

PASTOR'S PENNINGS

Jesus Has the Power to Heal

“Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed” (Luke 7:6,7).

It was an unlikely scene. A man of rank, a Roman centurion--a captain of 100 soldiers--sends an urgent message for help to a lowly Jewish rabbi named Jesus. The captain's valued servant was on his deathbed. The physicians had exhausted their remedies. Time was running out. Jesus was his only hope.

This wasn't a last-ditch cry of desperation, though. It was a prayer of trust. The centurion had heard about--maybe even witnessed--some of Jesus' miracles. He was convinced that Jesus had the power to do anything. The Lord only needed to say the word, and the centurion's servant would be healed. And that's just what Jesus did.

Jesus still has the power to do anything. He cares about what we're going through. He's the only one who can really help. But like the centurion, we must admit that we are not worthy of His attention. God is holy. We are not holy. We fail Him. We fail others. Why should He bother?

Every miracle showed God's good intentions toward the unworthy. Each one was saying, “God loves you!” By delivering people from impossible problems, Jesus proved His power over the far greater problems of death and hell. Jesus exchanged His life for ours and paid the horrific penalty for every sin when He died on the cross. “God made Jesus who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Through Jesus, God declares us “not guilty.”

What are you facing today? Whatever it is, you matter deeply to Jesus. He has both the power and the desire to help. He has the wisdom and love to give us exactly what we need. He needs only to say the word. So, don't wait, trust Him like the centurion did. You will be richly blessed.

PRAYER LIST

We prayed for several people this last month in our church services. Among them were: Phillip Class who had back surgery on May 4th; Doris Hahn who had a heart attack; Pastor, who got stuck in Greece with the volcano ash blocking air traffic in Europe; Gene and Ada Hill and Carroll and George Dinse who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversaries. Finally, we prayed for the Stuevers, Piñas and others who suffered from the tornados of May 10th.

Let us thank the Lord that at the time of this writing, Phillip and Doris made some remarkable recoveries, that Pastor made it back home and that He has given this congregation such faithful servants as the Hills and the Dinses. May God continue to enrich their lives with His grace!

As for the tornados, we can thank God for them too. In fact we are to thank and praise God not only for the good things but also the tragedies that occur. To understand why this is so, listen to the following Bible verse, Matthew 11:28-30. There Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Professor Daniel Deutschlander, in his book, *The Theology of the Cross*, offers the following commentary on this verse.

"If the Christian had no cross to bear, he would need nothing of what Jesus promises in these verses. Nor would he have the least yearning for it. But in point of fact the cross-bearer is often worn out in his heart and parched in his soul. He comes to the Savior in the Word and sacrament, longing for relief. That longing is not, however, for a life of ease without the cross. No, that could never be! For Christ has promised the cross and promised that it will not go away until the Christian enters into the glory prepared for all who follow under the sacred sign of the cross. Jesus carefully words his promise in Matthew 11 with that in mind. The word translated as "rest" would be better translated as "refreshment." Rest, final rest, comes at the end, but that is not what Jesus is talking about in this promise. This is a promise for a refreshment that enables the cross-bearer to get back to the labor and the load. The labor and the load become light not because they have disappeared but because of Jesus' promise that the yoke is his yoke and the burden his burden. We therefore carry and endure it with him and in his company. That is the company of one who loved us all the way to the cross, to hell and back." There lies the reason for joy.

STEWARDSHIP

Build On A Deeper Foundation For Financial Stewardship

1) Examine the many ways the Bible talks about money. Realize the frequency of the subject of money: 16 of 38 parables given by Christ; 1 out of every 10 verses; there are 500 verses on prayer--but around 2,860 verses relating to money and possessions.

The reason Jesus spoke about money so frequently is: a) It relates to many things in life; b) We live in a money oriented society--need to emphasize the Gospel message above the material things on earth!

2) What money stories in the Bible have left the greatest impact on you? Some stories that may come to mind: a) the widow and her mite; b) the rich man and Jesus; c) Cain and Abel; and d) Elijah and the widow of Zerah.

3) Keep in mind the goal of the whole Scriptures. John 20:30,31, "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing you may have life in His name." Money and possessions are not what we believe or trust in but only in Christ Jesus.

The Wider Context Of A Christian's Stewardship Of Money

1) It begins with my understanding of God and what He is to me. Isaiah 43:1,2 - "But now this is what the LORD says--He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have

redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine...For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”

This answers the question “Who is God?” -- so I am not influenced by a non-Christian world view, which is propelled from an understanding of justification -- Jesus' work to make us “not guilty” before God (justified--just as if I had not sinned).

