

Pew News

June 2020

St. John's Lutheran Church

Laying Down Our Rights for the Sake of our Neighbor

"All things are lawful,' but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor." 1 Corinthians 10:23-24

I proudly served in the U.S. Navy because I cherish our country and the opportunities that it provides. I have been blessed to see much of it and it is spectacular in so many ways. From the purple mountains majesty to the fields of grain waving in the wind to the placid lake or the roaring ocean the natural beauty is spectacular. But the people that make up our country are just as diverse and spectacular. From the salty New England fisherman to the creole cook in New Orleans to the technological wonders in Silicon Valley we are a beautiful melting pot.

But it's also apparent to me that we too easily turn the rights that I fought for into idols that we worship. For the sake of our rights we sacrifice a relationship. But that's not a surprise. Idols demand sacrifice and sacrifice means death. In this case the death of a relationship or the death of opportunities to reach the lost for the sake of Christ. Death no matter how you look at it.

That's what Paul is talking about in his first letter to the Corinthians. The death of relationships or the fellowship of the believers. His letter has a lot to teach us in this odd place we find ourselves in. Paul argues that there is something more important than your rights - the relationship you have with your brothers and sisters. That's the message throughout his letter. It's the common theme that ties it all together.

In the passage above Paul is quoting a popular saying. Apparently there was a group of Christians in Corinth that kept saying "All things are lawful." It was their rallying cry. Sort of like, "I have rights." Paul agrees with them. They have been set free from the Old Testament civil and ceremonial laws that limited what they could eat. They were allowed to eat anything they wanted. All things are indeed lawful for them. That's true.

But not all things are helpful. Not all things build up the body of Christ. Sometimes insisting upon your rights leads to the death of a relationship and an opportunity to share Christ with our neighbors. That's why Paul says "Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor." Be ready to give up your rights for the good of your neighbor.

THAT'S RADICAL! Some would have worse names. But not Paul, he says "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1) Paul calls that kind of sacrifice Christian. Christ committed no sin and yet he willingly sacrificed his right to life for you so that you could live. "For our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21) Christians treasure Jesus' sacrifice because it is the source of our forgiveness and life. Without it we have no hope. As we treasure Jesus' sacrifice we are equipped to imitate Jesus as Paul did. To give up our rights for the sake of our

neighbors and that radical act of love gives us the opportunity to share the gospel with our neighbors!

The Christians in Corinth shopped in meat markets. Meat markets that didn't label their meats like we do today. There were no labels at all! What disturbed some Christians is that some of that meat had been sacrificed to false gods. Other Christians could have cared less. But Paul warns them that even if they got a great discount on that meat if eating it gives offense to another Christian then they shouldn't eat it. Not all things build up the body of Christ.

What is it that you are being asked to sacrifice for the sake of your neighbor? Once again, I invite you to look to the cross of Christ. Look to the one who gave up everything for you and there you will find the strength "to present bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1)

God's Peace,
Pastor Matt Sorenson

Applying Bible Principles

Under the Old Testament economy, people were required to give to God because this was also the means of providing the government. A theocracy was in place then, which meant that government was actually operating under the direct authority and leadership of God Himself.

Today, we are under a different economy. However, we are still required to support the government. We may not like the way government operates. We may not agree with the policies of our governmental leaders. We may not even like the political process or the individuals involved in it.

But God says that is not the issue. The issue is one of obedience. He says we are to pay our taxes to whom we "taxes are owed" (Romans 13:7). In spite of all the ills of government, God says that governmental agencies and government leaders are His "ministers" and that they operate for our ultimate "good."

So the question is not whether we agree with or even support the work and activities of our governments at the local, state and national levels. The question is one of whether or not we will obey God. You see, it's relatively easy to sing, "Oh, How I Love Jesus." It's far more difficult to demonstrate our love for Him by yielding to Him in full and complete obedience, especially when His commands are ones we do not care for — like paying our taxes.

If He is in charge, if He is Lord of our lives, then we will do what He tells us to do. As the little chorus states it so clearly, "I'll say, 'Yes,' Lord, 'Yes,' to Your will and to Your way; 'Yes,' Lord, 'Yes,' I will trust You and obey." Even when it comes to paying my taxes? Even when it comes to paying my taxes!

