



St. Paul's Monthly Messenger

September, 2023

Pastor's Notes:

THE BLESSING OF REGULAR HEARING AND READING OF SCRIPTURE

by Rev. Christopher Antonetti

There are three major Psalms which speak about attending to the Word of the Lord. They are easy to remember by their numbers – Psalm 1, Psalm 19, and Psalm 119. Psalm 1 begins the entire book of Psalms with these words, as an introduction –

Blessed is the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

Nor stands in the path of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

But his delight is in the law of the LORD,

And in His law he meditates day and night.

He shall be like a tree

Planted by the rivers of water,

That brings forth its fruit in its season,

Whose leaf also shall not wither;

And whatever he does shall prosper.

The Psalms begin to say that blessing will come to the man who regularly meditates on the law, really the entire word, of the Lord. Like a tree needs water, a man needs the word of the Lord to grow and produce fruit of a godly life. Psalm 19 goes into even more detail –

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;

The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold,

Yea, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover by them Your servant is warned,

And in keeping them there is great reward.

(Cont. on pg. 2)

We may often think of the Word of the Lord as just like the first line – converting the soul. We understand as Christians that God's word is necessary for our soul's salvation. Look at all the other benefits that David points out in this Psalm. Do you feel you are too simple, too easily fooled, and need wisdom? The testimony of the Lord will help you. Are you depressed and sad in heart, feeling hopeless? The statutes of the Lord will make you rejoice. Do you feel like your eyes are darkened and it's hard to discern what is good and evil? The pure commandment of the Lord will show you the light. These are all problems which affect us throughout our lives that the Lord offers a solution to in His Word. No wonder David calls the Word of God more desirable than fine gold and sweeter than honey!

Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, goes on to describe learning and walking in the Word of God. Verse 105 says, "*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*" The Word of God is here for every step we take in life, to guide and direct us.

Therefore, we should hold fast to the blessing which God has given us in His Word. First, by coming to hear the preaching of the Word of God as often as possible. This is the ordinary way by which our Lord has spread his gospel throughout time. Even when people weren't literate, or books weren't widely available, God sent preachers with His Word to give all the benefits He promises. Coming to hear God's Word every Sunday should be a Christian's bare minimum.

Beyond the preaching on Sundays, we have Bible class for adults, as well as Sunday School and confirmation for children. Here we get the opportunity to hear more of God's Word as well as train those children who most need help and guidance as they grow. Rally Day (September 10) is a celebration of that opportunity to keep training our children in the fear, love, and trust of God in our congregation. It is something to continually rejoice in, year after year, and I thank all the Sunday School teachers who dedicate time and energy toward this important task.

We also can attend to the Word with ourselves and our families throughout the week by reading our Bibles alone or together. Since Bibles in our time are widely available, we have the opportunity and blessing to be able to read them every day! If you do not do this already, it is easy to get started. Just choose a time each day to read, and an amount to read. It does not have to be much. Just a few chapters a day will finish the Bible in a year, but you don't have to go that fast.

There are many Bible reading plans one can find in books or online, even in our own hymnal (pages 299-304). This reading plan in our hymnal is the one we use in the Congregation at Prayer sheet which is available in the bulletin and on our website every week. It also gives a basic outline of how to do devotions with scripture by yourself or with your family. Starting on Rally Day, we will begin using this Congregation at Prayer format to begin Sunday School every week in Bezold Hall after fellowship time.

As you can see, there are great blessings which God gives us in His Word, if we would only make the effort to hear and to read. Many are beginning a new school year, and St. Paul's begins a new Sunday School year. It is as good as time as ever to begin a habit of attending to the Word of God, drinking it in like a tree needs water, so we too may produce the fruit that God wants from us in its season.

IS THE LECTIONARY ACTUALLY IMPORTANT?

Guest article - Pastor Evan Scamman, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Greenwich, CT

I grew up in a Pentecostal sort of church that had never used the lectionary. Why would we? Wasn't it better to be led by the Holy Spirit than to be tied down to any specific readings? Instead of preaching on a limited number of Biblical texts, our pastor preached from the whole Bible. Except that he didn't. That's the problem with "free-texting," as it is sometimes called. Although the pastor was free to preach on the entire Bible, his two-hour sermons generally fell back on one of his favorite passages. The story of Sanballat and Tobiah served to rebuke any members who were complaining against the work of "building up the walls of Jerusalem." When Elijah directed the starving widow of Zarephath to "bake me a cake," this meant that we were to put more in the offering plate, even when we had next to nothing to give. And the Road to Emmaus was a great opportunity to hear once again that we were "fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had said." It's not that what was said was inherently problematic, though some of it certainly was. The real problem lay in what was never said or taught.

