

The St. John Lutheran Church
Volume 51 – Number 01
January 2023 Jottings

“We lift up Jesus Christ in our lives, our church, and our community.”



Pastor Michael's Musings

January 2023

“But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned for you, and you did not lament.’”

--- Matthew 11: 16 & 17

Congratulations! You have made it to another year! What will it be like? What will you make of it?

That question has been a relevant question for thousands of years. Look at the scripture printed above from the book of Matthew. Written some 2,000 odd years ago, it describes a peculiar flaw in the human psyche or mind. Using the immature example of children in the marketplaces in his day, (please exchange at the mall, on Tik Tok, while texting, while performing on a You Tube video, etc. – anywhere public where we go to be noticed) Jesus points out the age-old reality that if we don't want to be pleased and satisfied, guess what, we won't be pleased and satisfied. Look, the little poem or saying in single quotes says (vs. 17), we “played the flute for you” i.e. we tried to make you happy, and you wouldn't act like you were happy; you wouldn't dance! Oh, and in case you wanted to be sad or grumpy, we “mourned” along with you; commiserated with you, and you told us to bug off and go away! You didn't play the sad role correctly! Jesus is pointing out a couple of things here in this little biblical ditty, a very popular saying in his day that has been lost in antiquity to our common usage. Jesus is showing us that we are rather contrarian creatures, after all. Ultimately, we cannot MAKE someone happy or sad (barring purposeful harm on our part, of course) if they are not willing to “go along with it.” True happiness and sadness come from within, central and intrinsic to our own nature and desire. *You cannot make another person happy or sad* if they don't want it. For a lot of us, this realization should alleviate a lot of guilt and frustration. Oh, how we

oftentimes fall into this ridiculous trap. “If I only do this, they will love me more and they will be happy.” Or, “I better not say this because I don’t want them to be mad at me.” Such is the nature of toxic family relationships among perfectly cognitive, functioning adults if taken to an extreme. If we are always tiptoeing around one another, for fear of some sort of negative repercussions, whether they are physical or verbal, then we are not living a Christian-styled life, and the other person is making a slave of us (knowingly or unknowingly.) The worse case scenario is when we make slaves of ourselves which is perhaps more of what Jesus is referring to above as he talks to his disciples and the generation gathered about him.

Have you ever done that? Have you ever made a slave of yourself? Have you ever locked yourself into such a tight mental prison that you are unable to see life from a different perspective? When we think politically, socially or religiously; anytime we find ourselves rooting for “our team”, so much so that the other side “never has ANY good ideas”, then we might be mirroring those silly, contrarian children mentioned above in Matthew. “I don’t care what you say, I don’t care what you think, I will not listen because you must be wrong because I know I am right...” is the “thinking flaw” that Jesus is trying to point out. We can see how old this flaw is. When we shut our worlds off from one another, we increase the likelihood that we might be living in error surrounded by our worldview’s inevitable echo-chamber of out-and-out lies, or at best, well-meant, but still destructive, distortion. There’s a great old adage; “Everyone thinks they’re the good guy.” And this reality is perplexing in light of our kneejerk desire to paint the “other team” as a pack of scoundrels who must be crushed and defeated. Yes, there are bad ideas. Yes, there are consequences to decisions. If they are not felt today they will definitely be felt tomorrow. We must test ideas and concepts, and hopefully, think in bigger terms than political, social and religious “teams” that seem to be driving us like a great, vast herd to someplace that we really do not want to go.

So, 2023. Who will you be this year? People are already saying it’s going to be a challenging year. But then, don’t *they* say things like this all the time? Will you continue to be the contrarian who won’t dance and won’t lament? Will you be willful just for the sake of being willful, or will you listen to your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who encourages you to take the uncomfortable, yet rewarding path of loving your neighbor as you love yourself? Thank the Lord that Jesus didn’t exclude us out of hand but is the Lord who knows how many hairs are on our head and went to the cross that we might be forgiven and have eternal life. Jesus doesn’t exclude us because we think differently about life with our old selfish and sinful ways. Instead, he speaks to us through prayer, scripture, and the miracle of the Holy Spirit. Maybe we should do a lot less excluding of one another in 2023 and be a bit more merciful and loving. Lord knows, we all need it.

