

PASTOR'S PENNINGS

How Can I be happy when I'm poor?

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Matthew 5:3

The hand is out. The face is pleading. In this case, the need is real. When one has run out of options and is desperate for help, begging seems the only choice.

It's hard to imagine that one who is forced to beg would be happy about it. Being so poor in physical things can make life very hard.

Yet when it comes to a person's spiritual condition, God says that it is very important to be a beggar. In fact, true happiness only comes when you see that you are a beggar.

Do you see yourself as a spiritual beggar? However wealthy we might be financially, it is very tempting to feel that we--just naturally--have what we need in our spiritual bank account. We think that striving to be a good person has to count for something before God. We may not be perfect, but we reason that surely God doesn't expect us to be.

Have you ever tried to reassure yourself with thoughts like those? And yet have you had lingering fears, wondering whether you've really done enough good? Does guilt for things you have done wrong keep coming back, robbing you of happiness?

Rather than trying to shout louder than those frightening voices, hear God speak a hard truth: “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). When I disobey God's perfect will in my life, I deserve to die eternally in hell. For God demands that everyone be perfect--that we never sin, even once.

This makes it quite clear that by nature we are all spiritually bankrupt. Yet Jesus says, “Blessed (happy) are the poor in spirit.” But isn't being spiritually poor--even bankrupt--reason to be sad and afraid?

Yes. But this is also the moment to hear God tell us a most amazing truth from His Word: “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

When we see that we have nothing to give God, we are so grateful that God has lavished us with spiritual riches. Jesus freely came to earth to take all of our sin on Himself. He became poor--He humbled Himself to become the victim of the greatest suffering, paying on the cross the penalty of sin that we owed. He now assures you, “Your sins are forgiven.” With sins forgiven and the eternal kingdom of heaven yours because of Jesus, you are truly rich!

It is a blessing to be a poor beggar before God because in Jesus we are filled with the riches of salvation.

PRAYER LIST

Let us thank and praise the Lord for:

- ** bringing Regina Hahn safely through her gall bladder surgery;
- ** and for blessing Al and Carol Cardwell with 40 years of marriage.
- ** Please keep the Trowe family in your prayers as they go ahead in life without Craig's mother, Grace.
- ** Please also pray for Tom Bigaouette and Mary Cart-wright who are facing health challenges that affect their lungs.
- ** Please ask the Lord to preserve the lives of Adam Buczynskyj and Chad Walker who are in Iraq and Afghanistan.

God has promised to hear our prayers. Come to Him in faith.

EVANGELISM

In Mark 16:15, Jesus tells us, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." Jesus says, "Go." But what is the destination? The destination is all the world. God makes it very clear throughout His Word that every person is included in His loving plan of salvation. The way they will come to the knowledge of the truth is by hearing the message of Jesus. And the way they hear the message of Jesus is by you and me proclaiming the good news of what Jesus has done. It is the message of God's great exchange: Our sin was placed on Jesus. Jesus' perfection is placed on us. The result? The requirements for getting into heaven, (being perfect) are completely met. Those who believe it will be blessed with it.

This is one of the reasons we at Holy Cross have joined together with other like-minded believers in an organization which we call the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It is to fulfill the task of spreading the Gospel to the world. That is what happens when you give part of your offering to the mission side of your offering envelope.

Of course, there is more to missions than your offering envelope. Ask yourself, Can you think of at least one person whom you would like to reach for Christ? If so, who? What are ways you can "build bridges" to that person? Are there areas where you have common interests with him/her? What else can we do for an unbeliever besides witnessing to him? Ephesians 1:18 mentions prayer. Are you willing to make a commitment to pray for that person? If so, how frequently will you do it? When will you begin?

When the Lord gives you the opening to share your faith, remember these general principals:

1. Rely on the power of God's Word to convert rather than on arguments based in reason.
2. Stick to the subject of salvation. Don't major on minor points. Always try to work the conversation back to the topic of sin and grace.

