

Immanuel Lutheran Church
229 Eleventh Avenue West
Grinnell, Iowa 50112

December Newsletter

Immanuel News

Immanuel Lutheran Church LC-MS

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Let's Get Social



<http://www.immanuelgrinnell.org/>



Immanuel Lutheran Church LC-MS



Listen to weekly sermons:
Rev. Dr. Joel Koepf

Worship with Us!

Sundays at Immanuel

Divine Worship 9:00 a.m.
Christian Education 10:30 a.m.
Bible Study 10:30 a.m.

Thursdays

Weekly Bible Study 11:00 a.m.

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HAVE YOU...moved? ...changed phone numbers? ...changed email addresses? ...need to update birthday/anniversary dates? Let the office know! Thanks!

LET US KNOW...If you have a loved one ill or hospitalized, have a new baby, would like a pastoral visit, or if any pastoral need arises.

PRAYER REQUEST...If you would like a special prayer during the prayers of the church on Sunday, please contact Rev. Koepf:
Email: koepfj@hotmail.com Cell: 507-829-3901 Office: 641-236-6691

DO YOU...want to put something in the bulletin or newsletter? Have a prayer request? Birth/Anniversary/Graduation announcements? Upcoming events? If so, please submit the information as you want it to appear in the bulletin or newsletter by the deadlines listed below to the church secretary at immanuelutheran@iowatelecom.net.

Deadlines:

Bulletin – 12 noon of each Wednesday

Newsletter – 15th of each month

For those of you without email access, please call or submit your written request to the church secretary.

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To those of you that “fly” south for the winter and would like your monthly newsletter mailed to you, please submit your address, date departing and date returning, to the church office. Even those that have submitted their address in the past, please do so again to make sure we have the correct address. If you would like to “go green” and have your newsletter e-mailed to you, please submit your e-mail address.

The newsletter can also be read online
at www.immanuelgrinnell.org



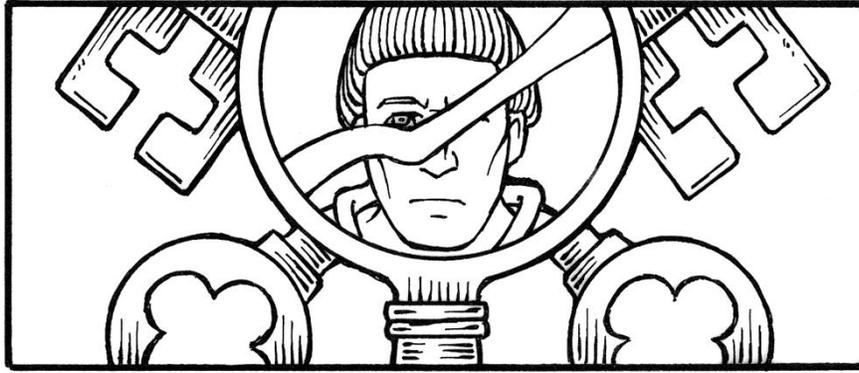
A new year is almost upon us. In the church, we use the church year to aid in our worship life, and a new year begins on December 1st with the Season of Advent. Advent is a penitential season. We pray and prepare our worship lives to celebrate our God becoming man. We prepare to celebrate Immanuel, God with us!

As we make preparations this Advent Season, there will be special time set aside at Immanuel Lutheran Church for your personal prayer and preparation for the Christmas Season. One practice in the Church that has been talked about, but not set aside for practice much is Private Confession/Absolution. As we discussed at length during our last section of Bible Study, covering the 5th Chief Part of the Catechism (Confession and the Office of the Keys), this is a gift that was retained in the church for a joyful conscience. Martin Luther wrote on confession, "If you are a Christian, you should be glad to run more than a hundred miles for confession, not under compulsion but rather coming and compelling us to offer it." Psalm 42:1 states, "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God." As our soul prepares for this season, we are driven to the streams of living water, to the Gospel of Christ Jesus, and one place this is given is confession/absolution. There is no law stating that you have to come to confession. I do not intend anyone to come under compulsion; rather, to use Luther's words again, "If you are poor and miserable, then go and make use of the healing medicine."

