



Echoes From the Past by Pastor Glenn Huebel

Introduction: In my remaining newsletter articles, I will be providing some echoes of the past history of Messiah. This will include sermons preached on various occasions in the past 38 years, selected to reflect upon aspects of the congregation's history and my experience serving as pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church, Keller. Today I am offering a reprint of the sermon I preached in October 2001, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary celebration of our charter (October 18, 1981). I really don't remember anything about the writing and preaching of this sermon, probably because we were all overwhelmed by the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers on September 11 of that year. The sermon covered many of the historical milestones and called the congregation to remember the blessings bestowed upon us in the first 20 years, a call that is always relevant. Thanks be to God for all the benefits we have received from His gracious hand!

I WILL TELL OF THE KINDNESSES OF THE LORD

Isaiah 63:7
10/21/01

20th Anniversary

I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us— yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. (Isaiah 63:7)

When we first began to discuss the celebration of our 20th anniversary, we were not thinking of such a large event as this has become, but it escalated as we began to focus our attention upon the blessings we have enjoyed from the hand of God these past 20 years. Many changes have happened since a young pastor, fresh out of seminary, and his 23 year old wife, came to make a home in Keller and to plant a Lutheran Church in a small town of 5,000 people.

The vast majority of you do not remember the hour or more of hard labor it used to take every Sunday morning to prepare for worship in the Keller Lion's Club. You don't remember the sweltering summer Sundays and the cold winter days in our storefront location at 134 South Main. Most of you don't remember when this little hill was a field of tall grass and Mesquite trees with a large oak tree near where our parish hall now stands. You don't remember the old abandoned well that once stood between our present education building and the playground, or the beautiful wild flowers that

used to blanket the hillside toward Highway 377 in the spring time. It was wild back there, a place for the critters to live. We could hardly even imagine a day when we would be hemmed in by our fences. Five acres looked like a ranch in those days. More of you remember the portable buildings that used to house our Sunday School and VBS and Mothers Day Out programs. And some of you remember one, two or even three building projects.

All of this history is presented in the beautiful memory books so lovingly prepared in the past weeks by some very dedicated women. As I look at the pictures and consider all that has happened here during the last 20 years, I am moved to confess with the Patriarch, Jacob, returning to his homeland after 20 years, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." We have truly been a blessed congregation in many and wonderful ways. It amazes me that God can and does work through such humble and weak vessels as us to prosper His kingdom.

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*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God, and that by believing
you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

It has been as true of Messiah as of the congregation of Corinth that “not many of us were wise by human standards, not many were influential; not many of noble birth.” Truly, God has chosen “the foolish, the weak, the lowly, and the despised” to accomplish His good and gracious will here at Messiah. Here He has gathered a congregation and blessed many people through many avenues, not because of us, but in spite of us. Today is not a day to glory in men, in ourselves, in the charter members or anyone else, but “to tell of the kindness of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us.”

There is nothing better for the Christian to speak about than the kindnesses of the Lord, and that is what, by God’s grace, I will do today.

Where shall I begin to survey the kindnesses of the Lord on the occasion of our anniversary? Let me begin with the church itself.

1. *It was the kindness of the Lord that created the church of Jesus Christ.*

The church is not an institution built by men. It is the creation of God through the Spirit. The church is the people of God, purchased with the blood of His own Son and founded upon His death and resurrection. It was the kindness of God toward the sinful world that moved Him to send His beloved Son to remove sin by offering His own life as the ransom for many. Without that sacrifice, and the resurrection by which we are assured the sacrifice was accepted, there could be no church, for the church consists of all those – and only those who are united to this crucified and risen Christ.

2. *It was the kindness of the Lord that provided the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments to all nations of the earth.*

The church would have died with the apostles and a few other disciples had Christ not commanded and empowered them to “make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things He commanded.” Through the preaching of this Gospel in all the world, faith in Christ was created in the hearts of many people in many nations who also carried the Gospel to their children and grandchildren. That Gospel has come, by God’s grace, also to us – not because we are worthy or even lucky, but because the Lord is merciful and kind, and desires our salvation.

