



Echoes From the Past, 7 by Pastor Glenn Huebel

Introduction: Some events in the distant past of our lives have been almost branded on our memories. For one reason or another we can remember certain small moments of past years distinctly. Some, no doubt, because they were exceedingly painful and others because they were gloriously happy events. One distinct memory of mine that happened over 55 years ago is associated with neither pain nor joy. I don't know why I remember it so clearly except that the Holy Spirit imprinted it on my brain. I was sitting in the car after church (a 1963 Ford Fairlane 500) with my brother, waiting for our father to finish talking with others in front of the little Lutheran church we regularly attended. It was a pleasant, sunny day and I remember exactly where we were parked. Either through the Sunday School lesson or the church service (I don't remember which) I had heard the story of the Scribes and Pharisees mocking Jesus and daring Him to come down from the cross. I was puzzled by the passiveness of Jesus, and I remember verbalizing my confusion: "I don't understand why Jesus did not come down from the cross and show them His power." That's all I remember. Isn't that a strange little snippet to be retained in all the memories stored in a brain? Eventually I learned the answer to that question and it has always troubled me a little that an 11 or 12 year old child who grew up in the Lutheran Church would ask such a question. I'm sure it was not that the Gospel was never preached or taught, but somehow it never connected with me. Through that odd little memory I have been deeply moved by the words of St. Paul "to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." I know from experience how easy it must be to miss the point of the whole salvation story, the meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus. Though in the modern liturgical year Palm Sunday is overshadowed by the Passion Sunday Gospel, I have chosen to focus almost exclusively on the crucifixion. I have wanted to make it as clear as possible WHY JESUS HAD TO DIE. I sometimes wonder how many children of Messiah have to ask that question. Below is one of my many attempts to make it clear. Parents, you may want to ask your children why Jesus had to die.

THE CHOICE

Text: Mark 15:6—15
3/29/15

Palm Sunday

⁶Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. ⁷And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. ⁸And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. ¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him

release for them Barabbas instead. ¹²And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³And they cried out again, "Crucify him." ¹⁴And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." ¹⁵So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

—Mark 15:6—15

Pilate tried his best to evade his responsibility to render a just decision on whether Jesus should be condemned or set free. It is quite clear in the Gospels that Pilate was convinced by the facts of the case that justice required him to exonerate Jesus. He knew that Jesus had done nothing wrong and he stated that

several times along the way. Why then did he hesitate to render the verdict and dismiss the case? He hesitated because he knew that rendering the correct verdict would subject him to possible political suicide. The ruling priests of Israel were also politically

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Symbols of Lent—Midweek Sermons	3
Lenten Fasting—Pastor Chryst	5
Statement from LCMS Pres. Harrison	6
MLCA Spring Fundraiser Announcement	7
Miscellany	8

*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*

astute and they knew very well how to spin this case to make Pilate look very bad. "if youyou are no friend of Caesar's." By the time the story got to Rome that this Jesus was claiming to be a king with a huge and highly motivated following and Pilate set Him free even when the leaders of Israel delivered Him over, Pilate would be almost hopelessly on the defensive. He did not want to have to fight that battle before Caesar against these crafty serpents, especially since he had already lost a couple of battles with them recently. So Pilate maneuvered the trial to force the crowds to make the decision about whether to condemn Jesus or set Him free. He tried to do it in such a way that justice could be served, that the innocent Jesus could be set free without endangering his own position. It was a custom to grant amnesty to a condemned person during Passover. Pilate used that custom to present a choice to the people – the choice between the notorious Barabbas and the righteous Jesus.

The amazing thing is that the choice of the people and the choice of God – at this critical point in history - were the same, except that they were not. Peter, in his Pentecost sermon, calls the choice of the Jews wicked, but that it was according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. How can this same decision be both wicked and righteous? Let us consider

THE CHOICE

- I. The People's Choice
- II. God's Choice

I

Let us consider the choice from the perspective of the people as they were influenced by the priests. Pilate had set a notorious killer and the righteous Jesus side by side. They were limited to these two candidates. Surely, Pilate reasoned that the crowds would see, as he himself saw, that the priests were envious and wanted Jesus to be killed for selfish reasons. He thought that they would be compelled, by the limitation, to chose the obviously better man, Jesus. But Pilate underestimated the influence of the priests, and especially the influence of the "prince of the power of the air," the devil who was behind the scenes orchestrating the whole event. Here is the choice the devil through the priests moved the people to make, and the reason for it:

THE INNOCENT MAN (JESUS) MUST DIE!

