



St. Luke Lutheran Church
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Open doors, open hearts, open minds.

Parish Times January 2018

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105

Happy New Year! This is a time when many people make resolutions to start something anew. How about a resolution to dive more deeply into God's Word? We will be starting a new Bible study here at St. Luke on Wednesday mornings at 10am, beginning Jan. 10. Please come if you are able. If that time doesn't work for you, please come to adult forum on Sunday mornings after worship. It is not held every week, so stay tuned for the days when we have it and please come. Or, you can use the commentaries I write in the newsletter for upcoming Sunday gospel readings. Please read the gospel as well as the commentary to prepare for Sunday worship. Another good way to dive into God's Word is to concentrate on a short passage in the Bible (like Psalm 119:105 found above). Read it slowly, prayerfully. Meditate on it, then slowly read it again. Don't worry about trying to interpret the passage; instead let it interpret you. Take some quiet time with God's Word. Relax. Breathe. Let the tension out of your body and rest in the Word. If you make this a habit, you will find yourself renewed....by that which you start anew.

God bless you,

Pr. Dave



January Acolytes

7 Evan Nelson
 21 Ava Herrmann

UnDec The Halls!

We will be packing up the Christmas decorations on Sunday, Jan. 7, after worship. Many hands make light work...please join us!



Usher Notes

Many thanks to our ushers for January: Alek and Volker Landenberger, Doug Klein, Ben Pilgrim, Joan Wilson, Bruce Magnuson, Rob and Ava Herrmann.



The 2018 offering envelopes are now available in the Social Hall. Please pick up your box as soon as possible to defray postage expenses. Thank you.

Micro-lending Meeting and Dinner



We will have a micro-lending meeting and dinner on Tuesday, January 30 at 6:00. No need to cook that evening, we will have a delicious, hot meal for you. The meal will cost \$5.00 and the wonderful fellowship is free! What a deal! After dinner, we will make micro-loans all around the world, helping people begin their lives anew! Please sign up on the kiosk so we know how much food to order. Do it today!



Bible Study

We will begin a new Bible study on Wednesday mornings at 10am, beginning Jan. 10. It is open to everyone, so please come, if you are able. We will be looking at the New Testament. Please grab your Bible and come!

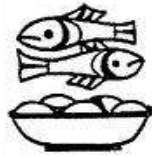


January Birthdays

- 1 Linda Funkhouser
- Dusty Jensen
- 5 Dawn Peterson
- 9 Laurie Herrmann
- 10 Noah Fabie
- Judy Johnson
- Kimberly Loewen
- 16 Nancy Hegdahl
- 17 Kathy Spray
- 27 Kevin Arndt
- 29 Norma Alexander
- 30 Sue McNeill
- 31 Kim McNamara

SAVE THE DATE

Come one, come all to our ever-popular ALL MEMBER WINTER CHURCH RETREAT at Camp Onomia, Feb. 16-18. Young and old, parents or singles, all are welcome! Want to get away from your busy life, and just relax and have fun? Or do you want to have some great family time with your kids? There is something of everyone! To RSVP, please sign up on the kiosk asap. For further info, talk to Pastor Dave.



140 very hungry men women and children enjoyed a delicious meal at Loaves and Fishes on Nov. 27th at St. Matthew's Catholic Church. We have been seeing more children the last few months. Workers from ST. LUKE were Pastor Dave Person, Larry Litzkow, Joyce Bluel and Roger and Dianne Diestler.

Prayer for Unity

**Lutheran-Roman Catholic
Evening Prayer for Unity
Sunday, January 21, 7:00 pm
at the Cathedral of St. Paul**

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, the Saint Paul Area Synod, and the Minneapolis Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will bring the five-hundredth anniversary commemorations of the Reformation to a close with a joint liturgy of evening prayer for Christian Unity on Sunday, January 21 at 7:00 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Paul (239 Selby Avenue, St. Paul). The National Lutheran Choir under the direction of David Cherwien will lead the liturgy; St. Paul Bishop Patricia Lull will preach, and Minneapolis Bishop Anne Svennungsen and Archbishop Bernard Hebda will serve as liturgists. All are welcome as we renew our common witness to Jesus Christ; a reception follows the liturgy at the Cathedral.

January WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

READERS:

Jan. 7 Jeff Kingsley
Jan. 14 Cindy Schroer
Jan. 21 Wendy Bjorklund
Jan. 28 Mike Hegdahl

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS:

Jan. 7 Joan Wilson
Jan. 21 Wendy Bjorklund



Winter Retreat Pancake Breakfast

All are invited to a delicious breakfast after worship on Sunday, January 28. Come hungry! You will be served with smiles and mouth-watering food. All money raised will be used for the Winter Retreat at Camp Onomia. This is for ALL St. Luke members and the money raised will help supplement the costs for people. So make plans to go to the Winter Retreat on February 16-18 and come hungry on January 28.

It's time for Undie Sunday!

In partnering with THE DRAWER, please help us make our annual 'Undie Sunday' a *success*!

Now is a great time to stock up on NEW men's', women's' and children's' socks and underwear for our annual collection of these important essential items.

We will be collecting NEW socks and underwear at St. Luke, in the bin marked with THE DRAWER, which will provide dignity and warmth for those less fortunate. We will also gratefully accept monetary donations; just indicate Undie Drive in the memo line of your check. We hope that you will join us and be a part of our collection! THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS! -Deb and Stew Shepard

Collection Start: Jan. 7 | Undie Sunday: Jan. 21



Commentaries for the January Gospel Readings

Below are some notes for your study and meditation on the January Sunday gospel readings. For reference material I have used Working Preacher, "Preaching Mark's Gospel" by Rev. Richard Jensen, "The Good News According to Mark" by Eduard Schweizer, "Texts for Preaching" and my own notes. Please take time to read the gospel and the commentaries. Try reading them on Monday and think and pray about them through the week, going back to them day by day until Sunday worship. Let God's Word be your companion and your light throughout the week.

January 7, Mark 1:4-11 Baptism of Our Lord

The gospel reading for today begins with John the Baptist preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. What is repentance? One meaning of repent is to turn around and face a new direction. This can often mean turning from being self-centered to being God centered. In God we see our salvation and new life as God takes away the sins which separate us from God. Only the Lord can do that, so we turn our whole self to the Lord who can make us whole, clean and give us a new life. Mark states that the "whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going to him (John the Baptist)." It seems like a bit of an overstatement, but needless to say, people were flocking to hear John's message and be baptized by John in the river Jordan. Then in verse 6 it states that John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. Why describe him in this particular way? The reasons are found in 2 Kings 1:8 and Malachi 4:5-6. This is the description of the prophet Elijah. Remember, Elijah didn't die; he was taken into heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11). The expectation was that Elijah would come again to prepare the way for the Messiah. Jesus himself equated John the Baptist with Elijah (Matthew 11:12-15). Jesus is the one who is to come! John declares this stating that he (John) baptizes with water, but the one who is to come is more powerful, for he will baptize with the Holy Spirit. The one who can do this is the Son of God! Then in verse 9 we see that Jesus came and was indeed baptized by John in the River Jordan. As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens "torn apart." What would THAT look like?! It must have been absolutely fantastic. What is telling is that Mark begins and ends his gospel account with something being torn open. In the beginning, it is the heavens. At the end, when Jesus died on the cross, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (15:38). In both cases, that which separated humankind from God was torn away. In the beginning of the Gospel of Mark the heavens were torn open and at the end of the Gospel, when Jesus died, the curtain which separated everyone from the Holy of Holies in the Temple, was torn open from top to bottom. In Jesus, that which separates us from God is torn away....permanently. After the heavens are torn apart, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon Jesus. The Spirit of God is indeed on and in Jesus. We then hear the voice of the Father who reinforces this by saying, "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased." Here in this scene, we see the three members of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Mark stated in the very first sentence of his gospel, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the *Son of God*." Now just 11 verses later, this fantastically good news is repeated, just in case it didn't sink in the first time; Jesus is the Son of God! And if we forget that once again, it will be repeated at the transfiguration as God once again proclaims it for all to hear. Can you hear this good news? Jesus is the Son of God, come for you.