3. Identify specific areas where their beliefs add stress to their lives and then apply specific biblical comfort.
4. Address the subjects in their religion that troubles them rather than the areas in their religion that trouble us.
5. Learn and use their figures of speech, their words, their idioms to communicate rather than expecting them to immediately learn and understand our manner of communication.

Finally, don't give up when the going gets tough. God will bless your work. It may be in ways you don't see immediately.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

At the last meeting of the Elders, Jenna Tucker was transferred to our sister church, Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Tulsa, OK. Peter Strackbein was transferred to Calvary Lutheran Church in Dallas, TX. Tom Strackbein was transferred back to Holy Cross after his vicar year at Prairie Du Chien, WI.

We will miss Jenna and Peter, but are confident they will be big blessings to the congregations they have joined. Tom, we are happy you are back even though your seminary training takes you far away from us in Wisconsin.

ATTENTION YOUTH GROUP MEMBERS

All Holy Cross youth and friends are invited to root for their favorite Super Bowl football team at a Super Bowl party at Cliff & Janice Gallarneau's home located at 1529 SW 121st St., OKC. Phone 703-2371. The party will be February 6th at 6:00PM. Everyone attending please bring soda or other beverage and a snack that will be pooled for everyone to graze from. At half-time Pastor Strackbein will lead a short devotion. Everyone who will be attending please RSVP Cliff at e-mail address: cliff_gallarneau@yahoo.com. See you there.

MARY-MARTHA GUILD

The Mary-Martha Guild would like to thank all the ladies of Holy Cross congregation who helped sew the pill bags for the Central Africa Medical Mission. Two hundred of these bags were sent to the mission in Zambia. All ladies of the congregation are invited to the 3rd Annual Women's Retreat which starts February 18th at Camp Shiloh, TX. For information on transportation to the retreat, please contact Joy Hahn 632-4524. The next Mary-Martha Guild meeting will be held February 12th at 9:30AM. All ladies of Holy Cross are invited and encouraged to attend.

MEN'S BREAKFAST MEETING

The next Holy Cross men's fellowship meeting will be held Saturday, February 19th. All men are invited to meet at 8:00AM for breakfast at Denny's restaurant on I-240 and Penn Ave. The breakfast will be followed by a Bible study at 9:00AM at Holy Cross church. All men are invited to attend for Christian fellowship and Bible study.

SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT CONFENTION HIGHLIGHTS

The South Central District Pastor/Teacher/Delegate Conference was held at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Corpus Christi, TX on January 20th and 21st. Pastor Strackbein, and Holy Cross delegate, Tony Taylor, along with visitors Scott Peters, Doug Hahn, and Bill Shoumaker attended. District President, Pastor Glaeske, reported there are presently 31 pastoral vacancies in the Synod, and there will be 37 or 38 vicars available for assignment in May. The Synod's finances are good news from the standpoint that the offering for 2010 exceeded the pledges. This will allow Synod mission work at home and abroad to be carried on without any reduction during 2011.

An ad hoc committee has been appointed by the Seminary to deal with the new NIV Bible. At this junction the committee feels that the 2010 NIV may be acceptable for use in our Synod, with the understanding that it is not, in the judgment of the committee, a perfect translation, even as the 1984 version of the NIV was not perfect. The next step in the committee work is to farm out the entire NIV to the faculty members of the Seminary and others who will be able to do the exegesis of the Greek and comment on the translation on the basis of their exegetical work. One of the committee members may be invited to this year's pastoral conference to present his report. A four part essay with discussion on "addiction" was presented by Pastor Alan Siggelkow, Professor of Pastoral Theology and Church History at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

YOUTH GROUP LEADERS

Cliff Gallarneau and Kelly Lawson have volunteered to serve as leaders of the Youth Group during the coming year. So everyone is asked to remember them in your prayers and support them as they lead our youth in the Lord's way. We also want to express our thanks to Scott and Carole Peters and others who have worked with the youth during the past year.

FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

Establish a Context For Faithful Stewardship through the impact of meaningful involvement in Mission and Ministry by:

...Helping each member find ownership in the body of Christ.

...Telling stories of ministry involvement and impact.

...Developing a plan and a process to help individuals live out their calling and their purpose as the priesthood of believers.

a) Help ministries develop with grassroots

involvement and congregational permission.

b) Helpful resources: Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts (CAD/NPH), and mission trips and involvement groups.

...Investing in growing leaders.

...Setting a pattern for teamwork and a process for handling conflict.

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 3:12-14

...Other Helpful Training and Assistance in developing ministry strategy:

Schools of Outreach:

www.wels.net/evangelism - 414-256-3288

Schools of Worship Enrichment:

www.wels.net/worship - 414-256-3226

WELS Parish Assistance:

www.wels.net/parishassistance - 414-256-3219

WELS Adult Discipleship:

www.wels.net/adultdiscipleship - 414-256-3278

GRACE NEWS

Grace has received a \$20,000 grant from a WELS family in Texas and \$7,000 from a gentleman in Kansas to be used for various outreach projects. Much of it will be made available as part of further requests from Synod and Synod organizations such as Kingdom Workers and the Seminary for various manpower options. If the manpower options are denied, the money will be used for advertising, and other mission related expenses. We thank and praise the Lord for moving WELS people to support this mission outreach endeavor sponsored by Holy Cross!

2010 statistics include: total offerings collected by Grace participants - \$15,991.88; total offerings collected for Grace from Holy Cross - \$5,273.21; total offering collected for CMO (missions) - \$683.60; 28,000 postcards sent; total attendance - 895; weekly attendance average - 18.2; visitors attended - 89; Holy Cross communicant members who have agreed to worship at the mission regularly - 19.

Goals for 2011 include a \$15,115 budget. See the bulletin board for more details.

SHARING THE LORD'S BLESSINGS

The Lord has been good to our members of Holy Cross congregation and has showered many blessings upon them. Means have been provided to share these blessings with other members in the

congregation and outside the congregation. The following are a few means available through which to share these blessings.

Mary-Martha Food Pantry

The Mary-Martha Guild still has the year-round food pantry to help members of Holy Cross congregation as well as others who are experiencing difficult times due to the sagging economy. Anyone who wishes to donate to the food pantry may bring non-perishable food items and leave them in the kitchen area.

Oklahoma Charities Fund

This is a fund to which monies may be given to help those in need for help with living expenses.

CAMP SHILOH RETREATS

MEN'S RETREAT -- All men need to be active in their faith lives as they serve the Lord and reach out to build up fellow believers and share the Gospel with un-believers. Brian Arthur Lampe, the founder of Christ Empowered Opportunities will lead this retreat. Through a fresh, interactive style he will lead participants as they strive to break down the barriers to service that the devil erects, and develop workable plans of service as they live their lives in joyful response to God's love. Dates: Friday, February 4th at 6:30PM until Sunday, February 6th at 11:00AM. Fees: Register by January 24th and the fee is \$99.00 - after January 24th it is \$114.00. You can bring your first high school or college age son or grandson for only \$79.00, and a second or third for only \$66.00 each. Fees include: Room, meals, materials and a tee shirt. You can register by calling the Camp Shiloh office 903-855-1800, or you can register online at www.campshilohretreat.org.

WOMEN'S RETREAT -- God has gifted every woman who believes in Jesus Christ as her Savior. All Christians are to use the gifts God gave them in joyful response for the greatest gift -- salvation won by Jesus. The retreat leader is Mrs. Sally Valleskey who has been very active in promoting and encouraging women to be active members of Christ's Kingdom. She will lead the women in attendance to a deeper understanding of the great gifts they each possess and encourage them to actively use those gifts to honor God and benefit mankind. Dates: Friday, February 18th at 6:30PM until Saturday, February 19th at 4:00PM. Fees: Register by February 7th and the fee is \$79.00 - after February 7th it is \$94.00. You can bring your first high school or college age daughter or granddaughter for only \$65.00, and a second or third for only \$55.00 each. Fees include: Room, meals, materials and a tee shirt. You can register by calling the Camp Shiloh office 903-855-1800 or you can register online at www.campshilohretreat.org.

