**Everything is Jesus**

*“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”*

*Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”*

I recently posted to our Facebook page a tour of a Lutheran Church very similar to ours in which Pr. Will Weedon explains our architecture to an outsider to Lutheranism and what it all means. His constant comment is “It is all about Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.” Which is exactly right. Everything is about Jesus, and it must be. For *“there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* Acts 4:12

The annual remembrance of Christmas is upon us again. This time of the year our hearts and minds and souls are turned through the readings of the Advent and Christmas seasons to remember what God has done for us. How He sent His Son to fulfill His promise to us to bear our sin and to be our savior.

It is not just the readings that remind us of God’s love, everything we do around Christmas time is designed to bring our thoughts and hearts the peace that God gives to us. We decorate the church and our homes with Nativity Scenes and candles and trees that even in the midst of winter still are green with life. All of this reminds us of the gift of God to us in Jesus.

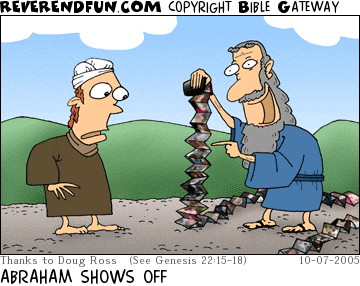
But our remembrances and reminders should not be reserved for a special festival or feast. Every Sunday in the church year speaks to us the same message of **“Do not be afraid, for the Lord is with you and His Name is Jesus and He will take away your sins.”** We need this message constantly because our hearts are weak, and they fail us. Our flesh desires to live apart from God. Our minds forget what God has done for us. We stray and we fall, and we despair, and we worry, and we doubt.

Which is why the message of Jesus must be constantly told to us, again and again and again and in many and various ways. Every part of our church serves the proclamation of this message. When you enter in the first things you see here at St. Paul are the crosses on the doors to the Sanctuary. As you enter the Sanctuary the message of God’s love almost assaults the eyes. The Baptismal font straight ahead of you, the place where God made you His child. The altar, the place where the Lord comes to you in His body and blood. The pulpit, prominent, the place where the Lord’s Word is preached into your ears that your heart may be recreated, and faith may be put into you. The cross on the altar. The statue of Jesus ascending with His arms outstretched in blessing. All of it shows us the story of God’s love for us.

And then the liturgy. Every word of it dripping with the blood of Christ, from the confession and absolution, to the Kyrie where we cry to God for mercy and the Gloria in Excelsis where we sing the song of the Angels to the shepherds. The Sermon points away from ourselves and to Jesus. The prayers for our protection and to intercede for us and our neighbors. The Lord’s Supper delivers the Jesus into our hands and into our mouths. The Nunc Dimittis to point our hearts to the peace we have with God and our eventual time of being brought to Him. We leave with God’s blessing upon us ringing in our ears. Every word delivered into our ears to deliver into our minds and our hearts the reminder of how God loved us so much that He sent Jesus to take away our sin.

Everything is Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. For only in Him is there light and that light is the life of the world.

Pastor Donald Johnson



**~~~~Remembering**

Forgot to pack a lunch. Forgot to bring the beach towels. Forgot to schedule the kids’ checkup. If there’s

one thing for certain when you’re a parent, it’s this: you are going to forget something. Maybe even a lot of

somethings. When you have a household full of people who depend on you for most (all) of their needs, it’s bound to happen from time to time.

Sometimes, we get so busy trying *not* to forget all of the little things, it ends up that we *do* forget the big things, like being in God’s Word regularly, praying to our Father, and even sharing Christ with our neighbor. It all just ends up on the list of things we

meant to do but . . . forgot.

Thank God our salvation isn’t found in our remembering. It’s found in our faith in Christ, the one who never forgets.

It’s true! He said so Himself, even to a criminal hanging on a cross:

*And [the criminal] said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And [Jesus] said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.” (Luke 23:42–43)*

 Even in the swirling chaos of death on a cross, even with *more* than a household of people who depend on Him, even when bearing the sin of the whole world, Jesus doesn’t forget us. The criminal who was crucified alongside Jesus had faith, and our Lord told him that He wouldn’t forget him, that the man would be with Jesus forevermore. Here was a man who couldn’t even remember not to break the law, and Jesus counts him as worth remembering.

So it goes for us.

And so it goes in the Church. When others forget, the Church remembers. Outside of the Church, it can feel like the world moves so fast and furious that our very real everyday struggles and sadness are left in the dust. The world keeps spinning, and we’re

left behind, forgotten, alone in our sorrow.

If you’ve lost a loved one, or come upon an important anniversary, or are struggling with health issues, your pastor and congregation are right there with you, reminding you that Christ has not forgotten you. That they have not forgotten you. That your loved ones are not forgotten, and your struggles are acknowledged. This isn’t because they’re such great people who have mastered remembering things. It’s because we are one Body in Christ, and what goes for Jesus goes for us. We can’t help but be concerned with our fellow members. Their sorrow and struggles are ours.

