**~~~~**“Behold the Man!”

A recent advertisement by Gillette repurposed their age-old slogan “The best a man can get” by asking us to reconsider our behavior as individuals and as men. What would a “real man” do in different situations, it asks: Would a man allow a child to be bullied by other boys because it’s “boys will be boys” or should a man step in and protect the vulnerable? Should a man treat a woman as an object for his amusement or should he respect and honor her? The ad is trying to tell us what a “real man” would be like or not like. This ad has stirred quite a lot of conversation which I think is always a good thing. It is better to talk than to ignore.

But what does the ideal “man” or “human” look like? Our preaching and teaching for Lent will ask us this very simple yet complex question, what does it mean for us that God became man?

From the introduction:

““Behold the man!” proclaimed the unwitting preacher Pontius Pilate in one of the shortest yet most profound sermons ever recorded. This will be our endeavor this Lententide and Easter Sunday. Behold the man, God in human flesh, Jesus. His incarnation will provide the basis for our meditation and proclamation on His Passion. And His real bodily suffering and death will provide the basis for our full-throated proclamation on Easter morning of a bodily resurrection, not just of Jesus but also for His saints. Real bodies that have suffered, wept, bled, prayed, eaten, hoped, and more will be those raised incorruptible from their graves on the day of Jesus’ return.

We will fix our eyes and our preaching on the man Jesus, contemplating the inescapable fact—indeed the most important fact in the course of human history—that God became man. The Second Person of the eternal triune God, whom we confess in the Nicene Creed as “God of God, Light of light, very God of very God . . . of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made,” became a living, breathing, flesh-and-blood human being: a man.

This Lent, we will consider what it means that God became man. In preparation for the celebration of a real, bodily, flesh-and-blood, bone-and-sinew resurrection, the resurrection without which our faith and our preaching are all in vain, consider the body of Jesus that exists in order to be nailed to a cross. The spiritual, bodyless Son of God became the embodied, enfleshed, incarnate Son of Mary. In Jesus, God has human flesh, a body, just like you. What could be more profound?

Each week, we’ll consider a different aspect of the body of Jesus Christ. What does it mean that, in Jesus, God has hands, feet, lungs, lips, eyes, and ears?

Our contemplation begins on March 6th at 7pm with our Ash Wednesday Service.

Pastor Johnson

**Where’s Your Loyalty?**

Is loyalty a big deal in your family? No, really, I’m asking. It seems in some families, it’s everything; and in others, it’s not uncommon for water to be thicker than blood. In some cultures, it’s expected that family comes before anything and everything else. In others, friendships can easily be deemed more important than family ties.

Then we have a strange story like that of Ruth’s. Remember Ruth? She was the Moabite woman who lost her husband and chose to remain loyal and stay the course with her Jewish ex-mother-in-law, Naomi (who had also lost her husband), turning her back on her extended family, her people, her country, her Moabite gods, and essentially her life. What in the world? Where’s her loyalty?

She sure left everyone behind. In that moment, she wildly decreased the size of her family to where she only had Naomi left. Her disloyalty to her Moabite family would mean no respect, no home, no security. So why did she do it?

Her loyalty, it seems, lay elsewhere. Perhaps through the Word of God, shared with her by her late husband, Ruth may have learned a little something about this God of Israel that set Him apart from the gods that the Moabite people might have worshiped. Her loyalty to Naomi speaks volumes about her loyalty to her new God, all to the exclusion of her old life and old gods.

Ruth’s story ended well: her family size didn’t decrease after all—it actually increased. By rejecting what was evil and false and clinging to what was good and true, Ruth got a family much bigger than any biological family could be. She got the family of God. Her faith made her whole and well and the blessed recipient of all the mercy and grace she could handle.

And that’s just the kind of faith and loyalty our God requires. You see, in our family—our spiritual family, that is—loyalty is kind of a big deal. Our Lord is a jealous God, and He wants all of you. He has so much to give that He can’t get every last bit of it to you if you’re still clinging to your old life, your old people, and your old home, the world.

