

PASTOR'S PENNINGS

How can I be happy when the future is so uncertain?

“Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.” Matthew 13:16

Every generation talks about the “good ole days.” As we embark on a new year, many people would be more than happy to go back to the “good ole days” of years ago.

Today, stock market swoons, foreclosures, and unemployment are all too common. Grumbling and complaining occur as many people find it difficult to provide for their personal needs. These things, along with other personal struggles, may make us long for the “good ole days.”

Amidst all the turmoil, even when nest eggs crack and portfolios decline, we can still move forward with certainty that all of our needs will be met. Why? Because Jesus has met all of our true needs and promises to provide for our future!

Jesus came into the world so that we can be happy every day with the kind of joy that only He can provide. He blesses us--makes us happy--by the powerful things He accomplished in our place: He lived a perfect life as our substitute; He died on the cross to win forgiveness of sins for each of us; and He won the victory over sin, death, and the devil by His triumphant resurrection from the grave.

God tells us about all these blessings in the Bible. In His written Word, God's plan for our future is laid out, and we are informed how Jesus fulfilled God's saving will for us. Jesus said, “Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.” Our Savior teaches us that we can be happy as we give attention to God's love as it is described and explained for us on the pages of Scripture.

Jesus' work is not limited to the spans of generations; it is a gift to all people for all time. God's faithfulness to His world of people has remained the one constant since He created all things. Trusting in His love, we can overcome concerns we have due to personal circumstances. We can be truly happy because we see in the Bible how our Savior gave His life for us and how He is now preparing for us an eternal home in heaven, the place of unbridled joy.

God invites everyone to hear the good news of Jesus and celebrate the wonderful message of salvation. With that confidence, we do not have to look back to the “good ole days” for a sense of happiness but rather look forward to the eternal happiness that awaits us in heaven--all because of God's great love for us in Jesus!

PRAYER LIST

Several people have been ill this last month:

-- Mrs. Mary Cartwright has had trouble with her lungs that caused her to be hospitalized and requires her to be near or on oxygen much of the time.

-- Tom Bigaouette has had the same problem and had a bout with pneumonia.

- Janice Gallarneau's cousin, Carol Crawford, is not doing well with her breast cancer.
- Mike Huller asked for our prayers and God answered them richly.
- Tiffany McRae, a new prospect, had her thyroid taken out last week.
- Butch and Bonnie Barnett asked for a prayer of thanksgiving to celebrate their 37th wedding anniversary.

Please pray for them all. As we begin a New Year, please make your daily prayer that of St. Paul who wrote in 2 Thessalonians 3:1, "Pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored."

EVANGELISM

The mission of our church is (Matthew 28:18-20) to go, baptize and teach God's Word to all nations. That is how God will make disciples out of people who formally did not trust Him. When we try to go about applying the Great Commission around our church we usually focus our efforts around trying to find and then nourish the prospects we do find.

Before we try to find and nourish prospects several principles and assumptions should be examined:

1. That we have a friendly caring congregation with maturing Christians eager and ready to receive and welcome the babes in the faith who do show up on our prospect list.
2. That we are ready to nurture the prospects toward some action like attending church or an adult Bible information class.
3. That prayer will be needed for both the workers trying to nourish the prospects as well as prayer for the prospects themselves.
4. That many visits will need to be made not only by the pastor but also by congregation members. There may be a canvassing visit, a listening visit to see where the prospect is spiritually, an information visit in which Law and Gospel is shared, an invitation visit, etc.
5. That the goal of all nurturing efforts is to share the Law and Gospel, sin and grace in different ways, and, if possible, involve them in an on-going study of God's Word. The Word works!

ESTABLISH A CONTEXT FOR FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

Session Two Continued, of a WELS Steward-ship Conference attended by Terry Eischen

1. Communicate the mission and ministry God places before you. Matthew 28:19-20 - "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

A) Build on a “Kingdom of God” focus--Perhaps the construction of a written “mission statement” would be beneficial for the congregation.

B) Ask, “What is God calling us to be and do?...

In this place

At this time

With these resources

C) Focus on people elements not institutional elements.

How has it touched lives?

How will it touch their life?

2. Provide a vision that can be clearly stated and grasped.

A) Build on your strengths first.