Our children aren’t immune to forgetfulness, either—and don’t we know it! Sometimes it may feel like reminders are the backbone of the parents’ day. But even as we teach them to remember where their shoes are located, that their tiny Lego building

blocks need to be picked up before the baby eats them, and that brushing their teeth is nonnegotiable, let’s help them learn to remember others in their prayers. Let’s instruct them to remember the Body of Christ when the world has forgotten. Most of all, let’s impress on our children and grandchildren that our salvation is found in Jesus, who never, ever forgets them—and never will.

**Sunday School Schedule**

Mark your calendars! Here are the important upcoming Sunday school dates for the rest of the year!

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|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| December 1st, 2019 | Christmas program practice. |
| December 15th, 2019 | Christmas Musical Program - Children sing at 10:30.  Class time will be a dress rehearsal. |
| December 22nd and 29th, 2019 | No Classes - Christmas Break |
| January 5th, 2020 | Classes Resume |
| April 12th, 2020 | Easter Sunday—Children Sing |

**Lcms Stewardship article** December 2019

 Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, is teaching those who follow Him that worrying about the necessities of life is idolatry: worshipping a false god. This is because worry and anxiety show what we care about. Our anxiety reveals what we love and to what we’re devoted. It reveals what we trust in.

This is why our Lord begins this section with an overarching principle: “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

But you say: “I must eat and drink. I must have clothing to wear and have a home in which to dwell.” Yes, all these things you need. And Jesus says that your Father in heaven will ensure that you have them. He demonstrates this with a simple argument.

Your Father in heaven feeds the birds of the air, who neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns. He clothes the lilies of the field, who neither toil nor spin but are arrayed more luxuriously than Solomon in all his glory. If, then, your Father in heaven feeds the birds and clothes the lilies, how will He not also feed and clothe you when you are worth more than they are?

For you know that you are worth more than them. You are worth infinitely more. You are worth the price of the eternal Son of God. Did the Son of God come down from heaven and become a lily? Did he descend and take on the form of a bird? No!

He came down from heaven and became a man: flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. He is one of us, our brother. And what did He do when He became flesh to dwell among us? He gave His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death, that you might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom forever.

God became man in Christ Jesus. He lived the life we failed to live, and He died the death we deserve because of it. He was raised again on the third day to overcome sin and death … for us. He was crucified for our transgressions and raised for our justification. So, if your Father in heaven has given His Son to die for us in order that we might live with Him eternally, how will He not also give us all things to support this body and life?

To be anxious about the necessities of life, to devote yourself to food and clothing, to care about this and find security in it, is to serve another god. It is to deny that you will live forever because Jesus, the Son of God is risen from the dead, lives and reigns for all eternity. It is to believe that God – who created you, redeemed you by the death and resurrection of His Son, and sanctifies you by His Spirit – will not keep His promises of sustaining you in this life.

Jesus says this: Seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness. God’s kingdom is His rule among us. His rule among us comes when our Father in heaven gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity. This is what we ask God to do for us in the prayer Jesus taught us.

Your Father in heaven knows what you need – food and clothing, house and home, etc. – and He promises to give it to you. Chief of the things you need is His grace and mercy in His Son, Jesus Christ. So, seek after that. Those who seek will find. And all the necessities of life, our Lord says, will be added to you.

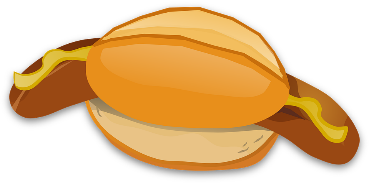
**December Mission Project**

For our November and December mission project, we will be a drop off location for Toys for Tots. Collection boxes will be picked up on the morning of Monday, December 16. We can collect all sorts of new toys of kids of all ages. These toys will be donated to needy children in our area. When you’re out shopping this year, consider picking up an extra toy or two so we can spread the love of Christ at Christmas!



**Decorating the tree**

Join us on the first Sunday in Advent (December 1st) as we decorate the Christmas tree. Everyone will have the chance to come up to the tree during the service and put one of the church’s ornaments or a special ornament of yours up on the tree.

**German Christmas Dinner**

Join the St. Paul’s Youth and the American Heritage Girls for the annual German Christmas Dinner! This year, the dinner will take place on Saturday, December 7th from 9am to 6pm in the church basement. We will be serving an assortment of German delicacies: German potato salad, brats, BBQ, and an assortment of delicious desserts. The American Heritage Girls will have a table of homemade desserts and gift items to sell as well!

Come help support our groups and enjoy a delicious dinner! Funds raised will support Youth events and the AHG troop activities. Volunteers are needed to cook, serve, bake, even make some crafty Christmas gifts for the kids to sell! Call Jenn Milner or Corinne Johnson if you are interested in helping out. We’ve got a job for everyone.

