



Hope Ev. Lutheran Church

5218 Neosho St, St. Louis, MO 63109 • 314-352-0014

www.hopelutheranstl.org



✠ THE HOPE LUTHERAN ✠

Vol. 97, No. 7

September 2020

Safeguarding the Gospel

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5:14-16)

The year 2020 will no doubt go into the history books as one of the most perplexing, stressful, chaotic, and confusing years ever, at least in our shared experience. As a society and as Christians, we are being battered by the coronavirus pandemic, racial tensions, destructive anarchist riots, and a presidential election year, which Alexis de Tocqueville called "a moment of crisis." We find ourselves staggering and reeling like drunken sailors. How do we navigate such stormy seas? How do we make sense of so much that makes no sense at all?

Of course, there is "nothing new under the sun," as Ecclesiastes 1:9 says. Since Adam and Eve fell into sin, plunging God's good creation into chaos and death, plagues, racial tensions, and senseless destruction have routinely been part and parcel of our fallen human experience. The real questions we Christians need to ask are: *How can we safeguard the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this chaotic time? How can we faithfully confess Jesus and His life-giving salvation, and thus let our light shine before others?*

In this political year, it is most fitting for us Christians to take an active role in the political life of our land. We do not participate in political activities in order to promote a "Christian agenda" or bring about a "Christian nation." Instead, we seek to practice what is called "civic righteousness." We use human reason and common sense to work for the good of all people,

for justice, and for fairness. "We cannot impose faith in God through law upon the unbelievers, but through law and political persuasion we can impose external compliance with large portions of God's design for our lives" (Robert Kolb, *Teaching God's Children His Teaching*, 148).

We seek the welfare of the city and nation where God has placed us at this time. As God told his exiled people in the days of the prophet Jeremiah: "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7).

Robert Kolb gives some helpful details:

"...God does want his people involved in the often 'dirty' and compromising work of making civil society more harmonious. He calls us to work hard at making our towns or townships better places for everyone to live. He bestows upon us the vocation to strive for justice and welfare in the earthly city.

"This means more than the disciplines of 'praying, paying, and obeying' which typified the subject's life in Luther's day. Contemporary believers in democratic cities will pray for their governments (1 Tm 2:1-2), will pay their taxes faithfully and without complaint, and will obey the laws of the land (Mt 22:21; Rom 13:5-7; Ti 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13-14). But we are also called to play a role in the decisions of our government and

bear responsibilities for doing so. Christians will recognize voting as well as paying taxes as a kind of minimal exercise of vocation in the political realm. They will take the opportunities to write letters to public officials and to sign petitions in efforts to guide the wise exercise of public power. They may join political parties and pressure groups which are organized to influence public policy. They may participate in community groups which foster good living in neighborhoods or towns or counties.

“They may on occasion decide to run for public office, the local school board, or the United States Congress. They will not do so because they want to bring the gospel to bear on the realm where only the law rules. They will do so rather because they realize that God has called them to work for the welfare of the city or the country, as the law of God prescribes the pattern of human interaction in the horizontal realm” (*Teach God’s Children His Teaching*, 149).

One of the most critical things our Lord calls us to do—for the welfare of the city, for our salvation, and for our witness to Him—is to *safeguard the Gospel*. While we do not seek to bring about a “Christian nation,” we do want to safeguard the preaching and teaching of God’s Truth in our land. We can and must work in the political realm (the horizontal realm) to ensure that the Church (the vertical realm) may continue to proclaim Jesus and administer His Sacraments. After all, it is when the Gospel is proclaimed and the Sacraments are faithfully given out that we Christians truly let our light shine in this dark, chaotic world.

This is especially urgent and necessary today. Events and policies in recent years, and especially this year, should wake us Christians up! There are those who are simply apathetic about what happens in churches. There are also those who actively try to close church doors, silence Christian pulpits, and marginalize Christians in general. We Christians must be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16) when it comes to safeguarding the Gospel of Jesus in our land. It is only with the Gospel flowing from our lips that we can bring comfort, hope, and peace to people around us who are hurting and fearful.

So as we participate in the political life of our nation, our state, and our city, we are called to do so on the basis of God’s Truth. Here’s how I said it in a recent sermon (Tenth Sunday after Trinity, 2020):

In our time, we Christians are called to rise above the usual bitter divides of red vs. blue, Republican vs. Democrat, right-wing vs. left-wing. God’s peace in Jesus frees us to engage and vote based on God’s Truth. What do I mean? Instead of looking at life in the civic realm through red- or blue-colored lenses, we look at it through the prescription glasses of God’s commandments. After all, God’s commandments give us clarity in seeing His design for all of life. And when we follow that design the best we can in the civic realm, life runs more smoothly, more peacefully in the civic realm.

