

GOOD SHEPHERD NEWS

February 2015

The Appropriate Valentine Gift

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Thanks to Benoit Paquette

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REALLY ADAM ... A VALENTINE'S DAY
FRUIT BASKET ... IN THE GARDEN OF
EDEN?!?

What is the appropriate Valentine gift for the one you love? Of course, this world has many suggestions for that appropriate gift. They range from the simple such as flowers, candy, and cards, to the extravagantly expensive such as diamond jewelry and exotic cars. Most of the time these gifts are not really something we need.

Isn't it great that our heavenly Father gives us exactly what we need? And not just on Valentine's Day. Our greatest need is the forgiveness of sins. And the greatest gift we receive is the forgiveness of sins. In love, God gives us this most precious gift. We are sinful human beings who would be lost forever unless delivered from sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take our sins to Calvary's cross and pay the penalty we deserved, death, so that we might be forgiven and live.

I just love the way Saint Paul put it in his Letter to the Romans: "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (5:8). Yes, when we were still lost in our sin, God acted on our behalf to save us. He sent our salvation in the person of His Son, Jesus. Christ died and rose again so that we might live. In Him we have the forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation. And that's the greatest gift of all. What better gift of love could be celebrated on Valentine's Day than God's gift to us of forgiveness and life in His Son, Jesus. Truly, God is love.

Have a blessed Valentine's Day,

Pastor Dan

Revisiting the Augsburg Confession:

Articles 19 and 20: Of the Cause of Sin, and of Good Works

Article XIX regarding the cause or origin of sin is a short and uncontested declaration. It affirms that God is not the author of evil, but rather, evil is brought about by the devil, his evil angels, and evil people. This is important, because Scripture repeatedly affirms that God is always holy, pure, and righteous, and that in Him no darkness abides at all. The only reason we experience evil in this fallen world, is because like the evil angels, we have fallen into sin and depravity of our own wicked will. We can't blame God for the evil in the world, because we were part of bringing that evil into the world, twisting what He made good, into things ugly and dark.

Keeping that straight also helps us to understand the doctrine relative to Good Works, found in Article XX. After first fending off the spurious charges of the Roman party, the Confessors of the Augustana affirm clearly and confidently that they not only encourage good works—they teach how people can actually do them. Knowing that nothing good comes from fallen mankind, they confess that all truly good works start with God... specifically, faith in God and His promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation in Jesus Christ. God's Law reveals what truly good works are (read the 10 Commandments for a handy summary,) and keeps us from thinking that we can make up our own good works that please God. But the Law can only terrify sinful people, because if we honestly hear the Law of God, we hear a holy standard which we cannot attain. That Law demands total, complete, and never faltering love of God and neighbor; a love that never thinks of itself, is never selfish, unkind, or unfaithful; a love that never ceases to both aspire toward and actually be pure; a love that reflects God's love. Hammering a sinner with the Law can bring that person to understand his failure and despise of saving himself by his own works, but such knowledge can only bring forth terror and loathing. Like the demons who know their just sentence under the Law of God, sinful man with no more than the Law of God can only await his judgment in the Lake of Fire. The Law cannot save us, because we are fundamentally fallen, broken, sinful, and unclean.

However, we have something the demons can't grasp—a divine message of forgiveness and salvation, won for us in Jesus Christ. That Gospel comes to terrified sinners, and declares them justified by the Blood of Christ and His Vicarious Atonement. This is a Gospel of love in action, reaching from the throne of Almighty God to each and every sinful heart, making peace. Thus, the Gospel of Salvation in Jesus Christ alone, heals the broken sinner and inspires faith to believe this divine Promise. This faith, given by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Sacraments, reaches out and trusts in the love of God, receiving grace, life, and salvation. Now emboldened by the love of God in Christ Jesus and free from the curse of the Law, the Christian can by grace through faith bring forth good works of love for God and neighbor.