MARRIAGE RETREAT -- "Best Friends for Life" -- is coming next spring. On February 11-13, 2011, a retreat will be held at the Stagecoach Inn, Salado, TX. On March 18-20, 2011, a retreat will be held at Hampton Inn and Suites, College Station. Strengthen your two most important friendships for life -- your friendship with God and your friendship with your spouse. The cost for either retreat is \$250/couple. Contact Pastor Nate Buege at pastorncb@gmail.com or call him at 281-395-0544 with questions.

VOTERS' BODY MEETING REPORT

The Quarterly Voters' Body Meeting was held Sunday, January 23rd following a pot luck dinner. A report was given on the progress of Grace mission in Norman and plans for their future. Permission was granted by Holy Cross for the mission to apply for numerous grants as they become available. Also, permission was granted for requesting a vicar if one is available. The vicar would spend the majority of his time serving at Grace, but would also be available to serve Holy Cross congregation in a limited capacity as part of his training. The Fiscal Secretary and Treasurer's reports were presented. These reports showed that the offerings to the Lord has declined during 2010 with expenditures having to be decreased to compensate. Reports from all the Boards were given. The next Voters' Body Meeting will be held April 17th.

WELS

World Mission News from the Dominican Republic

Promises

Do you promise to remain faithful to the teachings of the Scripture? I do. Do you promise to support the work of the church with your time, talents and treasures? I do.

With promises such as these, two new members were received into fellowship in the Moca congregation. It was a wonderful way to start the new year and there was much rejoicing among the other members of the congregation.

As we were rejoicing over the work of the Holy Spirit in creating and sustaining faith in these new members, someone tapped me on the shoulder and pulled me aside to tell me that their spouse had been unfaithful.

Do you promise to love and cherish...? I do.

Do you promise to remain faithful and to forsake all others? I do.

Promises, when given produce much joy for the person who receives the pledge. But when promises are broken many hearts are crushed and lives thrown into disarray and sadness. How easy it is for us to move closer and closer to the "gray" areas of sin, so that when the prowling Satan attacks all he has to do is "pounce" and those promises easily become broken marriages and delinquent members. Satan doesn't have to run us down because we are already so comfortable dancing around in the gray areas.

There is someone who keeps all His promises. Someone who runs after us, seeks us out, calls us -- our Savior. When we are unfaithful, He remains faithful. He keeps all His promises. And when we are unfaithful - He forgives.

Promises, promises. May He give us the strength to remain faithful to the promises we have given. May we always rejoice in Him - the only one who always remains faithful. With Jesus, a promise given is a promise kept.

Posted by Kathryn Strackbein

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 - FEBRUARY GREETERS

Feb. 6 - Paul & Aimee Barnett

Feb. 13 - Al & Carol Cardwell

Feb. 20 - Tom and Janet Finney

Feb. 27 - Marlon & Karen Henry

HC - FEBRUARY CLEANING LIST

Feb. 5 - Bill & Fran Shoumaker/Cheryl Littlejohn

Feb. 12 - Mary-Martha Guild

Feb. 19 - Ed Schnell/Patrick Roberts

Feb. 26 - Tom Finney/Kelly Lawson

MY FAITHFUL SHEPHERD

By Delores Staats

Every time I go astray
And wander from the narrow way
And find no time Your Word to read
Or to Your promises give heed;
No matter what my plans or schemes
Nothing satisfies, it seems!
My work becomes a dreadful chore
And hubby seems to be a bore!
I find my thankful heart is gone
And somehow everything goes wrong!