If you wish to take advantage of this medicine during the season of Advent, there will be time set aside **Tuesdays (December 3, 10, 17) from 12-1, Thursdays (December 5, 12, 19) from 5-6, and anytime by appointment.** During these times, the windows to the fellowship hall will be blackened. When there is no one confessing, the fellowship doors will be propped open. If the doors are closed, please remain in the entryway, or Sunday School rooms. There will be hymnals for your use in reflection and prayerful preparation. During these times, I will be sitting up by the Altar and when you are ready, simply enter the sanctuary and there will be a hymnal open for you to use. *Remember that every sin confessed remains only between you and God, as He separates your sin from you as far as the East is from the West.*



May God bless our penitential season of Advent as we prepare to again celebrate His coming!



**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, EXPLANATIONS, AND
QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SELF-EXAMINATION
IN PREPARATION FOR PRIVATE ABSOLUTION:
A CONFESSION MIRROR (BEICHTSPIEGEL)**

INTRODUCTION

Luther describes God as that to which we look for the greatest and highest good. From the time of the fall in the Garden of Eden, people have been constantly tempted to look inward for that good. Our selfish search for good within ourselves is the temptation of the old Adam in us. The Ten Commandments address this “self”-ish issue directly. We do not fear, love, and trust God above all things. On this earth we struggle against looking inward toward ourselves. In the questions below the common theme of selfishness is interwoven throughout. This constant breaking of the first commandment is a life-long struggle for Christians. No matter which of commandments 2-10 that you break, it is always an assault on having none other than God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the center of our trust (faith). In the Ten Commandments there is a vertical relationship (we and God) and there is a horizontal relationship (we and our neighbors). The first table (Commandments 1-3) shows the vertical relationship, and the second table (Commandments 4-10) shows the horizontal. Even in the breaking of the horizontal relationships we are offending against the vertical because God has called us to live in harmony and love with our neighbor.

The Small Catechism urges us to consider our place in life according to the Ten Commandments. The Commandments act as a mirror to reflect our sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. This honest reflection, on account of God’s holy Word working in us, will bear the fruit of repentance. In private confession and absolution we repent before our pastor of those sins which we know and feel in our heart, and he, in turn, grants us Christ’s forgiveness individually.

WHAT BELONGS TO CONFESSION?

Confession is a return to God, a return to baptismal grace. The first part of confession is that I come into judgment with myself honestly and sincerely. I examine my life and must be able to say “yes” to the question: “Do you confess that you have sinned, and do you repent of your sins?” The second part of confession is that, as far as I am able, I try to set right what I have committed or omitted against my fellow man: I cannot ask God for forgiveness if I have not done this to my fellow man. The third part of confession is that I place my trust on the fact that Christ on the cross has paid also for my debt, for my guilt; I am asked: “Do you desire the forgiveness of your sins in the name of Jesus Christ?” and I must be able to speak my “yes” to this question. The fourth part of confession is that I resolve “in the power of the Holy Spirit to avoid the sins committed and to live in a Christian way.” This I cannot do from my own ability, but only as far as the Spirit of God assists me. The fifth part of confession is that I confess my sins and accept the holy absolution as sure and certain before God in heaven. I must be able to say “yes” when I am asked whether I also believe “that the forgiveness which the father confessor speaks to me in the name of God is God’s forgiveness.” The last part of confession, finally, is that I thank God. “For He has done great things for me” in the forgiveness of my guilt.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR CONFESSION?

Confession is not something one can take care of “in passing.” There must be time for it, and the more time I take for it the better I will confess. At the very least I should prepare myself for it for about an hour.

1. I go into a quiet room where I can be alone, undisturbed. Radio, T.V., the telephone, other people, and all things which distract me must be excluded. If this cannot take place at home, then perhaps the church is the proper place of refuge.

2. I open the Holy Scriptures and pray one of the penitential Psalms slowly, word for word: Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143 (perhaps Psalm 51 is the most suitable). I think for a moment over what God has to say to me in the Psalm.

3. I fold my hands for personal prayer: that God the Holy Spirit would show me what I have done wrong before God and men; how heavy my guilt lies; that I may confess sincerely and honestly; that I may rejoice over the holy absolution with which all my sins are put to an end.

4. I take paper and pencil in hand and go through the following confession mirror, write my mistakes down (abbreviations are enough), so that I can set them forth in an orderly fashion and without stammering in private confession. (I destroy the “confession sheet” after confession is over. No one can read it except me!)

