

THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

Pastor's Keyboard: “Discipleship - You Shall Be Holy”

God's Word is our Great Heritage, and shall be ours forever. Scripture is our birthright, our allotted portion, our inheritance and our legacy. For the past two months, members of Emmanuel have begun working their way through the Bible, attempting to read all 66 Books in 365 days. Readers have already read Genesis, Exodus, Matthew, & some of the Psalms & Proverbs. Presently, the books of Leviticus & Mark are being read.

While the Gospel of Mark holds a prominent place in the hearts of many Christians, Leviticus is usually not a favorite. It's easy to get bogged down when reading Leviticus, with all the rules & regulations, offerings & sacrifices, & the rituals for cleansing and purification. There are however some keys to help the reader in his/her understanding of this challenging piece of Scripture.

For example, God is “Holy, Holy, Holy”. Because God is holy, His beloved people must be holy. Holiness is both God's requirement and God's gift for God's people. In the Book of Leviticus, holiness is spoken of 152 times. **Leviticus 19:2** is a cornerstone text: “*You shall be holy for I the LORD your God am holy!*” The demand is a promise. To be holy is



to be set apart. God's people are required to be distinctively different from the pagan cultures that surround them.

Leviticus contains 36 speeches of God, each beginning with the words, “*The LORD said*”. The refrain “*I am the LORD*” is found only two times in chapters 1-16, but is found 47 times in the Holiness Code (Chapters 17-26). God's sovereignty is emphasized throughout Leviticus. Chapters 1-16 gives detailed instructions on how the chosen people of God get their sins forgiven. God desires to dwell among His people, but can do so only if His people are holy as He is holy.

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How can sinful people be holy? How can sinful people obey, worship &

live in the presence of a holy God. Leviticus describes God's provisions for making His people holy. The sacrifices and offerings were means of acquiring atonement. Sin required a sacrifice; a life for a life. The sacrificial offerings had to be perfect, spotless, & without defect. **Leviticus 17:11** reminds us that “*it is the blood that makes atonement*”. All of the offerings in Leviticus point to the “Once for All” offering of Jesus Christ, whose atoning sacrifice sets us free from sin and death, reconciling us with God the Father.

A centerpiece in the Book of Leviticus is Chapter 16, where the Annual Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is described in detail. Once a year on the tenth day of the seventh month, ritual sacrifices cleansed the sanctuary, tent of meeting, altar, priests and entire congregation of their sins. The chief cleansing agent was blood, which pointed forward to Jesus' sacrifice. By his death, Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice and entered the heavenly

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March 2017
Newsletter
Volume 5
Issue 3

Food For Thought:

“Even our tears of repentance need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb.”

— Jerry Bridges,
The Pursuit of Holiness

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LENTEN PLANS!

The Season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1, with soup supper at 5pm and worship at 6pm. During the **Season of Lent** we will gather weekly on Tuesdays at 5pm for soup and worship at 6pm. Julie Steffenson will be coordinating the soup suppers. Give Julie a SHOUT if you would like to provide soup, bread or milk for one of our weekly meals. Our liturgy each Tuesday will be Holden Evening Prayer. Our Sermon Series this year will be a look at **Martin Luther's Small and Large Catechisms**, in commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of Luther's Posting of the 95 Theses.

Lent! Why the Ashes?

Sola Publishing reminds us that “we put ashes on our foreheads in Lent to remember that we are sinners in need of God’s grace and mercy. When our first parents, Adam and Eve, lived in the Garden of Eden they enjoyed perfect love and perfect communion with the Lord. God instructed them not to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. But Satan, the enemy, twisted God’s words and created doubt in their minds. They wondered, ‘Does God really have our best interests at heart? Can we really trust him or is he holding out some special secret or power from us?’

The first couple believed the lie. They ate against God’s clear instructions. They wanted to be like the Creator, to control their own lives rather than be obedient to God. This was the first sin - and every human since Adam and Eve has committed similar sins because we want to be in charge of our own lives rather than be faithful to God.

God searched for the couple after they had sinned. He knew they were ashamed and he covered them. But because of their disobedience they were cast from the garden and would spend their lives working the land and toiling for their needs. To the woman God pronounced pain in childbirth. To the serpent God cursed

him to slither on the ground and eat dirt. And to Adam God said, ‘By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.’

When ashes are rubbed on our forehead on Ash Wednesday, we hear these words, ‘Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.’

These ashes are a sign of our sin, but also of God’s forgiveness. When God forgives us, it’s like he cleans our hearts from dirt and soot caused by sin. Ashes were used in the old days to clean - strange idea isn’t it? But it’s true! Ash plus water makes a soap-like paste! The ashes on our foreheads are also a symbol that we will someday die. To understand that we have to remember the story of Adam and Eve.

