The Eagle

St. John Lutheran Church + Houghton Lake, Michigan 48629

January 2014

The View From Here

Why Can't We Come To Faith On Our Own?

Don't we have the capacity within our will and reason to believe in God? Indeed it's true that God has indeed equipped humans with a will and reason, and we need to understand that from the Bible's point of view. Since this is not a generic question ... we do need to deal with specifics! When all is said and done, we must come to grips with Jesus, the Savior.

Human reason can help us realize that we need to live orderly and productive lives. With reason and will a person can come to some sort of conclusion that there is a god ... but not the Triune God. Some people look at the **universe** and conclude that there must be a creator behind all this order. Others look at the **moral code or compass** which guides most human beings and they conclude that there must be an author to this code. Others, using their **reason and logic**, conclude that there must be something greater than all of this. And that would be a god. These are all natural arguments for the existence of God. However, this is not the kind of faith referred to when the Bible says: ***"Jesus is the Author, the Founder and Perfecter of our faith"***. That faith is described in Hebrews 12 and is talking about a level of natural knowledge, but it goes quite a bit further. If all we have is a natural knowledge of God's existence, then all we can be sure of is that there is a God, and He seems distant and abstract, maybe even demanding and angry. That's not a very comforting thought.

We Christians have learned that God is loving and compassionate. Our Bible verse suggests that we can only know a loving and compassionate God by looking to Jesus, God revealing Himself to us on His terms alone. Luther even said it more pointedly, saying, *"Outside of Christ, no God for me please!"* So, that's where we start for our certainty with God, by looking at Jesus.

Jesus says in John 5:29, ***"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it's they that bear witness about me."*** So, we start by looking at the Bible, the Scriptures. There you'll find the incarnate Word in the enscripted Word. Jesus is called the Word made flesh(incarnate Word) and that's a more certain, clear word than what we can learn on our own just by looking around at what we see and what we hear. When we look at Jesus we can't help but see a loving and compassionate God in action for us, by what He says and by what He does. So, the faith in Him is a lot more than just some general idea that God exists.

This all means, then, that we don't have to come up with this idea of this loving God on our own. Actually, we couldn't even do that because sin obscures our knowledge of God , and God's grace trumps our sin. So, God's revelation of Himself in Christ trumps our confused notion of who He is. ***"Faith comes by hearing***, the Bible says in Romans 10, and that message is something that God makes known through His Word, His church. Who Jesus is and what Jesus did go hand in hand for our salvation.

The Bible reveals Jesus as God's beloved Son, and it's because of what He did that He makes Him the object of our faith. Hebrews 12 again says this about what Jesus did. Look to ***"Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,"*** and then it says, ***"who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising its shame, and is seated, now, at the right hand of the throne of God."*** So Jesus shouldered all the shame of mankind's sin when He shouldered the cross. Now as Jesus said on the cross: ***"It is finished."*** The payment for our sins is finished. Our relationship with Jesus' Father is complete. We are now co-heirs with Christ of the glory that is to come, and we see a loving and compassionate God because we have a compassionate Savior who died for us and rose from the dead, victorious over sin, death and hell.

Not only does Christ bring us to faith in who He is and what He did, but He keeps us there throughout our lives until we finish the race of grace. So, when you believe in Jesus, it's the greatest news of all that He, with His Spirit, empowered your faith and sustains your faith. That news should motivate us to hear His Word, the Word that keeps us in that faith unto life everlasting.

That's the View from Here!

Pastor Bill Winter

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Sunday Morning Adult Bible Class to Resume This Year

The 2009 book *Already Gone* by Ken Ham and Britt Beemer (and the scientific study on which the book is based) reveals the reasons why young people are leaving the church. In much of the teaching today in our churches, the Bible is disconnected from the real world, and the authority of Scripture is undermined and replaced with secular reasoning using man's ideas. At St. John we have, over the last few years, offered the screening of the DVD *"Already Gone"* in adult confirmation classes, Bible classes and meetings of our organizations.

In the book and the video, we have learned that the church has failed to teach the Bible as relevant fact. The Church-at-large has, intentionally or unintentionally, taught the Scriptures on Sunday as nothing but "stories" that relate to spiritual matters and have avoided engaging the challenging questions from the secular world that bombard churched children and adults the other 166 hours of their week. As a result, children are beginning to doubt the Bible—and the gospel message that it presents— as early as elementary school. Many studies confirm that more than 60 percent of young people leave the church after they graduate from high school.

Answers Bible Curriculum was designed and written to provide answers to the questions and issues that confront youth (and adults) in school, in the media, from friends, at work, etc. Our St. John Lutheran Church's Board of Christian Education, under the direction of Louise Nagy, and with help from our teaching staff, have incorporated this curriculum into our **Kidz Church** program. It is our hope and prayer that God will be pleased to use this curriculum with our **Adult Bible Class** on Sunday to instill a lifelong trust in the Bible and in the God who authored it.

We will resume our regular Adult Bible Classes beginning on Sunday,

January 12, 2014 at 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Taught by Pastor Winter

"NEWS FROM THE PEW"

January 2014

Happy New Year my friends! I have good news for you. It started this summer when over 315,000 registered voters representing every county in Michigan signed the "No taxes for Abortion Insurance Petition," making it clear that people of Michigan do not believe that abortion is healthcare and we do not want to pay for it. On December 11, 2013, both the Michigan House and Senate passed this petition, with the house voting 62 to 47; Senate 27 to 11. Praise GOD!

Abortion will be available only by purchasing a separate rider. This act also ensures premiums will not go toward funding abortions. Michigan remains a "Pro-Life State." The Affordable Care Act requires all states to have healthcare exchanges available by 2014. The ACA allows states to exclude abortion as a covered benefit through legislation. Michigan is the 24th state to exclude abortion coverage from insurance plans. The legislation ensures that we will not have to fund the destruction of lives through abortion. The Abortion Insurance Opt-Out Act will go into effect March 2014. Tragically, many have classified abortion as a "political issue." Nothing could be farther from the truth! Abortion is a deeply spiritual and moral issue that happens to have political ramifications. The bottom line, spiritual issues need to be dealt with in Church, political issues need to be dealt with at the ballot box.

*Thank you to everyone who signed our petition this summer and please take time everyday to pray for unborn children who are in need of peace. Pray for harmony for their parents, love for their families and surety for those in charge of "**Choosing Life."***

Also a big thank you to everyone for your generous donations for Roscommon and Collins Elementary Schools, they were very excited to receive your help, and your donations for Project Hope!

God Bless You in the coming year!

Yours in Christ,

Pamela L Joles

Pamela L. Joles/Board of Social Welfare

St. John Lutheran Church

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09 December, 2013

St. John Board of Directors and Congregation
Houghton Lake, Michigan

Dear Members of St. John,

It is with deep appreciation that I write this letter to you, the members of St. John congregation and her Board of Directors.

I had no idea when I accepted the call to become your pastor back in October of 1975 that I would still be here 38 years later. I thank God each day for the love, support and prayer that you offer me, Judy and to God in our behalf.

I thank you from the deepest recesses of my heart for the beautiful tungsten ring presented to me after the worship service in November, celebrating 40 years in the ministry. Forty years may not seem like that much of a milestone to those in the business world, since individuals are able to start much earlier in life. Pastors cannot start their ministries until graduating from the seminary at about the age of 26. That gives most of us only 40 years before becoming retirement-eligible. That said, I have no immediate plans to retire.

Thank you for your continued blessings!

In Christ's love and service,

Pastor Bill Winter

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