

Pew News

March 2020

St. John's Lutheran Church

The Communion of Saints

"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." John 8:7.

What a beautiful picture of the communion of saints or the church. It's found in John 8:1-11. You're familiar with the account. A woman is caught in the act of adultery (verse 4). The religious leaders of her day bring the woman to Jesus to test him (verse 6). They want Jesus to contradict God's Word so that they can charge him with something.

God's Word is crystal clear. The sixth commandment from Exodus 20:14 says, "You shall not commit adultery." This woman was caught in the act. There is no doubt about it. She is guilty. God's Word is also clear on what's supposed to happen to her. In Deuteronomy 22:22, 24 we read, "If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman . . . then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones . . ." Let there be no doubt. The woman was guilty according to God's Word and deserved to die.

That's not the question at hand. No. The important question that Jesus is asking is "What about you?" What about you the reader? The religious leaders keep asking Jesus what they should do and that's when Jesus says, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." What about you? Are you guilty according to God's Word and deserving of death?

God's Word says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) and "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). God's Word is crystal clear. We're all guilty according to God's Word and deserving of death. For the woman caught in adultery it was obvious and clear. But what about for the religious leaders? What about for you? Jesus' words are an invitation to them and to us to reflect on what we have done or not done in thought, word and deed. To reflect on our sinfulness and our desperate need for help.

That's what the season of Lent is all about. Taking time to reflect on our sinfulness and need for salvation. Too often we'll admit that we're sinners but we don't really understand what we've done. Although we might stand with the woman caught in adultery we struggle to empathize with her. We need to understand our own sinfulness and need for help. After all, that's who the church is. Sinners in need of salvation.

This adulteress is such a beautiful picture of the church. She understands her sin and she desperately wants someone to forgive her. That's what Jesus does in verse 11. He says, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." That's what the communion of saints looks like. People struggling with their sins who have been forgiven by Jesus.

What about the religious leaders? Apparently, they too understood their sinfulness because none of them stayed around to further accuse the woman. But where are they when Jesus is offering the forgiveness of sins? Absent. Although they understood their sinfulness they didn't seek forgiveness from Jesus. Perhaps, like so many other people, they sought to make up for their sinfulness by being a nice person. While that's a good thing to do that's not the church.

Rejoice in this beautiful picture of the church. There she is lost in sin but waiting in hope before Jesus while surrounded by a bunch of pious hypocrites pointing their accusing fingers at her. There she is forgiven and restored by her Lord and Savior!

Lenten Services - Eyes on Jesus

Every Wednesday at 7 pm

O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Gradual for Lent, based on Hebrews 12:2)

When the characters in the Passion narrative look at Jesus, what do they see? In most cases, people misunderstood who He is and what He was doing. In some cases, by faith, people recognized Him aright. Our Lenten series this year, Eyes on Jesus is based on Passion according to St. Mark. We will examine how the various people around Jesus viewed Him—and how we should view Him. We will “fix our eyes” on what Jesus has done to save us from our sins by His holy, precious blood and innocent sufferings and death, and celebrate what God sees on account of His work: our justification for His sake.

With Eyes on Jesus as our theme this Lent, we will continuously focus on Jesus Christ and Him crucified, buried, and risen for our justification. This is a vision that will never disappoint, for by trusting in Jesus, He promises that we will gaze upon His beautiful face now by faith and forever in heaven!

We also offer a fellowship dinner each Wednesday in Lent at 5:45 pm. Each week different volunteers bring their favorite soup to accompany some bread, cookies and drinks. Sign up to bring your favorite on the list in the hallway!

Applying Bible Principles

Many people — including Christians — sometimes end up in serious financial difficulty because they ignore this basic principle from God’s Word: God wants us to know the state of our finances. Proverbs 27:23-24 instruct us, “Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever; and does a crown endure to all generations?”

In Old Testament times, livestock were one of the primary measures of a person’s wealth. Today, we might be admonished, “Be diligent to know the state of your bank accounts and your possessions.” Or as Proverbs 24:3-4 says in a contemporary version, “Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts.”

Why is this so important? As managers, we are responsible for what God has entrusted to us. Part of that responsibility includes monitoring the status of our possessions and making wise investments.

One of the best investments we can make is to send deposits to the “Bank of Heaven” by giving to the Lord’s work here at St. John’s Lutheran Church. When we do that, we are not only exercising good stewardship, but we are also earning God’s approval. There’s no better return on an investment than that!