2) It hinges on our identity not our behavior (it is God's work, not ours). Galatians 3:26-29 - “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ ...If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.” 1 Peter 2:9 - “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.”

This answers the question, “Who am I?” -- so I am not influenced by the world's view of me. People serve and give as they believe, not as they are able.

3) It is a focused portion of the bigger picture of whole-life discipleship. 2 Corinthians 5:14,15 - “For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

This answers the question, “Who am I living for?” Pastor David Valleskey says, “Financial stewardship is part of a Christian's life of sanctification...and...fits in with such activities as worship, prayer, charity, and evangelism...The proper way to motivate and sustain sound stewardship practices is to do so in the same way that one motivates and sustains a Christian's life of sanctification in general...The gospel (not the law--or principles) is the dynamic, the power supply, the motivator for a Christian's life of sanctification.”

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Welcome Shelby Stuever and Jonah Shoenborn.

You have both studied hard and gained deeper insight into the truths of God's Holy Word. More importantly, your faith in Jesus was strengthened. On the first Sunday of June you will experience your first Holy Communion. This sacrament of Christ's body and blood along with baptism is one of the only two means of Grace God uses to feed our faith in Jesus so that it grows and blossoms into giant flowering trees filled with fruits. The other means of Grace is the Gospel. May the sacrament you receive be the beginning of a life time of regular reception of this heavenly food. With this gift of Himself, and the forgiveness He alone can give you by faith, you will be brought safely to eternal life. So cherish this gift, use it often! It is the priceless gift of Grace.

OUTREACH

Here are some tips on witnessing our faith in Jesus.

--BE...a good listener. "listening is earning the right to be heard." By listening carefully you find the "doors and windows" by which to enter people's lives with specific Law and Gospel.

--BE...sensitive to times of need or change in a persons life. Outline: pPSs (problems...THE Problem (a broken relationship with God...sin). The Solution (Jesus Christ and His cross)...solutions to all problems found in Christ and His Word.)

--BE...patient - See 1 Corinthians 3:6,7 (Witnessing is like farming.)

--BE...joyful - Reason for joy? See Luke 10:20 (Have a resurrection faith.)

--BE...normal - Don't be weird! Act normal...not better - just forgiven in Christ!

NEW BIBLE STUDY FOR MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN AT HOME

A request has been made by a couple of moms for special Bible studies. If you are a mother with kids at home and would like to be a part of a weekly or monthly Bible study geared around your special needs, please meet with Pastor Strackbein after church on June 6th. Bring some ideas you would like to have presented or discussed along with ideas on time and frequency.

MARY-MARTHA

The Annual National Lutheran Women's Missionary Society Convention will be held June 24-27 in St. Louis, MO. More information with cost, etc. is posted on the bulletin board. Pastor, Barbara and Joy Hahn are planning to attend. If any other ladies would like to go, contact Joy Hahn.

The Mite Box offerings for the projects voted on at the Spring Rally in Arlington, TX in April were, the Vicars in Mission Settings, and the Russia Projects. The total Mite Box offerings from all the congregations in the Circuit totaled \$3,865.62.

Our Guild is planning to have a noon luncheon for all the ladies of Holy Cross congregation on Saturday, October 2nd. This is to get better acquainted with everyone and to encourage more ladies to attend our monthly meetings and Bible study. We do not meet during the summer, so the next meeting will be Saturday, September 11th at 9:30AM.

EDUCATION

Some of you may have heard Pastor Strackbein use the cards written by the students at Gethsemane Lutheran School run by our sister church in the northwest part of Oklahoma City. For those of you who did not, listen to Pastor Strackbein's sermon on the web site for Sunday, May 16th. The children in grades 1-4 were told of how the tornados had damaged some of our members' property and they wanted to do something. They used hymns, Scripture, personal comments and drawings to beautifully express their faith and love. Christian education is the answer to a host of attacks by Satan against the family and church in our country.

We here at Holy Cross do not have a Christian day school. We do have Christian education in our Sunday School designed to help parents bring up their children to know the doctrines and history of the Bible. Our children will be a part of the future of our congregation. If they do not learn to love the truths of Scripture, if they do not know to differentiate between Law and Gospel, how will Holy Cross remain faithful in all the truths of the Bible? If they are not taught, how will they ever be able to counteract the faith destroying teachings of secular humanism, evolution, and the general trend of our society to drift away from God?

