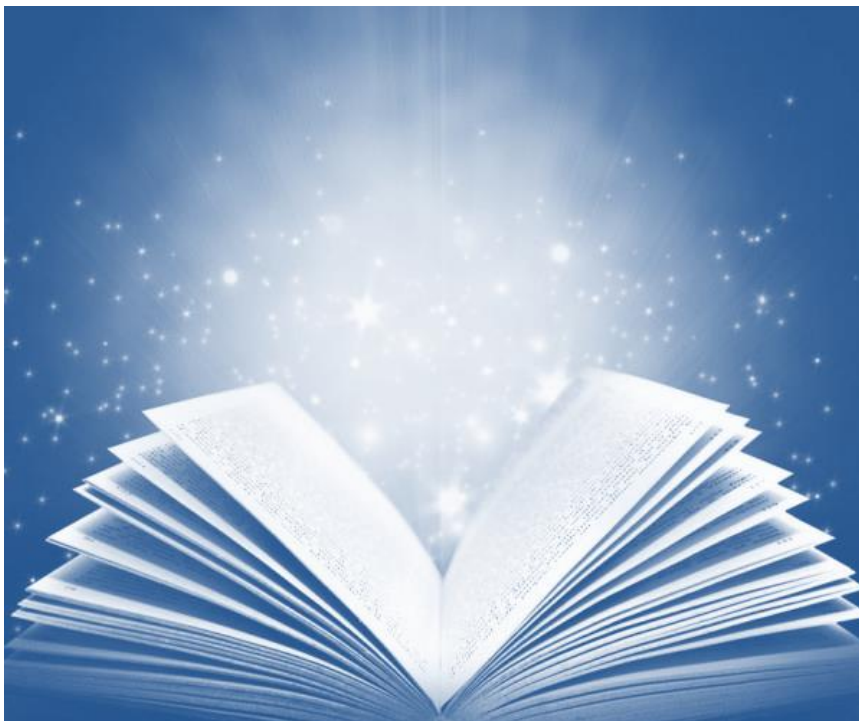




CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH
MAKING CHRIST'S LOVE KNOWN

Lenten Devotional – 2023

Written by and for the members and friends of Christ Lutheran
Church



Stories of Faith

Death VS Life - Endings VS New Beginnings

Week of February 26, 2023

1 John 2:20 You have an anointing from the Holy one, and all of you know the truth.

Have you ever been called a prophet, or a priest, or a king or queen? Probably not often. Most of us rarely think of ourselves that way. But God does. He lifts us up to live a full life of blessing and purpose.

What does it mean to be prophets, priests, and royal rulers in God's service? Jesus Christ, son of God the Father was anointed by the Holy Spirit. As the Bible teaches, Jesus is our chief Prophet. This means he fully reveals to us the will of God and how God calls us to live. Jesus is also our perfect High Priest, who gives us access to God and has delivered us through the one sacrifice of his life for us. What's more, Jesus is our eternal King, who governs us by his Word and Spirit.

We share in his anointing. We are called to believe and trust Jesus and to honor his name, to serve as living sacrifices of thanks. So let's consider all these things as the season of Lent helps us focus on Jesus and his sacrifice for us.

The Spirit of God empowers us to imitate Jesus through our lives. Our love and obedience to Christ grow as we carry out our calling as prophets, priests and rulers who serve God.

Prayer: Lord, help us to see that you have saved us by grace to share in Jesus' anointing and become like him. Lift us up to serve you. Amen

Submitted by: Pastor Nirmala

Week of March 5, 2023

Matthew 14:27 Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.

In 2011 I received a call from St. Mary's Emergency Department that my brother, John, had been admitted from his memory care facility after a sudden loss of consciousness. As I drove to Rochester, I prayed for healing for him and courage for me. I knew God would be with us and drew strength from an image that I had seen almost every Sunday for 18 years.

For generations, East St. Olaf Lutheran Church in rural Byron was where our ancestors had been baptized, confirmed and usually, married and buried. There is a beautiful icon on the altar of Jesus holding out his hand to Peter. You may remember the story of Jesus walking on the water to where his disciples were fishing. Peter asks Jesus to let him walk on the water also. Peter became afraid of the waves and wind and began to sink. Our Savior reached out his hand and caught him, returning Peter safely to the boat.

Since John's condition was terminal and he was totally unresponsive, the doctor admitted him to a private room where he would be kept comfortable and allowed to die peacefully. As I sat and talked to John about our parents, our life on the farm, our Norwegian Christmas dinners of lutefisk, etc., I was not afraid. I was assured that God was with us, and Jesus was holding out His hand to John as he slipped away. Because of Jesus' resurrection, we don't need to be afraid of dying or any other of life's difficulties. Jesus reminds us He is Here! Take courage!

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, remind us of your continued presence in our lives. Amen.

Submitted by: Sylvia Alberts

Week of March 12, 2023

Hebrews 2:18 For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

Hello fellow member of Christ. We gather again for a moment to stop and reflect. Today we will go to the book of Hebrews - chapter 2, verse 18.

We all know that we are sinful beings. None of us are immune to sin. What is sin? By definition: "an immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law." We are all aware of the 10 commandments - the guidelines/commands God has put before us to help us in our day to day living. Pretty simple right? Reality is, temptation can be anywhere and in many forms. If lucky, we have had individuals in our lives to help us when needed....when we are making bad decisions or choices. Perhaps a good friend, a parent/grandparent, Sunday School teacher, teacher in school, confirmation mentor, pastor, neighbor. If you have been fortunate to have someone to help guide you -

perhaps they helped guide you to God OR remind you of your God...for he is a forgiving God. He understands. He has walked this earth - he has been tempted. He knows YOU. He has promised you forgiveness. He accepts you every day for who you are. He loves you for all you are. He just asks that you come to him. Stand with your fellow members in Christ to support each other - especially when tempted. Draw your strength from him and ask for forgiveness and direction. Rejoice in knowing that he knows us, loves us and cradles us in his mercy. We don't have to be perfect - we just need to be the best person we can be - even if our halo is a bit tarnished.

