



St Paul's of German Lake

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St Paul's of German Lake

October 2022

Pastor Karl's Ponderings

At the end of this month, we will celebrate a pivotal event and a pivotal time in the history of the church...and of the world. We remember a faithful monk who, in the depths of a fierce struggle with his own unworthiness in God's eyes, composed a list of 95 propositions...or theses...for debate among the theological scholars...and nailed them to the door of the castle church at Wittenberg. Luther didn't intend this to be any sort of radical act. It was simply a plea for help with his spiritual struggle.

The questions centered on the differences he found between the doctrines of his beloved church and what he read in the Scriptures. He had no idea of the uproar he would cause. His innocent act ignited a powder keg that exploded into a conflict which resulted in a reform in the church that continues to this day...a continual process of re-forming our idea of who we are and the nature of our relationship with God.

In Luther's time, people were a lot more concerned about what would happen to them after they died. The church had begun to take advantage of those fears. Heaven was the goal of life. Hell was portrayed as a miserable place of agony filled with fire and all sorts of mean and ugly creatures. In an effort to promote morality, the leaders of the church developed doctrines that encouraged keeping the commandments and doing good works of service for one's neighbor and community. Living a "good" and righteous life by keeping the commandments and following what was understood to be God's will, would ensure you a place in heaven.

But, as Luther was studying the apostle Paul's writings in Romans in preparation for a Bible class, he read:

"There is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus". (Romans 3:22-24)

Luther discovered that, because of our bondage to sin, any chance of us being saved and getting into heaven depends not on us...but on God. This is the most important discovery of the Reformation...the **re-forming** of our understanding of who is responsible for our salvation...not us... but God!

Forgiveness, and our salvation, are gifts of pure grace...a wonderful, unimaginable, free gift that we do not and could not ever earn. And the only way we are able to believe and trust in this gift is through another incredible, free gift...the gift of faith.

This amazing claim seems too good to be true! And you know what they say about things that seem too good to be true. Yet this is the truth Luther discovered...the truth that caused such an upheaval in the church of his day. It is such a revolutionary idea that we still have trouble accepting it today. Even as Lutherans, we seem to have this idea that yes, it's all about God's grace...but... And as soon as we add the "but", it isn't grace anymore!

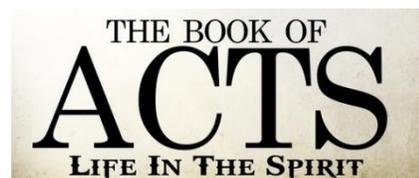
The message of the Reformation is that, through Jesus Christ, God accepts us just as we are. God welcomes each and every one of us into His kingdom with all our imperfections, our flaws and our failings, in all our sinfulness. We don't earn such love and acceptance. God does this...freely and without conditions...simply because He loves us...**all of us!** This is the miracle of grace!

Luther and the other reformers help us to see that the Bible talks of a God who descends into this world and joins us where we are in the muck and mire of our broken and sinful lives and says, "I love you. I forgive your shortcomings...your petty hatreds...your manic desire to dominate and conquer one another...your selfish desires...and your unwillingness to love and forgive others as I have loved and forgiven you."

Then God asks us, "Please, please, please, be kind to one another. Care for one another. Love one another. Have compassion for one another...friend or foe. Imitate the love and forgiveness I have shown you...not for your own good...but for the well-being and benefit of all my people. I don't want you to be slaves to sin and selfishness. I want you to be free...free to enjoy the abundant life I have created for you."

This is the truth the reformers discovered. This is the amazing truth we are still trying to wrap our minds around today because it still seems to be too good to be true. But it is the only truth that will set us free! May the Holy Spirit enable us, through faith, to embrace and live in this truth today and always.

Blessings,
Pastor Karl



Bible Study of the Book of Acts of the Apostles

After a hiatus during the month of September, we will resume our study of the Bible on **Monday, October 17th at 6:00 p.m.** in the fellowship hall. The Book of Acts is the story of the early church after Jesus' ascension. There are some amazing stories of how the apostles took on the task of spreading the Gospel without Jesus' physical presence to lead and guide them. As you might imagine, it is a very human story filled with conflicts of leadership, arguments and differences of opinion, and stories of deep faith in a God of love and mercy for all people.

Come and join us as we explore this often-overlooked book of the Bible and discover how it continues to impact and inform our life and ministry as followers of Christ today!



