

The Emmanuel Epistle

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship: “Embracing the TRUTH”

“The Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, so help us God.” What is the Truth? Is Truth a principle or a person? Is Truth a matter of individual subjective opinion, or is it a Divine revelation?

Last month, I shared some reflections with you from Nabeel Qureshi’s book, No God But One. During my flight to and from the SEMAC Mission Trip in Wilmington, N.C., I read the rest of Nabeel’s book. This month, I will share some more reflections with you from his book.

What is the Word of God?

The Quran is, to Muslims, the eternal Word of Allah. Jesus is, to Christians, the eternal Word of Yahweh. The Quran holds in Islam the place that Jesus holds in the Christian faith. The Quran (*i.e. recitation*) is a book with 114 *suras*. The Bible is a collection of 66 books. The Quran asserts that the Torah & the Gospel are both inspired scripture, but the Quran is “*the newest testament*”; *i.e.* the final scripture to guide mankind. Islam asserts that the Bible is corrupted and cannot be trusted.

But consider this: by AD



644-655, variant recitations of the Quran were causing dissension among Muslims. Within twenty-five years after Muhammad’s death, Quranic manuscripts were being collected and burned; official standardized copies were being distributed. While the Quran is the collection of recitations to one person (Muhammad), the Bible is revealed as God’s inspired Word to multiple individuals and communities, offering multiple attestations.

“There simply is no basis to accuse the Bible of large-scale corruption without condemning the Quran.”

—Nabeel Qureshi

What about Holy Wars?

Which religion is a religion of peace? Nabeel was taught that Christians were the aggressors and Muslims were the victims. “Jihad was either a spiritual or a defensive enterprise.” But in truth, the First Crusade was a defensive effort.

Historically, Christians and Muslims both have plenty of blood on their hands. So what exactly did Jesus and Muhammad teach? The Prophet Muhammad made it clear that apostates must be killed for leaving Islam. Though the Quran does not command it, Muhammad practiced it. If Muhammad is one’s exemplar then converts to Christianity from Islam must be killed.

Jesus on the other hand never sanctioned violence. He endorsed nothing like the crusades. His clear words against violence led to 300+ years of Christian nonresistance. Nabeel writes, “strict adherence to the life and teachings of the historical Jesus results in pacifism and sacrificial love for one’s enemies.”

After gaining an army, Muhammad commissioned or participated in 86 battles over the course of 9 years. According to the Quran, non-Muslims have four options: convert, vacate, be killed, or pay a ransom tax

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March 2019
Newsletter
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Food For Thought:

“The Church is justified, not because her children do not sin, but because they do.”

— G.K. Chesterton

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LENT 2019

The Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord will be on Saturday, March 2. Don't forget to return your Palm fronds so that they can be burned down for ashes on Ash Wednesday (March 6). Emmanuel has received a Thrivent Action Team grant which will be used in support of our Fat Tuesday celebration (March 5, from 4-7pm) and our weekly soup suppers on Tuesday evenings during Lent. Join us for a soup supper each Tuesday during Lent, beginning on March 12 at 5pm.

Our Lenten Theme & Sermon Series this year will

be, "Singing and Praying the Psalms" with Holden Evening Prayer. Members of Emmanuel are invited to provide soups each week during Lent (contact Julie Steffenson). A Lenten discipline this year will be *M&M's minis tubes*. Recipients of the sweet M&M's will be invited to eat the candy before Lent begins, & then fill the empty canisters with coins, bills, or checks during the 40 Days of Lent. Monies received will support the Emmanuel Hospitality House.

Easter is April 20. Julie Edwards & her sister will be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt for our youth.

WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR MARCH

Saturday, March 2 - Transfiguration (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Julie Steffenson
Ushers: Rich Sunde & Brock Edwards
Acolyte: Mason Edwards

Wednesday, March 6 - Ash Wednesday (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Darald Bothun
Ushers: Rich Sunde & Creig Anderson
Acolyte: Nora Serr

Saturday, March 9 - Lent I (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Jenna Serr
Ushers: Arne Nelson & Matt Serr
Acolyte: Nora Serr

Tuesday, March 12 - Mid-Week Worship (6pm)

Ushers: LeRoy Quam & Nora Serr

Saturday, March 16 - Lent II (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce
Ushers: Darald & Leitha Bothun
Acolyte: **PENDING**

Tuesday, March 19 - Mid-Week Worship (6pm)

Ushers: Darald & Leitha Bothun

Saturday, March 23 - Lent III (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Vicky Mulvihill
Ushers: Bob Mulvihill & Brock Edwards
Acolyte: Mason Edwards

Tuesday, March 26 - Mid-Week Worship (6pm)

Usher: Larry Vomhof

Saturday, March 30 - Lent IV (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Deb Vomhof
Ushers: LeRoy Quam & Bob Harms
Acolyte: Elijah Matzke

PIANIST: MarJean Damerval
Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Julie Engle

PIANIST: Karen Salz
Communion Assistant: Leitha Bothun
Sound: Don Holtan

PIANIST: Beth Daede
Communion Assistant: Jenna Serr
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Jenna Serr

PIANIST: Karen Salz
Sound: Don Holtan

PIANIST: Annette Engelmann
Communion Assistant: Lee Pearce
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Judy Pearce

PIANIST: Karen Salz
Sound: Don Holtan

PIANIST: Mary Ann Groven
Communion Assistant: Deb Vomhof
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Jean Wanek

PIANIST: Karen Salz
Sound: Don Holtan

PIANIST: Mary Ann Groven
Communion Assistant: Judy Caudill
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Deb Vomhof

NOTE: Julie Steffenson will take care of set up & Janet Sunde & friends will take care of the take down. Pastor Dave will preach at all Worship Services. Bob & Marcia Harms will serve as our monthly greeters!

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in submission (Quran, 9). Truth be told, are the followers of Muhammad, or followers of Jesus ambassadors of peace?

Nabeel writes, “A decade of experiences as a Christian contrasted with my first 22 years as a Muslim leaves me with no alternative conclusion: Christianity is very different from Islam. The message it preaches is pure grace, the God that it proclaims is objective love, its founder on earth was non other than the incarnate God, its scriptures are communal and diverse, and it leaves no room for exulting in violence. Islam, as traditionally understood, differs significantly at every turn.”

With Lent on the immediate horizon, it serves us well to examine the core truth claims of Christianity. St. Paul writes, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, & that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep” (I Corinthians 15). In Romans 10:9, Paul writes, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Islam rejects all of these essential faith convictions of Christianity. The Quran rejects Jesus’ death by crucifixion (4.157). Scholars agree: “That Jesus was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be.” Nabeel writes, “the sources are unanimous, diverse, early and plentiful: Jesus died by crucifixion.”

Islam argues that Jesus somehow survived crucifixion (Theistic Swoon Theory—he just appeared to die), or that someone switched places with Jesus (Substitutionary Theory); e.g. Simon of Cyrene or Judas Iscariot. