

PEW NEWS
ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
MAY 2021

Well Rested

I treasure rest. When I was at the Naval Academy I learned the value of rest. We worked hard so we treasured the opportunity to lay down and take a nap. We used to say that a nap was higher on our priority list than women. The older I get the more I treasure my naps and the opportunity to lay down at night. I also treasure my weekly rest. Most of us take the weekend to do something different, to get away or just slow down. I really look forward to my annual rests. We take time around Christmas and Easter off to spend with family. We take a couple weeks off during the summer to get way with the family and rest. Rest is important.

Rest is so important that God included it in the ten commandments. In Exodus 20:8-10 we read "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God." God set apart the Sabbath day as a day of rest.

But why? Look at Exodus 31:13-14. God says, "Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you." God says that they're to keep the Sabbath so that they may know that He makes them holy. We tend to work too much because we've bought into the devil's lie that we can save ourselves by trying harder. But we can't. Only God is holy. Only God can sanctify us and make us holy. By taking a weekly rest and annual rests the Israelites relied upon the Lord for their salvation.

Skip forward to that first Easter morning. Jesus emerges from the tomb after a three day rest! Why was Jesus resting? To fulfill all that was written in the Law and Prophets. Jesus died on that cross, rested in that tomb and rose from the dead so that you too can have rest. So that you can rest from trying to makeup for your sins! So that you can rest from trying to outwit the devil! So that you can rest from trying to beat death!

That's what his resurrection means! Jesus rose triumphant over sin, death and the devil for you. His victory is your victory. In Jesus we find our true Sabbath rest and the fulfillment of Exodus 31. Here's what it looks like today. "Above all you shall have faith in Jesus, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that the blood of Christ makes you holy. You shall have faith in Jesus because he is holy for you."

Celebrate Jesus' resurrection and treasure your rest!

Opportunities to Serve - Feeding Farmville Coordinator

Each month we're trying to highlight a different opportunity for you to use your gifts to serve the Lord and your neighbor. That's a summary of why God created us. "And [Jesus] answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.'" (Luke 10:27)

We're looking for someone to coordinate Feeding Farmville. Feeding Farmville's vision is to help our neighbors grow closer to God through an experience with His unconditional love. Our volunteers experience God's love as they watch God work through their efforts and that of all of the other volunteers to feed over 800 people. They get to be the boy in John 6:9 who donated the five barley loaves and the two fish and watched Jesus feed 5,000 people with them. It's overwhelming and awesome! The people who receive the meals experience God's love as strangers spend time with them, pray with them and then leave a meal with them. It's all about love and grace.

We've been doing this for years and we have a great process and team leaders who do a great job. We're looking for someone to serve as the coordinator for the project. They schedule the meetings and coordinate between all of the different teams. Shirley Sorenson has done this for several years but is ready to hand over the job to someone else or to work with them as they learn the ropes. If you're interested please speak with Shirley Sorenson or Pastor.

Mission of the Month - Habitat for Humanity

Piedmont Area Habitat for Humanity is celebrating 30 years of helping families find safe, affordable and decent housing. They are currently building their 50th home in the area! This home is going up on Hylawn Avenue and is for Rosa and her daughter.



Having lived in Prince Edward County all her life, Rosa has deep roots in the community. This can be easily seen at the counter of a local eating spot in downtown Farmville, where for nineteen years Rosa has taken care of the needs of regular customers. Both she and her daughter are looking forward to having a place they can call their own. Having applied before, Rosa did not give up on her dream. When Rosa received the phone call that she had been approved this time, she jumped for joy, overwhelmed by the good news. Rosa's roots run deep in Farmville. Now she will have the deep roots of a safe, decent, affordable home of her own.

Please keep Habitat for Humanity in your prayers! There are two ways that you can help make this home a reality for Rosa and her daughter. You can volunteer to help with the construction or you can make a financial gift. Financial gifts should be designated for MOM and left in the basket or offering plate in May.

If you would like to volunteer please call Habitat at 434-394-3001

Contemplating Prayer...

Our Father in Heaven has blessed us with privilege and power in His invitation to us to meet Him in prayer. One of the issues on which Luther wrote and taught extensively was prayer.

Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand describe Luther's view of prayer well: "Prayer is the conversation of the dependent and trusting child, who is eager to voice both thanks and requests with the loving Father, who in turn is eager to hear from his children."¹ The first two words of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father," are crucial in Luther's view of prayer. Calling on God as "Father" stirs God's heart more than any title, and brings with it the idea that we are children, which stirs his heart again. Luther teaches to recognize our position as children of God as we approach God in prayer. This recognition encourages confidence in the efficacy of prayer, strengthens weak faith, and assures us that we approach God as an overflowing giver rather than demanding tyrant. For example, Luther encourages this prayer: "Now through your mercy implant in our hearts a comforting trust in your fatherly love, and let us experience the sweet and pleasant savor of a childlike certainty that we may joyfully call you Father, knowing and loving you and calling on you in every trouble."²

In John 16: 26-27 Jesus says, The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

1 - . Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology*:

2 - Luther, "Personal Prayer Book

Chuck Ironmonger

St. John's Stewardship Corner

Applying Bible Principles

When Samuel was seeking someone to succeed Saul as King of Israel, he examined the sons of Jesse. In that process, he considered their stature and physical characteristics in great detail, only to be told by God, "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

That modus operandi on God's part has not changed over the centuries of time. He still looks at the hearts of men and women. He is not as interested in how things appear on the outside, but what they are really like on the inside. And God's scrutiny extends to every area of our lives, including our giving.

