****Ascension Day 2019

One of the least celebrated holy days of the calendar is Ascension Day. I suppose it is because it landson Thursday instead of Sunday. It also happens exclusively in May every year when our Wisconsin hearts are longing to be outside as the weather is finally warm enough and the snow usually melted by then and we think who wants to be inside?

We have not attached any rituals to the Ascension holy day. As opposed to Christmas we don’t exchange gifts. What kind of a gift do you give to someone that celebrates Jesus going away? As opposed to Christmas, Ascension is not a national holiday, so everyone has to be at work. Although, if it were a national holiday, we would all have a four-day weekend, that certainly is something to get excited about! For the most part, Ascension Day passes by without much fanfare.

Yet we should get excited about Ascension Day almost as much as Easter. Here are a few things we get from Christ ascending into Heaven.

1. The Holy Spirit. He promised that it would be to our advantage for him to go away because he would send us the Holy Spirit to clothe us in power! It is through the Holy Spirit delivered to the Apostles on Pentecost and through God’s Word that any one is actually converted. With out this gift we would all be lost.

2. The distribution of the forgiveness of sins to all the world through His meal. If He stays on earth He gives out forgiveness by His Word in His location. In heaven He is able to be on our altars as He promised to be bringing with Him forgiveness.

3. Jesus is sat down in the seat of power over all creation and he rules and governs all things. He rules and governs all things as a merciful and gracious King who understands our temptations.

4. A great High Priest whose blood is on the mercy seat of God forever and ever which means our sins are taken care of by Him and we can come before God as a child and ask Him whatever we want, and He will hear and answer us.

And so much more!!

What a marvelous thing to remember. All these blessings from God because the Risen and Alive, conquering hero Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven and is there right now for us. One day He will come back for us that we will be where He is forever.

Christ is Risen!

Pastor Johnson

**Unsettled To Astonished**

We are an unsettled people.

And that’s curious, because in the age of Google, we have the world

at our fingertips; we think we’ve thought of everything; we have overresearched every topic to death. And yet we are still unsettled and uncertain. When we make a decision, it’s easy to second-guess ourselves.

This might be okay, except that we also tend to second-guess God and His commands. We even question His gifts to us. We often feel we know better—or at least Alexa knows better—so it’s easy to believe that abiding by our Lord’s Word and receiving His gifts is a losing game or

a pointless effort.

I imagine this is how Simon Peter felt when Jesus suggested that he let down his nets for some fish.

Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, He [Jesus] asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at Your word I will let down the nets.” And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken. (Luke 5:3–9)

You can almost hear the skepticism in Simon’s voice. “Well, we pretty much have tried everything already, but whatever . . .” Who knows, maybe an eye roll even accompanied his response to Jesus’ suggestion that he try, try again.

Where Simon goes right, however, is in doing precisely what Jesus suggested. He let down those nets. And wow, what a catch! Of course, Jesus has too much class to respond with, “Told ya so.”

[](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiSiLeG3OnhAhXvYt8KHejpB_QQjRx6BAgBEAU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DbeAvsQD2jMM&psig=AOvVaw3lF37XmVJBDgbhbbvuXUfQ&ust=1556229254598504)Are we astonished, too, when our Lord comes through for us and our families? Are we continuously surprised when, once again, we find that we can trust Jesus at His Word?

Even when we think that we know better, that we know more, we can trust that God knows best. While we’re uncertain about our parenting skills, relationships, jobs, finances, and a myriad of other things, we can take comfort in knowing that God works all things for our good. He’ll work that good even when we don’t think He can or will. Even when we roll our eyes.

Along with that good comes an abundance of grace. All we can do is respond in faithfulness by receiving with joy the gifts He has for us. We’d do well to get out of the way of His abundant love and concern for us, and just stop second-guessing His commands and His Word. Let’s settle our hearts in peace, because He’s got this. Our children and families will learn by seeing this faith modeled for them that our Lord truly knows best and we can trust Him wholeheartedly.

We have only to be astonished.

Annual Yard Sale & brat Fry!

[](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwij8t3XtKPhAhVL2IMKHXeODDcQjRx6BAgBEAU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.deerparktx.gov%2F1191%2FGarage-Sales&psig=AOvVaw14SWejuu0nCAJLDpdPB5Kv&ust=1553813537420979)