" . . . render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21).

When Will St. John's Lutheran Church be Holding Worship Services in the Building?

Many of you are asking this question so I wanted to share with you some of the factors that the leaders of the congregation have been considering.

The Commonwealth of Virginia allows religious services with the following limitations during Phase One of their reopening plan.

1. Occupancy shall be limited to no more than 50% of the lowest occupancy load on the certificate of occupancy for the room or facility in which the religious services are conducted.
2. Individuals attending religious services must be seated at least six feet apart at all times and must practice physical distancing at all times.
3. Face coverings are now required. (The original order did not require them but that was amended by Executive Order 63 on May 26, 2020)
4. No items must be passed to or between attendees, who are not family members.
5. Any items used to distribute food or beverages must be disposable and used only once and discarded.
6. A thorough cleaning and disinfection of frequently contacted surfaces must be conducted prior to and following any religious service.
7. We are to encourage all of our elderly and at risk members to stay at home.

In addition we are considering evidence which indicates that there is a substantially higher risk of transmitting the virus when people are engaged in singing, speech and responsive reading. There are multiple examples of churches and choirs where they engaged in these activities and many people were infected. The latest example is a church in Frankfurt Germany which reopened on May 10th. Contact tracing has demonstrated that it is likely that 107 people have been infected as a result of people who attended this worship service. Although they did practice social distancing they engaged in singing and responsive reading.

The CDC has also issued new guidance stating that the virus is NOT primarily transmitted via contact with surfaces. While they strongly encourage people to continue washing their hands and not touching their face it is possible to relax some of the disinfection protocols. We hope that this will lead Virginia to relax requirement 6 above. If that does not happen we will have to develop procedures for disinfecting our cloth chairs and recruit a team of volunteers to implement it following each service.

Worship in our building will be very different when we come back together but we are making plans to do that in accordance with the laws and the best guidance available. We are hoping that the Commonwealth will enter Phase 2 soon which will ease unnecessary restrictions and make use of the building easier. We are also making improvements that will allow us to continue to share the services and Bible studies in our virtual worship space.

Please keep your Pastor, Elders and members of the Council in your prayers as they seek God's wisdom on these issues. Please share with them your thoughts and concerns as together we experience and share the love of Jesus Christ!

Treasurer's Report

	Apr - 20				YTD
Total Collections & Savings Used	\$24,677.17			Total Collections & Savings Used	\$82,614.71
Total Expenses	\$17,475.49			Total Expenses	\$76,398.42
Difference	\$7,201.68			Difference	\$6216.29
Apr-20				YTD	
Total Savings Used	\$7,000.00			Total Savings Used	\$14,500.00
MOM Mission Match				MOM Match	\$41.50
Add Mortgage Paid	\$1,945.00			Add Mortgage Paid	\$3,537.63

\$7000 was pulled from savings at the beginning of April to meet our monthly bills. Later in the month tithes and offerings started coming in by mail or drop off and things balanced out for the month of April. No savings have been used for month of May (as of 5/22/20). I sincerely thank you for your faithfulness in remembering your church during this quarantine time. Also please note that additional gifts were made in April of \$1945 to be applied to the Mortgage's principal.

Thus far in May, the additional mortgage principal payments gifted are \$1535.

Lutheran World Relief Face Mask Challenge

Several ladies has been sewing personal face mask in response to the LWR 75,000 Face Mask Challenge. Lutheran World Relief seeks volunteers to sew 75,000 cloth face masks that will be sent to the areas in which it works — from slums to remote rural villages — for those who don't have the option of social distancing or frequent hand washing, putting them at risk of serious illness. Health officials now recommend cloth face masks for reducing transmission. Several ladies from St. John's has answered the challenge and we have 140 pledged so far. If anyone wants to contribute to this challenge, there is a bag marked for the challenge in the narthex for your donation. The masks are like the ones people have been making around here. There is a pattern and more information of the Lutheran World Relief website or you can call Shirley Sorenson at 391-3333. We will be sending them to LWR at the end of June so you have plenty of time to make some and drop them off at church.