5. I try to make my confession as if it were the last one of my life. Do not mention any sin which you have not committed, but confess the sins committed without any excuse. No “perhaps,” no “maybe,” but only, “I have...” I should and may accuse only myself the names of others have no place in my confession.

CONFESSION MIRROR

In General: Why does God give His holy Ten Commandments? What does He demand? All your heart, all your life should belong to Him! But every transgression of His will was a “no” to this demand. Have you walked the way that God calls you to? Have you tried to come nearer to Him? Have you lived according to His Word, or have you fallen into previous sins? Have you done that which your conscience previously told you was sin? Were your previous confessions in earnest? Have you delayed confession in order to sin further?

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

To whom have I looked for the highest good? Have I doubted God’s Word and thus committed idolatry by seeking my highest good from other “sources”? Which one was more important when I made my daily decisions: God or myself? What do I fear, what do I love, what do I trust more than my God? Have good times deluded me into thinking that I am in control? Am I tempted to think that I have God and everything I need when I have money and earthly goods? Have bad times caused me to despair and lose hope and trust in God? Have I doubted God’s love for me when I have money problems, loss of possessions, sickness, or injury? Have I been discontent with what God has spoken of Himself in Jesus Christ and in the Scriptures? Have I put my own notions or the notions of others above what the Scriptures say about God?

To trust in God above all things is to have faith. Have I thought or done things that have weakened or hurt my faith in God? Have I denied the faith out of indifference or cowardice before acquaintances, relatives, friends, or those who believe differently?

I have God as my Lord over me. What contradicts Him in my life? Does my self-consciousness, my pride, my sensitivity, my temper, my dissatisfaction, my laziness, my “rights,” my fearfulness, or weariness with my life contradict God in my life? Have I cursed God and His Church? Is it noticeable to others that I am a Christian: baptized, redeemed, made holy? Or have I been ashamed of my salvation?

Consider the things that you have done to weaken or hurt your faith according to the next nine commandments. Remember that your flesh is weak with sin and the old man in you must be killed daily.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

You shall not misuse the Name of the Lord your God.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

Have I called God “Father” with delight? Have I used holy words or holy names in a light-hearted way? Have I used them in anger, in mockery, thoughtlessly, or for superstitious reasons? Have I sworn carelessly or falsely? Have I taken oaths frivolously or even lied under oath intentionally? Have I kept my vows (baptismal vows, confirmation vows, marriage vows)? Have I received the holy absolution or the holy sacrament of the altar unworthily (mindless of the gift and my need for it)? Have I listened to and read God’s Word diligently?

When the precious Name of Jesus is not used rightly, it is misused. Have I properly called on my heavenly Father through His only Son Jesus Christ and had faith that He hears and answers my prayer? Have I called on His Name wrongly through false worship?

God is one, and yet there are three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Have I desired to find salvation in any other name, but the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Have I wished that there were other paths to God outside of Christ, perhaps for the sake of others? Have I confirmed others in error and made conversion difficult for them by recognizing prayers to the gods of other religions as valid? Do I pray absent-mindedly or inattentively? Do I bring every worry, concern, and grief to God in prayer? Or do I neglect prayer altogether? Have I given thanks and praise to God for his promise to listen compassionately and unendingly to my supplications? Have I consulted astrologers, fortune-tellers, palm-readers, or spiritualists? Have I been led by superstitions? Have I been influenced by horoscopes? Have I done little or nothing to spread the Name of God? Have I supported preaching and the administration of the sacrament with my prayers, conversations, and tithes?

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT
Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

Have I neglected the reading of the Bible thinking that hearing it on Sunday is enough? Do I let other daily activities take precedence over prayer and meditation on God's Word? Have I kept every day holy with the reading and meditation upon God's Word? Has the hearing and reading of God's Word become boring and meaningless to me? Have I despised the preaching of His Word by not coming to church as regularly as I should? Have I let my mind wander when I am at church and become distracted by my thoughts? Do I despise the reception of Holy Communion by not coming to receive it or by receiving it with no thought of the great price Jesus paid for my sin on the cross? Have I been an unfaithful witness to others in our congregation by my absence from or inattention in the Divine Service? Have I gone to church only out of habit, or because I was forced? Do I get bored with the sermon, the holy liturgy, or the celebration of the sacrament, when I should know that the Lord Jesus is present and wants to speak to me through them?