B) Communicate your focus:

Clearly

Regularly

In a variety of ways

3. Equip people to be “flexible” (and meet opportunities) to shift resources and approaches to freshly connect the Gospel opportunities to a rapidly changing world.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Please give a big welcome to Trevor Oestreich and his three children, Colton, Noel, and Gavin, who have just transferred in from Gethsemane Lutheran Church. Trevor is an engineer working with the installation of GPS and electrical systems in airplanes. He loves to play guitar and ride his motorcycle when the weather is nice. We are happy to have you as a part of your spiritual family, Trevor. It is our prayer that you will be richly blessed during the time the Lord gives you with us.

MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE CLASSES

Our congregational Monday night Bible study will continue starting January 3rd from 6:30PM-8:30PM. We always stop for a ten-fifteen minute break. The intent of the class will be to answer questions that many modern day skeptics have about Christians, the Bible, and of course, about God. January 3rd will deal with the religious excuses many make and the temptation to put off till later in life the matter of being right with God. On January 10th, we will evaluate the false doctrine of “reincarnation.” On January 17th, we will examine what the Bible teaches about the devil. On January

24th, we will examine whether Christianity's purpose to make this place a better place to live (Social justice) or is it to bring the message of Christ's redemption to the world so that as many as believe will have the joy of living forever in heaven. On January 31st, we will deal with how we can face rejection of our families because of the biblical principles we insist on following.

The two hours we spend is filled with fellowship and lots of discussion. It is a great way to spend a Monday evening.

PASTOR/TEACHER/DELEGATE CONFERENCE

Our South Central District's annual Pastor, Teacher, Lay Delegate Conference will be held on Thursday and Friday, January 20-21, at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Corpus Christi, TX. The conference begins at 10:00AM Thursday with Divine Service and the Lord's Supper. It will adjourn at 3:15PM Friday.

Pastor, Al Cardwell, Scott Peters, Tony Taylor, Doug Hahn and maybe some others are planning on going. They will leave Wednesday morning, January 19th, and get back sometime early Saturday morning.

A Circuit Pastors' Meeting will begin the day at 8:00AM on Thursday. The rest of the day will be taken with reports from the District President, the Synodical Council representative, the District Mission Board, the World Mission Board, The Evangelism Committee, The Commission on Worship, The Special Ministries Committee, Adult Discipleship, Camp Shiloh, Ministry of Christian Giving, Commission on Lutheran Schools, LPS, MLC, CEF, LACE, China Partners, and Kingdom Workers. The day will end with an essay on Brother To Brother Encouragement from 1 Thessalonians.

On Friday, January 21st, those assembled will hear essays and have discussions on Definitions of Addiction: Scriptural and Secular, The Need for Prevention and Treatment, Assisting Others in Breaking the Cycle of Addiction. Every morning and afternoon session will begin and end with a devotion.

If anyone else would like to accompany our group to this conference, please call Pastor, Al Cardwell or Scott Peters. If we need to we will take two cars.

BRANCHES BAND

A WELS group of musicians named "Branches Band" helped about 45 people prepare for Christmas with a beautiful concert. They were a husband and wife team and one extra man for the electronic organ. The singers consisted of the husband and wife team, along with the one friend. The music consisted of various common and not so common hymn arrangements that were beautiful. The singing featured variations on hymns with lots of congregation participation. All the people Pastor talked with after the concert felt blessed to have heard these talented people.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING HIGHLIGHTS

On Sunday, December 19th, about 25 congregational members, including many young people, went to sing carols at the homes of various members. At the end, everyone met at George and Carroll Dinse's home for food and fellowship. What a loving way to serve one another in love.

THANKS TO THOSE WHO USED THEIR GOD GIVEN TALENTS DURING THE PAST YEAR

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, tells them that he and Timothy have joined together to thank God for them. This is what he said. "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints, the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth" (Col. 1:3-6).

What Paul wrote to the Colossians could just as well have been written about the members of Holy Cross. So many of you have been examples of faith and have shown your love by unselfish service and offerings to the Lord. Some cleaned the church, some used their gifts of music, some shared with food, many were on boards and committees, many others visited, prayed and gave their hearts in service for God in thankfulness of the service God freely and richly gave them. God has blessed these gifts. As your divinely called Shepherd and Spiritual Overseer, I thank God for each of you and for everything each of you have done for the glory of His name and the edifying of His church.

NEWS FROM THE LWMS

The ladies of the LWMS are sewing pill bags for the Central African Medical Mission. Anyone interested in assisting with this project can get the directions from Patti Buzynskyj or Joy Hahn. There is a sample of the bag on the Mary-Martha bulletin board at the church in the kitchen area. Each pill bag should have a Bible passage written in their language. The bags will be sent to either Zambia or Malawi. Other items needed along with the bags are: toothbrushes, toothpaste, sun screen, sun hats, and cotton balls. These items will be collected later, shortly before the pill bags are sent.

