

# PASTOR'S PENNINGS

## The Perfect Pearl

*Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45, 46).*

Have you found the perfect Christmas gift for that special someone yet? If so, what makes it perfect? Is it perfect because it's unique, like handcrafted pottery? Is it perfect because it fits the personality of the individual for whom you bought it, like a plaid shirt for the lumberjack in your family?

What if you find the perfect gift only to discover that it's beyond your budget? Would you sell your car, your house, everything you own to obtain THE perfect gift?

Jesus once told a parable about a pearl-dealer whose goal was to find the perfect pearl. When he found it, he sold all that he owned so he could buy his treasured find.

The perfect pearl represents the message of salvation found in the Bible. This message is perfect because it tells us everything we need to know for this life and the next. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and deserve God's eternal punishment in hell. But the Bible also says that Jesus came to take that punishment – like your next-door neighbor paying for the fire damage that *your* hastily strung Christmas lights did to *her* house. Because of Jesus our sins are paid for and forgiven!

This message is not only perfect; it's one of a kind. There are plenty of places you can look for the answers to life's questions, but the only place you'll find the perfect pearl is in the Bible. We would be glad to share with you the treasure that God has for us in his Word. The Bible appears to be like any other book, but within there is a precious message that exceeds everything we've known. It's like the person who pries open a dull clamshell and finds a glowing pearl nestled within that's worth more than any other.

A pearl in a clamshell! That's often how God works. He comes to us in unlikely places to give us his love. Could that be illustrated any more beautifully than it is at Christmas? At Christmas, the Son of God, our Savior, was born ... in a barn! And then this Jesus willingly gave up his life on the cross to pay for our sins and win us a place in heaven. This message is God's priceless, perfect gift for us!

### NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

After an intensive study of Scripture, Chad and Whitney Walker were confirmed as members of Holy Cross last Sunday, November 22. They have a little girl named Hadlee who was baptized last January here at Holy Cross. Chad was formerly Roman Catholic, and Whitney was an LC-MS member. More information will be coming about them in the next newsletter. In the mean time, introduce yourselves to them and make them feel at home. Chad and Whitney, we are very happy you have joined our church family. Together we will grow in faith and march towards glory with Christ.

### PIONEER/YOUTH GROUP

A tour of the Braum's Plant for the Pioneers & Youth group (and whoever else who wants to go) has been scheduled for December 21st @ 12:00 PM. It is a Monday...however, all of the children will be out of school for Christmas break at this time. The tour is free and takes about 90 minutes...and everyone gets an ice cream. So make a place on your holiday schedule for some fun time and ice cream.

### PRAYER LIST

*1 Thessalonians 5 :16-18, Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

\* Let us give thanks to the Lord for the fellowship and love Jean Luebking gave us during her life. We hate to see her go but at the same time, we rejoice that we were given the opportunity to be a part of her spiritual family, that we could help each other on our pilgrimage to our heavenly home. Please pray for Russell, and her immediate family as they wrestle with a new life without her presence. Pray that they remain strong in the Lord through the means of grace that alone can truly comfort and bless, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

\* Please thank the Lord that Andy Kidd, Darlene Kidd's son did not have a heart attack but made it to the hospital in time to have two stents put in to relieve a 90% blockage. Andy went to Deaconess early in November and is back at work today.

\* We praise our God also for his grace in permitting Barbara a rapid recovery from her total hip bone replacement; for Principal Dan Johnston of Gethsemane, who is recovering from an appendectomy; and for granting Holy Cross two new communicant members, Chad and Whitney Walker and daughter Hadlee.

\* Please pray that Patricia Hobbs, Dorothy Deard's son Philip's business associate's mother would receive healing from her brain tumor.

\* Please also ask God to watch over the upcoming hip surgeries of Gary Hahn on December 8<sup>th</sup> at Edmond and Doug Dinse at the Bone and Joint Hospital on December 14<sup>th</sup>. As soon as Doug Dinse gets home from the hospital he and Robyn will need some volunteers to help since Robyn is also very sick. If you would like to help, please call Pastor and he will have someone organize the effort.