That was the plan from the beginning. The High Priest, Caiaphas, had said to the Sanhedrin, "It is better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation should perish." After the resurrection of Lazarus, the crowds were almost in a frenzy to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem, and the rulers and chief priests decided there was nothing left to do but get rid of Him, and they plotted His death. The Sanhedrin arranged a Kangaroo trial on Thursday evening and convicted Jesus of blasphemy. They changed the charges in bringing Him to Pilate to making Himself a King so that Pilate would be forced to

take the case and render a verdict. Their target and determined will was that Jesus must go, at all costs. Jesus must die was the ultimate goal.

Pilate was making this goal very difficult to achieve because truly Barabbas was not a popular figure. He was a bad and violent man, the scourge of civilized society. The fact that he was being condemned for basically the same crime as Jesus was being accused of – sedition and rebellion against Rome – was probably part of Pilate's plan. "This is the kind of man who is dangerous. Jesus is nothing compared to him. LOOK and SEE FOR YOURSELVES!" But getting rid of Jesus was more important than bringing justice to an evil man. If securing Jesus' death means letting the guilty go free, so be it!

This choice of the people and their rulers reflects the basic hostility against God that resides deeply in the world, and in the sinful flesh. This was not a vote to set Barabbas free. It was a vote to kill the Son of God and to silence God's voice in the world. This is darkness hating the light. This is wickedness, calling good, evil and evil, good. These are the tenants of Jesus' parable who say "Here comes the heir. Let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours."

This is the hostility against God that abides in the natural human heart born in Adam. It doesn't usually reveal itself so openly as this, but it is always there, lurking within our flesh, for St. Paul says, "the carnal mind is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot" (Rom 8:7). Oftentimes it clothes itself in religious piety, as it does here before Pilate, but that is only an outward show that covers ugliness and death. What we see in this trial is the depravity of natural man at work. Let us not imagine that we are somehow better than these people, for we must say with Paul, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing." God, have mercy upon us!

II

And He has! He has had mercy upon us, and that is what we see in GOD'S CHOICE. Here is the choice that God made through these wicked people, and the reason for it:

THE GUILTY MUST BE SAVED FOR THEY ARE MY LOST SONS

The name Barabbas means "son of the father." No father is proud of such a worthless son as this, but every true father would long for such a son to come to his senses and be restored and redeemed. This is our Heavenly Father's heart as He beholds His lost and condemned creatures. He looks upon us all with mercy and pity, and He desires our return, as we see in the parable of the Prodigal son, where the joyful Father says at the return of His lost son, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." God does not desire that any man should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth.

Satan made this goal very difficult for God, for he could accuse God of injustice by setting the guilty free. How can a just God become unjust? Impossible! Justice must be served. Not one iota or dot can pass from the law. It must all be fulfilled. Not one sin can remain unpunished. The debt must be paid in full. Thus, the choice God had to make. He can only free the guilty if the innocent pays the debt. But because God was determined to redeem not only Barabbas, but all the lost sons of the world through all of history, the debt of the world had to be paid by an infinite sacrifice. That is why the Son of God stands here to silently and patiently accept the charges laid upon Him. God's saving will cannot be accomplished without delivering up His Son, His beloved Son, Jesus. So, in order to save the guilty, God spares not His own Son, but delivers Him up for us all. God made Jesus to be sin for us, that we might

become the righteousness of God in Him. All we, like sheep, have gone astray, and the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. **FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.**

Though the outward decision is the same, the motive is as different as night and day, as heaven and hell as God and Satan. Before Pilate, the world said, "we will not have this man reign over us." Before Pilate, God said, "I will not have the sinner die!" Behold what manner of love the father has toward us that we should be called sons of God. Go in peace. You have been redeemed.