God made Adam out of the dust when He breathed life into Adam’s body. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden by eating the fruit from the tree that God told them to stay away from, God sent them away and death became real. They would no longer live forever with God in that perfect garden. They would have to go out on their own and farm the fields for food and build their own shelter.

Ashes remind us of our sin, but they also remind us of God’s promise in Jesus Christ that we are forgiven & will live eternally with him. We can trust that God’s promises are true!”

Emmanuel: Going on Six!

Thank you to everyone who helped us celebrate our Five-Year Anniversary on February 25. We are especially grateful to Judy Pearce for coordinating the refreshments and to everyone who donated food. Thanks also to the members of the choirs who favored us with beautiful gifts of music (“Gift of Grace” in Holmen, WI, Emmanuel of Grafton, IA, & Emmanuel’s Kids Choir). The offering received on February 25 will be used to launch a new NALC church plant in the next two years.

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sanctuary with His blood (Hebrews 9:11-14), opening the way for believers to enter into God's presence (Hebrews 6:20). On the Day of Atonement the sins of God's people were confessed and laid on two goats: one as a sacrifice for sin, and one as a scapegoat, which was released into the wilderness. On a Good Friday Cross God made permanent atonement for the sins of His people. (II Corinthians 5:21).

Recently in Bible Study, the men of Emmanuel discussed Leviticus 14, where God provides instructions for cleansing His people from defiling skin diseases, & their homes from defiling molds. Careful reading reveals how ahead of their time Israel was in terms of understanding the importance of sterilization of surgical instruments, quarantine & isolation of those with contagious diseases, and the proper disposal of hazardous waste. Containment for 7 days was reminiscent of creation. The eighth day foreshadows the first day of the new creation. Blood on the right earlobe, right thumb and right big toe, indicated that one is cleansed for clean (holy) living; walking in the ways of the LORD from head to toe.

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WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR MARCH

Wednesday, March 1 - Ash Wednesday (Ashes & Holy Communion) (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers & Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson

Ushers: Rich Sunde & LeRoy Quam

Sound: Don Holtan

Acolyte: Cabe Siebenaler

Saturday, March 4 - Lent I (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers & Communion Assistant: Lee Pearce

Ushers: Pending

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Acolyte: Emma Matzke

Treats: Judy Pearce

Tuesday, March 7 - Lenten Service (6pm) - Liturgy: Revised Holden Evening Prayer

Usher: Lee Pearce

Sound: Don Holtan

Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Saturday, March 11 - Lent II (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Matt Serr

Ushers: Pending

Acolyte: Elijah Matzke

Kid's Choir Sings!

Communion Assistant: Jenna Serr

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Nora Serr & Barb Steffenson

Tuesday, March 14 - Lenten Service (6pm) - Liturgy: Revised Holden Evening Prayer

Usher: Pending

Sound: Don Holtan

Acolyte: Cabe Siebenaler

Saturday, March 18 - Lent III (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers & Communion Assistant: Leitha Bothun

Ushers: Bob Mulvihill, & Matt Serr, Nora & Scarlett

Coffee: Julie Steffenson

Treats: Jean Wanek

Acolyte: Cabe Siebenaler

Sound: Pending

Tuesday, March 21 - Lenten Service (6pm) - Liturgy: Revised Holden Evening Prayer

Usher: Pending

Sound: Don Holtan

Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Saturday, March 25 - Lent IV (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Matt Serr

Ushers: Bob Harms, & Bob Mulvihill

Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Communion Assistant: Jenna Serr

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Marcia Harms

Tuesday, March 28 - Lenten Service (6pm) - Liturgy: Revised Holden Evening Prayer

Usher: Lee Pearce

Sound: Don Holtan

Acolyte: Cabe Siebenaler

NOTE: MarJean Damerval will be our pianist each week. Julie Steffenson will take care of set up, & Janet Sunde & friends will take care of the take down. Pastor Dave will be our preacher each week. Lenten Services will be on Tuesday nights at 6pm preceded by a soup supper at 5pm.

Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

Brother Lawrence was born Nicolas Herman in 1614, in modern-day eastern France. As a young man, Herman's poverty forced him into joining the army, which guaranteed him meals and a small stipend. During this period, Herman claimed an experience that set him on a unique spiritual journey, shaping the rest of his life.

After leaving the army, he joined a Carmelite monastery in Paris, where he served as a lay brother. He took the religious name, "Lawrence of the Resurrection". He spent most of his life within the walls of the priory, working in the kitchen and as a repairer of sandals.

Christians remember Brother Lawrence for the intimacy he expressed concerning his relationship to God as recorded in a book compiled after his death (February 12, 1691), entitled, "The Practice of the Presence of God". He found holiness in the common business of life.

