

PASTOR'S PENNINGS

Canceled Debts

Jesus said, "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" (Luke 7:41-42)

One day Jesus was invited to dinner at the home of a religious leader named Simon. He was a member of the group called Pharisees that believed their good works made them worthy before God; they didn't believe that they needed to be saved from their sins. There was an unexpected guest at the gathering – a sinful woman, a prostitute. She had come to honor Jesus by pouring expensive perfume and even her own tears on his feet. Simon was upset that Jesus was welcoming the praise of this sinful woman. He thought that if Jesus really knew who she was, he would not even let her touch him. The truth is that Jesus knew that she had lived a sinful life. He also knew that her joyful tears were born of his forgiving love for her.

So Jesus told a story to teach Simon and us a lesson about forgiveness. There were two men who were in debt. One of them owed a money lender about three years' worth of wages. The other owed the same money lender about 50 days of wages. Neither was able to repay, so the money lender graciously canceled both debts. Jesus posed a question: "Now which one of them will love him more?" Simon answered correctly that the one who had the larger debt canceled would have loved the money lender more.

Jesus' short story speaks volumes for our lives. We all have a huge debt that we cannot pay. We cannot make up for all the sinful things we do, not by doing more good things or by doing less bad things. We can't cancel the debt of sin by anything we think, do, or say.

But God saw our desperate need and loves us so much that he canceled our debt of sin. He did that by having his Son, Jesus, pay it completely for everyone. The price he paid was his death. As the sinless Son of God, he was able to take all of our sins on himself and suffer their punishment for us. By his death, he canceled the debt of our sin. Three days after he died, he rose from the dead to prove that his sacrifice counted for all of us.

It's springtime and Christians are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. What a great time of the year to be reminded that Jesus has canceled our debt of sin and given us new life with him!

STEWARDSHIP

"Christ's love compels us" says the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 5:14. God doesn't need our possessions. "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1). God wants our devotion. "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut 6:5). Everything in our lives should reflect our total dedication to God. God has shown us incredible mercy time and again, particularly in sending us Jesus as a Savior. Jesus redeems us from sin and makes us one with God again. We have eternal life through him. It is God's Holy Spirit that helps us to see and believe in Jesus our Savior and to WANT to serve God in all we do, including with our possessions

PRAYER LIST

Psalm 6:7-9, "My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes. Away from me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard my weeping. The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer."

* In our prayers at church this last month we prayed for our Synod, its leaders, our mission fields, our seminaries and schools. Cutbacks that seem like they may go upward to 8% this year and 11% next year will require huge changes and cut backs across the board. Please pray for the souls and workers who will be affected.

* We also prayer for several people who have had surgeries and who are on the road to recovery.

Please thank the Lord that Robert Barnett did not lose his leg nor his life.

- Thank the Lord that Bonnie Barnett's tests came out negative and that Craig Trowe's Knee replacement was successful.

- Thank the Lord that Ben Strackbein's appendix was not ruptured and that he has been able to go back to work.

- Thank the Lord that Aimee Barnett's step sister, Serina, had her baby and is now on the road to recovery.

- We also thank the Lord that Terry Eischen is also on the road to recovery with his hip replacement.

* Several people are still in need of our prayers. - Dean Barnett, the older brother of Butch is in serious condition.

- Jimmy Schnell still has blood clots and is making a very slow recovery. Please pray that the family's insurance cooperates to pay their hospital and doctor bills.

- Please ask God to bless Janice Gallarneau, daughter of Tom and Janet Finney, who had gall bladder surgery and Cameron Loper, their grand daughter, who had her tonsils out. Kamiel Gartner, another daughter had a hysterectomy and needs the love of God showered down upon her.

- Latischa Huller has a friend whose baby is losing weight and is down to 5 lbs. Please pray that this baby will be permitted to live if that is God's loving will.

- Terah Avery, 31, a relative of a young man in our Bible information class has a giant tumor. Ask God, to remove it if it is his will.