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT
Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents or other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

For children: How have I behaved toward my parents? Have I been loveless, unfriendly, unthankful, rude, rebellious, disobedient, or full of pride? Have I hurt their feelings? Have I wished them evil or harm, despised them? Have I left them alone in danger, in sickness, in old age? Have I thanked them with my words and deeds? Have I helped them? Have I prayed that God would give my parents the strength, knowledge and desire to do what is best for me, even if I don't like it?

Have I loved and honored those people whom my parents have chosen to instruct me, my teachers and professors? Have I shown the proper respect and obedience to the civic leaders who have been given their position by God to govern this country, state, and city? Have I been hypocritical to my superiors and defamed them behind their backs? Have I prayed earnestly for the well-being of the leaders of government? Have I placed myself above the law, thinking it sometimes doesn't apply to me, perhaps when I know better? Have I treated my parents and other authorities as representatives of God for my sake?

For parents and superiors: Have I protected those entrusted to me from bad influences? Have I provided for them in all external things? Have I made time for them? Have I made time to think about them? Have I been a good example for them? Have I been impatient, hot-tempered, rude, or unfair? Have I shown preference to someone? Have I prayed for the Lord to guide my words and actions? Have I become exasperated and wished that I did not have children or responsibility for those whom God gave me?

How have you behaved toward your pastor or the church? Have you prayed for your parents, your superiors, and your pastor?

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT
You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

Some people imagine that because they have not killed anyone with their own hands or caused someone to die, that this commandment has been kept. However, there are many other ways to hurt and harm your neighbor or in other words “kill” your neighbor.

Have I hurt or harmed my neighbor by physical hitting or by destructive words? Have I murdered my neighbor's reputation by speaking harmful words about him? Have I acted as though my neighbor is a treasured gift from God?

Simply leaving my neighbor alone does not fulfill this commandment. Have I helped my neighbor in every physical need, or only when it was convenient, if at all? Have I passed up the opportunity to do good to my neighbor? Have I allowed hunger, temperature, or loneliness to kill my neighbor out of my laziness, comfort, indifference, or on purpose? Have I prayed for my friends and enemies alike, that nothing evil or bad would happen to them? Have I held grudges? Have I forgiven when I should have? Have I attempted to commit suicide or else tried to physically harm myself? Have I failed to help prevent my neighbor from committing suicide or hurting himself? Have I considered euthanasia to be an acceptable option for others, if they are really suffering, instead of leaving their life in God's hands? Do I overeat or drink too much? Have I encouraged or not aided my neighbor when he eats or drinks too much? Do I smoke in excess or allow my neighbor to smoke to his physical detriment? Have I neglected to properly care for animals, and thus been a poor steward of God's creation?

For rulers: Have I neglected to use the sword instituted by God to punish evil and protect innocent lives?

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT
You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.

In this commandment God requires cleanness of me, even in thoughts and desires, and if I be unmarried, He requires the conscientious preservation of my body and my soul for the duty of marriage or for an unmarried life of service to Him.

Have I despised God's gift of sexuality by looking at other people around me for selfish pleasure? Do I look at others with indecency and lust? Have I spoken in a crude manner about sex or made light of the intimacy that God has given to a husband and wife? Have I injured my modesty with my behavior: my eyes, offensive clothing, looking at obscene pictures, or by listening to or telling crude jokes? Have I seduced myself or others to unchaste things? Have I striven sincerely for purity of thoughts, of speech, of body and of soul, or not striven at all? Have I considered my body as a temple of the Holy Spirit through holy Baptism? Do I pray, turn away, and fight against temptations? Have I done unchaste things with myself or with others?

If single, do I consider my unmarried state as coming from the hand of God?

If married, have I made time for my spouse? Have I refused the blessing of children due to selfishness or a desire for comfort? Have I desired to break my marital fidelity? Have I actually broken it? Do I harbor intentions or have I even consented to divorce? Have I been concerned for the soul of my spouse?

Have I condoned homosexual relationships and failed to address it as a sinful act? Have I had sexual intercourse with a man or woman who is not my spouse? Have I read, viewed, or listened to immoral, suggestive or pornographic books, magazines, pictures, movies, music, dances, plays, or internet sites? Have I neglected to encourage others to be faithful to their spouses in the fear of God?