The answer is to use the tools God has given us. Go over your children's textbook lessons thoroughly. De-program from their minds any false doctrine they may have learned from their school texts. Spend time with your children in devotions morning and evening. (After breakfast and supper??) If you use "Meditations" from our publishing house, explain how the lesson is a repeat of the theme used the Sunday before in church. Sing or read hymns. Use the morning devotion guide on page 152 of the hymn book to help you lead the devotion. Spend time memorizing and discussing the catechism. Show your child how important church and the Word are to you in your life. Use the very fine institution we have at Holy Cross in our Sunday School to help your children learn the Bible stories and lesson applications they will need to participate well in and get the most out of confirmation class. Christian education is vital to the well being of our church. It's an important key to their spiritual well-being as adults.

Please support the Christian education our church offers with your prayers and faithful participation. Perhaps we could call our Sunday School, "God's mission to His children."

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

VBS will be July 19-23 this year during the evening. More on the theme next month. For now, write the dates down and make your plans. Classes will be available for ages 4-18. Invite your friends and pray that some children will learn to love Jesus for the first time and that others will grow in the love they have for Him already.

YOUNG PEOPLE/YOUTH VOLLEYBALL

On Saturday, June 12th, the Stewardship Board would like to host a volleyball or softball activity for teens and young adults. It starts at Noon. Bring your own food. A grill will be provided.

BIBLE DISCOVERY SERIES

Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) is offering another Bible teaching series of books titled "Bible Discovery Series." It is a companion book series to the previous two book series "The People's Bible" and "People's Bible Teaching" published by NPH. The "Bible Discovery Series" is a 15-volume series which will be published over the next 6 years. If ordered by June 20, 2010 a 25% discount can be received on all books along with free shipping. Page 2 in the May issue of "Forward in Christ" gives all the details on the book series and subscription requirements.

PIONEER/YOUTH GROUP

Let's go fishing. The fishing scheduled for May 15th was cancelled due to rain and wet grounds, so the fishing has been rescheduled for June 5th starting any time after 10:00AM. Everyone, young and old, grab your fishing rod and any special fish bait you want to use and come to Jack and LaVon Post's lake at 14405 Prairie Lane in Moore. Worms for bait will be provided. Also, bring along whatever you would like for a noon snack. A grill will be available for hamburgers and hot dogs. Please do not tell the fish we are coming - it is to be a surprise.

GRACE NEWS

Attendance has been down this past month at Grace. On the other hand lots of positive things are happening. A new Bible Information Class has been started with a new family. John and Candice Lupin have three children - Timothy, Gabriel and Cora. Two children, Shelby Stuever and Jonah Shoenborn, were confirmed and have become members of Holy Cross at Grace. Visitation of prospects has been going on and will continue in June. Discussions and plans are being discussed on what mission strategy or strategies will best bring the Gospel home to those who are without Christ in the area and to get our name known. More on that later when something is concrete.

Please keep this mission endeavor in your prayers. If even one person comes to faith as a result of this effort it will be worth it. Actually, it will have been worth it even if no one comes to faith, so long as many new people heard the Law and Gospel. Our job is not to bring anyone to faith. That is the Holy Spirit's work. Our task is to get the message of God's plan of salvation out to the world. Those who don't listen will be judged. They will be without excuse. Those who believe as a result of our message will be saved. What a joy that God is allowing us to be the instruments God uses to bring the power of the Gospel to bear on their hearts and see the results of faith.

PENTECOST

Last Sunday was the first Sunday of the Pentecost season. What does this really mean? And, where did it come from and why is it so important?

Pentecost takes place 50 days after Easter. Where? In the Upper Room -- the same place Jesus held the Last Supper with the twelve disciples, Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot.

The Biblical narrative of Pentecost is given in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. As recounted in Acts 2:14, "When the day of Pentecost came they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were setting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues, as the Spirit enabled them."

What is the Holy Spirit? The Giver of Life as stated in the introduction of the "People's Bible Teachings" book by John F. Vogt (which can be found in our church Library). Introduction: "Holy Spirit."

“I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him.” Martin Luther confessed in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, I am saved only because “the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”

Because the Holy Spirit plays such a vital role in God's plan of salvation, the Nicene Creed calls the Holy Spirit “the Giver of Life.” The Spirit is active, powerful, and very much at work in God's people, giving them the life Jesus won for them. He brings us to faith and keeps us in faith, thereby giving us spiritual life; life lived in the intimate fellowship with God our Father. As the Holy Spirit does His work, He doesn't call much attention to Himself. Rather, He calls attention to Jesus, our Savior. In spite of this fact, the Holy Spirit has attracted quite a bit of attention through the history of the Christian Church. He and His work even have been at the center of controversy. Much of the controversy in the modern-day Church revolves around the charismatic movement.

Christians view the Holy Spirit and His gifts differently. In this book we will look at what the Bible says about the points in controversy and find its answers to them. More importantly, I pray this book will help us grow in our knowledge of the closeness to the Holy Spirit. I pray the Holy Spirit will not just be a doctrine of our theology, but also the source of spiritual power for our lives.

Pentecost is the time that we reflect back on our own Baptism, and look ahead for our new confirmands. The beginning of Pentecost is recognized by the RED parament on the altar which symbolizes JOY and the FIRE of the Holy Spirit.

Al Cardwell, Board of Elders

HOLY CROSS NURSERY

Holy Cross has a cradle roll program designed to encourage children to enter Sunday School at the age of 4. Currently we do not have a Sunday School program for our children from the infant age to 3 years old. Our church is growing and we are now gaining new members that have children in this age group and our young mothers need a nursery for these children. We have basically outgrown the cry room which was built over 30 years ago, and the needs at Holy Cross have changed. Some mothers are asking about space to set up a nursery. The sound system we have throughout the church will be a plus for this program. If this gets up and running, we will ask for rugs and toys for this age group and craft materials to teach these children.

If you would be interested in helping in this area, please talk with members of the Education Board, Craig Ballinger, Fred Jenkins, or Don Chaddock. One of them is always here during Sunday School. Otherwise, contact Sheila Taylor or Elder Al Cardwell.

THE STORM

On May 10th many tornados hit Oklahoma and many people were hurt badly. Two of our member families, the Duane Stuevers and the Piñas, suffered huge crippling loses. Since that time, the congregation had a large crew help with cleanup at the Piña home. Many others at Holy Cross received

damages from the hail. Prayers have been requested from the District. At a special meeting of the Holy Cross Finance Committee held with two pastors from Synod's Committee on Relief, it was resolved to request a special offering from the members of our District and to have a special offering at Holy Cross dedicated to helping those who suffered the most damage. The Elders will plan a Sunday and announce it. The Synod Committee on Relief will put our needs on their web page allowing anyone in the Synod to give to the Lord by helping those who were most severely hurt here at Holy Cross or those severely hurt people Holy Cross chooses to help outside of the church. They will also announce the results of their visit to one or two WELS foundations to see if they can be of some assistance. Some basic emergency funds were left behind to give immediate aid to those who were most affected. A basic plan for how to distribute all offerings that come in was decided upon by the Finance Committee.

The storm has become a great opportunity to show love and to be loved. When Israel came to the red sea and the Egyptian army was close behind, Moses told the Israelites, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today...The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Exodus 14:13,14). May we join with the Psalmist with portions of Psalm 31, "I trust in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my god.' In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me..." Let us thank the Lord that He has given us this storm to wrestle with for in so doing it will teach us to rely ever more on Him, the Rock of our Salvation.

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 - JUNE GREETERS

June 6 - Mike & Latischa Huller

June 13 - George & Nancy McKinnis

June 20 - Scott & Carole Peters

June 27 - Jack & LaVon Post

HC - JUNE CLEANING LIST

June 5 - Marlon & Karen Henry/Mike & Latischa Huller

June 12 - Al & Carol Cardwell/John Deards

June 19 - Bill & Fran Shoumaker/Cheryl Littlejohn

June 26 - Ed & Kathy Schnell/Patrick Roberts

HC - JUNE MOWING LIST

June 5 - Dean & Troy Thomas

June 12 - Jack Post/Andy Quam

June 19 - Rick Poulin/Paul Barnett

June 26 - John Deards/Al Cardwell

FAITH

By Delores Staats, Barb Strackbein's Mother

When I behold the clouds on high

Or ponder stars up in the sky

I marvel, Lord, You think at all

Of man who is so very small!

And yet You tell us in Your Word

That all our sighs and prayers are heard!

Your children you do clothe and feed

And graciously supply our need.

Lo! Even hairs upon our head

Are numbered carefully and read!

And sparrows, too, tho' very small

Do not without permission fall!

Tho' lilies neither sew nor spin,

Such beauty we can ne're begin

To see ourselves in such array;

No king was ever dressed as they!

How foolish, then, to not depend

Completely on our Heavenly Friend;

Who bids us come to Him each day

And answers gladly when we pray!
How can we learn to trust His love
And know our help comes from above?
He teaches by a child small
Who has the greatest faith of all!

JUNGLE JOURNAL - January 2010

God willing, we will soon realize one of the biggest dreams in our jungle mission work: The opening of a Lutheran high school on an Amazon tribal reserve. We have less than two months left before March 15, the beginning of the academic school year in Peru. Last week in the port town of Yurimaguas, Pastor Ronal and I met several Shawi elders from Louis Terry (site of the high school) including our grade school teacher Felix and his family. Together, we would take a rented motorboat two hours down river and then hike 12 miles through the jungle to the village.