For that reason, God sets us—and our children—squarely in His family, the Church. Have you ever heard of the Church referred to as a mother? Well, we are fiercely loyal, just like Ruth, clinging to our mother and following her back to her homeland. We know that the God and His people who await us will be worth the trouble.

Like Ruth, we care for others along the way. We encourage our children to remain in the church, we model service to neighbor by providing for the needs of our church family as we’re able, and we constantly remind our new brothers and sisters in Christ that we are a family, one people, with one God. Our loyalty lies there and nowhere else.

So, is loyalty a big deal in your family? It should be. And, by God’s grace, He’ll make sure it’s so. Ruth couldn’t have remained loyal to Naomi—to God—without the gift of faith, and the same goes for us. We thank God for that gift that He gave to our sister Ruth, and we know that it is the same gift He gives to us. Welcome home

**Aid Against Sin**

Rev. Erik Rottmann, Trinity Lutheran, Cole Camp, MO

*And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” (Luke 2:10)*

*The Gospel . . . does not give us counsel and* aid against sin *in only one way. God is superabundantly generous in His grace: First,* through the spoken Word*, by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world [Luke 24:45–47]. This is the particular office of the Gospel. Second, through Baptism. Third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourth, through the Power of the Keys. Also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren. (SA III IV 1, emphasis added)*

When producing popular devotional literature, Christian publishing houses sometimes prefer for their writers to avoid the second-person pronoun “you.” This is good because direct speech can easily sound “too preachy.” Arguably, the second sentence in these two following examples is much gentler than the first:

• You must repent continually.

• We Christians must repent continually.

We should bear in mind that our general distaste for “preachiness” is probably more traceable to the fir- and-brimstone revivalist preaching of American history—along with our personal aversions for not wanting to be told what to do—and less with what “preachiness” means

according to the Scriptures. In the Scriptures, *preaching* primarily means “verbal delivery of good news.” Whatgood news? “The good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35);specifically, “Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23). Forwhom has Christ died? To whom has Christ given Hisrich forgiveness of sins? You! (Me too, but the main pointhere is *you*.)

In the quote above, Martin Luther mentioned the us “through the spoken Word.” This does not mean to suggest that personal, devotional reading of the Scriptures is wrong in any way. Luther merely wanted us to understand that the Lord our God loves for His words of forgiveness and peace to be *spoken* to His Christians. Because God wants His words to be spoken, God sends *speakers* to His people.

• God sent an angel to the shepherds, saying, “I bring you good news” (Luke 2:10).

• God sent Nathan to David, not only to say, “You are the [sinful] man!” (2 Samuel 12:7), but also to speak the forgiveness of God: “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die” (v. 13).

• Jesus Himself was sent to speak good news. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18).

Is the personal reading of the Scriptures valuable? Certainly! Is the preached Word, spoken to you by your heaven-sent pastor, even more valuable? Yes.

• When we personally read about the forgiveness of sins in the Scriptures, our doubts and our guilty consciences can easily accuse us and make us wonder, “Are those words of forgiveness really for me, or were they written for someone else?”

• By comparison, we receive “aid against sin . . . through the spoken Word” because the Word of forgiveness in Christ gets spoken directly to us by someone whom God sent specifically for the purpose of speaking it.

By all means, the good news of forgiveness in Christ is “for all the people,” as the angel proclaimed to the shepherds. But God wants *you* to have and to hear and to know and to believe that forgiveness for *yourself*. That is why He sent someone to preach it to you.



**Pancake Breakfast**

The elders will be hosting a pancake breakfast between services on Sunday, February 17th. Join us for fellowship and a delicious breakfast you don’t have to make yourself!

**AHG Valentine’s Day Dinner and a Show**

Looking for a fun, unique way to spend your Valentine’s Day this year with the people you love? We have the show for you!

