promised booming economy. Our hope is in Jesus Christ and His forgiveness and life!

✉ Pastor Randy Asburry

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C. F. W. Walther on John 10:16

I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Only one thing is necessary to belong to the one flock that saves. A person must listen to the voice of Christ and recognize Him as the only Shepherd of his soul, accepting Him and remaining with Him. Whoever is with Christ is in the true Church, and his salvation stands unshakably firm and certain.

The true application of these words of Christ, “so there will be one flock, one shepherd,” consists, finally, in this: We must help to share the Gospel according to the call and relationship in which we stand and according to the gifts that have been given to us. For although Christ gloriously fulfilled His Word in the service of the holy apostles, He does not want it to cease being fulfilled as long as He preserves, by His intercession, the time of grace for the world. It is Christ’s most gracious will that His call as Shepherd resound always more loudly in the wilderness of this world, where unnumbered multitudes of miserable heathens continue to wander without God and without hope. By this sharing of the Gospel, more and more people are led to the green pastures of Christ’s Church. And as His holy flock becomes more unified in Him, the fences Satan and his servants set up to separate believers will continue to be broken down. (*God Grant It: Daily Devotions from C. F. W. Walther* [CPH, 2006], pp. 376-377)

LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter Article – May 2020

Our Savior calls us to follow Him in generosity. that you also „For I have given you an example“ .should do just as I have done to you“ (John 13:15) We cannot give our lives for the salvation of the world, of course. Praise God – that job’s already done!

But with hearts full of thanksgiving for what Jesus has given us, we can follow Jesus’ example of generous giving. And this is not merely an example alone. It’s also our Lord’s command. “The one who contributes, (let him give) in generosity.” (Rom. 12:8)

So, when we give to help others who are in need, and when we bring offerings to the Lord, we should strive to heed His command and follow the pattern He has established for us. Jesus did not give us leftovers. He gave His best. So, we should not give leftovers, either, but the first and best of what He has given us. Jesus did not give as an afterthought, but according to the plan of salvation God established from the foundation of the world.

So, when it comes to our offerings to the Lord, we should make a thoughtful plan to give generously, in proportion to the way He has blessed us. Like the Macedonian Christians, who gave according to their ability – and even beyond their ability (2 Cor. 8:3) – we can and should give a generous portion of the income that God provides us to honor the Lord.

So also, we should give freely, just as Jesus gave freely for us. There is no compulsion involved in our works of love and our offerings to the Lord. Nor do we give grudgingly. We should give freely and cheerfully because we want to out of thanksgiving. “Each as he purposes in his heart,” as the Lord says. (2 Cor. 9:7) There is no New Testament ceremonial law involved here. Rather, we are free to give as generously as our Savior has given for us.

In the same way, our Lord teaches us to give generously out of love – love for Him and for our neighbor. Genuine love is always love in deed (1 John 3:18), love such as Jesus showed us all. It is love that sees our neighbor in need and gives generously to help him. It is love that hears the Word of the Lord and does what it says. If we truly love, we give generously. If we give without love, our giving is not truly following Jesus.

Finally, we follow Jesus in generosity when we give for a good purpose to thank the Lord and support His gospel ministry and other works of mercy. The people of Israel gave generously for the service of God’s gospel purposes, to construct and support the operation of the tabernacle. For that was the place where the Lord received the Old Testament sacrifices, through which He bestowed the forgiveness of sins on His people. So, they gave abundantly – so abundantly that they had to be told to stop giving. (Ex. 36:5-6)

In the same way, we should bring generous offerings to support the Lord’s work of bestowing His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation in our congregations through the preaching and teaching of His Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. We should support the Lord’s work of caring for those who are poor and needy.

Our Savior calls us to follow His example in generous giving. Let us then, with thankful hearts, rededicate ourselves to following Him in generosity.

“All ceremonies should serve the purpose of teaching the people what they need to know about Christ” (Augsburg Confession, 24:3). This month we keep celebrating the season of Easter—the most important time of the Christian year. The Church celebrates Easter not just on one day (Easter Sunday), but for a whole “week of Sundays,” that is, seven Sundays. Christ’s resurrection life is our new life. Each week we hear more of that wonderful Good News. Christ Jesus is the first fruits of the dead. He gives us His victory over sin, death, and hell. What great news! It gives us Christians a whole new purpose and outlook for life. Here’s what’s coming up in Divine Services for the month of May:

Date	Day in Church Year	Gospel Reading	Gospel Focus (Theme of the Day)
May 3	4th Sunday of Easter	John 16:16-22	THE NEW CREATION - We may be separated from Christ right now—for a little while—but we joyfully look forward to the permanent reunion in eternity. Since we are in Christ, we are new creations and all things are new.
May 10	5th Sunday of Easter	John 16:5-15	THE SINGING CHURCH - Jesus explains the threefold work of the Holy Spirit: 1) to reveal our sin; 2) to exalt Christ and His righteousness; and 3) to reveal the judgment on the prince of this world. For all this we sing Christ’s praises!
May 17	6th Sunday of Easter	John 16:23-33	THE PRAYING CHURCH - Since God has marvelously saved us and made us holy people, we learn to pray and trust Him. That’s the Christian’s “holy life.”
May 24	7th Sunday of Easter	John 15:26-16:4	THE EXPECTANT CHURCH - After Jesus ascends, His people look forward to His return. In the mean time, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to comfort us and keep us in the faith.
May 31	Feast of Pentecost	John 14:23-31	THE HOLY SPIRIT CREATES THE CHURCH -- The Holy Spirit comes to give us faith and sustain us in the faith. That is, He directs our attention to Jesus our Savior. “Pentecost” means 50 days after Easter.

IDENTITY YOUTH CAMP

Identity Youth Camp is for youth entering grades 7 -12 and will be hosted by Epiphany Lutheran Church.

The goal of Identity Youth Week is to deepen the awareness of teens about who they are in the eyes of Christ, themselves, their peers, and their community. With 1,000 different voices telling them “Be anything,” “Do anything,” “Believe anything,” and ever multiplying ways to express themselves, it is our desire to help each other walk with the one who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Each morning starts with worship, followed by speakers revealing biblical truths about who God is and why that matters. Afternoons deepen the students’ awareness of their part in the world

around them through service to our greater community. Upon registering, Youth will select one of 4 mission activities to be a servant leader to the St Louis City. Each day concludes with reflection on the conversations and activities. Students will be filled with new experiences and thoughts ... ideas that will incite further discussion throughout their evening.

Save the date - June 1-4, 2020, from 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM. The cost for the entire week is \$10. Breakfast, lunch and snacks will be provided.

Registration opens May 1, 2020.

Hosted at Epiphany Lutheran Church
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May 2020

Phone #314-352-0014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
3 <u>Easter 4</u> 9:00 Service of the Word LIVE STREAM	4	5	6	7	8	9 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
10 <u>Easter 5</u> 9:00 Service of the Word LIVE STREAM	11 7:00 Board of Elders via ZOOM	12	13	14	15	16 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
17 <u>Easter 6</u> 9:00 Service of the Word LIVE STREAM	18	19	20	21 <u>The Ascension of our Lord</u> 7:00 PM LIVE STREAM	22	23 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
24 <u>Easter 7</u> 9:00 Service of the Word LIVE STREAM	25	26	27	28	29	30 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
31 <u>Pentecost</u> 9:00 Service of the Word LIVE STREAM						