- Please ask God to bless Ethan Henry, who is a friend of Lola Miller Ethan is a 5 year old child on chemotherapy due to a stomach cancer.

- Gary Hahn will be doing some major tests to determine whether he needs to have his hip removed. Ask God to help him face this procedure with courage.

- We prayed for Darlene Kid also, to be with her during her hear tests. Please continue to pray that God would give her a strong heart and a faith that clings to your Word in all things.

- Doug and Robyn Dinse are also in need of our prayers. Doug has a bad heart and a bad hip. He cannot get hip surgery until his heart is better. Robyn has been experiencing a lot of pain and has a hard time moving around. Pray that these members will find strength and patience in your loving arms.

- Please continue to pray for Barbara who is finding it more and more difficult to walk. Ask the Lord, if it is His will for her to be able to find pain relief that does not further aggravate her cancer.

- Bob Wagner, brother of Dorothy Deards is suffering pain from his lymphoma cancer. Ask God to be with Dorothy and her brother.

- Since, Richard and Anna Massucci have just celebrated their 68th wedding anniversary, pray that the Lord will let them be models of us to follow. Thank him for the years they have had together.

- One last thing. Death has come to Linda Taha's step father, Richard Flanagan, and also to a good friend of Mike Hutter, Everett Pifer. Please ask the Lord to continue comforting the survivors with the Gospel of peace.

EVANGELISM

Jesus says in John 6 (verses 35, 51), "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." We have a feast in Jesus that provides eternal life! We eat this Gospel bread with our ears, and also eat the Bread of life with our mouths in the Lord's Supper. Jesus feeds our souls with forgiveness and the assurance that we are his forever. We will not starve to death because of our sins. He has removed our guilt forever by his sacrifice for us. Through Jesus we are saved! What a precious gift! What an awesome message! How can we not share it?

Actually, we have a special opportunity to share the message of salvation. Easter is a special time for all Christians. On this day we were declared not guilty of sin, death was defeated, Victory is ours through faith in Christ. Here at Holy Cross there will be special services, special music and an Easter breakfast. What better time could there be to personally invite and bring family, friends, neighbors and work associates to worship with us. Here they can become acquainted with our congregation and especially with our "Best Friend" the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why not target someone you know and pray for him/her. If you would like to have pastor pray that God would move them to come, put their name in the yellow prayer box before Palm Sunday. Take time to get to know your friend better, especially in terms of his/her spiritual needs, hopes and fears. Remember...in order to have a friend, YOU have to be a friend. If God moves them to come, welcome them and then visit with them and invite them back. God will bless your efforts.

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

We would like to give a very warm welcome to Mrs. Roberta Beckelman, a sister of Bev Jennings, who became a member last month by profession of faith. Roberta was a member of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). We will tell you more about her next time. In the mean time Roberta, we are overjoyed to have you back in the WELS and as a member of Holy Cross. We pray that God will richly bless you here through His Word and Sacrament.

In the last newsletter it was announced that Mike and Latischa Huller, (Latischa is a daughter of Anice Glass), transferred their membership from one of our WELS churches out East. Mike was born and raised in Belleville, Illinois, graduated from O'Fallon Township High School and got an associate degree from the military. Mike joined the Air Force in July of 2003 and then joined again in 2008. His specialty is Bio, environmental engineering. That means he deals with radiation, and environmental hazards. He has served in Texas, Northern California, Germany, Illinois and now Tinker. Mike likes to bowl and has a knack for woodworking since his father was a carpenter.

Latischa was born in Montana, spent 3 years in Okinowa, four years in Oklahoma, 3 years in Misawa Japan, and three years in Germany. She graduated from Moore High School here in Oklahoma and was married to Mike on Nov. 23, 07. Mike and Latischa have one son, Keith. Latischa likes to sing soprano, read, bowl and do scrap booking.

MAUNDY THURSDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY SERVICES

This year, one of our two Synodical preparatory schools will beautify our Maundy Thursday worship service by offering a sacred concert that will replace the liturgy and sermon. The service will begin at 7 pm. The choir's portion of the service will last 40 minutes. Holy Communion will be served after the choir finishes. Having this choir is a rare opportunity. Come and be edified by this special service. Bring a friend.