The next Mary-Martha meeting will be Saturday, January 8, 2011 at 9:30AM. All ladies of the congregation are invited and encouraged to attend.

THANK YOU!!! THANK YOU

The first annual Holy Cross Christmas Card Tree was enjoyed by all. A special thanks to the George Dinses for providing the tree and the beautifully decorated window, and to all who greeted members of their Holy Cross family by placing a card on the tree. Now the ladies of the LWMS will take the Christmas cards and send them to the Prisoner Card Project so they can be remade for the prisoners to use as greetings for their friends and family. Again, thank you one and all!

VOTERS' MEETING

The Holy Cross congregation Annual Voters' Body Meeting will be held January 23rd following the pot luck dinner after the worship service. This meeting will follow the Church Council Meeting, which will be held January 18th at 7:00PM. The Church Council meets to receive recommendations from each of the Boards. From these recommendations the Council prepares the agenda items for the Voters' Meeting. Each Board has been asked to make a report on their activities of the past year and their plans for the year 2011. Make plans to spend an hour taking part in the Lord's work.

PASTOR'S CHRISTMAS LETTER

Pastor's Christmas letter has been posted on the church bulletin board and on the church web site, www.holycrossokc.org under the menu button, "Pastor's Update." It is also on the congregations Face book page. In the address bar of your internet browser type in: www.facebook.com. If you have a Face book account, search for Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Local Business. You can also do a search for Pastor's name and request to be a friend. After being accepted, you can read the Christmas letter there. There are many photos of recent church activities on the church Face book site. Check it out!

THURSDAY NIGHT BIBLE CLASS

The Thursday night Bible study classes will start with Christian Eisenbeis on Thursday, January 6th from 6:30-8:00PM and then alternate with Al Cardwell every week as was done in the past, continuing until March 3rd. At this time a break will be taken so that everyone can concentrate on attending the Lenten services.

Al's class will continue the "Introduction to the Old Testament" in the Book of Genesis, beginning in Chapter 13, where Abram and Lot separate, Lot gets captured, and God makes a covenant with Abram. Once the Book of Genesis is completed, the class will accelerate on through the Old Testament with the lesson outlines and go on to the New Testament. Once Genesis is done, an overview of one book of the Bible will be given per class session.

Christian's class will be on the Augsburg Confession. This course will be followed after Easter with a course on the Formula of Concord, which is another one of our Lutheran Confessions.

Plan to attend these very informative Bible teaching courses.

MEN'S LUNCHEON

On Saturday, January 9th, all men of Holy Cross congregation are invited to a luncheon at 12:00 Noon at Holy Cross. This will include fellowship, a Bible study (led by Pastor), and a meal. The meal details have not been worked out at this time. All men, plan on attending and become better acquainted with each other and with God's Word.

GRACE NEWS

Attendance was down in December due to an unavoidable change in worship time at the Embassy Suites Hotel. The hotel refused to sign a contract for the regular 1:00PM meetings for two weeks in

December because the military needed all the space. Although the attendance was down, the spirit of those attending remains high. We expect a rise in our attendance during the month of January. Grace is waiting with eager hearts to see whether some of their big grant applications were approved by the participating grant boards.

WELS

World Mission News from the Dominican Republic

Well, our Christmas tree went to the dogs - literally. The watchdogs that guard the church during the night decided to "play" with the Christmas tree. They tipped the tree over and chewed on the branches and broke most of the ornaments. There was not much left of what had been a beautiful Christmas decoration. So our beautiful tree was recycled and now we have several decorative wreaths, hung high up on the walls!

Recycling is a very common thing in third world countries. Nothing is ever thrown out. Everything is fixed again and again until it cannot be fixed anymore and then it is taken apart and used as parts for repairing other items!

One very common item that is recycled is the oil drum. You see them everywhere. Most people use them for garbage cans. But some creative people have used them for dog houses. And we see them used as grills that hold quite a large quantity of meat for barbecuing.

We also see many people that push carts around town looking for things that can be reused or sold. Rule number one is - never throw anything away! If you do, expect someone to pick it out of the trash and find some use for it. This man pushes his cart around our neighborhood. Usually he is looking through the trash for empty bottles which he can trade in for a peso a piece. This is his income to take care of his family.

