ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH – HOLLAND, MN April 2023–NEWSLETTER 4

**Important Newsletter Options**

**In order to reduce the cost of our monthly printing and mailing of the Church Newsletter, those who would like to receive the newsletter by E-mail, please send the church your current e-mail address and request your newsletter to be sent electronically. We will then start to send them to you via e-mail. The church e-mail is: “****stjames@woodstocktel.net**”

**Thank You to those who have already requested this.**

**Those who still wish to receive this printed newsletter via regular mail or via your church mailbox may continue to do so. The newsletter will be placed in your box when it is printed and if it is still in the box after the last Sunday of the month, it will be mailed then.**

**Thank you for your attention. The Church Council**

An Easter Vigil Sermon for Promised Treasures: **The Oil of Joy and Gladness**

What are some of the most beautiful fragrances you can imagine? How about a freshly baked pan of chocolate chip cookies? What about a dozen fresh red roses? How about the smell of a baby freshly bathed, dried, and cuddling? How about the glass of a red cabernet wine aged ten years? What about the smell of a beautiful perfume or cologne? Then what about the smell of beautiful Easter lilies on Easter morning? All these beautiful fragrances that we smell are often never forgotten, leaving an indelible mark on our memory. You may have smelled things today that triggered a memory from long ago.

But not all smelling memories are necessarily good. Perhaps you have smelled a dead animal or symptoms of human sickness. You may have lived through horrendous nightmares or memories. You may have even sensed that some people smelled more like death in the way they spoke and lived while others smelled like life, and you loved to be with them.

Think of smelling a sweet fragrance [perhaps lilac or lilies] as you approach the baptismal font. By it, you are reminded of the richness of Christ’s resurrection and the joy of Baptism. Fragrant oil is a symbol of joy. It reminds you of one of God’s promised treasures for you: the gift of smell. When you began this season of Lent forty days ago, you had dirty ashes placed on your head. But today, imagine oil was placed on you. Ashes remind you of your sin, and they are a symbol of our need for repentance. In a sense, your stinky, smelly, deathlike self was crucified and buried with Christ in the tomb of Lent, only to arise completely new on Easter. This evening, you rise with Christ in Baptism, just as He rose from the tomb. This is what fragrant and perfumed oil is all about—reminding you, just as Easter lilies around the altar do, that Jesus lives now and forever.

If you read through the Scriptures, you will see that the Holy Spirit’s work in the lives of God’s people is often outwardly marked with oil. Jacob blessed the rock of Bethel after God appeared to him twice (see Genesis 28:18; 35:14). Moses anointed Aaron and all the priests (see Leviticus 8:12). Further, prophets, priests, and kings were often anointed with oil. It marked them for specific service. Therefore, David never wished to kill Saul even though Saul kept pursuing him. Saul was the Lord’s anointed, which is why David never killed him. David was anointed by Samuel to be king (see 1 Samuel 16:13) and lovingly expresses the joyful abundance of oil in Psalm 23:5: “You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”

In the New Testament, Jesus was anointed directly by the Holy Spirit when He came in the form of a dove at His Baptism. As many of us were taught in confirmation classes, Jesus, the Messiah, is the Anointed One who is the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King. Since you are baptized into Christ, God’s mark or seal of ownership is also placed on you tonight, reassuring you that you are God’s royal son or daughter, and in Him, you are a priest and king. As St. Peter says, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession” (1 Peter 2:9).

In the Early Church, the night of baptizing new adult Christians often took place on Easter Vigil. After new Christians were immersed in the waters of Baptism, they rose up out of the water and were anointed with perfumed oil. This reminded all who were baptized that they were marked and sealed by the resurrected Christ. This might be why St. Paul said this about the work that he and Titus did in preaching the Gospel: “For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Corinthians 2:15).

As a Christian, your life is a different drink of water than the lives of others. You smell different because you are different. You were anointed with fragrant oil to remind you that you are a sweet and pleasing aroma to God. You are washed and baptized into the Anointed One, Jesus Christ. You are, as St. Peter says, a living stone and anointed into a holy priesthood as the people of God. Just as Aaron and his sons and priests were anointed to offer sacrifices to God, now you offer your life and body as an acceptable sacrifice to God (see 1 Peter 2:5; Romans 8:1). Wherever you go will smell. You are the smell of life to some because Jesus rose to life from the dead from that aromatically spiced tomb, and you are baptized into Him. But you smell like death to others who hate and despise Jesus Christ. You will be hated because death no longer has power over you and because you are in Christ. You are connected to Jesus, and the Holy Spirit dwells in you. Unlike smelling death, as many feared when Lazarus’s tomb was opened (see John 11:39), there is no fear of death tonight.