3. *It was the kindness of the Lord that brought us together in this congregation.*

We didn’t just accidentally come together in our earthly pilgrimage of faith. Our walking together in fellowship of love in Christ is God’s doing. Before we knew each other God knew us all and planned our steps in life.

Those steps certainly include the places that we gather around the Word and the sacraments for the strengthening of our faith. God has placed us together just as He has seen fit to accomplish His gracious purposes in our lives.

I don’t know how the kindness of the Lord was working in your life to bring you here, but I can tell you of the kindness of God that led me here. In kindness God gave me Christian parents who brought me to God’s House to have my sins washed away and to be united with Christ in the waters of baptism. In a little church in Port Arthur, Texas I was taught in Sunday School every Sunday morning to know the Lord. I was instructed in the six chief parts of the catechism, publicly examined, and confirmed in April of 1963. As a young child I had set my heart upon becoming a pastor, but my hopes were dashed by a person who told me that one had to be almost perfect even from childhood to become a pastor. I knew on that basis that I did not qualify. Later, in the stubbornness of sin, in rebellion and pride I walked out of my Heavenly Father’s house and my baptismal covenant and journeyed in the darkness of unbelief. I will tell you of the kindness of the Lord that did not turn from me, but sought me out as a lost sheep and brought me back home on His shoulders. A faithful pastor led me to see the beauty of grace, and showed me that a pastor is not a good person who shows others how to be good, but a rescued sinner who tells others about the Savior who died for all. The kindness of God through that faithful man led me to the seminary, where God taught me through some of the most devoted scholars the LCMS has ever produced. God gave me a wise and godly woman for a wife, my crown and my joy through 23 years of preparation and ministry. God sent us to a little congregation in Clara, Texas where He used some of the most beautiful and supportive saints I have ever met to teach me to be a pastor. God sent us to the Philippines where we learned something about poverty and making use of meager resources to proclaim the Gospel to people of another culture. Finally the Lord sent us to the little town of Keller where He surrounded us with faithful people who received the Word of God with joy. It has become a place of refuge where my children could grow up and be nourished in a community of love and support. It was God’s abundant kindness to me that led me to become pastor here.

I know that the same kindness has been marvelously at work in every single one of your lives. Everyone of you could tell your story as if it all revolved around you – because in a way, it did. As the Lord was blessing me through the years even before we met, He was blessing you in your life. His kindness was leading you to repentance and to a life of service to Him. And as He was preparing you and others to bless me, he was preparing me and others to bless you. Our coming together was no accident. It was the kindness of the Lord that brought us together to serve one another in love. I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord.

4. It is the kindness of the Lord that has led many into His kingdom of Grace through this humble ministry.

We may mark our time together by such events as ground breakings and building dedications, but we know that these aren't the things that really matter. God does not speak through the earthquakes, wind, and fire, but through the still, small voice. We like things that we can see and touch, but the kindness of the Lord has been shown primarily in things not seen. We praise and thank God for enabling us to raise up buildings, but we praise Him mostly for the work of raising a spiritual temple. In kindness God has answered our frequent prayer, "Hallowed be thy name." He has graciously preserved His saving Gospel, and the proper administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is a blessing which we should never take for granted, for it is easily lost. Preservation of Word and sacrament depends on both pastors and congregations. It requires pastors who are willing to submit wholly to the Scriptures in their teaching, and congregations willing to listen and obey the Word. How easily that unity and cooperation is destroyed.

Through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, God has been at work to extend His kingdom in this place. Little children have been united with Christ and brought to faith at this font. Others have heard the Gospel of salvation as adults through some ministry of this congregation, and have come to faith. We were blessed, especially, to see many friends from the Laotian community, former Buddhists, to come to faith in Christ through this congregation. These are the events that have made the angels rejoice.

Through the means of Grace this humble house has been a Bethel, a house into which God has entered upon a stairway from heaven. I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord.

5. Finally, It is the kindness of the Lord that has ushered many of His people from this vale of tears into eternal glory through this congregation.

