

PASTOR'S PENNINGS

How can I be happy without doing anything dirty?

“Blessed are pure in heart.” Matthew 5:8

Wash your hands. Wash your hands! So often we are reminded of the need to wash our hands. After using the restroom, before eating, after eating, before cooking, after cooking. It's so hard to keep them clean.

And that's just our hands! Try keeping our hearts clean, and we have an impossible task! How hard it is to have perfectly pure motives! When I cut that little section of grass between my neighbor's house and mine, the good deed is spoiled with the self-serving intent that maybe he'll let me borrow his edger. I give some money for a worthy charitable cause, but only because I don't want to disappoint the sincere person asking.

We may be able to hide our impure motives from others, but not from God. The Bible says, “The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). We can't fool God. There is no covering false notions or hidden deception. God looks right through the outward act and inspects the inner motivations. He's looking for the pure in heart.

What is the measure for that kind of inner purity? God holds us up to His perfect will and measures us against it. The conclusion is that all of us have sinned and fall short of the sinless standard that God has set for us. Under God's inspection, our hearts are not pure.

What's the solution? Our hearts need to be washed. But how? We can't wash them on our own, so Jesus did it for us. The Bible says, “The blood of Jesus, [God's] Son, purifies us for all sin” (1 John 1:7). By His death for us, Jesus washed our hearts clean; He has cleansed us of sin's stain. Through Him all our sins are forgiven and our hearts are now pure in God's sight.

The forgiveness of sins and purity of heart that we have received freely from Jesus powerfully motivates us to stay away from anything dirty. We'll not want to dirty our hearts again with sinful things. Rather, we'll be happy to strive to live according to the pure way that God teaches and thereby indicate our great appreciation for the sacrifice that Jesus made to wash our hearts clean.

PRAYER LIST

** This last month we prayed for Robert Eischen who is losing his ability to walk;

** for Charlie Quam who is now living in a nursing home;

** for Aimee Barnett's half-sister who is in danger of losing her baby; and

** for relatives of Mike Huller who have experienced death in the family and are undergoing hard times.

** Please also remember our soldiers, Chad Walker in Afghanistan, James Witt in Japan, and David Eischen in Iraq.

** Please pray daily for rain, for the economic stability of our nation according to His loving and gracious will.

** Please keep those women who are carrying children especially in your prayers.

Here is a prayer for all of these people and anyone else you want to pray for. Simply substitute the name of the person you want to pray for in place of the word "me." Substitute the word "he or she" every time you come across the word, "I." "Answer me quickly, Oh Lord my spirit fails," becomes, "Answer Susie quickly, Oh Lord, her spirit fails," continuing . . .

"Do not hide Your face from me or I will be like those who go down to the pit. Let the morning bring me word of Your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You. Show me the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul. Rescue me from my enemies oh Lord, for I hide myself in You. Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; may Your good Spirit lead me on level ground. For Your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life; in Your righteousness, bring me out of trouble. In Your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am Your servant."

VBS THANK YOU

For the dozens of people who participated in various ways to bring the message of Christ to our children and the children of the community, we thank you! Thank you for reflecting so willingly and well the love Christ has showered upon you.

STEWARDSHIP

Plan For Year-round Stewardship Growth

A. Understanding the Life of A "Steward"

How do you explain Stewardship? - Luke 12:42-43 - "Who is the faithful and wise manager, whom the manager (owner) puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns." (For more on God's expectations for His servants read Matthew 25:14-30.)

1) A steward is a wise manager of God's blessings;

2) A steward says I will labor under God's grace to enrich my relationship; and

3) Christian stewardship includes leadership, use of our spiritual gifts, and proper care of our family.

Being a steward has to do with the gift of relationships entrusted to you:

>> Relationship with God, family, "neighbors," and the "body of Christ."

Stewardship--the activity of the steward:

>> Using the tools God has give us to enrich those relationships--Time, Talents, Treasures, Talk, Health, etc.

Christ's Love-Our Calling - Ephesians 5:1-2 - "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave him-self up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

My Calling -

>> to Seek (as priests) re-ordering my time (His providence);

>> to Serve (as members of body) offering myself (His workmanship);

>> to Share (as stewards) focusing my finances (His ownership);

>> and to Speak (as ambassadors) sharing my faith (His story).

1) With God --

a) Committing to personal devotion and prayer (Discovering: who is this God that gives me these gifts);

b) Discovering my personality, talents, and spiritual gifts - (Discovering: how has God made me unique and improving my character and skills);

c) Expressing His honor and my trust: offerings- testing my closeness with God - (Discovering: where my heart is); and

d) Proclaiming His love in my . . . Corporate worship, prayer, and life of obedience -

(Discovering: how to proclaim Him as my risen Savior) -- "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength..."

2) With Family --

- a) Time with family: building the relationship; growing in God's Word; and prayer together - (Discovering: a deeper spiritual time with family);
- b) Mentoring - (Discovering: how does God want me to use my unique gifts to serve spouse-family);
- c) My family support-earning/spending wisely - (Discovering: how should I care for the needs of those who depend on me); and
- d) Family evangelism and faith development - (Discovering: simple ways I can help people know Christ better-words and life) --

“Husbands love your wives...”

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Please take time to welcome and get to know Marcia Whitney, who joined us by Profession of Faith, Tamara Binning, who joined us by Rite of Confirmation, and Dan and Becky Johnson and their daughter, who transferred from Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Oklahoma City. More news about our new members will be available in the September newsletter. We pray that you will get to know the members a lot better and that the Word of God will lead you to grow spiritually stronger with every passing week.

VOTERS' MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The Quarterly Voters' Body Meeting was held Sunday, July 17th. The membership report from the Elders listed a number of new members who were received into membership and the names of a number of members who requested a termination of their membership. The Fiscal Secretary reported the 2011 offerings for the first quarter of the year have been lower than the first quarter of 2010. The Treasurer reported that the expenditures for the first quarter of 2011 had been reduced in keeping with the lower offering so that a budget deficit had not been encountered. All Boards reported on their activities during the second quarter. The next Voters' meeting will be October 8th.

SWIM PARTY

A swim party will be held at the Kingspark Clubhouse on August 14th from 2:00-4:00PM. Everyone from the congregation is invited. After the swim party a Teen Bible Study will be held from 4:30-5:30PM, with pizza/drinks furnished. A sign-up sheet has been posted on the bulletin board for everyone to sign so the correct number of life guards may be present for the party. So, invite a friend and come to enjoy some swimming fun.

SYNOD NEWS

About four hundred pastors, teachers, staff ministers and laymen attended the WELS 66th Biennial Synod Convention at Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, WI. The convention was held July 25th-29th. Scott Peters from Holy Cross congregation was one of the lay delegates representing the South Central District. Scott will have a report about the convention in our September newsletter.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

All men of Holy Cross congregation are invited to the men's breakfast and Bible study. The men will meet August 13th at 8:00AM for breakfast at Jimmy's Egg on I-240 and Western Ave. Following breakfast, at 9:00AM, a Bible study will be held at Holy Cross church. All men are invited and encouraged to bring a friend.

FREE CONCERT

Branches Band, a Milwaukee-based Christian band, will be presenting a concert on Monday, August 1st, 2011 at 7:00PM at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Oklahoma City. Make plans to attend and invite a friend!

GRACE NEWS

Grace is looking into the possibility of a new worship site. More on that next time. At least two WELS students will be coming to OU next year and plans are being made to stay connected with them and offer special Bible studies during the year. An application will be made in August for a Kingdom Worker grant to finance a student to do canvassing and set up a program for doing outreach to university students. Another grant proposal to the Antioch Foundation will be submitted to allow continued advertising in the community as well as to produce initial funding for other potential outreach personnel.

WORSHIP CONFERENCE

Worship of our God is a natural response for us as believers in Christ. When we think of what the Lord has done for us giving Himself up for our salvation. It is what the angels and saints do in heaven. We were created as spiritual beings. Without worshiping the true God life is truly empty. Since worship is so important in our lives, it is good to study how we do it and how we can offer our worship as true sacrifices of the heart, filled with reverence and beauty. To help us do that our Synod offers a worship conference every three years. Lectures are given about different aspects of worship and majestic, extremely beautiful examples of worship are given throughout the conference. This year the conference rented out Gustavus Adolphus

College campus near New Ulm, MN. On Thursday, all worship services and lectures were held on our Martin Luther College campus.

Sunny Stuever has attended these conferences ever since they began. This year was the first for Pastor Strackbein. The conference began on Tuesday, July 19th and continued till noon on Friday, July 22nd. Each day had a 1-1/2 hour long worship service in the morning and early evening. Each service had a 50 member children's choir, 100 member adult choir, 15 member brass, and some services also had an orchestra. Can you imagine 1,200 people singing, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives?" or singing the "Hallelujah Chorus?" That is how many were at each service. The worship service followed Palm Sunday, Easter Day, Easter evening and Good Shepherd Sunday themes. The sermons were all very powerful and soul lifting.

In addition to the worship there were two afternoon lectures every day and a couple days with 7:00AM lectures. The lectures each participant went to were picked from almost 50 different available lectures. Pastor's classes included two classes on "Using Worship As An Outreach Tool," by two home missionaries; two classes on "Freshness and Variety In Proclaiming Law and Gospel" by Seminary Professor Gurgle; and two classes from a layman entitled, "From Evangelical Praise Band." It was by a musician who used to play in a "praise band" and who now appreciated much more our liturgical way of worshiping.