American Heritage Girls Troop WI 2345 has written and rehearsed their own play/variety show all about a weekend at summer camp. Be prepared for singing, dancing, magic, and hilarious skits.

Guests will be treated to a spaghetti dinner and dessert along with the two-act performance. It’s a wonderful way to spend an inexpensive evening out and support a good cause!

All proceeds will go to the AHG troop fund which helps pay for uniforms, books, and fun activities as the girls work to earn badges.

**Lcms Stewardship article** January 2019

The season of Epiphany focuses on how God was made manifest in the flesh of Jesus. The church spends time hearing of the miracles, the signs and wonders, of Jesus in the world.

And this made plain to all that Jesus was who He said He was: He was the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the only-begotten Son of the Father, in the flesh. For “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

It is revealed for all the world to see that Jesus is God in the flesh. It is made manifest by His words and His work, by what He said and by what He did. And these belong together, for “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Jesus is the Word and will of God in the flesh, that is, He is the walking, talking, enactment of God’s Word.

It is no different for us. We are called not just to believe in God in hearts, but also to trust in God in word and deed.

As James wrote: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22), and again, “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? … So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. … Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. … For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead” (James 2:14, 17–18, 26).

Our faith is lived out in works for our neighbor. Our trust in the Word and will of God is lived out not in word only, but also in deed and in truth.

In other words, the Epiphany of the Lord creates in us an epiphany of our faith in our works of obedience to God who commanded them. By this, our faith is made manifest to the world. It is, as Luther wrote of faith:

“Faith is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God (John 1). It kills the old Adam and makes altogether different people, in heart and spirit and mind and powers, and it brings with it the Holy Spirit.

“Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. And so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly. It does not ask whether there are good works to do, but before the question rises, it has already done them, and is always at the doing of them.

“He who does not these works is a faithless man. He gropes and looks about after faith and good works and knows neither what faith is nor what good works are, though he talks and talks, with many words about faith and good works.

“Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times. This confidence in God’s grace and knowledge of it makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and all His creatures.

“And this is the work of the Holy Spirit in faith. Hence a man is ready and glad, without compulsion, to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, in love and praise to God, who has shown him this grace.

“And thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate burning and shining from fire. Beware, therefore, of your own false notions and of the idle talkers, who would be wise enough to make decisions about faith and good works, and yet are the greatest fools.” *(Preface to the Book of Romans)*

So, then, let our faith be active by God’s power in the Word through the Holy Spirit. And let then our faith be made manifest to the world by what this faith does: serving our neighbor — in church, in the family, and society — with the works of faith in time, talents, and treasures.



**A statement from the Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in response to recent gubernatorial actions expanding abortion in New York and Illinois.**

 *“In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).*

On Jan. 22, 2019, the 46th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion on demand, the governors of both New York and Illinois signed laws to extend and promote abortion.

As he signed the Reproductive Health Act into law, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo described it as the “evolution” of humankind in America. In Illinois, Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed an executive order to ensure taxpayer funding of abortions, saying that it would make his state “the most progressive … in terms of women’s reproductive rights.”

Life, not death, is the goal of humanity. History testifies that death is never the means through which justice and human rights prevail. We do not advance on the graves of our children. Germany, which sought eugenics as the solution to problems, now has strict abortion laws. To defend and support life is the goal of every just government, and the right to life is the hallmark of a good society.

Yet abortion laws have allowed the abortion of more than 61,000,000 children since Roe v. Wade. That’s nearly 50 times the number of American soldiers killed in all wars. The abortion industry and its proponents take great lengths to avoid facing the fact that abortion dismembers a living child in a horrid pool of its own blood. This is barbaric.

Abortion is a lie. Science is on the side of life. We shall stand against the barbarism of abortion until our dying breath. Abortion is illogical, as we slaughter babies in the womb while developing ever-better care for other unborn children. Abortion contradicts the natural law written on human hearts that teaches us it is wrong to kill.