AMEN.

Symbols of Lent: a Midweek Sermon Series . by Pastor Chryst

Join us at 7:00pm on the Wednesday evenings in Lent>

Ash Wednesday, March 6

Ashes

Appointed Readings for Ash Wednesday,
Genesis 3:19

Midweek 1

March 13 (*Pastor Huebel*)

(Passion Part 1)

The Crowing Rooster

Mark 14:27-31 and 66-72



Midweek 2

March 20

(Passion Part 2)

30 Pieces of Silver

Matthew 26:15 and 27:3-10



Midweek 3

March 27

(Passion Part 3)

The Whip

Mark 15:15

Midweek 4

April 3

(Passion Part 4)

The Crown of Thorns

Matthew 27:29



Midweek 5

April 10

(Passion Part 5)

The Seamless Coat



Lenten Fasting (Lutheran Style) by Pastor Tom Chryst



"Fasting? Isn't that a Romish thing which the Lutheran Confessions abolished?"

Not exactly. The Augsburg Confession (in Article XXVI—The Distinction of Foods) does decry fasting or abstaining *for the sake of earning grace or making satisfaction for sin*. Only Christ makes satisfaction for sins. And He delivers the result of that satisfaction—the forgiveness of sins—to us solely by His grace on account of His mercy; and He does so whether we fast or not. So fasting is not a matter of salvation; but that does not mean that fasting is not a meet, right, and salutary practice.

Jesus, in the Gospel lesson appointed for Ash Wednesday, assumes that His disciples will fast: "And *when you fast*, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others...But *when you fast*, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret" (Matthew 6:16-18—emphasis added). Twice, Jesus says to His disciples "when you fast." He does not say, "if," but "when."

Likewise, St. Paul, in the Epistle lesson appointed for Septuagesima tells his readers that he disciplines his body: "I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Luther in the Small Catechism, in the section on the Sacrament of the Altar, writes "*Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training.*"

In LSB hymn #418, "O Lord, throughout These Forty Days," stanza 3, we sing:

*Though parched and hungry, yet You prayed
And fixed Your mind above;
So teach us to deny ourselves,
Since we have known God's love*

Fasting reminds the body that "man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3 [and quoted by Jesus in Matthew 4:4]). Fasting reminds our

bodies that our bellies (really all our fleshly demands) are not our boss. It is a reminder that ultimately no earthly food can satisfy the true hunger of man—the Blessed Holy Trinity. And fasting frees up time for prayer and money for charity.

Lent—the season of penitent preparation for the Great Feast of Easter—is a fine time for such bodily discipline. In fact, to this day in Germany, Lent is known as Fastenzeit—i.e. fasting-time.

Fasting is not 'giving something up for Lent.' That is abstaining (another fine discipline). Fasting is decreasing your overall intake for a time to allow your body the discipline of remaining in want. Obviously, for some, this may be medically inadvisable. (It's a good thing that our salvation doesn't depend on fasting, but on Christ alone.)

There can be no laws for how one fasts. As a matter of Christian freedom, Paul would remind us not to pass judgment on how another Christian exercises his freedom:

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:1-6)

Nevertheless, it is important to consider what others in the past have done. For instance, the traditional Lenten fast of the Western Church might look something like this: 1/4 meal for breakfast and lunch, with a simple dinner. In other words, for breakfast maybe half a slice of toast, for lunch an orange. Then a regular dinner—but nothing fancy. Something like that was observed throughout the days of Lent. Further, Western Christians have traditionally abstained from meat and wine on the Fridays of Lent.

Maybe food is not what your flesh craves most. Maybe it is video games, or beer, or even books. In that case, these might make fine abstentions for Fridays (and/or Saturdays and/or Wednesdays (it all depends on which tradition you consult).