Everything you wanted to know about the Bible...but were afraid to ask!

What to do on a cold winter day (or evening)? For many people, winter gives us an opportunity to spend less time running to events and more time to stay home. While our church offers Sunday School on Sunday mornings and has a Bible Study group that meets on evenings during the week, there may be reasons you have not taken advantage of either. Perhaps you are afraid of “looking stupid” in front of your friends, or perhaps you don’t want to commit to something on a weekly basis, or maybe you are afraid the topics are “way over your head”.

WHAT IF you could study a variety of topics from the comfort of your recliner?

WHAT IF those mini-studies covered a topic in less time than a 1/2 hour TV show and without lots of annoying commercials?

WHAT IF you could get answers to interesting questions that reflect the ELCA position on Biblical interpretation?

YOU CAN DO IT! Luther (ELCA) Seminary in Minneapolis offers podcasts that cover a wide variety of interesting topics. What’s a Podcast (you may be asking)? In a nutshell, a podcast is simply a recorded program that is stored online and available for anyone to log in and listen anytime AT NO COST! Think of a podcast as a “talk show” where the host introduces and interviews an expert on the “topic of the day.”

The “Enter The Bible” podcast sponsored by Luther Seminary has recorded questions, discussions, and answers to dozens of fascinating questions, such as:

- ✚ How is suicide treated in the Bible?
- ✚ Why does God allow people to sin?
- ✚ Does Jesus have any of Mary’s DNA?
- ✚ What does the Bible say about “the rapture”?
- ✚ What does the Bible say about the “end times”?
- ✚ Where did the souls of Old Testament believers go? Heaven?
- ✚ Do people of color read the Bible differently than white people?
- ✚ Can you help biblically explain why nationalism is not a Christian narrative?
- ✚ What’s the difference between the Catholic and Protestant Bible?

- † Demons. Is it absurd to believe in them?
- † Miracles. Is it absurd to believe in them?
- † What motherly images for God are in the Bible?
- † Angels in our time?
- † What is heaven like?
- † How do I read the book of Revelation?
- † Which Bible translation is “best”?
- † What is the Gospel of Thonas?
- † How do parents (or grandparents) share their faith with kids?
- † Would Jesus shop on Black Friday?
- † A-HA moments in the Bible.
- † Can we believe in the Bible AND Science?
- † What does “eternal life” mean, and when does it start?

There are MANY more fascinating topics you can explore in the privacy of your own home. All you need is INTERNET ACCESS on a computer or smart phone. Go to this address:

enterthebible.org/podcasts

You will find DOZENS of fascinating topics, all discussed by ELCA theologians. Most last about a half-hour. Many Christian Book stores carry books dealing with similar topics, but many of them lean more toward a fundamentalist interpretation of scripture, which does not necessarily agree with our Lutheran perspective.

SO, instead of wasting your winter, why not take advantage of your rare “free time” to expand your horizons while listening to experts discuss some very interesting topics!

Epiphany...the season of LIGHT!

After all the excitement of Advent and Christmas, January seems like a dull, boring month, but in the church year, it's the season of EPIPHANY, the season and celebration of LIGHT! Epiphany starts on January 6th, which traditionally is the 12th day of Christmas and the day we remember the Wise Men arriving to present their gifts to baby Jesus (it's also Pastor's Birthday). Since the Christmas season was so short this year, why not celebrate the LIGHT by leaving your decorations lit until January 6th, and then follow the words of hymn #314 (Arise, your light has come) which tells us to: *Arise, your light has come! The Spirit's call obey. Show forth the glory of your God, which shines on you today!* How can you do that? COME TO CHURCH, FELLOWSHIP, SING, PRAY, and be nourished by word and sacrament.

Until Next Month...

During Epiphany we remember that Christ told us “*I am the light of the world*” Martin Luther commented on that by saying Jesus was meaning:

“You know nothing whatever, you see nothing, you are sticking in darkness; and if I do not give light, there is no light!”

from a sermon on John 8:12

Soli Deo Gloria (To God alone be the Glory)

Donald L. Bauer Director of Music

Look what is happening in Sunday School.