So we might want to ask questions such as:

- Does the candidate, the ticket, or the political party support and defend God’s gift of physical life, from womb to tomb and every moment in between?
- Does the candidate, the ticket, or the political party honor and promote God’s gift of marriage between one man and one woman? Do they safeguard the nuclear family?
- Does the candidate, the ticket, or the political party seek to let people improve and protect their possessions and income?
- Does the candidate, the ticket, or the political party strive for contentment over the baser urges of envy and jealousy?
- And, most of all, will the candidate, the ticket, or the political party at least acknowledge God Himself? Will they be at least okay with the worship of God, the calling on His name, the hearing of His Word and how all of that shapes and influences people to live out their lives in the civic realm?

✠ Pastor Randy Asburry

email: rasburry@hopelutheranstl.org

Blog: <http://rasburrypatch.blogspot.com>

Hope’s Website: <http://www.hopelutheranstl.org>

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/hopelutheranstl

LCMS Stewardship Ministry

Newsletter article – September 2020

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Eccl 9:10).

God bids us to be faithful in the tasks He calls us to do. He calls us to be members of a family (husbands and wives; fathers and mothers; sons and daughters). He calls us to be members of society (those who govern and those who are governed). And He calls us to be members of His family, the Church (those who preach and teach and those who hear and learn). Each of these callings from God places a duty on us.

As members of a family, husbands are given the duty to die for their wives as Christ gave His life for His bride, the Church; while wives are given the duty to respect their husbands and submit themselves to them as the Church does to Christ. Fathers and mothers are to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, teaching them the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Scriptures concerning Baptism, Confession, the Office of the Keys, and the Lord’s Supper. Children are to honor their parents throughout their lives, and even when their parents are no longer alive, serving and obeying them, loving and cherishing them, and speaking well of them.

As members of society, God calls those who govern to bear the sword, that is, to punish those who do evil (those who live contrary to God’s will) and to reward those who do good (those whose lives are lived in conformity with God’s will). Those who are governed are to

obey their leaders as to the Lord Himself, for their leaders bear the sword of God’s temporal justice for a purpose.

As members of God’s own family, the Church, He calls those who preach and teach to do so in faithfulness to His holy Word. To preach and teach the Law of God to convict the hearts of hearers of their sin and to encourage, admonish, and exhort them to do good works in accordance with God’s will. They are to preach and teach the Gospel, the full forgiveness of their sins accomplished by Christ and received through faith, not by works. They are to administer the means of grace in accordance with the Gospel and the Word of God. They do all this for the young and old alike, for those who are near and far off. Those who hear and learn are to submit themselves to their preachers and teachers. They are to support them by their prayers and their gifts.

Each of these callings from God place a duty on us. They make a claim on our presence; on our prayers; and our time, talents, and treasures. So, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Eccl 9:10). Pray for your family, your government, and your church. Give of yourself by means of your time, your talents, and your treasures to your family, your government, and your Church. That is what it means to be faithful in the tasks that God has given us. That is what it means to do it with all your might.



**WALK, THEN,
AS CHILDREN
OF LIGHT,
FOR THE FRUIT
OF THE
LIGHT IS IN
GOODNESS
AND JUSTICE
AND TRUTH**

Notes from the Kantor

This month I'd like to share a few general announcements and thoughts. Enjoy!

Music in a Sacred Space

Last fall we began our "Music in a Sacred Space" series with several wonderful worship and musical events. The events were well attended, well supported financially, and reached people from across the greater St. Louis region. Unfortunately, several of our events in the spring were cancelled. Thankfully all of our guest musicians who were unable to present their musical gifts in the spring have shown their desire to join us in the future. While unnecessary gatherings are on hold for a time, rest assured that plans are in the works to jump start our music series when the time is right. We have an Organ Vespers service featuring our own Jacob Weber on organ and a Hymn Festival with Kevin Hildebrand penciled in for the spring. I can't wait to share specific dates with you. I've also been approached by several local musicians and musical ensembles about hosting, again when the time is right. If I've learned anything over the past five months, it's that patience truly is a virtue!

Choral Music

One of the wonderful aspects of our worship life is the inclusion of high-quality music, especially choral music. Our *Schola Cantorum* is our mixed SATB choir while the *Kantorei* is our children's choir. The rich musical tapestry they weave truly enhances our worship experience week by week. Our program year typically runs from after Labor Day until Pentecost with weekly rehearsals and regular participation in worship, including feast days and festivals. Again, patience is a virtue and our patience will be rewarded. Currently all the choral ensembles are on hold from full participation. It is our hope to incorporate small ensembles, family choirs, and soloists in worship until it is safe to pile back into the balcony. Current choir members should have received an email from me a few weeks ago. However, if you are interested in serving in a small group or solo capacity on a temporary basis, please let me know. Until then, remember that the most important choral ensemble at Hope is the gathered faithful in worship!