### STEWARDSHIP

To understand stewardship properly one must understand the difference between the law and the gospel. Law motivation can produce huge results but that doesn't make it right. For example, some churches require 10% of income be returned to God and imply that a person will be punished if it doesn't happen. Someone who fears the punishment or feels they must obey may give a ton of money. What is wrong is not the 10% giving. What's wrong is giving that is not produced by a heart that is deeply moved by Christ's love for Him. The minute we give whatever we are going to give because it is our duty or obligation we are under the law and the gift is not what God wants. If you want to give an offering from a right heart, keep the following facts in mind:

1. The law of God can never, with all its commands, threats, and promises produce a single good work. The old man can only be put to death, not reformed. The law, therefore, can never produce the good work of Christian stewardship.
2. The law, can and should be used to point to specific sins that militate against sound stewardship practices, such a greed, covetousness, and materialism (Luke 12:13-21, parable of the rich fool).
3. The law also serves the purpose of guiding grateful Christians in their lives as stewards. (1 Cor. 16:2 gives

guidance for giving)

1. The Gospel announces and conveys God's mercy to the sinner (Matthew 9:13)
2. The Gospel brings about a new birth (1 Peter 1:23)
3. The Gospel produces and empowers fruits of faith (Jn. 15:5 & Gal. 2:20)

So what is the effect of the gospel on a Christian?

1. It produces an "I will" rather than an "I must" attitude toward stewardship (Lk. 19:1-10 Zacchaeus)
2. It produces generous, even lavish, displays of Christ-honoring love (Luke 7:36-50 and John 12:1-8 - women who anoint Jesus)

In other words, God-pleasing stewardship motivation flows from the gospel, not the law.

## **EVANGELISM**

Our Outreach Board is doing some exciting things. They sponsored the outreach part of Thanksgiving meal, they are canvassing every month and they are supervising the Norman mission outreach effort. Pray for them.

Actually Christmas is a great time for all of us to witness. The world thinks Christmas joy is material things, family get-togethers and the excitement in the eyes of the children as they open their presents. Actually it has nothing to do with that. That type of Christmas is an empty shell that ends up with huge let downs and disappointments. Christmas is about Jesus. It's about the huge punishment I deserved for my sins being eliminated because of Him. It's about the cross and the guarantee of life forever with Him through faith in Him. It's about God's gift to us not our gifts to Him or to others. So how do we share Jesus at Christmas time?

1. Why not ask the Holy Spirit to use you, to utilize you, as a spiritual influence in the lives of the people he has brought into your day-to-day life? Ask often. Ask about specific people and situations. Ask dangerously!
2. Keep the Lord at the forefront of your life: Is Christ the center of your personal and family celebrations of Christmas?
3. Talk openly and naturally about how Jesus has helped you deal with and get through difficult times in your life.
4. Study the Bible. Know it well. Practice applying Bible story lessons to different moments in life.
5. Invite friends to come to our Advent and Christmas services and then come with them to a Bible information class offered by the pastor.
6. Be there for your special friends, relatives, associates and neighbors during those crucial times when they need someone: (an illness, job loss, divorce, death)
7. Ask WHY questions, "Does Christmas inspire you? Why? Let them tell their story, you respond with your story and then end it with God's story.
8. When you send a card, an e-mail, or make a phone call, end it with a Christ centered thought or passage. An e-mail could end with "We are forgiven." A phone call could end with, "God be with you" or "I'll be praying for you." If someone seems sad, tell them, "Jesus loves you!"

*Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14, 16*

*Paul said, "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:5-6*

## **NORMAN MISSION NEWS**

December will be a big month as we head down to the opening service at Norman. A meeting will take place on Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM to determine the final time and place of services. In addition a final budget will be drawn up for approval at the next Holy Cross voter's meeting. The meeting will begin at the Norman Embassy Suites off Tecumseh. From there we will visit two or three other possible rental sites. The time of service will either be 6:30PM on Saturdays with confirmation from 4 PM-6 PM, Sunday School and possible Bible Study from 5-6 PM., or Sunday at 1 PM with confirmation, Sunday School, etc from 2:15- 4:15 PM. Anyone who plans to be a part of this needs to be at this meeting. Craig Ballinger will be coordinating the activities. Don Chaddock will be responsible for the finances.