Rather than seeking some kind of new process, new procedure, new retreat, new monastery, new book club, new movement, or anything else of human construct, the Reformers pointed the Christian back to her Savior, Jesus Christ. Since the salvation of the Christian could only be accomplished by Jesus, so, too, could truly good works only come through Him. If the salvation of the sinner comes only by grace through faith in Christ alone, then the sanctified life of the Christian, bringing forth good works as a necessary living out of her new life in Christ, could only come by grace through faith in Christ alone. Here's how the Confessors summed it up, at the end of Article XX:

Now he that knows that he has a Father gracious to him through Christ, truly knows God; he knows also that God cares for him, and calls upon God; in a word, he is not without God, as the heathen. For devils and the ungodly are not able to believe this article: the forgiveness of sins. Hence, they hate God as an enemy, call not upon Him, and expect no good from Him. Augustine also admonishes his readers concerning the word "faith," and teaches that the term "faith" is accepted in the Scriptures not for knowledge such as is in the ungodly but for confidence which consoles and encourages the terrified mind.

Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God. It is only by faith that forgiveness of sins is apprehended, and that, for nothing. And because through faith the Holy Ghost is received, hearts are renewed and endowed with new affections, so as to be able to bring forth good works. For Ambrose says: Faith is the mother of a good will and right doing.

For man's powers without the Holy Ghost are full of ungodly affections, and are too weak to do works which are good in God's sight. Besides, they are in the power of the devil who impels men to divers sins, to ungodly opinions, to open crimes. This we may see in the philosophers, who, although they endeavored to live an honest life could not succeed, but were defiled with many open crimes. Such is the feebleness of man when he is without faith and without the Holy Ghost, and governs himself only by human strength.

Hence it may be readily seen that this doctrine is not to be charged with prohibiting good works, but rather the more to be commended, because it shows how we are enabled to do good works. For without faith human nature can in no wise do the works of the First or of the Second Commandment. Without faith it does not call upon God, nor expect anything from God, nor bear the cross, but seeks, and trusts in, man's help. And thus, when there is no faith and trust in God all manner of lusts and human devices rule in the heart. Wherefore Christ said, *John 15, 5: Without Me ye can do nothing.*

Pastor Brad

Men's Breakfast / Bible Study **Saturday, February 21st – 8 am**

Join us for a delicious breakfast, wonderful fellowship, and in-depth Bible Study. We are going through the series "Stuff They Didn't Teach Me in Sunday School." We will be discussing the chapter "When Your Mouth Is Faster Than Your Brain" (Judges 11).



Pastor Dan

We rejoice with our sister congregations in our circuit as they welcome new pastors. On February 15, at 3 pm, Immanuel, Puyallup, will ordain and install the Rev. Mark Zier as their Associate Pastor. (At the time of this writing, they are awaiting the decision on a call issued for the Senior Pastor position.) Also on February 15, at 7 pm, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Lakewood, will install the Rev. Paul Zeigler as their new pastor. The Rev. Paul Linnemann, President of our Northwest District LCMS, will be participating in both services. You are invited to attend.

Lent 2015—

Singing With the Exiles

Gathered by the waters of Babylon, Judean exiles wistfully wondered: Is God for real? If so, does HE really care about us? What does our future hold? Will this ever change? God's people had watched their world shatter into a million pieces. They were demoralized and disillusioned. Their disaster looked terminal.

Do you feel this way? Does it look as though your current problems are more than you can bear? Do you find yourself asking: Why did this happen? Why did God allow it? Is there any order in the world? Will God really deliver on what HE said?

Isaiah answers these questions in chapters 40-55 of his book. He announces that just when Israel's history seemed closed and controlled by hopeless Babylonian imperial policy, to the shock and surprise of everyone the Lord will stir up a king named Cyrus and a new exodus will explode in the desert! A Servant will be wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. And barren Zion will be given so many children that, like the old woman in the shoe, she won't know what to do! Standing behind these marvelous promises is God's almighty Word. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8). The exiles are going home!

That's why we are "Singing with the Exiles" as they are restored to their home.