Again, fasting (and abstaining) is not just for fasting's sake. It goes along with prayer and meditation on God's Word and with almsgiving. When you spend less time eating and preparing elaborate meals, you have more time for prayer and meditation. When you spend less

Fasting, cont.

money on food, you free up funds for giving to those for whom hunger is not voluntary but an everyday way of life. Perhaps this is why some have decided not to “give something up” for Lent, but instead to “take something up”, that is, some new spiritual discipline or devotion.

In Gospel freedom you may consider Lent as a time to discipline your wayward body and rejoice that “Man shall

not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). A blessed fastenzeit to you all!

(Thanks to Rev. Daniel Freeman and Rev. William Weedon for much of this content)

Texas District CEF Rebate by Tobie Hall

Texas District Church Extension Fund (CEF) —Tobie & Elaine Hall, Representatives

Due to the level of investment by a few of Messiah's members, a check for \$12,249.86 has been received from CEF representing investment activity for 2018.

A heartfelt thank you to CEF and our faithful members who made this possible.

CEF assisted in the acquisition of our land and buildings through loans at below market rate and remains committed to extending God's Kingdom by boldly and responsibly assisting congregations in the Texas

District Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

Please prayerfully consider supporting the CEF mission and our congregation by making an investment. Detailed information can be obtained from your Messiah representatives.



Save the Date!



The Annual Messiah Lutheran Church & School Campout

May 17-19, 2019.

(Details to follow. Location within an hour of Fort Worth.)

LCMS President's statement regarding gubernatorial actions expanding abortion in New York, Illinois January 24, 2019

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men"
(John 1:4).

On Jan. 22, 2019, the 46th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion on demand, the governors of both New York and Illinois signed laws to extend and promote abortion.

As he signed the Reproductive Health Act into law, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo described it as the "evolution" of humankind in America. In Illinois, Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed an executive order to ensure taxpayer funding of abortions, saying that it would make his state "the most progressive ... in terms of women's reproductive rights."

Life, not death, is the goal of humanity. History testifies that death is never the means through which justice and human rights prevail. We do not advance on the graves of our children. Germany, which sought eugenics as the solution to problems, now has strict abortion laws. To defend and support life is the goal of every just government, and the right to life is the hallmark of a good society.

Yet abortion laws have allowed the abortion of more than 61,000,000 children since Roe v. Wade. That's nearly 50 times the number of American soldiers killed in all wars. The abortion industry and its proponents take great lengths to avoid facing the fact that abortion dismembers a living child in a horrid pool of its own blood. This is barbaric.

Abortion is a lie. Science is on the side of life. We shall stand against the barbarism of abortion until our dying breath. Abortion is illogical, as we slaughter babies in the womb while developing ever-better care for other unborn children. Abortion contradicts the natural law written on human hearts that teaches us it is wrong to kill.

Lawmakers and bureaucrats in our country have become emboldened to force citizens to go against their conscience. People publicly celebrate laws that lead to the deaths of children.

How long, O Lord, how long?

Our Christian faith teaches us to value life and to love each and every person as our neighbor. Love is life, and life is the great gift of love. Death is our natural enemy. This can be seen in our lives and in our world each day. Even the birds that seek food in winter testify that life is the goal of their movements and their work. The flowers that grow toward the sun seek the light that enlivens them. We all live under God, who grants life to His whole creation.

And in the giving of His Son to be the Savior, God shows that He is the Lord of life. Jesus came to love. He taught us to love all people, including those whom we consider our enemies. He taught us to unconditionally love every person, even those whom this world considers unworthy of love.

Jesus not only taught us to love. He brought healing and wholeness to the broken. He proclaimed peace to those

who were troubled. He sat with those who were excluded. He lifted up those who were beaten down. But most of all, He loved through the sacrifice of His own life on the cross. He died to forgive the sins of all humanity. His forgiveness is a free gift for all who trust in Him, including those who suffer from guilt for aborting their child. He rose on the third day.

The resurrection of Jesus is God's grand statement that life is the goal of this creation. The resurrection of Jesus proclaims that all creatures find the goal of their existence in life. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so we learn that God treasures life over death.