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT
You shall not steal.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions or get them in any false way, but help and support him in every physical need.

Have I been discontent with what God has or has not given me? Have I approved of stealing in certain situations, perhaps if my neighbor stole from me first? Have I stolen by neglecting to help take care of my neighbor's property, possessions, or earnings? Have I been lazy at work or school and not fulfilled my duties in a faithful manner? Do I accept pay even when I have not done a satisfactory job or not done the job at all? Have I been stingy with paying those who work under me? Do I demand unreasonable payment for poor work? Have I stolen information by plagiarism or cheating at work or school? Have I overcharged for the goods that I sell? Do I simply sell for my own gain, not caring for the needs of my neighbor? Have I wasted food by over eating or taking more than I should eat? Have I cheated on my taxes, or not reported income to the state? Have I supported my neighbor by all means available to me? Have I kept something that was borrowed or found? Have I damaged another person's property? Have I given offerings, as I was able, for the needy, for collections, for the church, and for missions? Have I kept stolen property for myself?

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT
You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

Have I spread rumors about my neighbor? Have I spoken poorly about my neighbor to other people? Have I murdered my neighbor's reputation by passing on harmful information even if it is true?—Just because something is true does not mean that you can spread it. It must be true, not harmful to someone else, and beneficial to others.

Have I told lies about my neighbor or to him? Have I given true witness to the truth, or have I lied in court or to other authorities such as parents, teachers, or policemen? Have I celebrated upon hearing hurtful news? Have I defended the reputation and feelings of my neighbor even when I do not like him? Do I look for the bad in someone instead of seeing the good? Have I kept the private sins of others secret when they have confessed and repented of them, or helped him to confess them? Have I explained all things in a way that is complimentary to my neighbor? Where a sin is public, have I testified publicly against it, thereby giving faithful witness to the truth? Have I lied to harm someone? Have I lied to help someone? (That too, even if unavoidable, is sin.) Have I been nosey with the secrets of others? Have I cast doubt on the honor of others? Have I listened to gossip or even passed it on? Did I protect others and their reputation when I was able? Have I had the courage to privately show my neighbor his errors, which I have observed, before I spoke about it with others?

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT
You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

Do I look at the life of others and become bitter or dissatisfied with the life that God has given me? Do I get jealous that other people look happier than I do? Have I competed with others in order to have as much money and possessions as those around me? Have I engaged in lawsuits to attempt to satisfy my greed? Have I tried to get my neighbor's land or house and made it appear legal?

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maid-servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

Have I wanted my neighbor's spouse, workers, or his property to be mine? Have I tried to win the affections of my neighbor's spouse, children, or employees for my personal use? Have I been slow to give my neighbor what properly belongs to him? Do I assist my neighbor at all times in keeping what is his?

THE CLOSE OF THE COMMANDMENTS

What does God say about all these commandments?

He says: "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep my commandments." [Exodus 20:5-6]

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He provides grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

Have I looked at the Ten Commandments as a way to properly do good works in faith? Or have I made up my own "seemingly" good works? Have I depended on works for salvation? Have I taught the Ten Commandments to my children or family? Have I tried to rely on my own power and strength to keep these Commandments? Do all of my actions proceed from a heart that fears God and looks to Him alone? Have I been proud or self-righteous, thinking I can do good works apart from faith in Jesus? Have my trust and faith rested and depended upon the works that I do?

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

Have I worked at becoming a better Christian? Have I fought against my errors? Has terror of God's wrath against sin moved my heart? Has the love of Christ, who let Himself be crucified for me, moved my heart? Am I indifferent about how God sees me and what His Son has done for me? Do I have a favorite sin? What sin is hardest for me to fight? What is it that must change with me? Where must I begin?

This confession mirror by no means contains all sins you could have committed. It is only meant to help you find the trail – you can then ask yourself further questions.

Do I believe that my sins are serious in the eyes of God and believe that Jesus Christ died for all of my sins and gives forgiveness to me through His Word and through the Sacraments?

If you believe this, my dear brother or sister in Christ, then come and unburden your conscience before your pastor who has been placed in the stead of Jesus for your comfort. Your confession does not need to be perfect, for the Absolution that Jesus gives is.