As you think about your life today, do you have a good picture of where you are financially?
Are you keeping the commitments concerning giving which you have made to God?

Think about it: A dollar spent for lunch lasts about five hours. A dollar spent for a necktie lasts about five weeks. A dollar spent for an automobile lasts about five years. A dollar spent in the service of God lasts for eternity.

The Stained Glass Window Project

Several questions have been raised concerning the stained glass window project. While the congregation leadership endeavors to keep the congregation up-to-date on what is going on sometimes we fall short. So we really appreciate your questions.

During the congregation meeting on January 27, 2019 the congregation considered a proposal to establish a stained glass window fund because a member was interested in making a donation. An estimate was shared with the congregation of \$61,800 for the work with a 10% deposit needed to begin the work. A motion was made and seconded to open the fund.

Praise the Lord we have received many wonderful gifts of love towards this project. When we began receiving these gifts the Council wanted to make sure that the congregation was aware of our progress so that they too could celebrate. Therefore, a sign was approved that would track the progress. The Council also discussed when it would be appropriate to have the company begin work. Although the company had suggested that they could proceed with 10% of the funds the Council decided to wait until 50% of the funds were received so that we would not start without being able to complete half the work. That initial work will include working with the company to approve a design for the windows. The remainder of the work will NOT be done until the remaining funds have been donated to the church.

The Council also discussed the possibility of using contributions to the Memorial fund for the project. Over the years donations have been made to the Memorial fund in memory of those who have passed away. We have always allowed the families to designate which project they would like those funds to be used for. Although we have encouraged families to designate those funds for a particular project a significant amount had been left undesignated. The Council approved a letter to the families that would give them the option of designating their Memorial funds to one of several projects including the stained glass window fund or being used to pay off part of the existing mortgage. Praise the Lord that many of the families found these two projects a great way to remember their loved ones!

The design of the windows has not been determined. The sign in the back of the church does NOT reflect in any way what the windows will look like. That sign simply lets us know how much progress we have made on the project. We are currently looking for members of the church who will serve with other members to give guidance to the artists and ultimately approve the design. It will likely involve 3 - 4 meetings but the impact will be seen in the windows for as long as the windows light up the sanctuary. We are leaning towards a design called "modern narrative" which would reflect how "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1). These verse and theme is also the basis for Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." If you are interested in serving in this group please let Pastor know.

Praise the Lord that we have received \$26,835 to date towards the stained glass window project. That is 43% of the project! We also praise the Lord because several families have elected to make gifts towards paying off the mortgage. Just in the month of February we received gifts of over \$1,300!

Finally, how do we balance putting in stained glass windows with other financial goals? One of the blessings of being a part of the body of Christ is that we are very diverse. We have different gifts and different passions that are expressed in different ways. Some are passionate about stained glass windows while some are passionate about cooking. Some are artists and some are accountants. Our goal is to encourage expression of all of those

gifts in ways that are God pleasing and will help us accomplish our common vision. We believe that the windows can do that by being a visual reminder of the vision that God has put on our hearts.

But this is a reminder why our common mission and vision are so important. The vision is where we as a group are going and we have agreed that achieving a balanced budget and paying off the mortgage is absolutely critical for the accomplishment of our vision. That's why "Growing as Stewards of God's Gifts" is one of three strategic focus objectives. That's why both the budget and the mortgage are listed as goals.

We rejoice that we have made progress in both of those areas. In 2019 we cut our deficit spending in half! Praise the Lord! That's a huge gift from the Lord. In 2019 we received gifts of over \$50,000 to pay off our mortgage. More blessings from the Lord! But we must stay focused and disciplined and the church leadership is committed to working with the congregation to do that by God's grace. We look forward to seeing how God accomplishes His incredible work in and through the family of believers that surrounds us!

New Bible Study Begins in March - Exodus

Our new Bible study begins Tuesday March 10th and Sunday March 15th. The cost of the workbook is \$10. You can place your cash or check in the wooden box in the back of the church.

After 430 years of sipping from the Nile, the children of Israel forgot their homeland in Canaan to the east. The Egyptians forgot God's mercy during the administration of Joseph, who delivered them from the dryness of the desert and settled the Israelites in the Nile Delta.

Though the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites, mistreated them, and even forced them to cast their sons into the river, the Israelites could not walk away from the Nile. The great serpent trapped them in its coils.