Submitted by: Susan Holz

Week of March 19, 2023

The past few years the world has been filled with division and separation more than I ever have experienced. The division was caused by various factors such as illness, staying away from people so not to spread the illness, disagreements on how to help with the illness and arguments over politics. More people were sent home to work, people watched church services on TV at home, and children were home schooled. Families were divided or separated causing some people to be isolated from others. There are so many people who have become lonely or they are still staying home where they feel safe.

When people stay home they are missing out on the social interactions. I found myself staying home and not going into church services or spending time with others. I was spending more time reading the bible, praying and watching Church services on TV. I came closer to GOD more than I ever have before through his words, but I was missing something. My friend invited me to attend a service at her church. That day I found what I was missing, the interaction with fellow members, smiles, hearing laughter, singing and praising GOD together. As Hebrews 10:24-25 states, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

If you are staying home for fear of being around others and not getting sick, you must turn to GOD for guidance. There are two verses that speak to this: Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to GOD. And the peace of GOD, which

surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
Isaiah 41:10, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your GOD; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

The Joy I now feel when I am singing and seeing people in person is so great for my soul. I am seeing that it is Time to Return and worship as a community! Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” We must not be afraid to be around one another, GOD told us in Psalms 121:7 “The Lord GOD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul”; Proverbs 3:5 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding”; Joshua 1:9 “This is my command – be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your GOD is with you wherever you go.” Reach out to friends, neighbors or someone you may know that is alone and spread your JOY and GODs word. Ephesians 4:32 states “Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as GOD in Christ forgave you.”

Submitted by: Kim Postier

Week of March 26, 2023

Matthew 4:17 Jesus began to preach, “Repent, the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Matthew 6:9-10 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Health issues have a way of bringing us to our knees and seeking God’s divine intervention in our lives. Such is my story of recent spiritual growth. While studying God’s word through Dallas Willard’s teachings, I have found peace and joy in my circumstances. I learned that the “Good News” is more than God loves me and Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of my sins. I learned Jesus came into the world so that I could trust Him and follow Him into the “kingdom of heaven” on earth **now**. Living in the kingdom requires surrendering my kingdom (my will) for God’s Kingdom (God’s will). I no longer need to have it my way. I can trade anxiety for peace. Kingdom living is walking in the character and power of God. It is having FAITH... confidence in God’s goodness; HOPE... the joyous anticipation of good; and LOVE... simply the will for the good of others.

Living in God's kingdom leads us to a life we were designed to live. We grow in our awareness of God's GRACE - God's action in our lives, and KNOWLEDGE - a personal relationship with God, through prayer and studying His word. What I have found liberating is that Jesus' teachings focused on doing God's will rather than what not to do. When we armor ourselves with the character of Christ - that is doing what Jesus would do if He were us in a given situation, sin begins to lose its hold on us and doing the right thing becomes easier.

What I found in my studies was, no matter my circumstance and the gifts I have, I can come as I am and with the power of the Holy Spirit begin to step into "kingdom living" now. Things that have helped me on this journey are acknowledging God with praise & thanksgiving, relying on God's power in what I say and do, resting in the confidence of God's will/action in my life, focusing on what Jesus would do if he were me in my situation, and meditating on I Corinthians 13 and Colossians 3:1-17.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, We thank and praise you for your love and sending your son Jesus to save us and show us how to live in your kingdom on earth. Send your Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen each of us on our journey to living in the "kingdom of heaven" now. Amen

Submitted by: Sue Briske

Week of April 2, 2023

Psalms 100:2 Worship the Lord with Gladness; come before Him with joyful songs!

I admit that I am not very disciplined in my prayer life, especially worshipping God. I don't have a specific time each day to read the Bible, or to meditate on His word. Like most Christians, I easily pray FOR something or to "Thank God" for blessings or answered prayers. I struggle to find the words to adequately praise and extol our Almighty God. I feel my words are insufficient. But I can SING His Praises.

I've not been blessed with a beautiful voice or much musical talent (I play a little piano gently for my own amazement!). However, I make a great loud "noise unto the Lord" when I'm in the car or alone at home. Singing along with wonderful songs such as "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" and "How Great Thou Art" is my kind of heartfelt worship.

This was never more special to me as when 40 fellow tourists gathered around a huge cistern in a WWII bunker on the north coast of Norway. We were visiting one of the many Nazi bunkers along the North Sea that the Germans had blasted out of the coastline in occupied Norway. The bunkers were built by Jewish prisoners and when they died of starvation or maltreatment, their bodies were tossed into the sea. The huge cistern, now empty, was laid with rows of barbed wire, painted a bloody red. Our tour guide said, "Now we will sing a song to remember the people who died here" and she began "Amazing Grace..." and 41 voices, acapella, rose from that underground symbol of evil to praise the God who forgives, reconciles and loves. 41 faces stained with tears walked out into the sunlight when we had finished.

So I worship my God, our Creator, Savior and Spirit, in the words of a song and I am awed by His Amazing Grace and love for such as I.

Great and Gracious God, Thank you for all the blessings I have received and guide me in being a follower of your Son, Jesus. Amen

Submitted by: Sylvia Alberts