



St. Luke Lutheran Church

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Editor: Jo Klein

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Open doors, open hearts, open minds.

Parish Times February 2018

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Acts 9:1-2

In this Bible passage we find one of the earliest references to the followers of Jesus. They were known as people of "the Way." The Way. What do you think that means? One meaning is found in John 14:6 where Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus is the way to God the Father, eternal life. Followers of Jesus, followers of the Way are on the way to eternal life. In fact, as followers of Jesus, we can know the gift of peace found in eternal life right here and now.

Another possible interpretation for "the way" is to a certain way of life. It is the way of belief in Jesus as Lord, worshiping Jesus as the Son of God, being saved by grace, living a life of love and forgiveness, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the imprisoned, and the list could go on. This is the way of Jesus, the way he lived and calls us to live, a life of faith, worship and action informed by love.

I would like us to explore this more deeply through our upcoming Wednesday evening Lenten worship services. We will begin with Ash Wednesday worship on February 14 at 7 pm. There we will receive a cross of ashes on our foreheads and remember that the way of Jesus is not only one of glory, but also dying. We remember that our sinful selves are drown in the waters of baptism and raised to new life through Jesus. This is the Way of true life. During the five Wednesday evening worship services after Ash Wednesday, we will use the beautiful Holden Evening Prayer liturgy as well as watch five short videos (about 14 minutes each). They will be examining various aspects of the Way. I think you will find them stimulating as well as faith deepening.

See you in worship,

Pr. Dave



February Acolytes

4 Victor Landenberger
18 Tatum Herrmann

Heartfelt thanks to our February **Bun Run** volunteers: Ken McGrew, Doug and Jo Klein, Larry Litzkow, Julie Ellingson.



Usher Notes

Many thanks to our ushers for February: David Grzywinski, Mike and Nancy Hegdahl, Roger Diestler.

Lenten Schedule of Worship

Ash Wednesday worship is on February 14 at 7 pm. On the five following Wednesdays (Feb. 21, 28, March 7, 14, 21) we will have an evening worship from 6:30-7:15 featuring the Holden Evening Prayer Worship Service. Maundy Thursday (March 29) and Good Friday (March 30) services are at 7:00 p.m. Come, worship the Lord during this Lenten season as you prepare for the cross and resurrection!



Camp Onomia Family Retreat February 16-18

Come one, come all to the St. Luke Family Retreat! You are part of the family of St. Luke, so the invitation includes you. All are welcome. If you have never been to a St. Luke family retreat at Camp Onomia, come and try it out. This year our theme will center on: "Look and See, Listen and Hear, Touch and Feel." Have you ever been so busy you don't even notice something right in front of your eyes? You look, but you don't see. Or maybe you are listening to something, but realize you didn't hear a thing. You listened, but you did not hear. The same can be said about touching and feeling. My hope is that we can slow down during this retreat and take the time to see, hear and feel. When we do that, we become more aware of all the Lord is doing around us and so find that we are blessed! We find God at work in our everyday lives. Sign up on the kiosk and plan to go!



Ladies Night Out in February will take place on Tuesday, February 20th at Bennett's Railhouse, 1305 W. 7th St. at 5:30 p.m. Please notify Joyce Bluel (651-690-4614) by Sunday, Feb. 11 if you are planning on attending so we have an idea of how many for the reservation.



Mardi Gras Celebration with St. Mark on Saturday, February 10 at 5:00

We are going to have a party! It will be at the St. Mark Lutheran Church social hall. It will feature mouth-watering food from DeGidios as well as the delicious fun of building your own Sundae with a variety of ice cream, sauces, whipped cream and sprinkles. We will have a piñata for the kids, a place for designing your own Mardi Gras Mask, music and other fun. We are applying to Thrivent for funding. Cost for you will be a goodwill offering, all of which will be donated to Loaves and Fishes. So come, eat, have a good time and help with a great cause.

February WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

Readers:

4 Cindy Schroer
11 Laurie Herrmann
18 Katy Eggert
25 Wendy Bjorklund

Communion:

4 Jen Fredrickson
18 Katy Eggert



February Birthdays

4 Maggie Erickson
7 Samantha Smith
9 Kirby Peterson
10 Junella Litzkow
11 Sue Grzywinski
12 Alec Schultz
14 Dianne Diestler
16 Ann Verschoyle
17 David Nedrelow
23 Mary Dybvig
Volker Landenberger
24 Jeff Kingsley
26 Karen Wasko
28 Sadie Pilgrim

SAVE THE DATE for Pr. Dave's retirement party which will be Sunday, June 10th right after our service. More details to follow. Come one, come all!