Whether you are a musician or not, any one of our members at Holy Cross would have deeply appreciated attending the conference since worship is near and dear to all of our hearts.

The money used to pay for Pastor's attendance at this conference was taken out of a fund used every year for furthering Pastor's education. From my heart, thank you for making this available to me so that I could attend.

Pastor

A SYNOD CONVENTION HIGHLIGHT

On Monday, in the first of many elections for synodical positions that will be held this convention, Rev. Mark Schroeder was re-elected on the first ballot to his second term as WELS President. He says that he is grateful for the opportunity to serve another four years, but that he wants to save further comments until he has a chance to address delegates first.

The re-election followed Schroeder's President's Report, which reflected on Synod activities over the past few years and discussed plans for the coming biennium. These plans include careful expansion in missions and maintaining sufficient support for the ministerial education schools. He also previewed several special issues delegates will be addressing this convention, including the following:

...A report from the Conference of Presidents on the termination of divine calls for financial reasons.

...An update from the Translation Evaluation Committee, which is leading an evaluation of the revision of the New International Version of the Bible, which came out in 2011, to determine if it can be used for the Synod's publishing needs. It is also looking at alternative translations.

...A discussion of a proposed long-range plan entitled "In Christ Alone."

...A report of the Committee for Continuing Education of Called Workers outlining progress made especially in the areas of creating a program of continuing education for pastors.

Schroeder also discussed challenges that lay ahead for our church body, including the tension that can exist between those who emphasize outreach and mission work and those who emphasize the importance of maintaining purity of doctrine. "The reality is that both of those things are absolutely essential. You can't really have one without the other", says Schroeder. "If you're committed to outreach but not committed to the truth of God's Word, you lose God's truth and you have no message to spread. If you're committed to doctrinal purity and forget about the importance of sharing that with the world, you have nothing but empty doctrine."

Pastor Schroeder's entire report can be read at, <http://www.wels.net/news-events/president-mark-schroeder-re-elected>.

HOW DEEP DIRT?

By Pastor Robert Sawall

"Daddy, how deep down dirt go?" An average six-inch depth of growing soil worldwide is reported. That's really our lifeline for growing produce. Water or wind erosion can take away one's livelihood and deprive many of food.

"How deep dirt go, Daddy?" Planet earth can point to six-inches; but when it comes to moral dirt, it sinks to the core of our being. The terrible force in our heart is sin that erupts spewing forth bad behavior. No earthly energy can deplete the source of immorality nor limit its flow. Would you open your heart for all to see? How unbearable the shame! Yet God sees it all; and He hates sin.

Because God does not delight in the death of a sinner, He sent His own Son to take our place, to suffer our shame and judgment. He alone cleanses our abominable record offering comfort, peace and joy instead. Only in Christ, can God's children say, "Dirt all gone!"

1000 MARBLES

The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it's the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it's the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are most enjoyable.

A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward my base-ment ham radio shack with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning, turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time. Let me tell you about it.

I turned the dial up into the phone portion of the band on my ham radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning swap net. Along the way, I came across an older sounding chap, with a tremendous signal and a golden voice. You know the kind; he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business. He was telling whomever he was talking with something about “a thousand marbles.”

I was intrigued and stopped to listen to what he had to say. “Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well, but it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital.”

He continued, “Let me tell you something Tom, something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities.” And that's when he began to explain his theory of “a thousand marbles.”

“You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. I know, some live more and some live less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years. Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900, which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime.”

“Now, stick with me, Tom, I'm getting to the important part. It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail;” he went on, “and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy!”

“So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside a large, clear plastic container right here in the shack next to my gear. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away. I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focus more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight.”

“Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure that if I make it until next Saturday then I have been given a little extra time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time. It was nice to meet you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your family, and I hope to meet you again here on the band. 75 year Old Man, this is K9NZQ, clear and going QRT, good morning!”

You could have heard a pin drop on the band when this fellow signed off. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about. I had planned to work on the antenna that morning, and then I was going to meet up with a few hams to work on the next club newsletter. Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. “C'mon honey, I'm taking you and the kids to breakfast.” “What brought this on?” she asked with a smile. “Oh, nothing special, it's just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at a toy store while we're out? I need to buy some marbles....”

SOME POINTS TO PONDER

If we are willing to spend hours on end to learn to play the piano, operate a computer, or fly an airplane, it is sheer nonsense for us to imagine that we can learn the high art of getting guidance through communion with the Lord in His Word without being willing to set time aside for it. Adapted from Paul Rees

“Only one life to live. Will soon be past.

Only what is done for Christ will last.”

When you put God first, you are establishing order for everything else in your life.

Andrea Garney

Something to share with your spouse:

Winnie the Pooh said: “If you live to be a hundred, then I want to live to be a hundred minus one day, so I never have to live without you.”

BALANCE IN LIFE

Adapted from Mike Singletary's book, One-on-One, a devotional book, written with Jay Carty, a Christian minister.

(Mike Singletary was a Hall of Fame Linebacker for Chicago Bears and is now head coach for San Francisco 49ers. He is also a Christian.)

As head coach for the San Francisco 49ers, I want my staff to be good family men as well as good football men. That doesn't mean we don't work our tails off; we do, but we are better managers of our time. I want my coaches to keep a good balance between work and family. As coaches, we preach balance to our players. What is true athletically is also true with the issues of life. Pastors, teachers, staff ministers, parents, you need to find a balance between your ministry and your family and your personal life.

Parents, you are dads, mothers, mentors and teachers and shepherds to your children. You have a great opportunity to teach others about life. Having a healthy family life is a great testimony to your faith. Showing others what a happy home life looks like is very important, especially in our society where the concept of family is almost non-existent.

A healthy and happy home starts with mom and dad. The kids need to see mom and dad constantly relating, learning and growing together, especially in regard to their spiritual lives. If they are on good terms with each other, then the family is usually in pretty good shape. When there is respect without fear, things are usually pretty good. Kids will be kids (since we are all saints and sinners), but they need to learn to respect their parents. There needs to be a well-understood code or protocol. Boundaries need to be set and everyone needs to know they are. Everyone needs to know what is acceptable and what is not, especially from a biblical perspective.

Parents of well-adjusted, Christian children intention-ally set aside time to have fun and create memories. The family gets together and talks, plays hard and prays hard. Healthy families need to have a lot of fun. It is the fun times that make for good memories.

Mike Singletary says there are three areas of life that helped to add health to his family:

1. Prayer. There was a time when I thought that I could create a healthy home by organizing my time, arranging family events, planning vacations and setting up one-on-one time with my wife and kids. Some of these disciplines are good, but I had a tendency to put my family on a schedule -- my schedule. My schedule still shapes much of what we do, but now I pray for wisdom as to how I can best serve my family and best take advantage of my available time. I pray to know what to do and for the courage to do it when it needs to be done. Moving to the leading of God's Spirit is proving to be more effective than any schedule ever could. Also, I make sure that we pray together as a family.

2. Communication. My wife Kim and I sit down weekly to plan out the days. We both want to understand the schedule. We determine when we will go out on a date, who picks up the kids, etc., and we resolve the occasional problem when Kim can't be in two places at once. Every day during the week, we stay in close communication using our cell phones. Constant contact is crucial. It keeps me involved and keeps Kim from becoming resentful.

3. Sacrifice. As a husband, parent and coach, I must ask myself, What am I going to give up? I must be honest with my schedule and I must identify ways to best use my time. For example, coaches tend to waste time chatting and talking with friends on the phone between meetings and practices. I choose not to do that so I can finish my work and then leave to be with my family. I constantly ask myself, Where can I cut back without hurting my coaching performance? How can I create more time with my family? How can I be more efficient to be more effective? Shooting the breeze on the phone, lunch with the guys and hanging around for a few laughs can be fun, but it would steal me from my family. I have to ask, What am I going to give up?

TO MY DEAR HUSBAND

By Delores Staats

I'm sorry my dear,

That it took me so long

To accept the great things in this life

That our Lord has prepared

For His children on earth

To be shared by a husband and wife.

I thank you for all

Of the patience you've shown

With the problems I had from the start.

You've been kind and long suffering

And always had hope

And your love kept me close to your heart.

The Lord has been kind

And has answered my prayers

And has given new meaning to life!

Now there's joy and contentment

In doing His will

And it's good just to know I'm your wife!

SOUP CAN LABELS/CEREAL BOX TOPS

Please continue to bring your Campbell Soup labels and box top coupons and give them to Dina Shoumaker.

HC - AUGUST GREETERS

Aug. 7 - George & Nancy McKinnis

Aug. 14 - Scott & Carole Peters

Aug. 21 - Jack & LaVon Post

Aug. 28 - Byron & Dina Shoumaker

HC - AUGUST CLEANING LIST

Aug. 6 - Terry Eischen

Aug. 13 - Dorothy Deards/John Deards/Mellisa Deisering

Aug. 20 - Gerry & Mary Cartwright

Aug. 27 - Chuck Cateora/Robert Barnett

HC - AUGUST MOWING LIST

Aug. 6 - Kris Timm/Andy Quam

Aug. 13 - Dean Thomas/Troy Thomas

Aug. 20 - Tom Finney/Cliff Gallarneau

Aug. 27 - Rick Poulin/Paul Barnett