January 14, John 1:43-51

The reading begins with "The next day..." The next day after what? It was the day after Jesus called his first disciples, including Andrew and Simon Peter. After this Jesus decided to go to Galilee where he found Philip and said, "Follow me." We see that Philip was from the same town as Andrew and Simon Peter, so perhaps they knew one another. After being called to follow Jesus, Philip's reaction was similar to Peter's in verse 41; in other words, he had to share this amazingly good news with another person. He sought out Nathanael and said, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathaniel's answer is classic, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Remember, Nazareth was an insignificant place, a kind of one camel town, way out in the boondocks. It was not the kind of place that produces anything of note. But Nathaniel's comment also provides the Gospel's first fulfillment of 1:10-11 (his own people did not accept him). Philip invites Nathaniel to check it out for himself, simply saying, "Come and see." This is also an invitation to each one of us, to come and see Jesus the Savior. Each and everyone of us needs this invitation and need to respond. Nathaniel does go and meets Jesus, leading to some cryptic remarks by Jesus. Upon seeing Nathaniel Jesus says, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is not deceit!" What Jesus meant by that, perhaps only Nathaniel knows. Most scholars who study John are stumped by it. Nathaniel asks Jesus how he knows this and Jesus responds with another perplexing answer, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." In the Gospel of John, Jesus often displays knowledge of people before actually meeting them. Another example is the

Samaritan woman at the well in chapter 4. Jesus knows that she had five husbands, even before meeting her. Jesus discloses facts that were thought to be well covered, and yet he knows. In the same way he discloses who he is and the identity of his Father in heaven. Upon hearing what Jesus says to him, Nathaniel confesses, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel!" Thomas will make a similar confession when he sees Jesus after the resurrection. After Nathaniel's confession of faith, Jesus makes two promises to Nathaniel, "you will see greater things than these," and "you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." The first promise happened a number of times beginning with the wedding of Cana (chapter 2). How or when the second one was fulfilled is not noted in the Gospel of John, but all came to see Jesus as the one who descended and ascended to heaven. In ending, as one commentator said, the challenge to John's readers is whether they will see Jesus with Nathaniel's initial skepticism or with Nathaniel's eyes of faith (Texts for Preaching).

January 21, Mark 1:14-20

Jesus began his ministry after John the Baptist was arrested. This was right after Jesus returned from the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan. Jesus proclaimed the good news of God saying, "The kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the good news." Jesus points not to himself, but to the kingdom of God. Jesus points beyond himself to God his Father. But indeed, Jesus is the one whom John the Baptist declared to be more powerful than John, the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. When we realize this, we understand that not only does Jesus point to the kingdom of God; Jesus himself is a sign of God's kingdom and the nearness of the kingdom. In fact, the Kingdom of God can be found in Jesus himself. With this in mind, the famous theologian Rudolf Bultmann declared, "the proclaimer becomes the proclaimed." In Jesus, the proclaimer, is the kingdom of God! The message of Jesus mirrors the message of John the Baptist, repent, for the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent, turn away from your sinful self to God and there see your salvation. Next we see the calling of Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew, who were fisherman. Jesus simply says, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." They *immediately* (a favorite word of Mark) left their nets and followed Jesus. We see the same thing happen again, this time with two more fisherman brothers, John and James. Why did they follow Jesus so readily? It doesn't say. But we do know that Jesus spoke with all authority and I am sure that resonated in their hearts. One also wonders why Jesus chose *these* four men. Is this the best he could do?? They did let Jesus down more than a few times. If you read the gospels carefully, you can *feel* Jesus' frustration with them. Yet, wouldn't that have been true of any person, including you or me? Jesus chooses we who are sinful, full of faults and uses us, faults and all, to share the good news. Thanks to the power of God, the church has continued for over 2,000 years with disciples who are just as full of faults and sins as those first few disciples. Jesus continues to call us saying, "Follow me." I believe Jesus does this in love for each of us and for all people. All we can say is, thanks be to God! I will follow!

January 28, Mark 1:21-28

Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum. This is where Jesus made his home (Matthew 3:13; Mark 2:1). It is on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. When the Sabbath came, Jesus went to the local synagogue and taught. People there were amazed at his authority (We see in Matthew 28:18 that Jesus had all authority in heaven and earth....that's amazing authority!). Just then, as Jesus was teaching, there was a man with an unclean spirit who cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." One of the ironies of the Gospel of Mark is that the demons/evil spirits/those possessed, recognize Jesus immediately as the Son of God, but the religious authorities and even the disciples often fail to understand. They continually question who Jesus is and where he gets his power and authority. In fact, after the healing, the people forget about the disturbance and the man who was healed. The question on their mind was, "What is this? A new teaching – with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." Once again we hear that word "authority." Jesus' miracle (the first in the Gospel of Mark) reinforces the people's view of Jesus' authority which is displayed in his teaching and in his actions. Yet, as we shall see, miracles do not necessarily create faith. In fact, for many people, they only created more questions as they tried to understand where this power and authority came from. And when it began to threaten the power structures of the day, it would lead to the crucifixion of Jesus, the Son of God.

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. -Numbers 6:24