FAVORITE HYMN

Each month we plan to include a little article about a favorite hymn. If you have a favorite hymn, you would like featured in this space, please send your suggestions to stpaulsofgermanlake@gmail.com. If you would like, you could include a little story explaining why this is your favorite hymn.

This month's hymn is **A Mighty Fortress** by Martin Luther.

We think of Martin Luther as a great reformer, Biblical scholar and translator, political leader, fiery preacher, and theologian. But he was also a musician, having been born in an area of Germany known for its music. There in his little Thuringian village, young Martin grew up listening to his mother sing. He joined a boys' choir that sang at weddings and funerals. He became proficient with the flute (recorder), and his volcanic emotions often erupted in song.

When the Protestant Reformation began, Luther was determined to restore worship to the German Church. He worked with skilled musicians to create new music for Christians, to be sung in the ordinary language of the people. He helped revive congregational singing and wrote a number of hymns.

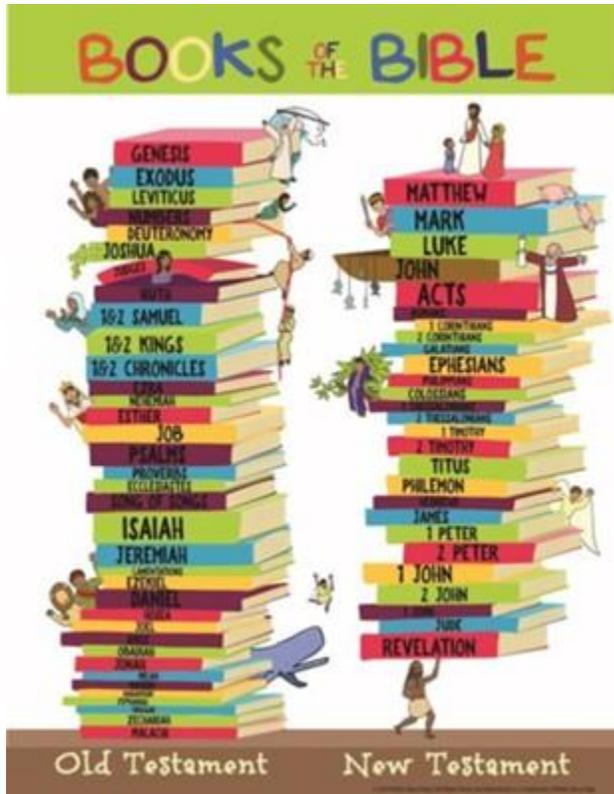
He often "borrowed" popular secular melodies for his hymns. Occasionally a tune brought criticism and he was "compelled to let the devil have it back" because it was too closely associated with bars and taverns.

In the forward of a book, Luther wrote, "Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. It controls our thoughts, minds, hearts, and spirits...A person who...does not regard music as a marvelous creation of God...does not deserve to be called a human being; he should be permitted to hear nothing but the braying of asses and the grunting of hogs."

Luther's most famous hymn, which is often considered to be the battle song of the Reformation is "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God". Based on Psalm 46 and set to a bar tune, it reflects Luther's awareness of our intense struggle with Satan. In difficulty and danger, Luther would often resort to this song, saying to his associate, Philipp Melanchthon, "Come, Phillip, let us sing the 46th Psalm".

This hymn that brought Luther much comfort, strength and hope during the tumultuous days of the Reformation. In challenging the church of his day, Luther often wondered if he was doing the right thing. The words of Psalm 46 were an assurance to him that God was with him in the midst of the struggle. As we seek to be faithful to God's will in the midst of the tumultuous days of our own time, may we find a similar comfort, hope, and the strength to keep up the fight against the "devil who threatens to devour us".

We thank our quilters who have donated 25 quilts to the Le Sueur County Sheriff's Department. The deputies carry those quilts in their cars and use them to bring comfort and warmth children and others at accident scenes, fires and in other situations where they are needed.



Books of the Bible Puzzle

For you puzzle lovers, here's a little challenge for you. Read all of it!

This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much; he passed it on to some friends. One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his john boat. Another friend studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it that she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend judges the job of solving this puzzle to be so involving that she brews a cup of tea to help her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a fact. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in

a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. Truthfully, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or scholar to see some of them at the worst. Research has shown that something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph. During a recent fundraising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta Phi lemonade booth set a new sales record. The local paper, the Chronicle, surveyed over 200 patrons who had reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana humbly puts it, "the books are all right here in plain view hidden from sight." Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation that may help is that books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. Also, keep in mind, that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember, there is no need for a mad exodus. There really are 30 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph, waiting to be found. Good luck!