Pastor will be completing worship templates that will match the services at Holy Cross. The purpose will be so that hymnals will not have to be purchased immediately. Everything will be typed into a multi page bulletin. A license will be purchased by pastor to give copy rights to Holy Cross and by extension the Norman group. The big order of business will be outreach, outreach, outreach. Kingdom Workers have agreed to send WELS canvassers from the U. Of Wisconsin in Madison. They hope to be here for one week during Holy Week. Other future goals will be to begin permanent land search, start drafting a constitution, get a name etc.

Please pray for this mission outreach attempt and the families who hope to be a part of it. They are: Craig Ballinger, Don and Darlene Chaddock, Jason Chaddock, the Doug Dinse family, the Eisenbeis family, the Hanson's, Amanda Kis, Andrea Perkins (newly moved to Norman), the Shoenborn family, Andrea Smith, the Shawn Stuever family, James Witt, Jeremy Zimdars, and 5 WELS O.U. students

## **MARY-MARTHA**

The ladies of the Mary-Martha guild met on November 14<sup>th</sup> with 11 ladies in attendance. The bible study was an inspirational slide show and video presentation of Pastor Strackbein's trip to Israel. The devotion was about Peter's conversion. Peter was encouraged to "feed the lambs" physically and spiritually.

The following LWMS activities were discussed:

- \* Ladies Advent Candle Light service, Sunday December 6<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 PM, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Oklahoma City
- \* LWMS retreat, March 12<sup>th</sup> thru March 14<sup>th</sup>, Camp Shiloh, Texas
- \* District LWMS Spring Rally April 24<sup>th</sup> at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Arlington, Texas.
- \* Annual LWMS convention June 24<sup>th</sup> thru June 27<sup>th</sup>, St Louis, Mo.

For additional information about these activities contact Joy Hahn.

The ladies of the Mary-Martha guild received a "thank you" from the Mexico mission about their correspondence to the missionaries in Mexico. A contribution of \$50.00 will be sent by the ladies to the "New Beginning". Also all funds designated for Camm will sent at this time.

The next meeting will be December 12<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM.

### **OFFICERS/BOARD MEMBERS 2010**

The election of Holy Cross officers and board members for 2009 was held during the October voters body meeting. They will be installed during the worship service on December 27<sup>th</sup>. The following is a list of the men who will serve as officers and board members of Holy Cross congregation during the year 2010

President Scott Peters  
Secretary Patrick Roberts  
Treasurer Byron Shoumaker  
Financial Secretary Gene Hill

<u>Elders</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Stewardship</u>
Al Cardwell	Craig Ballinger	Paul Barnett
Eric Hanson	Don Chaddock	Terry Eischen
Butch Barnett	Fred Jenkins	
Chris Eisenbeis		

<u>Outreach</u>	<u>Property Management</u>
Kris Timm	Duane Stuever
Doug Hahn	Doug Stuever
Robert Barnett	Gerald Cartwright

### **2010 OFFERING ENVELOPES**

The Offering Envelopes for the year 2010 will be distributed by the Elders in December. Please note that your envelope number may be changed for 2010. To avoid confusion, please destroy the 2009 envelopes after January 1<sup>st</sup>.

The offering envelope provides a method for you to designate the specific area to which you want your offering to go. It also enables the Financial Secretary to keep a record of your offering and provide you with a statement of contributions for Internal Revenue purposes. If you are sure you will not use envelopes for your offering in 2010, please notify your Elder or the Financial Secretary.

