

The Emmanuel Epistle

“Praising, Proclaiming and Practicing Emmanuel—God with us—in daily life!”

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship: Who Sinned?”

My mother asked, “Who damaged my plant and broke my keepsake vase?” My brother and I were doing what my mother clearly told us not to do: *“No horsing around in the house!”* We were playing nerf baseball. What harm could a nerf baseball do. Enough harm to bring tears to my mother’s face. My brother and I were small, but we were without excuse.

Who sinned? When something gets broken or when something terrible happens, like the Coronavirus, it’s easy to point the finger and assess blame. Whose fault is it? Who’s responsible? Finger-pointing is inevitable.

Who sinned? In the Garden of Eden, The LORD God posted a “No Trespassing” sign. Adam and Eve disobeyed the LORD and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree? God invited confession, but instead of admission, Adam and Eve practiced blaming: *“It’s the Woman you gave me.” “The Serpent you made beguiled me.”* Blame everyone, but yourself.

Sin produces consequences. Labor is difficult. Vegetarians become meat lovers. The LORD clothes Adam and Eve with animal skins. Unbelief results in expul-



sion from the Garden of Eden. The cross becomes necessary: Enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of Eve; the serpent will bruise the heel of the Son of Man, and Messiah Jesus will bruise the serpent’s head.

“No healthy Christian ever chooses suffering; he chooses God’s will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not.”
—Oswald Chambers

Recently, our Gospel reading in Worship was from John 9. Jesus passes by a man born blind. He sees the blind man. The disciples see only the manifestation of sin. *“Who sinned, that this man was born blind? Is it his fault or his parents fault?”* It’s always easier to point the finger than to accept responsibility. Who sinned? The short answer is, “I did. You did. We did.” St. Paul reminds us

that “one man’s sin brought condemnation to all; so also one man’s free gift, following many trespasses, brings redemption and salvation to all who believe in Jesus.”

Dan Simundson was an Old Testament professor of mine at Seminary. He wrote a book entitled, “Faith Under Fire.” In his book, Dan explores biblical answers to suffering?

When suffering comes our way, like COVID-19, we want answers. Dan reminds us that the word ANSWER has two definitions: 1) **An explanation** addresses the question of WHY? 2) **A response** addresses the question of HOW? The Cross is God’s answer for the human problem of sin.

God’s world is broken and corrupted by sin (Romans 8:20-23). Our Heavenly Father reminds us that He will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, and the children’s children, to the third and fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6-7).

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**April 2020
Newsletter
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Food For Thought:

“God had one Son on earth without sin, but never one without suffering.”

St. Augustine

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Everything is on Hold!

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has put ALL of our plans on hold. Lent, in a manner of speaking, has been cancelled. Schools & restaurants are closed. Parents are homeschooling. Some people are hoarding. Unemployment is at an all-time high. Writing an April Church Newsletter, with Holy Week and Easter on the horizon, ought to be easy. But nothing is easy these days. We are learning to do church and TO BE CHURCH in a whole new way. The world is watching us. What will they see? How will we believe & behave during these trying times?

James, the brother of our Lord writes: *“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or*

that.’ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do & fails to do it, for him it is sin.”

You’ll notice that in this newsletter, many things are pending. As a mission congregation we are trying to keep in touch with our members and friends. We’re are posting our worship services & sermons online (*Virship*), in large part thanks to Don Holtan and our worship pianists. We are looking into doing Bible studies via ZOOM. We have started a new prayer ministry called **Acts 4:31**. Each day at 4:31pm, Pastor Dave is emailing people prayer concerns and words of hope and encouragement. Send Pastor Dave an email if you have needs or prayer concerns. By the grace of God, we will all grow through this time of trial...TOGETHER. God be with you!

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

— Romans 15:13

WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR APRIL 2020 — Everything is PENDING

Holy Week Offerings: *With a small group of servants we will put our Worship Services online if need be! We will do church and be church one way or another. Soli Deo Gloria!*

Saturday, April 4, Eve of Palm Sunday: Palms have been ordered. Good Lord willing, Pastor Dave will be delivering palms, as he is able, to your doorstep, unless of course we all are in lock-down. Each palm will come with an order of worship to be used at 4:31pm on Palm Sunday, or at another time of your choice. Please email or call Pastor Dave if you would like a palm frond delivered to your door. Physical Distancing will make it impossible for Pastor Dave to deliver palm fronds to everyone. Virtual Worship. Listen to the sermon online!