(If you have trouble and would like a hint or two, perhaps you could compare notes with a friend.)

Thank you...Thank you...Thank you...

"We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labors of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord, Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)



Thank you...

...to the group who spontaneously gathered two weeks ago to honor Gary Nickels by carrying on his work of taking care of the landscaping around the church.

...to Brianne Hoffmann for volunteering to lead this year's Sunday school.

...to those who helped make our outdoor worship service possible

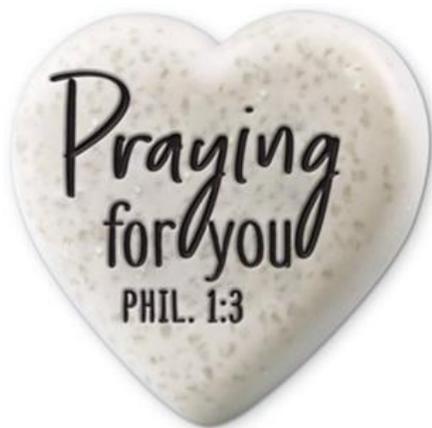
...those who helped set up the altar and the sound system

...those who helped break everything down and put it all away

...and those who organized the ice cream and popcorn treats everyone enjoyed

following the service! The word is that everyone had a good time in spite of the clouds, wind, and cold!

...to those who shared their goodies at the veggie table in the narthex each week. There was never anything left over! A special thanks to the children who made signs reminding us to eat our veggies!



Prayer Concerns:

Please keep these people and their families in your prayers as they continue to struggle with the difficulties of life:

- Nancy Berndt as she finishes up her cancer treatments.
- Wand Arndt and Barb Haslip as they struggle with heart problems
- Tim Poncin (Tom and Kathy Langdon's nephew) recovering from a motorcycle accident
- Dave Sicklern (Shelli Hoffmann's brother) recovering from a heart attack
- The people of Florida and the Bahamas in the aftermath of the hurricanes that have swept through those areas
- For the people of California and other western states whose homes and livelihoods have been destroyed by the wildfires there.
- For peace in Ukraine as the fighting continues to devastate and disrupt their lives.
- For the farmers in the fields, the workers in the elevators, and all who work to bring the harvest in from the fields.
- For those who continue to struggle with the COVID virus and the many ways it affects our lives, our work, and our relationships with family and friends.
- For those of our congregation and our families who struggle with the specter of mental illness, the chains of addiction, or the grip of chronic illness.

WELCA MEETING

Please join us on Oct 16th following the worship service.
The meeting will be in the fellowship hall.

As a member of St Paul's Lutheran Church of German Lake, you are a member of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

We offer a variety of activities at various times throughout the year. Here are a few – Missions (helping those in need as requests come up, giving of handmade quilts) Quilting, Altar Guild (setting up paraments for the service), Hospitality (making and/or serving food after the service), Spring Event, Thank Offering Service.

For more information on how you can be a part of these and/or other activities contact Virginia McCarthy @ gin5434@yahoo.com / 507-234-5434 or Joyce Bohlen @ cbohlen@frontiernet.net / 507-595-3557.



A friend wrote to me, saying "There is NOTHING like a deep, gut stirring, tear-streaming laugh." Lots of experts agree. They say laughter helps control pain in four ways: 1) by distracting attention, 2) by reducing tension, 3) by changing expectations, and 4) by increasing the production of

endorphins, the body's natural painkillers.

When you laugh, it takes your mind off the pain and actually creates a degree of anesthesia. Laughter reduces muscle tension and has even been known to have the same effect on a headache as aspirin or other pain relievers. It changes our expectations by changing our attitudes. Laughter is a shock absorber that eases the blows of life. So . . . let's laugh!

As I was driving by a church here is a message they had on their sign.

Where will you be sitting in eternity? Smoking or non-smoking?



OCTOBER

HEAD USHER – Harry Tolzman

Ushers –

- 2nd – Jeff & Shelli Hoffmann
- 9th – John & Patricia Petersen
- 16th – Clark Fell & Mike Pohlman
- 23rd – Tina Mack & Virginia McCarthy
- 30th – TBD

Readers –

- Patricia Petersen
- Sue Gress
- Nancy Nickels
- Virginia McCarthy
- TBD