So tenderly You guide me back
And turn me from this wrongful track;
Revive my soul on pastures green;
Restore my hope and joy serene.
Then life once more is kind and good
I like my work the way I should!
This lesson all our life we learn
We're sheep who know not where to turn.
O, Lord, without You life is drear;
I'm glad that You're my Shepherd, dear!

CLASSIC CHURCH BULLETIN BLOOPERS

--The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the church basement on Friday at 7 p.m. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

--The concert held in the Fellowship Hall was a great success. Special thanks are due to the minister's daughter, who labored the whole evening at the piano, which as usual fell upon her.

--22 members were present at the church meeting held at the home of Mrs. Marsha Crutchfield last evening. Mrs. Crutchfield and Mrs. Rankin sang a duet, The Lord Knows Why.

--Hymn 43: "Great God, What Do I see Here?" Preacher: The Rev. Horace Blodgett, Hymn 47: "Hark! An Awful Voice is Sounding."

--On a church bulletin board the minister's illness: GOD IS GOOD - Dr. Hargreaves is better.

--Potluck supper: prayer and medication to follow.

--Don't let worry kill you off - let the church help.

--8 new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

--The choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir.

--Weight Watchers will meet at 7 p.m. Please use large double door at the side entrance.

PARAMENTS - (cloth adornments on the altar, pulpit and lectern)

BLUE: used during advent to symbolize hope in the coming Savior.

Lectern Symbols: IHS (Latin for "In Hac Salus) with cross means "In this sign you will conquer; in this cross is salvation." The burning torch signifies witnessing for Christ with enlighten-ment and fervor. "Let your light shine..."

Altar Symbols: The crib suggests the lowliness and poverty surrounding the infant Savior. The "halo" shows there is life in the crib. The cross symbolizes faith. The four candles are the four Sundays of Advent, peace, love, joy and hope. The Church is the candlestick holding aloft the enlightening good news of Jesus Christ.

WHITE: used on particular festival days like Christmas, Easter, etc.

Lectern Symbols: The crown of life shows the promise of eternal life to those who follow Christ, the King of kings. The sun of righteousness symbolizes the life-giving powers of Jesus and that the light of the Son provides spiritual life.

Altar Symbols: Sometimes the word PAX appears. It is the Latin word for Peace. Once again IHS with the cross means "In this sign you will conquer." (In Hac Salus)

GREEN: used to symbolize growth during Trinity and Epiphany.

Lectern Symbols: The triangle indicates the one and inseparable Triune God and the equality, eternity, and unity of the Three Persons of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

Altar Symbols: The triangle represents the Trinity, with each side representing one of the Three Persons in the Trinity. The Triquetra, consisting of three equal arcs, also represents the Trinity. Combined with the triangle, the Three-Person nature of the Trinity is double-emphasized.

PURPLE: used during the Lenten season.

Lectern Symbols: The crown of thorns and cross symbolize the suffering of our Savior in our place. The cross and crown are a symbol of Christ's kingly office and stand for the reward to those who are faithful unto death. Christ's resurrection was a victory over death and provides all believers with the crown of eternal life.

Altar Symbols: may include two lamps which represent wisdom and knowledge. The two flames show the two-fold nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (both human and divine). The three trumpets announce the coming of the Savior and are a call to worship and the resurrection.

RED: used on Pentecost, Reformation, Pastoral installations-ordinations, confirmations and other special celebrations, represent the flame which descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost and the color of blood representing those martyrs who risked their lives to bring the Gospel to us.

Lectern Symbols: The dove with circles represents the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The anchor shows the security we have in Christ who holds us steady in stormy times.

Altar Symbols: The anchor is our faith in Christ, the open Bible is the Word, while the Alpha and Omega (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) show that Jesus is the beginning and end of all things. The Latin cross over the earth symbolizes the Gospel spreading in every direction to the far corners of the world.