This may seem to be a strange "kindness," because we know that death is the curse God laid upon Adam and Eve when they willfully disobeyed His command, but because our Head, Savior, and King has conquered that enemy and abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, we Christians can find comfort and peace in the kindness of God even at the grave. Several of our brothers and sisters in Christ have departed this life while holding our hands, as it were. Into the care of this community God chose to place these beloved children in their last years, or months and weeks. It was from us that their ears heard the good news of forgiveness and resurrection as they faced the most dreaded enemy. God gave us the blessed privilege of loving and serving and caring for

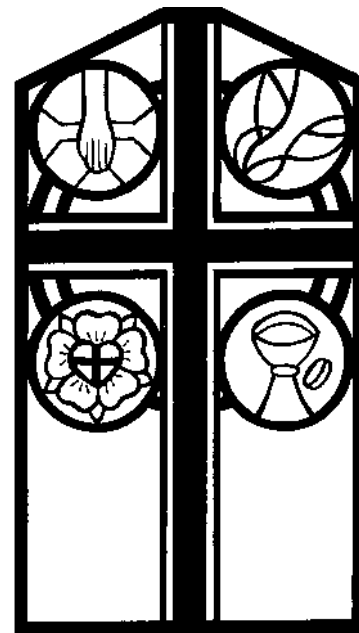
them in their weakness as they prepared to enter the gates of paradise. That is the work of angels, and, indeed, angels took over where we could no longer go. How blessed we were to be given this privilege of leading our fellow Christians from the toils of this world into the Sabbath of heaven.

And we have been privileged also to weep with those who weep and to mourn with those who mourn, to comfort and to serve the grieving and afflicted. We have been privileged to stand at the grave and to proclaim with the Easter angels who once sat in the tomb of Jesus, "HE IS RISEN!" He is risen indeed!

There is no event in the church's ministry where the Gospel can shine more brilliantly than when we, the saints of God, commit our loved ones to the grave, dust to dust, ashes to ashes "in the hope of the resurrection from the dead. We have been privileged to mock Satan, to mock death, to mock the grave – and to point ourselves and all who are willing to listen, to the risen, living Jesus who says, "He that lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Oh God, how great are your kindnesses to us! Who can number them or appreciate them fully? Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

AMEN.



***Blest be the
tie that binds***



And so, like all of creation, we must recognize the animals don't belong to us but God has given us stewardship (management) of it. And the animals are part of that creation, to be used responsibly. This is wrapped up in the concept of "dominion".

As Adam named all the animals, "no suitable helper was found." And so God created the woman. But she is not like the animals. Adam said it poetically, "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh". A true partner and helper that cannot be found anywhere else in creation. In a way, the animals serve as a foil to teach Adam just how wonderful this gift of God – the woman – truly is.

God himself slaughters the first animals to provide clothing for Adam and Eve. He gives the animals to us for food following the Flood (Genesis 6). He mandates sacrifices throughout the Old Testament, and John even refers to Christ as the "Lamb of God" - the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus rode a donkey. He gave the disciples fish to eat. He, too, ate the lamb of the passover meal.

And so if Jesus can do such things, we are safe to say that animals can be used for certain purposes.

And yet, God doesn't treat the animals of his creation with little-to-no regard, either. When Jonah complained that God hadn't destroyed Nineveh, God scolds him, "And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, **and also much cattle?**" It's how the book of Jonah ends!

Of course he also made Noah go to some trouble and prepare an ark to save pairs of animals from the flood. Otherwise it might have been "Noah's little 8 person boat".

Jesus likewise teaches about the animals, as in Matthew 10:29-31, "**Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.**" God regards these little creatures – as insignificant as they are. Of course, he regards you as much more valuable, too. Jesus even once compared himself to a mother hen who would shelter her chicks under her wings (Matthew 23:37), if only his people would let him.

Proverbs warns us about animal cruelty, "**Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.**" Proverbs 12:10. Even most secular governments have keyed into this wisdom – that cruelty to animals is a sign of someone

Christians ought to turn, not the the secular world, but to the church, and ultimately to Holy Scripture for our values. Scripture shapes our world view. It is the lens through which we are to interpret the world around us. And while Scripture doesn't answer every question of life-in-this-world, as some seem to believe, it does offer a surprising array of guidance on a range of topics.

So what about the animals? How ought a Christian regard these other creatures God has placed here on Earth with us? Does Scripture say anything at all about the animals? What are some of the false views that don't harmonize with a Christian view of animals? And, of course, everyone wants to know, "will my dog go to heaven?"