This Lent, Isaiah 40-55 will shape up as we . . .

Listen to the following sermons on our Wednesday evening services.

Ask Wednesday: "God Has a Word for That" (Isaiah 41:14-16)

Lent 1: "He Only Has Eyes for You" (Isaiah 43:1-7)

Lent 2: "Marked" (Isaiah 44:1-5)

Lent 3: "Breaking Down the Gates" (Isaiah 45:1-8)

Lent 4: "Get Out!" (Isaiah 48:17-22)

Lent 5: "One Little Word Can Fell Him" (Isaiah 49:1-6)

Holy Thursday: "He Prepares a Table" (Isaiah 49:7-13)

Good Friday: "All" (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

Easter Vigil: "Nothing" (Isaiah 54:1-8)

Easter Sunday: "We Are Going Home" (Isaiah 55:6-13)

Plan now to sing with the exiles as we learn from Isaiah to walk the Lenten way to the cross and to the empty tomb. God promises to turn our weeping into joy and our present pain into an endless Alleluia! Wednesday evening services begin at 7 pm. They are preceded at 6 pm by a fellowship meal.



-Preschool News

www.littlelambstacoma.com

Sharing Christ, Feeding Lambs

For the month of February our students will learn how much Jesus provides, cares, and forgives us with the Bible stories about feeding the 5,000 healing the ten lepers, and forgiving Zacchaeus. Please pray for our students that these Bible stories would be meaningful to them and they would see Jesus working in their lives today.

On February 4th, our preschool will be offering a “Discussion on Autism,” which will be led by Laura Walker. Please come to the fellowship hall that Wednesday from 6:30 – 7:30 pm. We will provide babysitting. Anyone is welcome to come and hear this valuable information.

We will have our annual Tea and Talk February 22nd at 4 pm in the fellowship hall. Please join us for some delicious scones, tea, and punch and time to get to know some of our preschool families better.

Our amazon.com program is ongoing throughout the year, so if you are placing any orders at amazon.com, remember to use our website, littlelambstacoma.com and click on the Amazon link. A portion of the purchase will be donated to the preschool at no additional cost to you!

The preschool staff, board, and families thank you for your prayer support. We ask for your continued prayers and God’s guidance as we continue to do the work God has given us to do.

Bonnie Huset
Director / Teacher

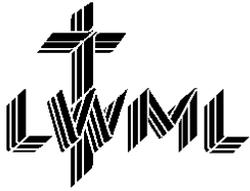


TEA AND TALK

Sunday, February 22nd
4:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall



The Preschool invites you to our annual Tea & Talk **Sunday, February 23rd at 4 pm** in the fellowship hall. All the preschool families and our congregational families are asked to join us for some fresh scones and tea or punch. We hope to have some great “talk” as we get to know one another. Please join us for this fun family event!



Women in Mission / Women's Ministry

- **Tuesdays:**
Bible Study (9:15 am) **Quilting** (10 am)
- **Mites and Missions** –February 8th
- **Seafarers' Auxiliary** – February 27th

Quilters are working on a project of 10 smaller and 2 regular size (60X80) quilts for the "Little Lambs" emergency kit. When these are completed we will return to making quilts for LWR (see poster on downstairs bulletin board).

February, month of Presidents Day (Lincoln and Washington), Valentines Day, Ash Wednesday and much more...all in 28 days! Begin each day with prayer and thanksgiving.

Tuesday Bible Study 9:15 am, currently studying "The Lord's Prayer" would love to have you join us!

February blessings to all!
 Serving the Lord with Gladness!
Jane Oberg



Lunch Bunch

February 12th is Game Day! Bring a game to share.
 We will begin at **11:45 am** for a pot blessing meal.
 Bring a dish to share.



FINANCIAL UPDATE



As we start a new year, we also start fresh financially. In 2015, we will need about **\$6,152.00** each week to meet **all** budgeted items. Your continued support and prayers are needed to accomplish the goals we as a congregation have set. Thank you all.