*The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LCMS Stewardship Ministry
Newsletter Article – December 2019*

Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, is teaching those who follow Him that worrying about the necessities of life is idolatry: worshipping a false god. This is because worry and anxiety show what we care about. Our anxiety reveals what we love and to what we're devoted. It reveals what we trust in.

This is why our Lord begins this section with an overarching principle: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

But you say: "I must eat and drink. I must have clothing to wear and have a home in which to dwell." Yes, all these things you need. And Jesus says that your Father in heaven will ensure that you have them. He demonstrates this with a simple argument.

Your Father in heaven feeds the birds of the air, who neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns. He clothes the lilies of the field, who neither toil nor spin but are arrayed more luxuriously than Solomon in all his glory. If, then, your Father in heaven feeds the birds and clothes the lilies, how will He not also feed and clothe you when you are worth more than they are?

For you know that you are worth more than them. You are worth infinitely more. You are worth the price of the eternal Son of God. Did the Son of God come down from heaven and become a lily? Did he descend and take on the form of a bird? No!

He came down from heaven and became a man: flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. He is one of us, our brother. And what did He do when He became flesh to dwell among us? He gave His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death, that you might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom forever.

God became man in Christ Jesus. He lived the life we failed to live, and He died the death we deserve because of it. He was raised again on the third day to overcome sin and death ... for us. He was crucified for our transgressions and raised for our justification. So, if your Father in heaven has given His Son to die for us in order that we might live with Him eternally, how will He not also give us all things to support this body and life?

To be anxious about the necessities of life, to devote yourself to food and clothing, to care about this and find security in it, is to serve another god. It is to deny that you will live forever because Jesus, the Son of God is risen from the dead, lives and reigns for all eternity. It is to believe that God – who created you, redeemed you by the death and resurrection of His Son, and sanctifies you by His Spirit – will not keep His promises of sustaining you in this life.

Jesus says this: Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. God's kingdom is His rule among us. His rule among us comes when our Father in heaven gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity. This is what we ask God to do for us in the prayer Jesus taught us.

Your Father in heaven knows what you need – food and clothing, house and home, etc. – and He promises to give it to you. Chief of the things you need is His grace and mercy in His Son, Jesus Christ. So, seek after that. Those who seek will find. And all the necessities of life, our Lord says, will be added to you.

In His Time

My wife and I took a quick trip to North Dakota to have an early Christmas gathering with my siblings. The state had recently been dumped on with snow, with some areas receiving 30 inches, but most of it had melted before we arrived. What I did notice was the number of corn, soybean, and sunflower fields which were yet to be harvested. I have noticed a similar scenario as I have traveled around Iowa.

Two words floated through my mind: patience and completion. Paul wrote: "So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. 1:10-13. Paul also wrote: "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." II Tim. 4:2.

So how are you doing in the patience category? Are you patient or does your life suffer from lack of patience? Do you always expect answers and results "right now?" While there is nothing wrong with that, sometimes our lack of patience with others can lead us to sin against them. We can become demanding instead of listening. We can fail to help and encourage when our agenda is not the most important thing!

I want to share one other word from St. Paul: "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:26-28. God is the one who ultimately sees things to completion, and that includes our salvation.

For God is patient and He had a timetable for mankind's salvation. Paul wrote: "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." Gal. 4:4. Christ Jesus has accomplished our salvation, through His perfect obedience and through His suffering and shedding of His blood on the cross. He gave His life in exchange for ours, and He rose in victory for us!

So our faithful Pastors teach with great patience and instruction. God's people bear fruit as they grow in the grace of God in Christ Jesus. God's people pray, for their Pastor, for their Church, and for their own needs and the needs of others. If we are to grow, we must have a solid and healthy diet of Word and Sacrament as those are the means which Christ Jesus has promised to use to build, grow, sustain, and increase His Church. And He does that "*in His time*," as He declares: "Be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven you!"

Rev. Dr. Dean Rothchild
Assistant to the President

Lavished With Blessings

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." - 1 John 3: 1,2



Have you ever been lavished with something? The dictionary gives the definition of the verb "lavish" as to "bestow something in generous or extravagant quantities." One of the times I had the opportunity to be lavished was at school in 2009 on my birthday. The plan concocted by the staff was to lavish the principal with love and attention in several different ways. For most of the morning I was lavished with a steady stream of students through my office bringing me an extravagant amount of chocolate. (Note the red box in the picture. It was overflowing!) At lunch, the students, several special guests (my husband and parents) and I enjoyed birthday cake while being serenaded by 11 former CLS students who sang several birthday type songs with the lyrics changed to reminisce about their time at Central. (What high school students won't do to get out of class for a free lunch is beyond me!) At the end of the day it was great to feel lavished with a generous amount of love, attention, and appreciation.