Our Good Friday service will also start at 7 pm. It will be a Tenebre service with the gradual dimming of lights. This year's service will highlight the seven words of Jesus on the cross.

EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE

Jesus Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! There are no sweeter words to hear when the pain and sorrow of death affect our families. There will be two completely different services for the Sunrise and main Easter services. The sunrise service begins at 7am followed by breakfast, Bible Study, and the main service at 10:30am. Easter is also our Friendship Sunday. Share your joy in Christ, bring a friend!

MLS STUDENT HOUSING

The Michigan Lutheran Prep School choir will be arriving at Holy Cross on Maundy Thursday at 5 PM. Our Mary Martha ladies will be feeding them at 5:30 pm. They are not planning on feeding other members of the congregation. As of this writing there are several students who still need homes to stay at. The kids need to be back at Holy Cross by 6:30 am. Even though that is early, please consider offering your home to either two boys or two girls. MLS exists to encourage WELS high School teenagers to consider the pastoral or teaching ministries. Who knows, one of them might come back to be your pastor some day.

MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE CLASS

Our Monday night Bible Study will begin again on April 13th using Professor Mark Paustian's "Prepared to Answer" as a guide. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board for any one who would be interested in a 6 lesson Bible Study on strengthening marriage relations using clips from the "Fireproof" movie as discussion starters. I would propose that, if there is interest we would begin it in June and use either Monday night or Wednesday night from 6:30pm to 8pm with no breaks or 6:30-8:30 with a 20 minute break. Perhaps we could begin each class with a cookout or light meal. Another option would be to do the "Fireproof Bible Study in April and May on Monday night. (Choir would still meet on Wednesdays.) If there is interest, other future classes could be held on "parenting, or grandparenting." Please put down your preferences on the sign up sheet.

Thanks, Pastor

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Renovation/Relocation Committee –

Ideas and information on the physical renovation of the church building has been given to a design consultant. He is using this information to design a plan for the building renovation. The committee is planning on reviewing the plans in early April.

Education Committee

The education committee is continuing to develop an outline of what is required to open and operate an Early Childhood Ministry (ECM) for pre-school age children. A program of this type provides education in a Christian environment. The program would operate one, two, or three days a week. The maximum number of school hours each week would be less than 15 hours. After initial costs for opening the ministry it would become self supporting.

Norman Mission Committee

The Norman Mission Committee has polled members who live closer to Norman than Holy Cross. Approximately 14 families have said they would participate if the congregation decides this is the direction and right time to begin a new congregation.

By the time you read this, Pastor Ed Schuppe, a Mission Counselor for several WELS Districts, will have visited for several days with prominent leaders in Norman and will have given a verbal report on his findings during last weeks Lenten supper meal. Stay tuned.

MARY-MARTHA

The ladies of the Mary-Martha guild met on Saturday, March 14th. Minutes of the meeting have been placed in the church mail boxes for all ladies of the congregation. Attached to the minutes are the names and addresses of missionaries for those wanting to send them mail. Next meeting on April 11, at 9:30 AM.

SPECIAL OFFERING ENVELOPES

Throughout the year special offering envelopes are provided for use by Holy Cross members along with the special offer envelopes received in the offering envelope boxes at the beginning of each year. These envelopes are to be used to return a portion of the Lord's blessing in addition to the regular weekly offerings. This article is the first of a series of articles intended to provide information on the use of the envelopes.

The yellow Jubilee Offering envelope is placed in each member's church mail box each month. The offerings received in these envelopes are sent to WELS for use in paying off the synod debt loan. This loan is for the amount of 22 million dollars. Each year synod has to pay 2 million dollars in interest on the loan. When this loan is paid off the 2 million dollars paid in interest can be used for other synod programs. In 2008 the special Jubilee offering was established with the goal of receiving enough offerings in one year to pay off the loan. This special offering ends in August 2009. Therefore until September you will receive the special yellow Jubilee offering envelopes each month. So please use the special Jubilee envelopes to contribute to synods debt reduction as the Lord has blessed you and continues to bless you.