Date: May 4, 2019

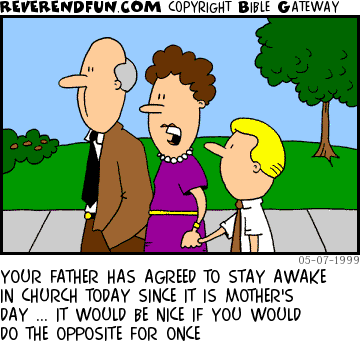
Time: 9:00am – 4:00pm

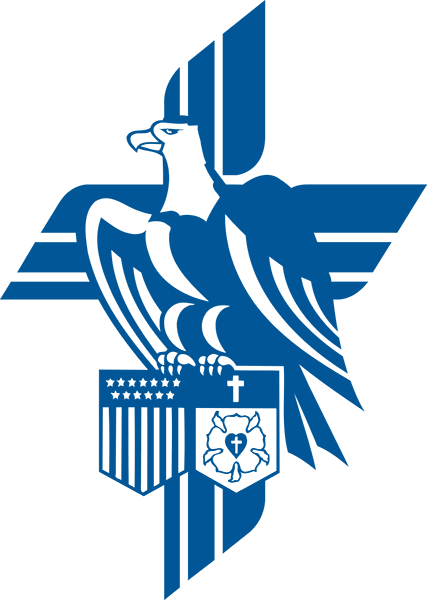
It is once again time for the annual church-wide rummage sale. This year, the funds raised will be benefitting youth education and programming. The American Heritage Girls are going to be helping with the sale and will reap a portion of the reward to help purchase uniforms and workbooks.

. As you begin your spring cleaning, please set aside any items you would like to donate to the sale! We will set up an area in the church basement beginning on Monday, April 22nd .

We will be looking for Youth and adult volunteers to help sort the donations, cook the brats, and work the sale and Brat Fry on Saturday.

IMPORTANT: Pastor’s grill has passed on to grill heaven, so we are looking for a grill to use for the weekend! If you are willing to donate the use of your grill, please speak with Jenn Milner!



**Care Packages**

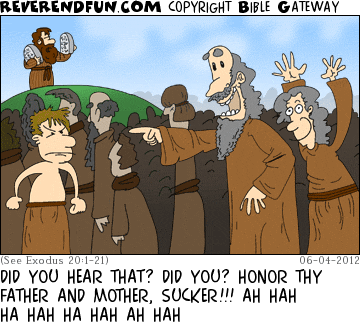
**For Deployed Service Members**

This month the elder-sponsored service project will be collecting items to package up and send to deployed service members through the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces. Below you’ll find a list of items we are looking for. These items have been discovered by chaplains to be popular and move fast when they arrive. Donations will be boxed and sent overseas in June!

**Items appreciated by service members:**

* Protein and granola bars
* Individually-wrapped hard candies: Tootsie Pops, suckers, etc.
* Rice Krispies treats
* Small cans of Pringles or small cracker packs (peanut butter, cheese, etc.)
* Nuts in small packages of all kinds
* Chewing gum, especially “breath enhancers” when you cannot always brush after a meal
* Personal hygiene items: toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, bar soap, etc.

\*\* Donations will be boxed and sent in June!



**Lcms Stewardship article** May 2019

Stewardship is not just about giving money to the church. It includes this, to be sure, but it is not limited to it. Stewardship involves our whole life – everything we have and everything we are.

Let us not, though, fall into the trap of thinking that because we give of ourselves in one area we can neglect giving in another. Stewardship is not stealing from Peter to pay Paul. It is not a game we play whereby we justify ourselves in not giving a tenth of our income because we have given in some other way. This is why our Lord warns:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.” (Matthew 23:23)

We are given to do both – tithe of ourselves and what we have. And so it is that St. Paul makes his appeal to us:

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2)

We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. We are not to have the mind of the world, where we exchange equal weight of this for an equal weight of that, and then think that we have done what God has required.

Our whole life is given over for service in and for the Church of God. This is to be done in thanksgiving for what God in Christ has accomplished for us. This is our spiritual worship, the reasonable response to what He has done for us – not one for the other, but all in all.

But what does this look like? St. Paul never lays down a general principle without also giving us some practical application of what shape that principle is to take concretely. He gives the general principle that our bodies are to be living sacrifices to God, and, after admonishing those who have been given particular gifts of grace to serve the church, St. Paul then speaks generally of what is expected of all. He says:

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” (Romans 12:9-13)

This is what it looks like to present your bodies as living sacrifices. This is how we live out the grace of God here in time.

Let us then heed the apostle’s teaching. Let us present our bodies – everything that we have and everything that we are – as living sacrifices to God, our reasonable response to what God in Christ Jesus accomplished for us by His death and resurrection.

Through this we have forgiveness of sins, a new life in Christ, and eternal salvation. And through this worship, the grace of God is made manifest in His saints – for the church and the world.



**~~~~Vacation Bible School**

Are you ready for a miraculous mission unlike any other you’ve experienced at VBS? August 19-23 from 5:00-7:30 we will be blasting off on a mission with Jesus to save the world!

Vacation Bible School is open to preschool, kindergarten, and early elementary students. If you are interested in attending or volunteering, please contact Shelly Utecht.