Exodus describes how the Lord awakened the memory of Israel, caused them to call out to Him, and sent Moses to rescue Israel from the grip of the Nile and the dryness of the desert.

As you read Exodus, keep one foot on the Nile's cool green bank and the other foot on the scalding yellow sand. Feel the Israelite's dilemma. Recognize the immense obstacles and temptations from which the Lord rescued them. And call Him your deliverer amid the obstacles and temptations of your life. -

The Lutheran Study Bible p. 94

We welcome both Bible veterans and newcomers to the Bible. Everyone will get something from this valuable time in God's Word. We meet on Tuesdays at 7 pm and Sundays at 9:15 am.

We're using the LifeLight series which involves completing a daily reading and questions five days a week. Then we gather once a week to discuss our questions in a small group and hear a lecture together.

Foundation of Faith Study Group

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Romans 12:12

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” Romans 15:13

“Since we have such a hope, we are very bold.” 2 Corinthians 3:12

“Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you.” Ephesians 1:18

“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul - a hope.” Hebrews 6:19

These are just some of the verses which talk about what God does for us. Our faith gives us hope. Not the whimsical desire for something better. But the sure and certain knowledge that something better is already ours. A hope which makes us bold and holds us steady in the midst of the turmoil that life throws at us.

Very soon we're beginning a new group to explore the basis for this kind of radical hope. Weekly beginning on Wednesday, March 4th at 8 pm a group of adults is going to get together to talk about this hope that God intends for us to have. I anticipate that we will meet for about eleven weeks for about 1 hour each week. This is a great way to become familiar with the foundational teachings of Christianity as the church has understood them for over 2,000 years. But this group will also give us the opportunity to apply those teachings to current events.

In addition to learning more about the incredible gifts of faith and hope this class will give you the opportunity to join St. John's Lutheran Church if you are not already a member. I'm praying that you will take this opportunity to join us and learn more about the hope that God has for you and your family right now.

LWML SAYS GOOD-BYE TO DOROTHY STAMPER

Our LWML group of ladies has been blessed to have Dorothy Stamper serve as our Treasurer for ten years during which time she also provided support for just about everything we endeavored to undertake as a group. She has done a good job of keeping the finances in order and on time. Her faithfulness in handling the mites, Yard Sale and Bazaar sales, donations, and writing checks on our behalf has kept us unconcerned about money matters. We thank her for her support through the years. But who would take over when she turned in the books?

Praise God that He raised up another two ladies with servant-hearts! Barbara Hansen, who has been an amazing "Son Shine" volunteer, agreed to take over the position of Treasurer if someone else would send out cards in her place. Ginny Dixon volunteered to become our new Son Shine lady. God provided two gracious women to take on these two positions. Thank You, Lord!

LUTHERAN WOMEN IN MISSION (LWML) NEWS

We enjoyed so much having our February meeting in the home of Bonnie Arney. She provided a lunch which she and her daughter, Kathryn Burch, had prepared for us to enjoy after the Bible study and business meeting. We all enjoyed the ambiance of being in a home rather than at church for our meeting, so we are giving each hostess the option to have it at their house or at the church. Either way is fine. The hostess can ask each lady to bring a sandwich and she will provide the dessert, or she has the option to provide the lunch and dessert.

Our next meeting will be March 10th at the home of Mabelle Bloker, 923 Lakeside Road. We also decided to change the meeting time to 9:30. Elfriede Wolford will be leading the Bible study from the Lutheran Woman's Quarterly, Winter 2019, entitled "Beauty Marks", page 2021.

LENTEN SOUP SUPPERS

There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for anyone who would like to provide Soup, Bread, Cookies, or Drinks for the Lenten Suppers each Wednesday before the Lenten Service. We are not assigning groups to have a particular week, so it is up to individuals to choose the date that works for them to bring the needed items. Thank you.

SOMETHING NEW ON THE LWML BULLETIN BOARD

Each month there will be a posting of two different charities or ministries that the LWML has supported with the proceeds from our sales. Check them out!

Treasurer's report for Jan 2020

Total Collections & Savings	US\$18,321.26
Total Expenses	US\$17,664.65
Difference	US\$656.61
Total Savings Used	US\$3,000
MOM Mission Match	US\$1.25

Collections in Jan for Additional Mortgage Principal:
\$240 From Memorials