VOTERS MEETING CORRECTION

In the March news letter article about the actions taken by the Voters Body it was stated the three year confirmation program "is to start in the fall of 2010". It should have read "This program is to start in the fall of 2009". Sorry for any confusion this may have caused.

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EASTER LILIES

Why do we like to put Easter lilies on the cross, around the altar and in the narthex of the church on Easter? An unknown author put it this way,

"Rightly the lily is the flower of Easter. It lies buried in the ooze of pond or stream. There is nothing in the grave of the dead lily that appeals to nostril or eye. But silently the forces of life are working in the dark and the damp to prepare a glorious resurrection. A shaft of green shoots upward toward the sun. This is followed by a cluster of tiny buds. One day the sun smiles with special warmth upon the dank, black ooze, and there leaps into the light a creature of light and beauty."

The symbolism is that of resurrection and life, beautiful life. It is a comparison between our dead bodies and the beautiful new bodies we will have in the resurrection.

If you are planning to buy an Easter lily or two, why not share it with Holy Cross on Easter Sunday morning. We will find room for all plants that are brought. Put your name on a small piece of paper and leave it in the pot. You can pick up your plant after the service.

LWMS RED RIVER VALLEY CIRCUIT

SPRING RALLY

The speakers that are invited are always good. The speaker for this one is outstanding. I would like to encourage every lady to think about going. Jacob, will tell the story of his conversion from being a Muslim to becoming a WELS Lutheran Christian. He will also talk about the Muslim treatment of women. There will be a free will offering, but otherwise, the rally is free. It will be held on Saturday April 18, from 9am-3pm in Plano, TX at Atonement Lutheran Church. Transportation should be available. Sign up on the bulletin board if you plan to attend and if you need a ride.

Pastor

EASTER IN OTHER LANDS

Missionary Dan Sargent, Zambia

Most of my experience is with the rural (bush) congregations in Zambia. They will hold joint worship services over the Easter weekend. Congregations will gather together (2 to 3) and hold what they call a camp meeting. The members will come with their families, blankets and food. They will stay over night and celebrate with songs by the choir, plays put on to remember the passion story, and worship services. They will often stay up late into the night. The Easter service will often include a celebration of the Lords Supper.

Missionary Michael Hartman, Mexico

As Lutherans in Mexico, the fact that we celebrate Easter at all is very different. Holy Week is a big deal in Mexico. Kids get two weeks off from school and families often take vacations and head to the beach. That said, most Mexicans don't know that Holy Week culminates with Easter. They know about Maundy Thursday, and have huge celebrations on Good Friday. These celebrations tend to involve processions and crucifying (usually with rope) a stand-in Jesus. Mexicans will even talk about "Saturday of Glory" when Jesus descended into hell. In Mexico City, Saturday of Glory is celebrated by throwing water balloons on strangers. Unfortunately, that's where Mexico's Holy week celebrations end. In my experience, most Mexicans don't even know that Easter Sunday exists. They know that Jesus died, but they don't know that he rose. This is very sad. It also makes our Lutheran Holy Week celebrations stand out. Mexican Lutherans tend to celebrate Holy week with a special service followed by a meal. A popular Easter dish is "menudo", a delicious pig tripe soup. Eggs are not colored or eaten, but the yokes are often blown out and the shells are then stuffed with confetti. Kids have fights with these confetti filled eggs, smashing them over each other's heads.

Missionary Michael Ewart, Russia

One of the most obvious differences between Easter in Russia and in the States is that Easter is often celebrated on a different Sunday (although this year they fall on the same date.) This is because the Russian church still follows the ancient Julian calendar, while the Western church follows the Gregorian calendar.

The traditional Easter greeting in Russia is: "Christ is risen!" To which the other responds: "He is risen indeed!" While this greeting is sometimes heard in churches in the States, it is very common in Russia. Even those who rarely attend church are familiar with this greeting and use it on Easter Sunday.