**Do You Know Your hymns?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dentist’s Hymn | Crown Him with Many Crowns |
| Weatherman’s Hymn | There Shall be Showers of Blessings |
| Contractor’s Hymn | The Church’s One Foundation |
| Tailor’s Hymn | Holy, Holy, Holy |
| Golfer’s Hymn | There’s a Green Hill Far Away |
| Politician’s Hymn | Standing on the Promises! |
| Optometrist’s Hymn | Open My Eyes that I Might See |
| IRS Agent’s Hymn | I Surrender All |
| Gossip’s Hymn | Pass It On |
| Electrician’s Hymn | Send The Light |
| Shopper’s Hymn | Sweet Bye and Bye |
| Realtor’s Hymn | I’ve Got a Mansion, Just Over the Hilltop |
| Massage Therapist’s Hymn | He Touched Me. |

**--Give me a sense of humor, Lord, Give me the grace to see a joke,**

**To get some humor out of life, And pass it on to other folks.**

**Advent 2019 Schedule**

Special worship services to aid our preparation for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Advent is a penitential time of preparation. It is a mini-Lent. Our preparation looks at who we are and opens our hearts to who we need.

**Advent Midweek December**

Wednesday December 4th 7pm

Wednesday December 11th 7pm

Wednesday December 18th 7pm

Children’s Christmas Program

December 15th 10:30am

**The Time of Christmas**

Tuesday December 24th Christmas Eve

Divine Service 6pm

Wednesday December 25th Christmas Morning

Divine Service 9am

Tuesday December 31st New Year’s Eve

Divine Service 4pm

**churches *with* walls**

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

Do good to Zion in Your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem. (Psalm 51:18)

In church life, as in daily life, decision-making sometimes leads to unanticipated, perhaps negative, results. For example:

• A pastor might decide against wearing vestments in worship, wanting to seem approachable to his congregation and guests. An unintended result might be that, without the vestments, the focus of worship accidentally shifts away from the divine Word and toward the personality of the pastor.

• Likewise, a move toward entertainment-oriented worship forms, hoping to attract more worshippers, might unintentionally make a congregation seem more American Evangelical (thus, anti-sacramental) than Lutheran.

Motivated by good intentions, one evangelism slogan that has become popular in recent years is “churches without walls.” This slogan suggests it is important to remove barriers to enable people to come to Jesus. Congregations from various denominations have held worship in city parks, baptized at public beaches, and even offered the Ash Wednesday imposition of ashes to passersby on the street.

 The movement means well. However, even well-intended decisions can lead to negative results. One negative result of “churches without walls” is that it accidentally works against the imagery used in the Scriptures. Throughout His Bible, God repeatedly uses the imagery of walls to comfort and assure His Christians. In addition to the verse above, the Scriptures also declare:

• “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress” (Psalm 46:7).

• “You hem me in, behind and before, and lay Your hand upon me” (Psalm 139:5).

• “You are a hiding place for me; You preserve me from trouble” (Psalm 32:7).

• “I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you” (Jeremiah 15:20).

These passages, and others like them, indicate that church walls are a good and blessed image from God. “Churches without walls” creates the opposite image. Rather than promoting the comfort and security of the Gospel, “churches without walls” compares more closely to “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).

 Church architecture carries rich meaning for us. The altar holds the body and blood of Christ, “which is for you” (1 Corinthians 11:24). The baptismal font is the place where God adopts His children forever. The pulpit hides the pastor so that his faithful preaching of Christ’s forgiveness might be the sole focus of his speaking. The stained glass, where present, tells the story of the faith. The doors, opened wide for worship, stand as an invitation to nations. Even the church ceiling, often designed to look like a ship, depicts how our God has placed us into the ark of His salvation.

So, too, the walls of the church also bear silent witness to us, proclaiming to us the eternal safety and protection that is now ours in Christ. The resurrected Christ now stands vigilant as a wall around His people, just as He was present before and behind in the exodus (Exodus 14:19).

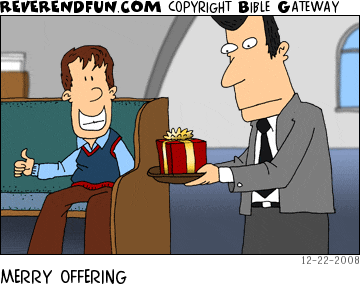
Granted, the phrase “churches without walls” is merely a figure of speech. The figure simply leads us in the opposite direction from where the imagery of the Scriptures teaches us to go. Even the church in heaven has a wall! “It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates” (Revelation 21:12); “the wall was built of jasper . . . the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel” (Revelation 21:17–18).

The Holy Christian Church here on earth has a wall too. The wall is Christ.

**2019 Contribution Status Report**

In fiscal year 2019, St. Paul’s is in better shape than we’ve been in a long time. Though we have not always met our monthly budget in contributions, we have spent a total of $4,789.67 less than we have received overall. Praise God for growth, security, and the ability to bless others with our abundance.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Month** | **Monthly Contribution Received** | **Monthly Budget Distributed** |
| February | $6,586.00 | $9,038.97 |
| March | $12,839.00 | $9,277.98 |
| April | $12,831.00 | $9,970.39 |
| May | $9,183.43 | $9,820.47 |
| June | $9,944.00 | $9,665.34 |
| July | $10,540.00 | $8,541.52 |
| August | $7,185.00 | $8,266.34 |
| September | $10,277.12 | $10,014.87 |
| October |  |  |
| **Annual Total** | $79,385.55 | $74,595.88 |



**The Shepherd’s Voice**

**December 2019**

# St. Paul’s Lutheran Church

**THE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Missouri Synod

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