3 years old-PreK	Kathy Ellis
Kindergarten-3rd grade	Becky & Shannon Sanders
4th-8th grade	Fred Rosenbohm

Starting Sunday, November 27th and throughout the winter months, our lessons will follow the Year A Lectionary to connect with Pastor's sermon.

January 1 st	Escape to Egypt
January 8 th	Jesus' Baptism
January 15 th	The Lamb of God
January 22 nd	The Disciples
January 29 th	The Beatitudes
February 5 th	Salt and Light
February 12 th	Jesus Teaches about Anger
February 19 th	The Transfiguration

Middle School aged children are learning about the Twelve Disciples and how their lives are relevant to them in the 21st century.

As always, all Sunday School age children are welcome to join. If interested, please contact me to register your child.

John Wetterauer
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Thank You for the Wonderful Christmas Season: Christina and I would like to thank all of you for the wonderful Christmas Season this year. So many of you made a lot of ministries possible through your attention to detail and willingness to volunteer in making this church a place where the ministry of Christ is alive. Leading our young people in the Christmas Sunday School Program, decorating the church, serving in making the Professional Leadership Meeting with the Bishop so successful, putting together and making the Christmas Eve Service so wonderful, Christmas Day a blessing, and for the Christmas Bonus this year; so many things for Christina and I to celebrate! God's blessings in this new year of 2023!
— Pastor Michael and Christina

Thank You: I would like to thank everyone for the cards, gifts, and Christmas bonus this year. It really means a lot and lets me know how much I am appreciated though out the year. I am looking forward to another year here at St. John.

God's Blessings!

Dee-Dee Krause

Adult Bible Study: Bible study continues this month on Wednesday. January 4th and 18th from 6-7 p.m. The study is on Acts, lessons 6 and 7. If you have any questions, please call or text Jane Rosenbohm at (309) 645-9009.

Homebound List (as of December 19, 2022)

Jay Baumgardner	Swan Special Care Center 109 Kenwood Champaign, Il. 61824	Pat Janssen	12615 Lancaster Rd. Hanna City, Il. 61536
Anna Bontz	Autumn Accolade 13516 Townline Rd. Room 314 Green Valley, Il. 61534	Joyce Jones	Villas of Holly Brook 5301 W. Dirksen Pkwy. Apt. 24 Peoria, Il. 61607
Art Campen % Carrie Campen	4169 King St. Denver, Co. 80211	Judy Kaufman	River Crossing 900 Centennial Dr. Room 201 E. Peoria, Il. 61611
Jeffrey Campen	Lennox Guest Home 2875 W. 33 rd Ave. Denver, Co. 80211	Eric Lambie	Lutheran Hillside Village 6901 N. Galena Rd. R9 Peoria, Il. 61614
Millie Carlson	Villas of Holly Brook 5301 W. Dirksen Pkwy. Apt. 48 Peoria, Il. 61607	Debra Look	Timber Ridge 2125 Veterans Rd. Morton, Il. 61550
Sally Catterall	Villas of Holly Brook 5301 W. Dirksen Pkwy. Apt. 28 Peoria, Il. 61607	Don Norvill	Independence Village 1201 N. Northmoor Rd Rm. 222 Peoria, Il. 61614
Evelyn Cool	Lutheran Hillside Village 6901 N. Galena Rd. Acorn Way Apt. A1 Peoria, Il. 61614	Sharon Resler	River Crossing 1500 W. Northmoor Room 415 Peoria, Il. 61614
Thelma Hartseil	Snyder Village 404 Flag Metamora, Il. 61548	Gary & Betty Schuster	1304 Velde Dr. Pekin, Il. 61554

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Year Round Worship Schedule :

8:00 a.m. Worship With Holy Communion
9:15 a.m. Sunday School for All Ages
10:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion

UPCOMING EVENTS THIS MONTH

8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Sunday mornings - Holy Communion Service
9:15 a.m. Sunday mornings - Sunday School
Sunday, January 8th and 22nd at 6:00 p.m. - Confirmation
Thursday evenings at 7:00 p.m. - Choir Rehearsal (there will not be rehearsal on Thursday, January 26th)