Ronal and I had our favorite assistants along for the trip, (I'll call him Juan), for added security. Recently there has been an increase in drug activity in the area. Juan is a member of one of our mestizo village congregations, an expert in the jungle, and a trusted friend. Before becoming a Christian, Juan himself was heavily involved in the drug trade. For a while he ran a midnight crew of boys deep in the jungle who stomped coca leaves in a shallow pit filled with chemicals to produce "pasta bruta." The thick paste was fashioned into balls of pure, raw cocaine. These were sold to Peruvian and Columbian drug runners who headed up river in speedboats featuring twin 200 horse outboards. The Peruvian National Police, with their antiquated boats, never stood a chance of catching them. The police and the military are no better off today.

The morning we prepared to leave, imagine Juan's surprise as he saw the 6-foot plus boat pilot step onto our rented boat. Juan instantly recognized him as a big-time drug runner and frequent body guard for two Peruvian drug lords! Between drug runs to the Colombian border, the pilot had picked up a quick gig with the Lutheran missionaries!

Juan couldn't help smiling as he whispered to me who the pilot was. We had a quick discussion of how far Juan had come in his walk with the Lord since his days of making "the produce." Juan is now acutely aware of how evil his work had been. And yet, the drug trade remains a huge temptation for everyone in his village.

Juan reminded me: "You can spend endless hours in the hot sun growing rice in a rice paddy and make 50 cents per kilo of rice. A ball of coca pasta weighing a kilo brings 1,500 dollars cash."

For those with no scruples it's a no-brainer. Right now the drug runners were actually going door to door down the back-streets in Juan's village, picking up balls of cocaine, placing them in a plastic bag, and handing out envelopes stuffed with huge amounts of money.

Juan's stories went on as our boat headed into the morning river fog. Needless to say, our expert pilot got us to our drop off point, Shucshuyacu, in record time.

There would be no rainforest canopy overhead for our 12 mile walk to Louis Terry. As reported in recent jungle journals, a huge truck route now runs all the way from the river to Louis Terry as a result of the logging the government permits. The Yurimaguas radio reported a record-setting week of Amazon temperatures which rarely fell below 109 degrees. It would be no different in the jungle today as we entered what the locals fondly call "el horno verde," - the green oven. We were of course excited to get to Louis Terry to meet with the elders on the school project. The hours in the hot sun passed quickly. We entered the village and were greeted warmly by everyone. We were just in time for lunch.

My long-standing policy of never refusing to eat at least some of what the natives put in front of us was in for a severe test. Two days ago, Felix's cousin was hunting deep in the jungle and shot a tapir. He returned to the village and rounded up several men to go back out with him to get the animal. The tapir was the size of a small cow, weighing over 400 pounds. The animal was cut into massive pieces weighing over 50 pounds each. A strong piece of vine was tied around each chunk of meat which was then loaded on the backs of the men for the 6-hour trek back to the village.

At the village, the women excitedly took the huge pieces of tapir and cooked them up. But, like I said, that was two days ago. What was placed in front of Ronal and me for lunch was meat that had sat in Cecilio's 100 degree hut for the last two days. On top of that, the bowl of meat set before me looked like something out of a Fred Flintstone cartoon. It was huge! I gamely ate away at the mound of meat and prayed for the best.

After lunch it was time for a tour of the village site that had been selected for the high school building. The area is up on a small cliff overlooking the green valley below. It is absolutely beautiful. As we stood discussing the project, the elders confirmed the wonderful news we had heard earlier: Twelve Shawi youths have already signed up for high school!

Even more exciting, these students come from four different Shawi villages, including one village we have not yet reached with our native evangelism team. The high school is poised to meet our primary objective: The students will receive religion classes for five years (the normal length of time for a high school education in Peru), then return to their villages with all their Bible knowledge to share with the people. God willing, the high school graduates may become lay leaders of village congregations. Perhaps some of the students may even become interested in attending our seminary in Tarapoto. Praise the Lord for the 12 students planning to attend our Christian school! According to the elders, a few more students may enroll once the surrounding villages see the school house under construction. Neighboring elders and chiefs have told the Louis Terry elders they can't believe a high school is opening this deep in the jungle. They want to see it. Thankfully, construction of the school begins in less than two weeks!

That evening, we dined on chicken soup with the elders. (The chicken was definitely fresh; we had seen it walking around in the afternoon.)

Terry