Maundy Thursday, April 9: Normally, our Maundy Thursday tradition at Emmanuel is to read John 13 & to celebrate the gift of the NEW COMMANDMENT (*mandatum*; literally “to put into one’s hands”) with a foot washing and holy communion. I would encourage families and individuals to read all of Jesus’ Farewell Discourse (St. John, Chapters 13-17) on Maundy Thursday. Remember your baptism (washing) & consider how you might serve someone with the love of Jesus; albeit in a safe way. Please call someone and say, “God loves you and so do I!” Jesus, our Lord and Master Servant, gives us an example to follow. Virtual Worship.

Good Friday, April 10: Worship will be the reading of the Passion Story according to St. John, Chapters 18-19. “Surely He [the Suffering Servant] has born our griefs and our sorrows He carried. He was pierced through for our transgression, he was crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:4-5). Virtual Worship.

Easter Saturday, April 11: The Easter Egg Hunt will not be happening this year. But NOTHING can cancel EASTER. Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Worship will happen, whether it is in person at 6pm, or celebrated online. Read John 20:1-18. Sermon Title: “Woman Why Are You Weeping?”

Easter Monday—April 13: Each year, Emmanuel Lutheran celebrates the resurrection of our Lord by hosting a **public reading of the entire New Testament**. The day begins at 5am and concludes by Midnight. This year we will most likely be reading and listening to God’s Holy Word from our homes; perhaps a telephone tag-team of sorts. Stay posted! Jean Wanek received a Thrivent Action Team grant in support of this event.

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Sin is our inherited state. It is our original and actual reality. The wages of sin is death. Sometimes we suffer for the sins of others. Sometimes others suffer for our sins. “The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Jeremiah 31:29f). In Luke 13, Jesus reminds his listeners that the Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices, and the 18 people on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were not worse sinners than others. And then Jesus adds these Lenten Words: “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

In the Book of Revelation (Chapter 16—Seven Bowls of Wrath), the LORD God pours out his judgment upon the earth. Not in a vindictive, or punitive manner, but in a redemptive and saving way. God’s solitary goal is repentance, which brings forgiveness of sins and eternal life in His Son. But no matter how great the suffering, sinners refuse to repent or to give God the glory. Hardness of heart leads to eternal damnation. God desires that all people be saved (I Tim. 2:3-4; II Peter 3:9; & John 3:16-17), but some people just won’t have it. AND GOD WEEPS!

Remember John 9? Jesus gave his disciples this answer: “It was not this man’s sin or his parent’s sin that made him blind.” Instead of assessing blame and finger-pointing, Jesus points to the Father: “This is an opportunity for the works of God to be displayed. This is an opportunity for God to get glory and praise.” When the narrative has run its course, the blind man gets healed physically and spiritually. He comes to saving faith in Jesus, which is the glory of God.

Who sinned? I did. Sin is my fault, my own most grievous fault. If there was hope for St. Paul, then there is hope for us. “*Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me. Died that I might live on high, Lived that I might never die. As the branch is to the vine, I am His and He is mine*” (I Cor. 15 & I Tim. 1:13). St. Paul considered himself to be unfit to be an apostle, but by the grace of God, he was chosen. God’s grace is never in vain. God hates sin, but God loves sinners. The cross is God’s response to sin, suffering & death. On the THIRD DAY Christ rose from the dead! Alleluia!

Whose fault? It’s my fault! I am totally responsible! In Christ Jesus I am eternally saved! In Christ, Pastor Dave

Acts 4:31—The Church Prayed!

"And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, & they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness."

New Life Baby Shower

A baby shower benefiting the young mothers who visit New Life Family Services is being planned, but the date is pending. The Shower will include refreshments, fun and games. The following items are suggested shower gifts:

Diapers, Wipes, Formula (Similac or Enfamil), Convertible car seats, Pack N Play, High Chairs, Bouncy Seats, Umbrella Strollers, High Back Booster Seats, & Potty Chairs. Also: Gift Cards to Amazon, Target, or Walmart; Baby Safety items (baby gates, outlet plugs, etc.); Books (all ages); Receiving blankets, crib sheets, & bedding (no bumpers); and "gently used" clothing for newborn-7T and maternity clothing.