Before becoming a Lutheran, I had never heard, for example, a sermon about heaven. This fundamental Christian doctrine wasn't of interest to my former pastor, who was more focused on "building God's kingdom" here on earth. Only after becoming a Lutheran and being immersed within the yearly cycle of the lectionary, did I come to recognize my previous pastor's failure to preach "the whole counsel of God." It seems paradoxical that free-texting pastors would tend to preach less of the Bible than those who follow the lectionary, but this generally proves true. In fact, one of the great benefits of using the lectionary is that pastors are forced to preach on passages and topics they might otherwise avoid. The lectionary protects the flock of God from "hobby-horse" preaching, and it presents the whole counsel of God to His people, building them up in the faith, precept upon precept, line upon line.

A pastor is not free to speak as he pleases. He must speak as he is commanded. Therefore, every faithful pastor must contend with the world, the devil, and his own sinful nature, which all conspire to entice him into voicing his own thoughts and opinions from the pulpit. Free-texting, though not inherently sinful, tends to steer a pastor into the danger of prophesying of himself, that is, speaking his own words. Jesus said that not even the Holy Spirit will speak "of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak" (John 16:13). How much more must mortal pastors be careful to speak only what they hear from the Word of God.

Consider the difference in process between a pastor who uses the lectionary and one who free-texts based on a self-chosen topic. The first is more likely to approach the Scriptures asking, "What does God have to say to His people today?" while the latter, having already decided what he wants to say, then searches the Bible for verses to support his chosen topic. This is not to say that a pastor cannot give a faithful and topical sermon—in fact, there may be times where this is necessary—but as a general rule, free-texting should be avoided, since it opens the door to many potential dangers: cherry-picking from the Word of God, avoiding uncomfortable truths, hobby-horse preaching, and even falling into serious doctrinal error.

Early in my seminary training, I wrongly assumed that it would sometimes be necessary to depart from the lectionary in order to address specific issues as they arose in my parish or in the surrounding culture. I have never once found this to be necessary. Instead, the appointed texts have consistently and miraculously proven to be far more applicable to the situation at hand than anything I might have chosen myself. For example, during COVID, while many people were fearfully avoiding church, the appointed Psalm for the Fourth Sunday of Lent began with these words: "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122). That same day, at the height of the toilet paper hoarding, Holy Scripture reminded us of how the fearful Israelites hoarded manna until it bred worms and stank (Exodus 16). But most importantly, we heard of the tender provision of our Lord Jesus for His people, as He fed them with bread in the wilderness (John 6).

The fathers of the church, who were much wiser than we—and likely better topical preachers when the need arose—nevertheless chose to follow the constraints of the lectionary. They did not view the prescribed set of readings as a muzzle upon the Holy Spirit, but rather, as a means by which He accomplishes His work of bringing all the words of Jesus to our remembrance. The lectionary has served the Church as a hedge of protection against false teachers and their pet agendas even as it has helped to present us with the whole counsel of God. May this sound pattern of words continue to aid and strengthen the Church as we earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto all the saints.

This article was originally published in the “Ad Fontes” newsletter of Luther Classical College – lutherclassical.org

Wheels in the Field

Cruise-In, Bake Sale and Jam Sale, Rummage Sale

Saturday, September 16, 2023

9 am to 4 pm

Cruise In—Joel and Denise Pilz are in charge. They will arrange set-up and direct any “cruise-in” cars to the east field.

Church Table—Pastor Antonetti is in charge of the church table which will be near the bake sale and rummage sale areas. He will have information about St. Paul’s Church and the LCMS.

Rummage Sale—Laura Wetherbee is in charge of the rummage sale (this sale and the bake sale benefit the church funds.) Please contact Laura if you need to drop off items before September 10th. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of that week are the general drop off days

Final sorting and pricing will be on Friday. The sale is on Saturday from 9 am—4 pm. From 1 -4 pm will be the bag sale (anything in the bag for \$3 and half price on large items).

Rich Czimer will have a table for plants to sell as part of the rummage sale. He will be set up near the Bezold Hall entrance doors.

Bake and Jam Sale—Ruth Gerk is in charge. She will oversee pricing and layout of the bake sale tables. Volunteers may be needed to set up canopies (provided by Joel) and tables (from the church) by 8:30 am. Baked items must be delivered to the church Friday night or Saturday morning before 8:30 am so they can be priced. Let us know if you have a good idea of what price you think is appropriate! Please try to have all baked good pre-wrapped and labeled, noting if they contain nuts or other allergens. If possible, let us know ahead of time what you will be making so we know how much table space to allow for.