We live as citizens in this world, and we seek to be obedient to our nation's laws. We thank God for our leaders and for this great land He has given to us and for its precious freedoms and opportunities. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod advocates strong citizenship and active participation in government. We obey the laws of our land and encourage those around us to do so.

We are, however, bound by our conscience to speak against those laws that are unjust and, especially, those laws that violate God's law and the natural law that binds all mankind. Abortion and other means through which humans kill humans violate these natural and moral laws that form the foundation of society.

Therefore, we stand against these actions and against all laws that sanction abortion or the taking of innocent life. We cannot stand silent when people elected to positions in which they are to protect citizens continue to pass laws and advocate for legislation that undermines the sanctity of human life. Our conscience is bound by both the Word of God and reason to speak for life as a precious gift of God and to speak against any and all who promote the killing of unborn children. We cannot hide the evil of these laws under the banner of "rights" or "privilege." Children's lives are at stake. They cannot speak for themselves. We will speak for them, and we will work to protect their lives.

And we will continue to work to love and support the women who face difficult choices or suffer from the consequences of abortion. We support young mothers who have chosen life for their children. We work to provide adoption and other opportunities to care for children in need. And we continue to show God's mercy to all, just as He, in Jesus, has mercy on all.

We will work, love and pray that all might know the love of Jesus and trust in Him for salvation. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

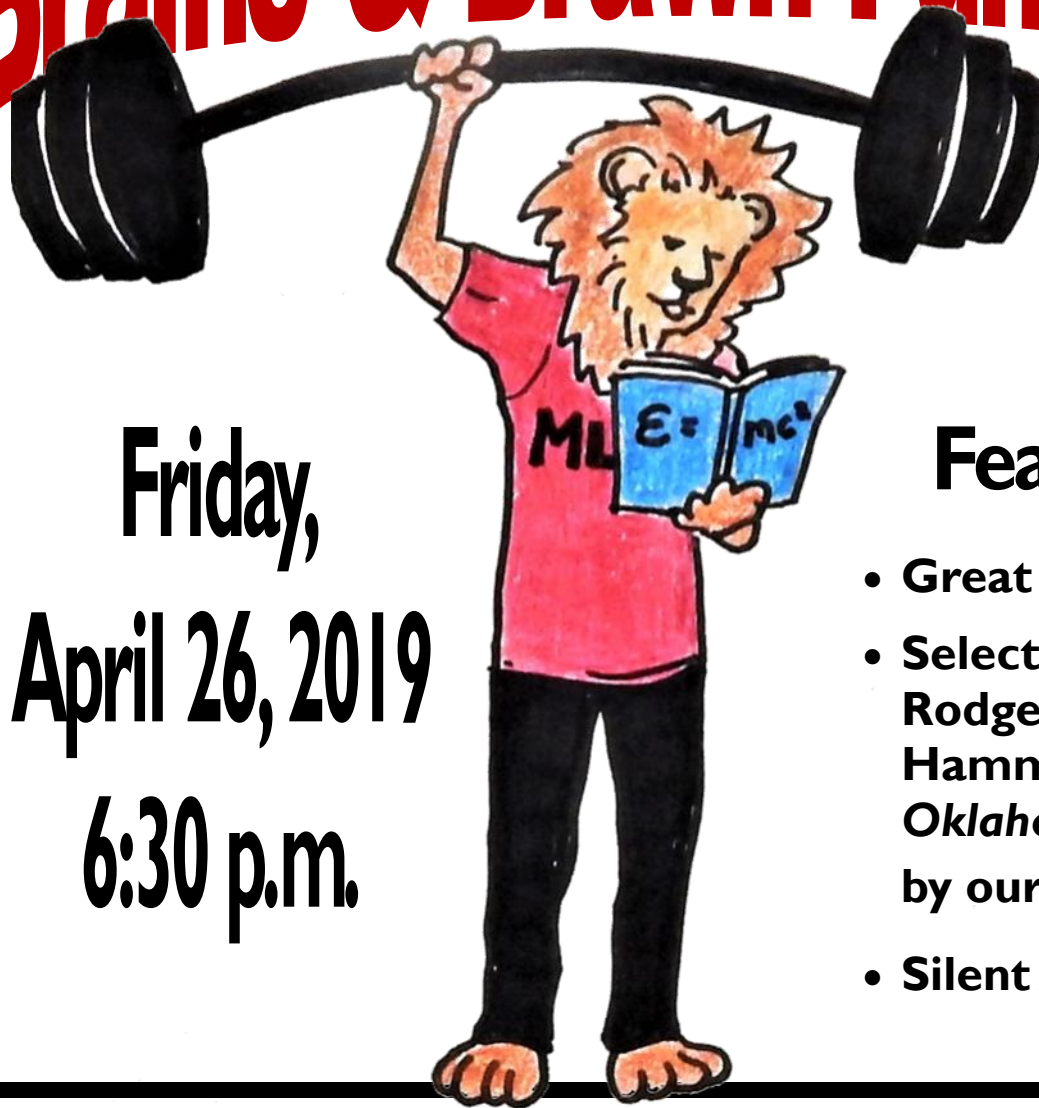
Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Updated Feb. 12, 2019