**Celebrating Mother's Day, Luther-style**

Emil B. Huntington May 2010

Martin Luther could regard any day as Mother’s Day. The value he placed on the maternal vocation stood in sharp contrast to the views of his contemporaries. The Roman Church had barred its clergy from marriage and its procreative fruit. Women were thought holier if they became nuns rather than wives or mothers. Martin Luther fought against this idea for much of his life. He wrote (quoted in Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, 123):

*The godless world is moved neither by God’s ordinance nor by the sweet nature of little children who are produced in marriage; it sees only the shortcomings and hardships in marriage—it does not see the great treasure and benefit that is in it.*

Luther valued motherhood highly, recognizing its origin in the very design of God’s creation. “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28) was, in Luther’s estimation, “more than a command, namely, a divine ordinance which is not our prerogative to hinder or ignore” (Luther’s Works, 45:17). In brief, God created women for motherhood (Luther’s Works, 5:355):

*The saintly women desire nothing else than the natural fruit of their bodies. For by nature woman has been created for the purpose of bearing children. Therefore she has breasts; she has arms for the purpose of nourishing, cherishing, and carrying her offspring. It was the intention of the Creator that women should bear children and that men should beget them.*

This quotation from Luther is just as jarring today as it was in the sixteenth century. In Luther’s day, church authorities had despised motherhood and privileged celibacy. Today, society has transformed motherhood from a badge of honor to a symbol of disgrace. Sure, Hallmark still sells plenty of Mother’s Day cards, but just as this celebration can be neatly scheduled on the calendar, so also motherhood must fit the schedule of one’s busy lifestyle, rather than vice versa. Our “pro-choice” world insists that true womanhood requires the ability to choose against motherhood. But if motherhood is to be a choice, shouldn’t it be God who does the choosing? After all, it is God who puts to death and brings to life (Deuteronomy 32:39), and it is God who opens and closes wombs (Genesis 29:31, 30:22).

Luther frequently celebrated the blessings of children and the wonderful calling of motherhood. For example (quoted in Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, 183):

*A pregnant woman is a divine work, giving birth, etc. Marriage is the fount of the entire human race, and nevertheless this sacred origin of life is concealed and held in contempt, such that it has the reputation of being a fleshly, worldly way of life. If all the leaves in the meadow of Torgau were to speak in tongues, they could not adequately preach the praise of marriage or the turpitude of celibacy.*

Along with this, Luther makes the point that giving birth is not enough; parents must also raise those children. “But it is not enough that a child is born…for heathens also bring forth children. A person has to raise children to the service, praise, and honor of God” (quoted in Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, 91). Well does Luther understand the responsibility of Christian parents (Luther’s Works, 45:46):

*But the greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worth while, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve Him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls. ... Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal.*

Luther also acknowledged the hardships of marriage and procreation. He was not ignorant of the difficulty, in this sin-saturated world. Couples would have a hard time living together. Husbands would have a difficult time being the loving heads, while wives would have a difficult time submitting to their husbands. As Luther warned (quoted in Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, 183):

*The devil always finds a pretext to be against this estate, for he sees both the original sin and the unhappiness, trouble, and toil that are ascribed to it. He can use these two things well, and wants to make marital life more difficult for everyone or even destroy it. For that reason we must lift this estate even higher, praise and honor it even more, adorn and embellish it, just as God Himself does.*

Luther understood that it was through marriage that God blesses all the institutions of the earth, and that it was through marital procreation that children should be born, and the church would prosper. If the devil were to destroy motherhood, he would achieve a great victory against the church. There would be fewer children being born, and fewer being raised in God’s Word, which would mean fewer pastors, teachers, and missionaries. There would also be fewer men who knew how to care for women and children with compassion and sensitivity, since those men themselves would never have been raised by a mother.

Whether you are a mother or not, surely you know of someone who is. Whether today is Mother’s Day or not, remember that any day can be. Offer your encouragement and support. You’ll find plenty of suggestions for that in Holy Scripture and the writings of the man who worked so earnestly to restore the church to its biblical foundation, Martin Luther.

Mother’s Day

Creamy Strawberry Crepes



Prep: 30 minutes

Cook: 30 minutes

**Ingredients**

3 eggs

1/2 cup milk

1/2 cup water

3 tablespoons butter, melted

3/4 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened

1 1/4 cups sifted confectioners' sugar

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 teaspoon lemon zest

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 cup heavy cream, whipped

4 cups sliced strawberries

**Directions**

Place the eggs, milk, water, melted butter, flour, and salt in the pitcher of a blender; blend until smooth.

Blend the cream cheese, confectioners' sugar, lemon juice, lemon zest, and vanilla with an electric mixer until smooth. Gently fold in the whipped cream.