Wednesday Morning Bible Study

Every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. we meet for Bible study with a chaser of coffee or tea. It is open to everyone, so bring along your Bible and let's dive into God's life-giving Word! Meet in the library.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2017 Year End

INCOME

Envelopes/General Fund	136,425.71
Loose Offering	1960.55
Thrivent	2552.00
Transfer from	
Designated Funds	3950.00
Use of Bldg/Other	2850.00
Total	147,738.26

TOTAL EXPENSES	146,719.38
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Need for volunteers for the MSP committee

What is the MSP committee? It is a group of people who will develop the **M**inistry **S**ite **P**rofile that will help the ELCA synod determine what type of pastor (leader) St. Luke needs going forward. This is **NOT** the call committee. This is the committee that generates the document that will help synod match candidates to our mission/vision as a church. Typically, an interim pastor would help us do this. Because we want to be "ahead of the curve," Pr. Joe Lees will assist us in this generating this document. We are lucky to have him. The committee will utilize a wonderful database that can tell us a lot about our own congregation and people living in the neighborhood around St. Luke, and help us to see where we overlap and what the gaps are. If you are interested in data, thinking about the mission of St. Luke going forward, and want to be part of the process of putting together this document, please contact Wendy Bjorklund, either at church, at wlbjorklund@stcloudstate.edu or by phone at [651-357-5742](tel:651-357-5742) by February 1. Meetings will be held in February and March, scheduled after church on Sunday, when possible. The plan is to have the MSP submitted to synod by May 1.



Commentaries for the February Gospel Readings

Study notes for Sundays in February

Below are some notes for your study and meditation on the Sunday gospel readings in February. Please take out your Bible, read the gospel lesson, along with the notes for that reading, then meditate on it in preparation for Sunday worship. Prepare your heart and mind for worship. The main sources I have used are "Preaching Mark" by Rev. Richard Jensen, "The Good News According to Mark" by Eduard Schweizer, "Texts for Preaching", Working Preacher and my own notes.

February 4: Mark 1:29-39 – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Mark begins his gospel with four healing stories. This is the second of the four (the first was the healing of the man with the demon, which took place in the synagogue). This gospel reading can be divided into three scenes. In the first, we see Jesus leaving the synagogue, where they had worshiped because it was the Sabbath. He entered the house of Andrew and Simon Peter (remember, they were brothers) and found Simon's mother-in-law in bed with a fever. Without saying a word, Jesus simply takes her by the hand and lifts her up. As he did that, the fever left her and she got right to work! You'd think they would have let her rest a little more, but no. Who knows, maybe she was the kind who felt duty bound to take care of guests. Or maybe she realized it was Jesus who cured her and so wanted to serve him out of gratitude. It doesn't say. What we *do* know is that in this first scene, only a few people witnessed this Sabbath healing (Simon, Andrew, James, John). However, that same evening (the second scene), people brought their sick and possessed to the house for Jesus to heal. It says *the whole city* gathered around the door. There were a lot of hurting people. The healing in the first scene of this gospel (Simon's mother-in-law) was witnessed by a few. The healings in the second scene were witnessed by the *whole city*. It wasn't a private affair. Word spread quickly about this miracle man and people brought loved ones from near and far to be healed. In the third scene we see Jesus waking early, while it was still dark, to go to a deserted place to pray. This is something Jesus often did. We need to take note: if it is good for the Son of God, it is good and even essential for us to make it a habit of taking time each day to find a quiet place to pray. As he prayed, it says that Simon and his companions *hunted* him down. It is like they are chasing an animal. And when they found Jesus they berated him saying, "Everyone is searching for you." What are you doing? Don't you know that people are looking for you with big expectations?? But Jesus has other plans and tells

the disciples so. It won't be the first time their plans conflict with Jesus' plans. In fact, unlike the demons, they never quite figure out who Jesus is until after the resurrection. Jesus then tells the disciples, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." As one commentator wrote, "Jesus subordinates his power for healing and exorcism to the greater need for proclamation of the kingdom of God. He does so because that is his primary task. He also does so because proclamation of the kingdom is the only context in which the power of healing gains its true meaning."