Specifically, He wants to know not just what or when we are giving, but **why**. He is not so concerned about the amount or the percentage but with the reason or motive why we give. It's not that amounts or percentages are not important, for they certainly are. But what is of greater importance is **why** we give.

If we only give out of a sense of duty, to impress someone, to keep a commitment we made, or to "do our part," we've missed the point. If we only give a certain amount or percentage because we've always given that way, we've missed the point. If we parcel out money to help "poor ol' God pay His bills," we've missed the point.

God owns it all! He doesn't need our money to pay His bills. He doesn't want us to give out of a sense of obligation or duty or habit. Nor does He want us to give to impress someone else. He wants us to give out of hearts motivated by love for Him in response to His love for us. He wants us to give as part of our worship and praise to Him. He wants us to give because giving is part of His way of growing Christians.

There's an old Indian fable about a mouse who, like all mice, was afraid of cats. A wizard felt sorry for him and offered to help him lose his fear. With the mouse's approval, the wizard turned him into a cat. The cat, however, was afraid of dogs, so the wizard turned the cat into a dog. But the dog was afraid of tigers, so the wizard turned the dog into a tiger. When the wizard discovered the tiger was afraid of hunters, he exclaimed in disgust, "You're hopeless. What you need is a change of heart. And that I cannot give you."

If our giving is motivated by anything other than a heart of love for God, we need a change of heart. We need to realize afresh that God owns everything and that we are just managers and stewards. We need to realize that when we give, we are only giving back to God what was rightfully His in the first place. And we need to understand that when we give out of love for God and not out of habit or duty or obligation, we are giving in a way that truly honors and glorifies Him.

REALIZING GOD'S VISION Capital Campaign Fundraiser

God has put on our hearts at St. John's to be a refuge to our neighbors here in Farmville and in our lives. Every day we are a refuge to each other, to our families, our friends, coworkers and the people we meet. We are a place for people to turn to and to experience Jesus because we are a people who experience and share the love of Jesus Christ as we live our mission here at St. John's. We've never been comfortable with "EVANGELISM" but we are comfortable with sharing JESUS.

The harvest is plentiful, and there is a lot to do. We hear it every day on the news, Joblessness, Depression, Poverty, Loneliness, Homelessness, Hunger. God is needed in this world today more than ever and we are His workers. So, we look toward the things we will accomplish as God creates and builds in us the vision of a Family Life Center here at St John's. Paul tells us in 2 Cor "to fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen".

As we read the bible, listen to Pastor preach and talk to God in prayer, we are challenged to think of things differently, to trust beyond our imagination. God asks us to put on a NEW PAIR OF GLASSES, to change our perception and LOOK with expectation and wonder at what HE has for us to do as a community of believers here at St. John's. Most things in life cost money, but as we discuss in the council meeting every month, there is no money for any new projects while we strive to pay our bills and pay off the mortgage. Our strategic focus goal is to have the mortgage paid off by 2025.

The Stewardship Committee has been working on creating a way for us to **REALIZE GOD'S VISION**, A WAY to work toward paying off the mortgage and look with wonder and expectation to what God will do. It takes faith to trust God when life is difficult, times are tight, and especially when you find yourself without a job or an income. But when God asks something of us, He also equips us to carry out His purpose and when He does this, He shines the light on His Love, His Grace, and His Power to change our lives.

So the first step toward being a refuge and building a Family Life Center is to witness to God's power in our own lives and how He will help us to accomplish this goal to pay off the mortgage.

OUR THEME IS REALIZING GOD'S VISION. We are working on a 24x36 poster like the stain glass window to display in the Narthex which will note progress each month toward our goal.

OUR GOAL FOR 2021 IS TO PAY \$100,000 TOWARD THE MORTGAGE PRINCIPLE
including our monthly payments.

- We have so far this year paid \$18,000 toward the mortgage principle with our monthly payments and extra designated giving since January.
- The Monthly Mortgage Principle is \$1,750.
- We will pay another \$14,000 over the next 8 months in our monthly payments.
- If we could pay an extra principle each month, over the next 8 months that would equal \$28,000.
- We could easily accomplish this if half of the members (50) gave \$10 a week extra toward the mortgage. We would exceed that amount by \$2,000 and pay off \$30,000 which together with what has already been paid is close to \$50,000.
- Even in my simple math I can see how this could be done.

We ask that each of you PRAY that God will inspire you with **creative ideas** as we wait with expectation and wonder in what He will have us do and for the faith and trust to see HIM accomplish it. In the coming weeks you will hear more from us on this campaign with more information in a letter form, newsletter, pledge cards and plans for a Banquet.

We know that you are already giving in faith and it may not be possible to give more. But we can all pray. We are looking for you to help us to Realize God's Vision with prayers,

ideas, help with a banquet, serving on the Stewardship Committee, or even giving your testimony of how God is working in your life.

Marion Kyner, Stewardship Committee Chair

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