It is really interesting to see how things that could be trash become useful items. Chewed up trees become beautiful wreaths, oil drums become grills, used bottles become a family's income. And here also, God has deigned to recycle souls - from sinner to saints. His word is changing hearts taking away sin and guilt and giving forgiveness and hope. People who feel "chewed up" by their sins and rejected and "thrown out" by others hear the good news of forgiveness in Jesus and that because of His perfect life and innocent death, God has a use for them - to serve Him and to speak of His love to others.

So, even though we had to recycle our tree, our hope is still strong. This past Sunday over 80 recycled souls attended worship service to hear that their sins separate them from God, but that because of Jesus, in His great love and mercy He will still find a useful purpose for them in this life. Trees become wreaths, oil drums become grills, bottles become pesos, sinners become saints.

Posted by Kathryn Strackbein, sister-in-law to your Pastor

Christmas Letter from our District President, Vilas Glaeske

Dear fellow workers in Christ's kingdom and your families,

Heart to heart greetings from our house to yours! Advent and Christmas can get a bit crowded at times, but it is a wonderful privilege to bring the message of the miracle of Bethlehem to God's people during these seasons. Sitting at the bedside of a sick member and pointing out to the dear soul the loving heart of the Savior to come for us to save us so that we can come to be with Him eternally is such a joy. Worship brings restful moments to reflect on the heart of our Heavenly Father in giving us His Son. It gives us a time of reflection realizing how often we may have considered it a burden rather than a privilege. John calls us to look down the road made straight and smooth in repentance and in the confidence that when Jesus comes again, we will join Him going through the gates of paradise without the flaming sword but with joyous welcome of the heavenly choir.

Thank you all for the opportunity to serve you again this year. Thank you all for your efforts in working harmoniously in your calling and for the respect you show each other as we strive to extend the kingdom. This is really the focus, isn't it? Not us, but Him. Not our little acre, but His eternal kingdom.

Join the children in singing the old favorite songs of Christmas and in childlike faith receive Him anew with gladness.

Vilas and Ruth

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 - JANUARY GREETERS

Jan. 2 - Mike & Latischa Huller

Jan. 9 - George & Nancy McKinnis

Jan. 16 - Scott & Carole Peters

Jan. 23 - Jack & LaVon Post

Jan. 30 - Byron & Dina Shoumaker

HC - JANUARY CLEANING LIST

Jan. 1 - Shawn & Charity Stuever

Jan. 8 - Mary-Martha Guild

Jan. 15 - Duane & Sunny Stuever/Butch & Bonnie Barnett

Jan. 22 - Marlon & Karen Henry/Mike & Latischa Huller

Jan. 29 - Unknown

WORK

By Delores Staats

I used to hate housework;

Oh, such a bore!

Doing the same things

Over and o're!

Never could see

What I really had done;

Cooking and cleaning

Wasn't much fun!

Oh, for a job

Where I'd really get paid!

Exciting! A challenge!

Then I'd have it made!

Finally, I learned

So I'm no longer bored;

No matter how lowly

I'm serving the Lord!

BIBLE QUIZ

Directions: Read each of the following statements carefully. Each statement is either "true" or "false." If the statement is true, draw a circle around the "T" -- If the statement is partly or wholly false, draw a circle around the "F."

- 1) T F -- If I know Jesus as my Savior and trust in Him for forgiveness of sins, I have saving faith.
- 2) T F -- True faith is possible only after man has learned about the true God.
- 3) T F -- Our knowledge regarding the creation of the world is a matter of faith.
- 4) T F -- Science has proved that man descended from animal ancestors.
- 5) T F -- Modern science has thoroughly disproved the Bible account of creation.
- 6) T F -- The devil is not an imaginary person, but a real being, who seeks to tempt us and destroy our souls in hell.
- 7) T F -- It is a great comfort to the believer to know that God and His angels are near to protect him amid all danger.
- 8) T F -- Through Adam's fall the image of God was lost and is partially restored in those who believe in Christ as their Savior.
- 9) T F -- Adam was made in God's image; that is, he knew God as his Maker and Father and was without sin.
- 10) T F -- If man still possessed the divine image, he would by nature live in blissful communion with God.

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ANSWER KEY: 1) True - 2) True - 3) Question 3 is true in the sense that what we have not seen is received by faith. Some may answer false because it is not only a matter of faith - it is God's truth and therefore fact. - 4) False - 5) False - 6) True -

7) True - 8) True - 9) Question 9 is true, although the image of God includes other points as well. - 10) True.

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