Many Christians own pets. Some go hunting. Some wear fur or leather, and most eat meat. And yet have we stopped to **consider our behaviors and values in light of the Word?**

Animals appear before humans, as part of God's week of creation. He made them before he made us, but they are also categorically different from us. Some people have sought to describe this obvious difference between man and animal along the lines of use of tools, use of language, or even whether they have emotions. Surprisingly, there are examples of all of these in the animal world. Only Scripture gives us the true distinction: **Man is created in the image of God.** Man is put in charge of creation – to order and subdue it. This is the real reason we are set apart from the animals.

Animal Life, cont.

deeply troubled, and likely also to harm even humans. How one treats animals can be a window into the condition of the heart.

Animals also serve, in Scripture, as representatives of all creation – as the four “living creatures” of Revelation 4 and Ezekiel 1 – with the face of a man, a bull, an eagle



and a lion. Thus the wisest (man), the strongest (bull), the swiftest (eagle) and the fiercest (lion) of all creation all give constant praise and honor to God. And these four have also come, in the church, to serve as symbols of the four

Gospels (Matthew, Luke, John, and Mark, respectively).

Likewise the church has used various animals as symbols of the faith – the stork, the butterfly, and the beehive – teach us the biblical ideas of self-sacrifice, resurrection, and working as one in the church.

It seems even the Devil can occasionally use the animals, though, too. Of course he appeared as a Serpent in the Garden of Eden. And the Legion of demons were cast into a herd of pigs. And the devil himself is pictured in Scripture also as a lion looking to devour us, and also a terrible dragon!

But Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world – In Revelation he's the “Lamb that has been slain”. He shows us the sign of Jonah in his resurrection (coming back, not from the whale's belly but from the belly of the earth – the grave itself).

So taken as a whole, the scriptural witness teaches us a balanced view of our relationship to animals. God made them and cares about them. But he cares about humans more. God gives us the animals as part of the creation, to care for them but also to make use of them. And the animals can teach us many things about the faith as we read and study Scripture. Let us give thanks for these, and for all of his gifts to us!

Oh – and does your dog go to heaven? Sorry, there's no clear answer on that one, but Scripture does give us some hints. The promise of eternity for us is a “new creation”. Revelation even pictures our eternal home as a paradise restored – with even the tree of life reappearing for us. Is it far fetched to imagine that the God who made animals as part of his original “very good” creation, and even saved them in the Flood, will not in some way include them when he “makes all things new” (Rev. 21:5)?



Finley, the MLCA mascot dog

Vocations in Life – Parenting/Grand Parenting Series:

At Messiah, around 12 or 13, your child would begin confirmation. The pastors are instructing and reviewing of your child's progress in understanding Lutheran doctrine and the Christian faith. Elders also have the duty to review the confirmand's progress on memory assignments. These three years of confirmation involve a very disciplined study approach. But, it is the parent's and child's responsibility to be diligent in successfully completing the confirmation requirements. This will aid the pastors in carrying out the pastoral duty in distributing the sacraments. So, a child's successful completion of confirmation does not only impact just themselves!

With confirmation your child knows all things related to scripture,

doctrine and theology. They don't have to come to church or Sunday school anymore, right? In a word, the answer is No! Confirmation is still part of the beginning. Nowhere in the scriptures is the concept that a person is so learned this side of heaven that they quit being in the Word. When your child is entering their teenage years there will be plenty of temptations. This is why it is important to continue nurturing your child's Christian faith and training. It is vitally important to be building the Christian foundation from conception onward.

Now, parenting is hard and we as parents are imperfect. We can do everything “right” and still have a child that leaves the faith. We can do a lot of things wrong and still

have the child remain in the faith. All we have been talking about in this series is having a thankful heart and wanting to be obedient to God's instruction. He knows what is best for us. His desire for us is to follow His Word and avoid negative consequences. So, no matter what, God loves us and gives us the strength to endure all things.

Awareness of the need for endurance certainly becomes obvious in the teenage and college years. The teenage and college years in a child's life can be challenging. Our prayer is: your child/children will stay strong in the Christian faith.