Dear friend in Christ, I pray that this wonderful night of beautiful scents of oil and lilies lingers with you, leaving an indelible and positive mark on your memory. Just as freshly baked chocolate chip cookies register joy within you, I pray that you know how sweet you smell not only to God but to everyone around you. You are baptized into Christ, and through His resurrection from the dead, you live now wherever you go as a lovely, living sacrifice to God. So rejoice this Easter Vigil, this night of gladness. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen. *Pastor Petrich*

**Sunday Lessons and Hymns *(Guitar)***

**Sun. April 2nd**  Psalm 118:26; 24:7-10; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Philippians 2:5-11; **Matt. 27:11-66**

 **LSB**: DS#3; **HYMNS:** #442 “All Glory, Laud and Honor”; #438 “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth”; #443 “Hosanna Loud Hosanna”; DISTRI: #437 “Alas and Did My Savior Bleed”; #439 “O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken”; #420 “Christ, the Life of All the Living”

**Sun. April 9th** Exodus 15:1b,2a,6,13,17-18; Acts 10:34-43; Colossians 3:1-4; Matt. 28:1-10

 **LSB:** DS#1; **HYMNS**: #465 vs1,2,4 “Now All the Vault of Heav’n Resounds”; #457 vs1,2 “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today”; “One House Abides Unending”; #461 vs1-3,8 “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today”; DISTRI: #633 “At the Lamb’s High Feast”; #474 “Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen”; #463 “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today”; #466 “Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia”

**Sun. April 16th** Psalm105:1-5,8; Acts 5:29-42; **I Peter 1:3-9**; John 20:19-31

 **LSB**: DS#1: **HYMNS**: #470 “O Sons and Daughters of the King”; #743 “Jesus, Priceless Treasure”; #482 “This Joyful Eastertide”; DISTRI: #527 “”O Savior Precious Savior”; #741 “Jesus Christ My Sure Defense”; #553 “O Christ, Our Hope, Our Heart’s Desire”

**Sun. April 23rd** Psalm 133; Acts 2:14a,36-41; I Peter 1:17-25; **Luke 24:13-35**

 **LSB:** Morning Prayer: **HYMNS: *AGPS#91 “Easter Song”***; #474 “Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen”; #483 “With High Delight”; ***AGPS#170 “Lord of the Dance***”; #476 “Who Are You Walking in Sorrow”; #585 “Lord Jesus Christ, With Us Abide”; ***AGPS#229 “The Lamb”***; #879 “Stay with Us, till Night Has Come”; ***AGPS#55 “Abide With Us, Our Savior”***

**Sun. April 30th** Psalm 95:1-3,6-7a; Acts 2:42-47; I Peter 2:19-25; **John 10:1-10**

 **AGPS p. 16:** HYMNS**: *“The Beach Story”; “The Sheep Song”; “The Baa Baa Song”;*** #115 “Have No Fear Little Flock”***;*** LSB #709 “The King of Love My Shepherd Is”***; “One in a Hundred*”;** #233 “The Lord’s My Shepherd I’ll not Want**”; *#125 “I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb”;*** LSB#711 “Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us”

**A Better Way**

The most common question about stewardship is not whether a Christian should give to their church. Of course Christians should give to their church. Everyone knows this. Rather, the ques-tion asked most is, “How much should I give?” But this question really means, “Should Chris-tians give a tenth of their income to their local congregation?”

Here are some common reasons against tithing. Some say tithing isn’t necessary because it isn’t expressly commanded in the New Testament. There is no “Thus saith the Lord,” or “should” concerning tithing. Others say that Christians give to their congregation in ways much broader than money. They give of their time and their talents, and these together with treasures (money) add up to more than a tithe. Still others say that they give of their treasures to other things be-sides their congregation, and they want to support those things alongside their church. And then there are those who think Christians shouldn’t tithe because of some fear. They are afraid that if they tithe, their gift will be misused, or that after tithing, there won’t be enough left over to get the things that they use, want or need.

Here are some reasons why Christians should tithe. Even though the New Testament doesn’t specifically command Christians to tithe, the Old Testament people were commanded to. And on top of this, St. Paul often describes giving a regular and generous proportion of the first fruits of one’s income — terms similar to a tithe (2 Cor. 8:7–23; 2 Cor. 9:2–7).

But here’s another way to think about it. What was the point of the tithe in the Old Testament? Where did it go? This tithe was intended to support the ministry of the Levites. They were not given any land because they had no time to farm; their full-time job was the ministry. What does it say in the New Testament? “The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14). This is the verse that Luther used in the Small Cate-chism’s Table of Duties to explain what Christians owe to the support of the ministry.

It seems clear from both the Old and the New Testaments that the tithe is the goal of Christians in their giving. But what if we’re not there yet? How should we handle this? What are we to do?

Let’s answer this by asking a different question. What would you say to your adult children who only attended church quarterly or once a month? After all, there is no passage in the New Testament that requires Christians to go to church weekly. Hebrews 10:25 is the closest verse we have, and it states simply that Christians should not neglect gathering together. And even though there is no passage that commands Christians to gather weekly, that is the implicit expectation throughout the Old and New Testaments.

So, what would you say to that son or daughter? The conversation might go something like this. I’m glad you’re still going to church. It is a wonderful blessing to hear God’s promises of forgiveness, life and salvation, and to receive His gifts in Word and Sacrament. But you can do better, and it will only be a blessing to you. There is a better way, and I’d really like you to try to attain it.

We should approach the topic of tithing with a similar conversation. The tithe is not specifically commanded in the New Testament, but it sure seems like the implicit expectation of both the Old and New Testaments. So, we’re ecstatic that you’re giving, and that you’re giving in all these various ways — time, talents and treasures. But there is a better way. And that will only be a blessing to you, just as the Word of God — Old and New Testament alike — promises. Can you try increasing your gifts over the coming weeks, months and years? Can you put your trust in the God who sent His Son to take away your sin and give you everlasting life? And if He did this for you, if He did not spare His only Son, how will He not give you all things? He will not disappoint. – LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/