I hope you, too, have lavish experiences. In fact, I know that you have. All of us have because we are children of the God, the Heavenly Father! This lavish gift of love has nothing to do with what we have done. None of us has reached "saint" status based on popularity or the number of friends we have on Facebook. In fact, the whole world is filled with fallen saints. What do you see when you look in a mirror? Do you see a saint? Some people might think so, but it's more likely that you see a sinner staring back. We see a sinner who has fallen short of God's high expectations. Rather, we are saints only because God covers our sin with the righteousness of Christ. By faith in Jesus as our Savior God declares us to be righteous in His sight. We are saints because God loves us and has given His Son to save us. 1 John 3:1 summarizes it this way, *"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."*

God lavishes the lives of His saints with many blessings. When God claimed us as His own dear children and brought us into the fellowship of His family through Baptism, we were no longer slaves. We became children of the living God. So many people in our world live outside the sheltered care of our Heavenly Father. God reaches down to us through His Son that we might not be lost children with a destiny of eternal life in hell. Rather, we know the love and safety and peace as God's own dear children.

Another such blessing is His promise to be with us always. He has promised to always love us. He will neither leave us or forsake us. Having that security is one of our greatest needs. God, who didn't spare His own Son, is also taking care of you in your personal times of ups and downs. This is a certain promise.

Remember also the blessing that our names are written in the Book of Life. He promised that all who believe in Him will inherit eternal life in heaven. As God's saints, we look forward to our **Continued on next page....**

Homecoming where we will experience the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting in heaven. We anticipate with joy and peace being escorted by angels into the gates of heaven where we will be with Christ our Savior forever.

Along with these blessings God gives us, His sons and daughters, some important responsibilities. When God brings us into His family He makes us part of the family business. That business is to proclaim the Gospel. We are called to be different from the world. Look out! God instructs us to stand firm in the face of evil in our world, in the culture in which we live. One of the ways we do that as Lutheran educators is by fulfilling our vocation by following His calling. In our classrooms, schools, and homes we are to be His witnesses so that your students and families, coworkers, and communities will see Christ through us.

As Lutheran school educators, we have the joyful responsibility of being in the Word. Certainly, this happens each week in worship. It also happens with daily devotions, whether it be with your students, colleagues, your own family, or personally. Further, we study God's Word when we prepare our religion lessons and attend faculty devotions and Bible study. We study God's Word so that we stay spiritually healthy. If we aren't, it's likely that our students and our own family will struggle to keep the faith as we fight the good fight to defend ourselves against Satan's deceptions.

On our own, we are left with no defense. Through the work of the Holy Spirit we have the power and ability to reflect our designation as children of the Heavenly Father. Our schools and classrooms will shine with the lavish love of Christ that has been bestowed on us. How can we not but be a light in the world when the Holy Spirit lavishes us with the power to witness our gift of faith and share it with our students and families! Truly, we have been lavished with blessings from our Heavenly Father!

Jan Doellinger
Assistant to the President, Schools

A Cheerful Heart

Occasionally we meet people who don't seem to have much joy in their lives. You can sense the lack of it in their faces and the absence of it when they speak. When they speak it is usually to complain about something. That is not so with my dear friend, Grace, aged 99. Grace had breast cancer many years ago. She has had two hip and two knee replacements over the years. Now her ankles and feet are deteriorating. She says she's hoping for a "foot and ankle replacement"!

Yet Grace is always cheerful! "Why shouldn't I be?" she says. "Each morning I wake up, and the grace of the Lord is over me. I'm able to get up in peace, and when the evening comes, I can lie down and sleep in peace, for the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, lets me dwell in safety and joy. Even if sleep doesn't come, and even if the joints ache, I think about the Lord during the night, and he makes my soul rejoice, for a cheerful heart is good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22).