As we enter the Forty Days of Lent here are two quotes from Brother Lawrence worth reflection:

"Nor is it needful that we should have great things to do We can do little things for God; I turn the cake that is frying on the pan for love of him, and that done, if there is nothing else to call me, I prostrate myself in worship before him, who has given me grace to work; afterwards I rise happier than a king. It is enough for me to pick up but a straw from the ground for the love of God."

"I consider myself as the most wretched of men, full of sores and corruption, and who has committed all sorts of crimes against his King; touched with a sensible regret, I confess to Him all my wickedness, I ask His forgiveness, I abandon myself in His hands that He may do what He pleases with me. The King, full of mercy and goodness, very far from chastising me, embraces me with love, makes me eat at His table, serves me with His own hands, gives me the key of His treasures; He converses and delights Himself with me incessantly, in a thousand and a thousand ways, and treats me in all respects as His favorite."

"ROCK the RED KETTLE"

Emmanuel Lutheran rang bells for the Salvation Army in 2016. Lee Pearce spearheaded our effort. Collectively, Emmanuel members rang bells for 59 hours, exceeding our goal. On Wednesday, February 1, Lee & Judy Pearce, along with Pastor Dave and Julie Steffenson attended the Red Kettle Awards Celebration. Emmanuel Lutheran took second place among area churches for the most hours of bell ringing. Visit with Lee if you wish to see our commemorative plaque.

WORSHIP BAGS

A new resource is available for the children of our worshiping community. Julie Steffenson received a Thrivent Action Team Grant of \$250.00 and used the money to assemble worship bags for children ages 8 and under. Interactive, age-appropriate, bags are available as families enter the worship space. Parents of young children have already commented on how wonderful these bags are for keeping small children engaged in worship. Emmanuel loves its children and is delighted that parents are keeping their children in church. Children's Bulletins are also available at the entrance of the worship space. Visit with Julie if you have questions or suggestions.

Saturday School

Each week, Julie Steffenson schools our children in the Word of God. They assemble in the Oasis Fellowship Hall from 5:10-5:50pm. Children learn favorite stories and enjoy a tasty snack. Once a month, MarJean Damerval leads the kids in "song time". The Kids Choir offers a gift of music during worship once a month also. Their next musical offering is Saturday, March 11 (6pm). While the youth are learning Bible Stories and fun songs of the Faith, adults are enjoying 30 minutes of conversation in G.I.F.T. (Growing In Faith Together). Adults are learning how to model the faith and mentor our little ones.

Next Chapter Ministries is hosting their annual Restoration Celebration fundraiser on Friday, March 17 from 6-8pm. Location: Rochester International Event Center. Register online at www.nextchapterrochester.org. Tickets are \$25.00 each. Next Chapter's mission is to build lasting relationships with those in our community who have been impacted by crime, restoring them to God, family, and community with the Gospel of God.

Thrivent Opportunities: Live Generously! Thrivent members have an opportunity to designate their Choice Dollars in support of the holy work of God at Emmanuel Lutheran. Each Thrivent member can also apply for two Action Team Gifts of \$250.00 each to be used as seed money for ministry activities. Members of Emmanuel Lutheran have already been approved for three Action Team Gifts in 2017: Worship Bags for Children, Emmanuel's 5-Year Anniversary Celebration, & Lenten Soup Suppers. Any Questions? Visit Thrivent.com or talk with Julie Steffenson.

Fun & Funds 4 Cy's Place

February 26 @ 3:30 pm at Autumn Ridge Church (3611 Salem Road SW Rochester, MN 55902). Enjoy light refreshments and live music by Higher Call Quartet at 3:30pm, The Benson Family Singers at 4:30pm, & Brad Boice at 5:30pm. Cy's Place (a facility where children with compromised immune systems can mend) will be the first Pediatric Transplant Hospitality House in MN. Your financial support is welcomed. For more information, talk to Judy Pearce or visit: www.cysplace.org.

Easter Monday—Bible Reading!

We are celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord and the gift of God's Word by sharing a public reading of the entire New Testament on Monday, April 17 from 6 am - Midnight. Refreshments, will be served. Stop by for a portion of the day, or make it a marathon. Hear God's Word, and if you wish offer your voice to the text.!

Electronic Giving

Members wishing to contribute to Emmanuel Lutheran with automatic giving may do so by contacting Judy Caudill or Deb Vomhof. Offerings are transferred once a month on the 15th of the month. Thanks for supporting the holy work of God at Emmanuel Lutheran Church of Rochester, Minnesota!