### **FROM THE BOARD OF ELDERS:**

During the next few months in the upcoming news- letters we will be discussing with you the four synod schools within the WELS and the importance of these schools. Why are they important? Because from these schools we get the Pastors and teachers who teach in our Christian Day schools throughout the synod. The four schools are: 1). Luther Preparatory School 2). Martin Luther College 3). Michigan Lutheran Seminary (which is also a High School ) and 4). Wisconsin Lutheran College or Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Like a relay team, our four Synodical schools work together to develop, Pastors, teachers and leaders within our Synod. "What does this really Mean ?" Well, if you are going to be a Pastor or a teacher within the WELS you must attend these schools to do so. So let's talk about the first school; Luther Preparatory School, which is located in Watertown, Wisconsin.

Luther preparatory school is a four year preparatory high school owned and operated by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (LPS). Its primary purpose is to train and encourage young people for the Pastoral and Teaching ministry in WELS. In carrying out that purpose, LPS offers a curriculum that focuses on history, mathematics, science, English, foreign languages, music, and religion. LPS also offers a wide variety of co-curricular activities in music, performing arts, and athletics. This is the first step a student can take if they are thinking on the lines of teaching in one of the synods day schools across the country or in the mission field, or becoming a pastor in WELS. After completing training at LPS, the next step is to attend MLC, which is Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. We will talk about MLC in the January News letter. If you would like to help the synod in the support of this school or any of the schools talk with Pastor Strackbein, or one of the Elders.

### **ADVENT SERVICES**

There will be three Wednesday night, Advent services at 7:00 PM, beginning on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. The services began three years ago and have been well attended. Once again, the format will be more like that of a song service. Instead of one sermon there will be four 3-5 minute messages. The themes will be Readiness, Repentance, and Joy. To make it easier for everyone to attend, the ladies of our Mary-Martha Lutheran Women's Missionary Society will serve supper before each service starting at 6:00 PM. What a wonderful opportunity to be fed body and soul and prepare our hearts for Jesus.

### **MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE CLASSES**

During the season of Advent and Christmas services the Monday night Adult Bible class will not meet. The next Monday night Adult Bible class will be held January 6<sup>th</sup> 2010 at 6:30 PM.

### **CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEARS EVE SERVICES**

- YOU ARE INVITED TO CELEBRATE A NEW ARRIVAL!

Name:	Jesus
Weight:	The sins of the entire world
Length:	Willing to go to any - willing to die for others
Time of birth:	Fulfillment of God's promise
Date of birth:	The beginning of the New Testament
Place of birth:	A lowly stable
Father:	Almighty God
Mother:	Mary, a sinner in need of a Savior
Brothers & sisters:	All who believe in Him

The Christmas Eve children's service will be at 6:00 PM on December 24<sup>th</sup>. The worship service is entitled, "Joy to the

World." The children, choir, instrumentalists and pastor will fill our hearts with the good news of our salvation.

Our Christmas Day service begins at 10:00 AM. Once again we are blessed to participate in Him who is born the Bread of Life, in the house of bread. (Bethlehem means house of bread in Hebrew). How beautiful is the good news, how radiant His glory, how perfect His timing, how gracious the Father, to give us his Son for us and for our salvation. The service will be a song service with a brief meditation from John 1:11 & 12, entitled, "Receive Jesus Your Redeemer".

New year's Eve, December 31 will end the old year and usher in the new with a communion service at 7:00 PM. The message will be from Psalm 23, "Enter the New Year with Confidence." There will be a reading of all Holy Cross members who have gone to be with the Lord, in between verses of 730, "Blessed are They who are Called."

### **"HERE WE COME A CAROLING**

On Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, we will once again go Christmas caroling. We will leave the church at approximately 3:00 PM, to bring "Christmas in Song" to some of the less mobile members of our congregation. Some sort of fellowship activity will be planned after the caroling. Whether you fancy yourself a singer or not, please join us as we tell of Jesus through music.

\*\*\*Sunny\*\*\*

### **GETHSEMANE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM AND WOMEN'S ADVENT SERVICE**

Our sister congregation is planning to have a special women's Advent service Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30PM. They are also having their Children's Christmas program on Friday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00PM with a silent auction at 8PM. All are welcome.

### **CHILDREN CHRISTMAS SERVICE PRACTICE**

Remember the Children's Christmas Eve Service practice on Saturdays, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup>. The 4 and 5 year old children meet from 9:30 to 10:00 AM and those in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade through confirmation age will meet from 9:30 to 11:30 AM. The Children's Christmas Eve Service will be held December 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM. If your child missed the practice on November 28<sup>th</sup>, they may still participate in the service by attending the remaining practices.

### **SERVICES FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON**

Advent Services Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> - Supper 6:00 PM - Service 7:00

Children's Christmas Eve service - Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> - 6:00PM

Christmas Day service- Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 AM

New Year's Eve Communion service - Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> - 7:00PM

**Liddie Jean Luebking**, age 84, went to be with her Lord and Savior on Thursday, November 19, 2009. The funeral was at Holy Cross on Saturday November 22 at 3PM. She was born February 9, 1925 in Altus, Oklahoma to the late Lewis A. and Liddie (Fore) Lahman.

Jean was a loving wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She took great pride in being a homemaker, but she was employed as a "Rosie the Riveter" during World War II.

In addition to her parents, Jean was preceded in death by four brothers and one sister.

Jean is survived by her husband, Russell; daughters, Jeanne Voerster of Norman, OK, Dionna Huff of OKC, Laney Pierce of OKC and Gayle Rockey of OKC; Two Brothers, One sister, Ten Grandchildren, Thirteen Great Grandchildren and One Great Grandchild.

Jean and Russell celebrated their 66<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on Sept 27<sup>th</sup> of this year. Jean became a Lutheran after marrying Russell and became a member of Holy Cross on July 10, 1995. Both Jean and Russell came to Holy Communion on the Sunday prior to Jean's departure to heaven.

"We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him." 1 Thess. 4:14. Truly, Blessed are they who are called, to the marriage feast of the Lamb!

### **DECEMBER GREETERS**

Dec 6 - Tom & Georgia Bigaouette

Dec 13- Al & Carol Cardwell

Dec 20 - Don & Darlene Chaddock

Dec 27 - Tom & Janet Finney

### **DECEMBER CLEANING LIST**

Dec 5 - D & S Stuever and B & B Barnett

Dec 12 - E & D Hansen and C & M Chaddock

Dec 19 - S Stuever Family

Dec 26 - T & J Finney and G & M Cartwright

### **GOSPEL HYMN**

*by Delores Staats, (Mother of Barbara Strackbein)*

I was held captive in slavery to sin;  
No light for my life could I see.  
Gone was the joy  
I had known as a child;  
Oh! How I longed to be free!  
Peace! Peace! Peace to my soul!  
He died for my sins  
And my conscience set free;  
Jesus gives peace to my soul!

Jesus, my Savior, has taken my sins

And nailed them to Calvary's tree.  
Who can explain  
Such a wonderful love  
That cares for a sinner like me?  
Hope! Hope! Hope to my soul!  
Jesus gives hope to my soul!  
He carried my burden  
And taught me to pray;  
Jesus gives hope to my soul!

Now I am happy and gone are the fears  
That tormented my soul night and day;  
My heart wants to sing  
And give praise to the Lord  
For His mercy has shown me the way!  
Joy! Joy! Joy to my soul!  
Jesus gives joy to my soul!  
He leads me and guides  
With His wonderful Word!  
Jesus gives joy to my soul!

#### **TOP TEN SIGNS YOU NEED TO GET TO BIBLE CLASS**

10. You open to Luke and a WWII bond falls out.
9. You think the minor prophets worked in quarries.
8. You become frustrated because Charleton Heston isn't in your concordance.
7. Whenever the pastor mentions the names Peter, Paul, or Mary, you start humming the tune to "Puff, the Magic Dragon" in your head.
6. You try to list some good Jewish kings, and you can only think of David and Netanyahu
5. Hearing your kids read from Song of Solomon you demand, "Where did you get that filth?"
4. You think your favorite Psalm is Psalm 151
3. The kids keep asking too many questions about your usual bedtime story which you call "Jonah the Shepherd Boy and His Ark of Many Colors."
2. Your favorite Old Testament hero... Hercules!
1. Sunday Bible Study is studying Bible History by examining videos and slides of the places where that history took place.