Even if the earth may be a vale of tears, and even though one may feel like a stranger here, one can rejoice in the awareness of God's wonder-working power and, by the grace of God, let life also be for the praise of and thanks to God for his glory and power. And that goes for any age ... from 9 to 99!

And speaking of thanks ... as we observe a day of Thanksgiving (in November in the United States), let us think about this world that God has created for us to live in! Frederick Buechner had this to say about creation: "To make suggests making something out of something else, the way someone makes wooden boxes out of wood. To create is to make something out of nothing, the way one makes paintings or poems. To create is to make something essentially new. In creating the world, God made something where before there had been nothing. As the author of the book of Job puts it: *The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:7)*. They shouted at the sheer and shimmering novelty of this miracle.

Using the same old materials of earth, air, fire and water, God creates something new every 24 hours. Every morning one wakes up to something that never was before and never will be again. And the you that wakes up was never the same before and will never be the same again either! Isn't that something worth rejoicing about, to think and to thank about?

May each of us rejoice, be cheerful, give and live Thanksgiving each day that God gives us!

By Lois Peacock, Zion Lutheran Church, San Francisco, CA

Submitted by:

Ronda Anderson

Iowa District East Parish Nurse Representative

Cookie Decorating Gathering for Teens

COME FOR COOKIE BAKING AND
DECORATING, FELLOWSHIP AND
LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HIGHER
THINGS CONFERENCE 2020

DEC. 14, 2020
9:30AM-12:30PM
HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH
CARLISLE, IA

9:30am Matins Service
Higher Things Presentation
Cookie Decorating
Lunch served at noon
Parents welcome

RSVP: Samjoshfette@aol.com or 515-473-0798



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Heritage Park Christmas Celebration

“Glad Tidings and Good Cheer”

Come to an Old-fashioned Christmas Program!

Sing-along to Favorite Hymns and Carols!

Come Early and Visit the Malcom No. 6 School!

Open at 1:00 p.m. ~ Heritage Park



When: Sunday, December 8th at 2:00 P.M.

Where: Lower Blue Point Church
Heritage Park - 425 East Street S.
Poweshiek Co. Fairgrounds - Grinnell

Why: To experience the Joy of Christmas

All Are Welcome!



LWML: We will be meeting on the 9th at 11:30, bring your lunch, and if you have one, wear an "Ugly Christmas Sweater." Pastor will have some Christmas activities for us. All women of Immanuel are invited to attend. See you there!

EVERYONE is invited to go caroling at Windsor Manor Sunday, December 8th after Program Practice & Bible Study.

It's that time of year again! Every year we adorn our altar area with poinsettias for Christmas. A poinsettia may be given in memory or in honor of a loved one. The poinsettias will be displayed for the Christmas Eve Service. You may take the plant(s) you ordered home after the Christmas Eve Service. Place your order (on table in church entryway) by filling out the order form along with payment and return to the church secretary Dec. 8th.

January 10

Summer Camp Registration Opens

January 31-Feb 1

IDE Middle School Retreat & Snowlympics

April 4

IDE LHM Convention



THIS LITTLE CHILD, OF
LOWLY BIRTH, SHALL BE
THE **JOY** OF ALL THE
EARTH.



CHRIST CAME FOR YOU.

Come join us to receive His forgiveness, life and salvation.

Children's Christmas Program
'Why Christmas?'

December 15th
10:30 a.m.

UPCOMING SERVICES & EVENTS

Festival of Trees

***Friday, December 6th 5:30-7:30 p.m.
at the Drake Library***

Christmas Caroling at Windsor Manor

Sunday, December 8th at 11:30 a.m.

Midweek Advent Evening Prayer Services

Wednesday, December 4th at 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 11th at 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 18th at 6:30 p.m.

****A meal will be served before
each service at 5:30 p.m.***

Christmas Program Practice

Sunday, December 1st from 10:15-11:30 a.m.

Sunday, December 8th from 10:15-11:30 a.m.

Saturday, December 14th from 9:00-10:30 a.m.

Children's Christmas Program

Sunday, December 15th at 10:30 a.m.

Christmas Eve Prayer Service

Tuesday, December 24 at 4:00 p.m.

Christmas Day Service

Wednesday, December 25th at 9:00 a.m.

Divine Service

Tuesday, December 31st at 4:00 p.m.

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Pam Sittig

Esther Huedepohl (Backup)