At its meeting on Feb. 7, the LCMS Council of Presidents and the LCMS Praesidium unanimously voted to sign their names to President Harrison's statement.

Brains & Brawn Fundraiser

**Friday,
April 26, 2019
6:30 p.m.**



Featuring:

- Great Barbeque Meal
- Selections from Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*, performed by our students
- Silent Auction

We are fundraising for a "brainy" Outdoor Chess Set and a "brawny" Ninja Warrior Obstacle Course!





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

Miscellany (*/ˈmɪsə, lānē /*)

noun. —a mixture or collection of different things

- **A ukelele case** has left in the church office. We've asked everyone we can think of, but no one seems to know to whom it belongs. If you know, please talk to Carol Hibbs.
- More **Lost and Found**: a box for other lost and found items is in the copy room, and it's full! Additional delicate objects are occasionally tacked to the hallway bulleting board. Take some time to check it all out to see if anything is yours (or you kid's).
- Looking for a calm, quiet volunteer opportunity? **The Library** is in need of someone to shelve new books and straighten out the ones already on the shelves. This can be done at your convenience! See Marcia Huebel
- **MLCA is seeking a new Headmaster**. A position description is posted on the school and church websites. If you know of someone who would be a good fit to lead our school, please submit his or her name to Clayton Brandt, School Board Chairman, at cbrandt8407@gmail.com or to Pastor Chryst.
- Remember **Swaddling Clothes** when shopping (We always need wipes!) or cleaning our your kids' closets!



NOW ENROLLING FOR THE 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR!

2 YEARS OLD - 8TH GRADE

WWW.MLCATEXAS.ORG

SCHEDULE A TOUR! 817-431-5486

Women's Retreat by Vera Sweet

Women's Retreat 2019: April 5 –

6. We have been invited to join the women's group of Faith, Plano for their annual "Women of Faith" Annual retreat at Camp Shiloh Lutheran Retreat on Bob Sandlin Lake, Pittsburgh, TX. The cost is \$50, and includes 3 meals and overnight in a large cabin. Scholarships are available. Teenage daughters are invited to attend, at a cost of \$20 per girl. (Moms can bring nursing babies or babies under a year old.)

Includes:

- Relaxation, reflection, and fun as

we study the Word

- Dinner Friday evening and breakfast on Saturday
- Coffee (Bring snacks and drinks for Friday night sharing)
- Bed linens (dorm style accommodations) bring your own toiletries and bath linens
- Leader: Pastor Woelmer (Faith, Plano)
- Messiah Coordinator: Vera Sweet vsweet2000@verizon.net; 817-988-3521
- Pastor Chryst will join us
- Bible Study and Devotions based on *He Restores My Soul* by Katie

Schuermann and a host of literary friends, all strong in the faith LCMS women. We will study six chapters that all point persistently to a firm trust in God's promises found in His Word and a resounding joy in God's mysterious work of conforming us "to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).

The retreat begins at 5:45pm with check-in, followed by dinner at 6:00pm. It concludes on Saturday, April 6 after lunch.