Like Americans, Russians dye Easter eggs. Traditionally, a homemade red dye (most use onion peel) is used. Few Russians remember the reason for this excellent tradition: a remembrance of the blood Jesus shed on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. Also traditional is to bake an Easter cake. Orthodox tradition requires members to bring their eggs and cake to church to have it consecrated. We encourage our members to bring the food too... not for consecration, but for an after service fellowship meal.

While there are some differences, the reason we celebrate Easter is exactly the same. Christ's victory over sin and death was proven and guaranteed by his glorious resurrection. He lives, means we live. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!"

Andrea Wordell, Japan

In the weeks preceding Easter, we deliver tracts to mailboxes in the surrounding area inviting people to worship with us. Our Easter celebration will begin a little early with a potluck and an English worship service on Saturday evening. On Sunday morning we will have our Japanese worship service. The choir will sing, the handbell choir will play, and the Sunday school children will perform a pageant. This year we are blessed to have four adult confirmations in our congregation on that day. After the Japanese service will be another potluck. Many of our members do not have Christian families with whom to celebrate Easter, so an opportunity for fellowship with church family is important.

LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME!

By Paul Barnett member of Holy Cross

I would like to talk to all of you about how I feel about going to a Christian Day School. First of all, let us read what God has to say. Matthew 18 vs 1-3 and 6. "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven...But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.'" It goes on to say a lot more talking about how a shepherd will go out of his way to look for a lost sheep of his. Then there is the passage from Matthew 19:14, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Finally, look at the great commission in Matthew 28: 18-20, one of the key reasons why we baptize children, Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations..." Children are part of the group called, "nations".

A good illustration for me is always football. I love the game. But, I do not think that the Pittsburgh Steelers won the Super Bowl this year by just showing up on Sunday, putting on their pads and playing a game. No, they started by hiring good coaches, scouting players, doing spring training, off season weight lifting long before they ever played a game. It is a coordinated effort of planning, and hard work that finally leads to winning. That kind of dedication, hard work and planning are also necessary if we are to listen to the voice of Jesus who says, "Let the little children come to me."

Public schools cannot by law and should not teach our children about God. Instead of teaching them about the God of the Bible, they will teach them about a false god who is happy with you if you do your best to do your duty and are sincere in what you believe. Jesus will not be looked upon as the one and only true God. Prayers will not be prayed in his name. The be good and God will be happy mentality contradicts the fundamental teaching of the Bible that we cannot be good enough for Salvation and that in fact from God's point of view, there is no good in us apart from Christ.

So, if the Public Schools cannot teach children about the true God and bring the Bible to our children, then it is up to us. A Christian day school would help our parents teach our children about Jesus and about having eternal salvation. That is worth more than all the gold in the world.

There are many pros and cons about having a Christian school. As a person who received a Christian education here at Holy Cross, I wanted to share some of my thoughts with all of you.

SPRING CLEAN UP

Now is a time to lend your expertise. On Saturday April 25th all Holy Cross congregation members are invited to a clean up gathering at 9:00 AM.(or later). Plans are to clean inside the church and outside at the church and parsonage. So grab your gloves and whatever cleaning equipment you have and join in the festivities.

April Greeters

April 5 - George & Nancy McKinnis

April 12 - Scott & Carol Peters

April 19 - Jack & Lavon Post

April 26 - Bryon & Dina Shoumaker

April Cleaning List:

April 4 - Shawn Stuever Family

April 11 - D & S Stuever and B & B Barnett

April 18 - S & C Peters and B & D Shoumaker

April 25 - E & D Hanson and C & M Chaddock

Nursery Schedule:

Nursery during Bible Study

April 5 TBA

April 12 Andrea Smith

April 19 Andrea Smith

April 26 TBA

Nursery during Church Service

April 5 Darlene Chaddock

April 12 Everett Peters

April 19 Everett Peters

April 26 Dorothy Deards