Lawmakers and bureaucrats in our country have become emboldened to force citizens to go against their conscience. People publicly celebrate laws that lead to the deaths of children.

How long, O Lord, how long?

Our Christian faith teaches us to value life and to love each and every person as our neighbor. Love is life, and life is the great gift of love. Death is our natural enemy. This can be seen in our lives and in our world each day. Even the birds that seek food in winter testify that life is the goal of their movements and their work. The flowers that grow toward the sun seek the light that enlivens them. We all live under God, who grants life to His whole creation.

And in the giving of His Son to be the Savior, God shows that He is the Lord of life. Jesus came to love. He taught us to love all people, including those whom we consider our enemies. He taught us to unconditionally love every person, even those whom this world considers unworthy of love.

Jesus not only taught us to love. He brought healing and wholeness to the broken. He proclaimed peace to those who were troubled. He sat with those who were excluded. He lifted up those who were beaten down. But most of all, He loved through the sacrifice of His own life on the cross. He died to forgive the sins of all humanity. His forgiveness is a free gift for all who trust in Him, including those who suffer from guilt for aborting their child. He rose on the third day.

The resurrection of Jesus is God’s grand statement that life is the goal of this creation. The resurrection of Jesus proclaims that all creatures find the goal of their existence in life. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so we learn that God treasures life over death.

We live as citizens in this world, and we seek to be obedient to our nation’s laws. We thank God for our leaders and for this great land He has given to us and for its precious freedoms and opportunities. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod advocates strong citizenship and active participation in government. We obey the laws of our land and encourage those around us to do so.

We are, however, bound by our conscience to speak against those laws that are unjust and, especially, those laws that violate God’s law and the natural law that binds all mankind. Abortion and other means through which humans kill humans violate these natural and moral laws that form the foundation of society.

Therefore, we stand against these actions and against all laws that sanction abortion or the taking of innocent life. We cannot stand silent when people elected to positions in which they are to protect citizens continue to pass laws and advocate for legislation that undermines the sanctity of human life. Our conscience is bound by both the Word of God and reason to speak for life as a precious gift of God and to speak against any and all who promote the killing of unborn children. We cannot hide the evil of these laws under the banner of “rights” or “privilege.” Children’s lives are at stake. They cannot speak for themselves. We will speak for them, and we will work to protect their lives.

And we will continue to work to love and support the women who face difficult choices or suffer from the consequences of abortion. We support young mothers who have chosen life for their children. We work to provide adoption and other opportunities to care for children in need. And we continue to show God’s mercy to all, just as He, in Jesus, has mercy on all.

We will work, love and pray that all might know the love of Jesus and trust in Him for salvation. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

January Voter’s Meeting recap

The annual Voter’s Meeting was held after the second worship service on 1/13/19. Full meeting minutes are available in the Narthex and were emailed on everyone on the email list, but here is a brief rundown of what was discussed.

* Many line items stay the same, but there were a couple of places we made cuts.
* Proposed budget for 2019 is about $8,000 shorter than 2018.
* Operations proposing lower this year. Eliminating computer fund. Going into maintenance.
* Electricity going to be lower this year. But they are lowering our budgeted plan again. Try to guess what electricity bills are going to be, but we will be in the ball park.
* Pastor category. Looking into health insurance. Took higher risk plan but had to get outside eye and dental insurance. Coming in lower than last year. Pastor’s salary is still going to be same salary. Take giving right off the top and don’t have to tax that giving. He gets to keep more. $5,200 off of there. Won’t show up as an offering but won’t show that we are paying extra in salary. Actual proposed for Pastor category $76,723.00.
* Appointed Joel Bartel and Jeff Taylor as Trustees with Pam Engle considering the position.
* Jenn Milner volunteered to become the secretary.
* Tentatively schedule Mother/Daughter banquet for May 6th.
* December was a good month for giving, put us on track to make budget for 2018. Thanks!

Looking forward to the lessons for the Sundays in February

Reflections from Higher Things on the Gospel to prepare ourselves for worship this month.