Volunteers—Please sign the sheet in the narthex or contact Laura directly (815-474-9343) to let us know what hours you are available and/or what you are bringing to the bake sale. We need volunteers of all ages—why not make it a family activity!



Food and Fellowship at Lunch with Pastor

Thanks to everyone who came out on August 14th. Our next lunch is scheduled for September 12th at George's restaurant.

Please note the change from Monday to Tuesday.

NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE WEEKLY MESSENGER

Manna: Order forms are available on Sunday, September 3 orders with payment are due September 10 and orders can be picked up on September 17.

Fellowship Signup: We need volunteers to set up, clean up, and provide food for about 20. A Sign up sheet is available in the narthex. Speak to Marlene Barmann, fellowship coordinator, with any questions.

Sunday School: Sunday School registration forms are available in the narthex. Sunday School starts on Sunday, September 10.

Pastor's Day Off: Starting this week pastor will be off on Monday. Morning prayer will be Tuesday through Friday every week.

Book of Concord Study - The Book of Concord is the confession of the Lutheran Church by which our congregations and every Lutheran pastor agrees to believe, teach, and confess. Beginning **Sunday, September 24, at 6 pm** we will have a monthly study group on the last Sunday of every month to read and discuss the Lutheran Book of Concord. All are invited, no matter your familiarity with it. If you do not have a Book of Concord, we will provide copies of what we are studying so you can follow along. Also, feel free to bring a treat to share, coffee will be provided.

Mission Offering for September - Betheseda Lutheran Communities



Happy Baptismal Birthday

Deanna Smulterowicz	September 2
Olivia Gerk	September 3
Mackenzie Panka	September 4
Richard Bellas	September 5
Jocelyn Gerk	September 5
Riggin Feiler	September 13
Ramona Gudgel	September 15
Gerald Wessel	September 20
Sara Chaney	September 28

Jimmie Johnson	September 1
Riggin Feiler	September 2
Kathryn Mueller	September 3
Dannielle Jimenez	September 7
Derrick Jimenez	September 8
Stuart Wetherbee	September 8
Sarah Barmann	September 10
Christina McSherry	September 11
David Saxon	September 11
Gerald Wessel	September 11
Isaiah Zavala	September 11
Frank Bruntjen, Jr.	September 13
Tonya Murdaugh	September 15
George Robinson	September 18
Carl Michaelson	September 21
Marianne Lillie	September 30



Joel & Denise Pilz	September 2, 1972
Michael & Deanna Smulterowicz	September 2, 1978
Ron & Marlene Barmann	September 6, 1986
David & Rita Saxon	September 23, 1972
Gerald & Jennifer Staley	September 23, 1995



September, 2023

at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Lockport

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity 9 am Divine Worship 10:15 am Fellowship 10:40 am Adult Bible Class	4 LABOR DAY—OFFICE CLOSED	5 8 am Morning Prayer 7pm Elders Meeting	6 8 am Morning Prayer 8:30 am Confession/ Absolution	7 9 am Circuit Meeting @ St. Paul's 6 pm Trustee meeting	8 8 am Morning Prayer	9 9 am Women's Group
10 Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity SUNDAY SCHOOL RALLY DAY 9 am Divine Worship 10:15 am Fellowship 10:40 am Sunday School Congregation Meeting	11	12 8 am Morning Prayer 11 am Lunch w/Pastor 9 am-3 pm drop off for rummage sale	13 8 am Morning Prayer 8:30 am Confession/ Absolution 9 am-3 pm drop off for rummage sale 5 pm Choir 6:30 pm Jr Confirmation	14 8 am Morning Prayer Noon-6 pm drop off for rummage sale	15 8 am Morning Prayer	16 9 am-4 pm Wheels in the Field/Bake Sale/ Rummage Sale
17 Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity 9 am Divine Worship 10:15 am Fellowship 10:40 am Adult Bible Class/ Sunday School	18	19 8 am Morning Prayer	20 10:15 am Confession/ Absolution 11 am NICL 5 pm Choir 6:30 pm Jr Confirmation	21 8 am Morning Prayer	22 8 am Morning Prayer	23 8 am Men's Group
24 Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity 9 am Divine Worship 10:15 am Fellowship 10:40 am Adult Bible Class/ Sunday School 6 pm Book of Concord Study	25	26	27	28 8 am Morning Prayer	29 8 am Morning Prayer	30

Pastor at District Pastor's Conference at Starved Rock

5 pm Choir



St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

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