Instrumentalists

During this time of decreased choral activity, I am hoping to feature our very talented youth and adult instrumentalists in worship. If you are interested in playing an instrument in worship, please talk to Kantor Janssen. Likewise, if you are interested in occasionally ringing in a handbell ensemble, please let me know. Handbells can be played with a mask and socially distanced from other ringers.

BYOH

Bring Your Own Hymnal! While it's not safe to be sharing hymnals right now, please keep in mind that you could always bring your own. We have a great tradition of singing in harmony. It's the highlight of each service for me when the congregation sings the Offertory or Agnus Dei unaccompanied in four-part harmony. If you are thirsting for the alto, tenor, or bass line on the hymns, feel free to bring your hymnal from home. Just don't forget to take it back with you.

Good Press

Over the past few months we've been blessed to receive some "good press" in regard to our pipe organ. Over the spring and summer, we have hosted Brent Johnson of Organ Media Foundation to record local organists on several occasions. These video recordings are recorded at various St. Louis churches with fine pipe organs and are meant to share new musical compositions with organists. These videos can be viewed on YouTube on the "Your Sunday Service" page. Additionally, our sanctuary and pipe organ were featured in an advertisement for Parsons Pipe Organ in the August issue of *The American Organist*, which is the monthly journal of the American Guild of Organists. Finally, we have recently hosted a site visit of an organist from the Milwaukee area who is guiding his Catholic congregation through the organ refurbishment process and was interested to hear about our experience with Parsons Pipe Organ and the process in general. It's wonderful that we are able to share our gifts with the greater world in such a way.

Together in Christ,
Kantor Janssen

“Therefore everything in this Christian community is so ordered that everyone may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and [Sacraments] appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live on earth” (Large Catechism, II:55).). In September we continue to hear about the Holy Life of Christian faith and love. The Blessed Trinity constantly teaches us to trust in His mercy and to love our neighbors by serving them.

Date	Day in Church Year	Gospel Reading	Gospel Focus (Theme of the Day)
September 6	Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity	Luke 10:23-37	The Good Samaritan - Jesus Christ is the true “Good Samaritan” who rescues us and heals us from our sin. In the same way, we Christians are called to “be neighbor” to people around us—that is, to be “little Christs” to them.
September 13	Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity	Luke 17:11-19	The Thankful Samaritan - We like it when someone does a good deed for us, but too often we ignore the good deeds that God does for us. The thankful Samaritan shows us how to receive God’s gifts in faith and give Him thanks and praise.
September 20	Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 6:24-34	Earthly Goods - Why get bogged down in the sin of worrying? After all, worry only betrays your lack of trust in God! God provides all of your earthly needs even before you know that you need them. Therefore, you can seek His kingdom first, and all other needed things will be given you.
September 27	St. Michael & All Angels	Matthew 18:1-10	God’s Holy Angels - Conflict is part of the Christian faith and life—that is, the conflict between God’s kingdom and the kingdom of darkness. But God sends His holy angels fight the forces of Satan on our behalf. On this day we hear the accurate Scriptural teaching of angels (a teaching that is not always present in popular ideas about angels).

WHO BROKE THE BABY?

This book was written in 1979 by a Lutheran pastor’s wife and co-founder of Lutheran’s For Life, Jean Garton. The title comes from what her three-year-old son asked when he saw a picture of a young aborted baby. Jean was working on a presentation late at night after the children were in bed. She hadn’t seen her young son get up and enter the room to see the picture, but she heard his gasp and sad voice innocently ask, “Who broke the baby?” when he saw the picture. What a young child could see so clearly that many adults miss became the title of her book.

Jean’s book addresses and dismantles many of the slogans that the pro-abortion industry presents to make their case. Her first chapter explains the

“seduction by semantics.” Other chapters include answers to Planned Parenthood slogans. This is an excellent book to help understand what is behind the slogans. It gives reasoned, logical responses. Interestingly, Jean tells her personal story in the preface of starting out on a journey to support abortion. She wanted to believe it was okay. Yes, a Lutheran pastor’s wife wanting to support abortion! Yet, after months of research and study of law, history, medicine, Scripture, church fathers, etc., God opened her eyes to the truth. It is an amazing story of God’s work in her.

For more information about this book, Lutherans For Life, and other pro-life information, contact Judy Maichel, 314-352-1319 or mjmaichel@juno.com.