**February 3**

*Gospel lesson Matthew 8:23-27*

*“Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” 26And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.*

“Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Jesus’ words to His disciples reveal the same sin in them that we see in ourselves. We do not fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Like the disciples, times of distress cause us to doubt Christ’s promises, despair of His grace—or worse yet—doubt that He is with us just as He was with the disciples. So Jesus rebukes the disciples' sin and then He rebukes the wind and waves. He rebukes our sin, and then He calms our distressing, doubtful, despairing hearts with the same Word. Do not be afraid of the world, no matter how ugly and wicked it gets. “I have overcome the world,” says Jesus. Do not be afraid of the devil’s fiery darts of temptation. Every one of them is quenched by the liquid shield of your Baptism. And the devil is defeated, crushed, and conquered in My death for you. Do not be afraid of your own sinful flesh. “For behold, I make all things new.”

**February 10**

*Gospel Lesson Matthew 17:1-9 Transfiguration of our Lord*

*“Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 5He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”*

In the presence of the glorified Jesus Peter lets his emotions overcloud his speaking as he so often does. He wants to put Jesus into a shelter of tents so that Peter, James, and John can have him all to themselves. In the moment Peter forgets all about the other disciples and followers of Jesus not on the mountain. He only cares about himself.

The Father won’t let Peter’s desires go unanswered and He speaks something similar to what was said by Him at Jesus’ baptism. He is well pleased with His Son. But He adds this: “Listen to him.” When we listen to our sinful flesh we end up like Peter, wanting to have a Jesus who caters to our needs. When we listen to Jesus we hear of a Savior who comes down from the mountain to be with us and to go to death for us. The death Peter deserved because of his selfishness, the death we deserve because of our desires Jesus goes into for us. Now we listen to Him when He says to Go into all the world and make disciples by baptizing and teaching. Our baptism into Christ connects us to the transfiguring work of Christ. In baptism we are clothed with this Christ who is clothed in light (Galatians 3:27). By our baptism we get the same definition given to Jesus by the Father, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

**February 17 Septuagesima**

*Gospel lesson Matthew 20:1-16*

*For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius1 a day, he sent them into his vineyard. “Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. “And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ 7 They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’. And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius.*

Our Lord calls people into the vineyard of the church at all stages in life. His life changing Gospel goes forth to all. Most of us hear it first while we are still in the womb of our mothers. We were safely placed in the church when we were given up by our parents to be adopted into God’s family in our baptism. We began singing the praises of God with our first cries as babies, unintelligible to us but beautiful to God. Many hear and remain idle. Idleness characterizes life in the world. No one loves the neighbor or lifts a finger for anything other than gratifying the sinful flesh. The message is proclaimed by preachers at all stages of life and when each hears and believes they are granted the same reward. The joy for us is we each receive the same reward of eternal life. It is the same reward because it is the same Lord who gives the life of His Son to all of humanity.

**February 24 Sexagesima**

*Gospel lesson Luke 8:4-15*

*“A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. 6And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 7And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. 8And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

The Seed is the Word of God but as soon as it takes root and springs up it becomes those who hear the Word of God and keep it. The Sower casts out without care. What a foolish farmer this would be, to take the precious seed and throw it out into places that will never produce a crop. What farmer throws expensive seed out onto the road? None, they plot and plan and only put the seed where they can be assured of growth. But not the Holy Spirit. He casts out the Word of God on all people even though He knows many will reject or be angry about it. He casts out even though many will become hard against the message because their hearts only care about how to get better at this life.

Those who receive the Word and let it take root by repenting of their sinful desires the root grows up to be a mighty plant that produces way more than any stalk of grain or vine of grapes, a hundredfold increase! Jesus ends with this simple admonition that whoever has ears, all of us, are to hear and let the Word take root.

**The Shepherd’s Voice**

**February 2019**

# St. Paul’s Lutheran Church

**THE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Missouri Synod

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