Heat a lightly oiled griddle or non-stick skillet over medium heat. Pour or scoop the batter onto the griddle, using approximately 2 tablespoons for each crepe. Tip and rotate pan to spread batter as thinly as possible. Flip over when the batter is set and the edges are beginning to brown. Cook until the other side begins to brown. Stack finished crepes on a plate, cover with a damp towel and set aside.

To serve, fill each crepe with 1/4 cup sliced strawberries and 1/3 cup of the cream cheese filling, roll up and top with a small dollop of the cream cheese filling and more sliced strawberries.

My Duplicate is Dead by Cheryl Magness—lcms.org

When my son was younger, he was a huge fan of the comic strip “Calvin & Hobbes,” about a little boy (Calvin), his stuffed tiger (Hobbes) and Calvin’s colossal imagination.

A memorable theme in the strip is that of Calvin’s “duplicates” — imaginary Calvins who are intended to help the real Calvin in whatever way he needs, from doing his homework to taking the blame when he is naughty. My son embraced the concept, and for several years we heard much about the exploits of his duplicate.

Then one Christmas, as our family sat down to open presents, my 7-year-old began to cry.

“Mommy! Mommy! My duplicate is dead!”

“What?” I asked. “What do you mean, your duplicate is dead?”

“He died! I buried him, right there in the fireplace!”

My eyes followed the direction of my son’s extended finger to see something I hadn’t noticed before: his own name, written on the hearth with the charred end of a burnt match.

It was an unexpected turn of events for a Christmas morning. And yet it wasn’t. Special occasions tend to remind us who is missing. Over the previous 18 months, my son had attended funerals for two of his grandparents, his preschool teacher and our family’s former pastor. In a year filled with too many deaths, here, it would seem, was one more.

Of course, duplicates can’t die, because they aren’t real. But wouldn’t it be nice if they were — if we each had our own personal duplicate to do the things we have failed to do, take the blame for our offenses or bear the pain that is just too much for us?

The truth is that in Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, we have all of those things and more. For in Christ, the Word made flesh, we have not a copy of our humanity, but its source; not an imitation of our life, but its cause; not a temporary coping mechanism, but the eternal Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus, our Lord and brother, really did die, and He really did rise. Fully like us and also fully divine, He took on our flesh so that the perishable might become imperishable (1 Cor. 15:42–56). He did not remain in the grave but rose again, proclaiming victory over sin, death and the devil, and wiping away all our tears. Though we are dust, we will rise and live forever through the One who did what we cannot.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

**Aid Against Sin--Part 4 The Power of the Keys**

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

*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matthew 12:34)*

*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)*

“The Power of the Keys” is a direct reference to private confession and absolution. Among the many ways that God loves to deliver the superabundant grace of His Gospel, private confession and absolution (see LSB, pp. 292–93) is perhaps the most neglected and ignored gift of them all. Hardly any Lutheran in America practices the divine gift of private confession and absolution. Many faithful pastors have repeatedly attempted to cultivate this gift in the worship life of their respective congregations, but few have met success.

There are probably many reasons for neglecting God’s gift.

• Historically, America has been strongly anti-Catholic from the earliest days of the colonies until at least the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960. (Private confession seems too Roman Catholic.)

• Religiously, our predominantly Anabaptist culture teaches us to believe such popular lies as “my sin is not very serious” and “my faith is a personal thing.” (If I confess the sins I know and feel in my heart, the pastor might think that I am less holy than I now appear. If my fellow Christians see me headed toward confession, then they will know that I am a sinner.)

• Private confession requires the sort of humility, exposure, and openness that not even the most gregarious American can tolerate. (My pride is more important than relief from my burdens, so I will suffer in silence.)

• Motivationally, private confession and absolution can only be taught and encouraged; never coerced. (If I do not have to do it, then I will not do it.)

The words of Jesus might help overcome such obstacles to private confession and absolution: “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

1. In private confession, we speak out of the heart. As we learned in the Small Catechism, we confess “those sins which we know and feel in our hearts” (Small Catechism, Confession, “What sins should we confess?”). Stated figuratively, private confession could be thought of as our opening of the mouth so that our guilt and our burdens may escape the prison cell of our hearts and fly to Jesus, where they belong.

2. In private absolution, the Lord our God likewise speaks from “out of the heart.” Unlike our hearts, which are full of sin (Matthew 15:18–19), God’s heart overflows with the mercy, forbearance, and grace of the crucified Christ. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” The pastor’s mouth speaks out of God’s heart: “I . . . forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in peace” (Small Catechism, Confession, Short Form).

Someone might ask: “God is superabundant in His grace! If I have the other forms of His Gospel, why do I need private confession and absolution?”

The answer: Perhaps we should think that our God gives us His Gospel in more forms than it seems we need precisely because our need is significantly greater than it seems.

**The Shepherd’s Voice**

**May 2019**

# St. Paul’s Lutheran Church

**THE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Missouri Synod

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