Thanks for keeping *New Life* in your prayers!

Saturday School and G.I.F.T.

During the month of April, there will be no Saturday School & G.I.F.T.

Women’s Bible Study

The Women of Emmanuel will gather for a short 5 Session Study on *I Peter* during the Season of Easter. *I Peter* is a baptismal homily celebrating the promise of Easter & the hope of the resurrection. Study Dates: April 23, 30, May 7, 14, & 28 at Oasis Church on Thursdays at 1pm. *This Study may be done via email or Zoom.*

LENTEN THANKS

Thanks is offered to our Holden Evening Prayer musicians: MarJean Damerval (pianist) and Julie Peterson (flutist); and to everyone who provided soup, milk and bread for our Mid-Week Lenten Soup Suppers. Thanks is also offered to Julie, Gary, Jean, Bob & Jana, for sharing their faith stories with us. Several of our Soup Suppers were cancelled, and worship was done virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks for staying connected & being the Church in season and out of season!

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SAVE THE DATES!

“Easter Monday Bible Reading”

April 13 (5am-Midnight)

Gift of Grace: 10 year Anniversary

Sunday, June 7 (1-4pm)

From Gay Bars to Jesus:

A clear voice in a gender confused generation.

Wed, April 29th – Trinity Lutheran Church, Rochester MN (Sponsored by the LCMS Rochester Circuit)

LCMS Vicar Brian Barlow will share his journey out of homosexuality into the fullness of a life identified with Christ. In a culture that celebrates and promotes “gay-Christianity,” Brian’s story testifies to God’s intent to do more than we can think or imagine as He recreates us out of a broken life.

Having been called out of a gender broken identity, Vicar Brian Barlow has invested over 20 years in ministry to those who struggle with relational & sexual brokenness. As regional director for a parachurch ministry in the Pacific Southwest, Brian offers a voice of hope to the gender broken, pastors, church leaders, and parents of gay and transgender children. He also provides real answers for those who struggle in a culture whose message is different than God’s own.

Wed, April 29th: 3 opportunities to hear Brian’s testimony.

9:30 AM & 12:10 PM (same presentation, for adults)

6:30 PM (for youth and families)

Due to the Coronavirus, this event may be cancelled or perhaps delivered via another medium. We’ll keep you posted.



Back Page Stories

Madonna Towers Ministry: Our bi-monthly worship services in the Skilled Care Chapel of Madonna Towers is currently suspended until further notice due to COVID-19. Please keep our dear friends at the Madonna Towers in your prayers.

Men’s Morning Bible Study: The men of Emmanuel Lutheran Church are currently meeting via email. Let Pastor Dave know if you would like the study notes emailed to you.

Church Council Highlights:

March 6, 2020: Expenses exceeded income for the month, due in large part to the submission of Pastor’s pension for 2020. Members are reminded to check their Thrivent Choice Dollars as 2019 dollars expire

at the end of March, 2020. We have loaned 50 copies of the LBW and 48 copies of WOV to Trinity Lutheran in St. Charles. Many of the plans discussed at the Council Meeting are on hold as we respond to the COVID-19 crisis. A new Sunday AM Emmanuel Worship Service to be held at the Homestead on a trial basis was approved. Pastor Dave & Don Holtan have each received a Thrivent Action Team grant in support of this new ministry. A baby Shower in support of New Life Family Services is being planned. We are checking into securing a subscription with **One License** so that we can put our Worship online. Emmanuel Huddle is set for May 2. Council Mtg.-April 3 @ 6pm.

Acts 4:31 ... Each day, at 4:31pm, members and friends of Emmanuel are bending the knee and praying to

God for healing & hope, repentance & mercy; the end of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Please join us in prayer. Contact Pastor Dave if you would like emails sent to you, or of you have prayer concerns & requests.

Marks of Discipleship: Signposts guide our way—Disciples seek to pray daily, worship weekly, grow spiritually, read & study Scripture on a regular basis, serve others, share the good news, & live and give generously.



Social Distancing — A New Normal!