February 11: Mark 9:2-9 – Transfiguration of our Lord

Our gospel reading begins with, "Six days later," Six days after what? Just before this, in 8:29 Peter confesses Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Right after Peter's confession Jesus tells the disciples that he must suffer and be killed. Peter rebukes Jesus and then Jesus calls Peter Satan! Jesus then tells the disciples that they too must take up their crosses and follow him. It is right after this that Jesus leads three of his disciples up the mountain where the transfiguration takes place and they see Jesus in his glory. Like at Jesus' baptism, we hear the voice of God say, "This is my Son, the Beloved." But then God adds, "listen to him!" "Listen to him." This is an extremely important word to both the disciples of that time, as well as to you and me, present day disciples. Jesus is unlike any Messiah we ever imagined. His ministry includes suffering, death and glory. In our minds, like the first disciples, we think the Messiah should only be about glory. But that is not the case, and so we need to listen. Like a good shepherd, it is necessary for the Messiah to go where the sheep are found, and that is a place of suffering and death. Jesus understands this well and so comes to the place where we are...a place of suffering and death. The disciples needed to *listen* to the teachings of God the Father and Jesus in order to understand this about the Messiah. We need to listen too. When we don't, we wander off like the lost sheep we become. There on the mountaintop the glory of Jesus is seen in his face and clothes, which shone like the sun and became dazzling white. Can you imagine watching as a person's face suddenly begins to shine like the sun? Not only that, but Moses and Elijah suddenly show up and begin talking with Jesus. It would be an overwhelming sight. About this, one commentator wrote, "The importance of listening becomes clear by contrast with the scene that has preceded it, in which everything is visual. The disciples see the transfiguration of Jesus, the whiteness of his clothing, the appearance of Elijah and Moses alongside him, the cloud that overshadows them. After the voice speaks, they look around and see only Jesus. Nothing is wrong with what the disciples have witnessed, except that they have not yet listened and heard what Jesus has said to them, so they are not ready to understand what they have seen." Think about it, at the crucifixion, Jesus was flanked by two criminals, but here in his glory he is flanked by two of the greatest prophets of all time. This one who is God's Son, shines with glory, yet descends into the deepest, darkest valleys of human misery, pain, suffering and death. Jesus does that for you and me. Jesus tells the disciples not to tell anyone about this mountaintop experience until after he has been raised from the dead. The disciples followed this order. It was after the resurrection that Peter writes about the glory of the transfiguration in 2 Peter 1:16-18.

February 18: Mark 1:9-15 – First Sunday in Lent

Like the first Sunday in January (The Baptism of our Lord), once again we read about the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Jesus journeyed from Nazareth to be baptized by John in the River Jordan. As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens "torn apart." Can you imagine? 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, which separated everyone from the Holy of Holies, was torn in two from top to bottom (15:38). In both cases, that which separated humankind from God was torn away. In Jesus, that is taken care of permanently. In Jesus, nothing separates us from the love of God! 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! It will be repeated again at the transfiguration as God proclaims it for all to hear (check out last week’s commentary above). Immediately (one of Mark’s favorite words) after the baptism, Jesus is driven out into the wilderness by the Spirit. Why in the world would the Spirit of God drive Jesus out into the wilderness? It is a place of temptation and danger. Shouldn’t the Spirit try to *protect* Jesus from such things? Rev. Richard Jensen writes about this saying, “In the baptismal scene we hear clearly who Jesus is. He is the Son of God. He will overthrow the rule of Satan and bring in the fulfilled time of salvation. Defeat of the evil powers is a central objective of Jesus’ ministry. When Jesus appointed the twelve to be with him he sent them out to preach the good news of the kingdom (the positive side of the message) and to cast out demons (the negative side of the message) (Mark 3:13-15).” Note that Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days. The number 40 in the Bible can sometimes mean, “a long time, or a lot.” In other words, it is sometimes used like we use “million,” such as, “There were a million mosquitoes by the lake!” We didn’t count them all, we just emphasize that there were a lot, by saying, “There were a million mosquitoes.” Jesus could have literally been in the wilderness for 40 days or just a long time. The number 40 also reminds one of the Hebrew people wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. During their wanderings in the wilderness the Hebrew people often failed to follow the Lord. On the contrary, Jesus was faithful to God the Father through all the temptations of the devil during his time in the wilderness. After Jesus’ time in the wilderness, we learn that John had been arrested. This is an ominous turn. The ministry of both John and Jesus will be met with deadly opposition. Jesus begins preaching the good news and we hear his first words, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the good news.” In and through Jesus, the Son of God, the kingdom of God has indeed come near. We are called to repent, turn from our sinful selves to see the good news of our salvation made flesh in Jesus. This is indeed good news, but it is also threatening news to some, and will lead to clashes, suffering, death, and resurrection.

February 25: Mark 8:31-38 – Second Sunday in Lent

These verses signal a new beginning in the Gospel of Mark. Up until chapter 8 the emphasis has been on Jesus’ authority and power. He casts out demons, heals people and commands the weather, all with power and authority. Beginning with chapter 8 the emphasis changes to his suffering and death, and he calls us to follow! This is the first of three times that Jesus tells his disciples of his suffering, death and resurrection (the other two are found in Mark 9:30-32; Mark 10:32-34). The disciples only seem to hear the suffering and death portion, not the resurrection news. Upon hearing this, Peter rebukes Jesus (In Mark the word “rebuke” is often used by Jesus when he casts out unclean spirits – Jesus rebukes the spirits). In so doing is Peter putting himself above Jesus? Does Peter want to be the leader, the teacher, and not the follower? Or are good intentions just leading him down the wrong road? How often are we like Peter? Are we faster to voice our thoughts/opinions than to listen (James 1:19)? Jesus rebukes Peter. Why does Jesus call Peter Satan? Jesus says Peter has his mind set on human things rather than the way of God. Is it possible for Peter (us) to change? How does that happen? What does it mean to be a follower of Christ? Jesus says we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus. How do you do that? Jesus then tells us about saving our life (8:35), the benefit (8:36), life’s price (8:37). What is Jesus saying to us? Take time to meditate on this or other thoughts that come to you as you read this passage. Take time to meditate on the words of life.

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