(to be continued)

-from the Board of Elders



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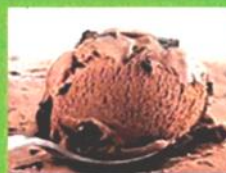
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DESSERTS

Science and Technology in the Classical Method, by Mrs. Betsy Kirk, MLCA Principal

In Tony Wagner's book, *The Global Achievement Gap*, his research shows that the career skills that government, military, and business leaders want in their employees are the same skills that are the natural fruits of . . . a classical education. His list of the seven survival skills needed today indeed reflect the outcome of a classical education:

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Collaboration Across Networks and Leading by Influence
- Agility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Entrepreneurialism
- Effective Oral and Written Communication
- Accessing and Analyzing Information
- Curiosity and Imagination

Classical education is a proven method and an excellent model. Classical education is time-tested and focuses a child's education on what is good, true and beautiful. It reaches the students of today in many of the same ways that it has throughout history. Recently, however, leaders in the field of Classical Education have begun to discuss and emphasize the fact that technology must hold an important place in the Classical Model. Classical Education must carefully integrate technology into the classroom in order to prepare our students for the modern world. Today's children are fascinated with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and electronics. Taking that one step forward, we as a classical school embrace more passionately the idea of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, *the* ARTS, and math)

So if technology is here to stay...
and Classical education produces well-rounded learners...

**It is time to bend classroom
technology to our classical will.**

Historically, classical educators have discouraged electronics, looked down on the use of videos and endorsed only *limited* computer use. In many ways, we at MLCA agree. Studies have shown that too much screen-time has a negative effect on a child's brain. We absolutely do NOT want our children set loose into a wired society, unaware and untrained. We agree that all forms of media should be screened, discussed as a family, and limited in many respects. At MLCA we have come to realize that students of today MUST be prepared and able to use technology in the educational environment. Critical thinking skills, the ability to express one's self clearly in writing, and an understanding of interconnections between history and the modern world

are highly valued in the market. These are also marks of a well-rounded and well-educated individual...the product of Classical Education.

Many predict that more than 50 percent of the jobs that will exist in the next ten years do not even exist now. In other words, we need to educate students who are nimble, adaptable, agile, and innovative—the fruits of a classical education. Although we want to be apart from the “world” (Colossians 3:1), that doesn't mean we should unilaterally reject the things of the world out of hand. After all, we seek to pursue “Goodness, Truth and Beauty”, wherever they are found. Today, we must wisely consider what, of technology, fits into these ideas. We seek to teach our students to have the same critical approach. Through thoughtful planning and monitoring, we can mold and shape a *new* classical education that encompasses the best of what the classical model *and* the technological world has to offer.

MLCA Technology use will be:

- Consistently *held up to the rubric of* goodness, truth and beauty
- Limited
- *Focused on* goodness, truth and beauty.
- *Supporting* our classical goals, rather than driving the learning
- Used to develop students who delight in learning
- Teaching our students to be judicious in their own use of technology
- a source support for our families as they establish their own healthy technological habits in the home

For these reasons, MLCA has chosen to develop a Science and Technology lab. Spearheaded by a generous gift from The Rick Liddle Memorial Fund, the **Rick Liddle Science and Technology Lab** opened for classes this week. Our students in grades one through eight began learning proper keyboarding techniques on our new collection of 10 iPads. Each class has a designated weekly lab time and will be supervised and taught by their classroom teacher or a trained volunteer. In addition, the lab will be available throughout the week for teachers to use for supplemental math, handwriting, history and science related activities. This is also an excellent opportunity for our older students to hone their skills, through research and word processing activities. The Science and Technology lab will introduce them to the skills necessary for composing a variety of papers and compositions that they will utilize in their future academic careers. The lab has proven to be an exciting and integral addition to our school and it was an absolute delight to see it in use. It truly was a delightfully rigorous sight to behold!



MLCA will participate in North Texas Giving Day again this year! We will use the funds to complete our Tech and Science Lab, and for other needed improvements in our classrooms.



Messiah Lutheran Church & School

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Glenn Huebel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Associate Pastor

www.messiahkeller.org

MLCA is Off to a Great Start!