THE LUTHER HOUSEHOLD

An Eight Week Women's Afternoon Bible Study will begin on Thursday, April 20 at 1pm. In celebration of the 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther's Posting of the 95 Theses, we will be looking at a brand new study on "*The Lutheran Understanding of Marriage and Family*"; both of which are under assault by today's culture. This study will look at what Scripture says about Marriage and Family. It will also take a close look at the Luther Household. Luther spoke often about the honorable vocation of marriage and family. Martin married Katie (Katharina Von Bora) on June 13, 1525. Katie was 16 years younger than Martin, cloistered at the age of 5. God blessed the Luthers with six children. Class participants will learn much about the gifts of marriage and family as they view the Luther Household.

Looking Ahead!

April 8-16: Holy Week - Eve of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, & Easter.

Monday, April 17: Second Annual Public Reading of the New Testament.

Friday, May 12: Amy Grant concert at Autumn Ridge Church.

Saturday, June 3: New Life Family Services are hosting a "Walk & Run for Life".

Monday-Friday, July 24-28 (5:30-8:00pm): Oasis Vacation Bible School.

Tuesday, August 1 (5-9pm): National Night Out. Emmanuel will host a neighborhood gathering in the Oasis Church parking lot.

Sunday, August 6: Emmanuel Church Picnic at the home of Larry & Deb Vomhof.

Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

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Save the Dates!

**Easter Monday, April 17*

Public Reading of the New Testament at Oasis Church!

**August 7-11, 2017 is the date of the NALC Convocation in Nashville, Tennessee!*

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Healing and hearing requires obedience & practice. A Holy God makes His people holy for holy living.

Leviticus 14 also prescribes a purification ritual that includes two live clean birds (one which is sacrificed and one which is released; as were the two goats on Yom Kippur). The killed bird was a blood sacrifice; the other was set free, previewing Christ's resurrection and our justification. It also represents our freedom from sin when our relationship with God is restored. Cedar wood is used in the cleansing ritual. Some say that Cedar was the first tree of creation. Solomon used the Cedars of Lebanon to build the Temple. Native Americans regard Cedar as a sacred tree and use it in important ceremonies. Cedar has long been used for medicinal purposes. For example, the tea of the twigs and branches is simmered until the water in the pot begins to turn brown. It is then used for fevers, rheumatic complaints, chest colds and flu. Cedar (chests & closets) is also an excellent air freshener, deodorizer, and insect repellent.

In addition to cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet yarn were also used in the cleansing ritual. We remember that hyssop was the plant used to paint the blood of the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:21) on the doorposts of the Israelite homes, providing protection from the angel of death. Jesus was given sour wine on a sponge placed on a hyssop branch during his crucifixion (John 19:29). David in Psalm 51:7 implores God: "Purge me hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." What about scarlet yarn??

Leviticus is a challenging Book to say the least, but it is worth serious study by Christians. Understanding Leviticus will aid us in understanding the Book of Hebrews and the atoning sacrifice of Jesus - Once for All! You shall be holy! We have God's Word!

Practicing Holiness, by the Grace of God, Pastor Dave

Back Page Stories

Women's Bible Studies: The Afternoon Group has concluded its study on Revelation. A new study will begin after Easter (April 20-June 8) on Thursdays at 1pm at Oasis Church. The Evening Group continues its study on Revelation monthly at the home of Katie Siebenaler at 6:30pm. Next Session: Wednesday, April 19.

Madonna Towers Ministry: Pastor Dave is leading worship & preaching at the Madonna Towers Skilled Care Chapel on the first and third Wednesdays of each month in 2017. Members of Emmanuel are invited to participate in this ministry to seniors of our community. Our next

Worship Services will be on Wednesdays, March 1 & 15 at 1:00 pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to help with this wonderful ministry.

Church Council Highlights - February 10: The minutes from the recent Annual Meeting were reviewed & found to be in good order. \$35.00 was received in Thrivent Choice Dollars. Julie Steffenson has received a Thrivent Action Team Grant of \$250.00 to be used for Lenten Soup Suppers. Prayers were offered for the SEMAC Mission Trip to West Virginia. The Emmanuel Domain Name and WhoIsGuard privacy protection for our Church Website have both been renewed for

the next two years. Emmanuel is officially separated from the Minkota Mission District and aligned solely with the Iowa Mission District. Emmanuel placed second among area churches in bell ringing (Red Kettle). A newspaper ad will be placed in the Post-Bulletin for our Five Year Emmanuel Anniversary. The rental lease for 2017 has been signed. Pastor's worship microphone has been repaired & a second one ordered. 2017 church goals are being reviewed monthly. Fun & Funds 4 Cy's Place will be at Autumn Ridge on February 26. The next Council Meeting will be on Friday, March 3 (1pm).

Supermarket Saturday: The next Channel One ministry opportunity is March 18, 2016 (9 am—Noon).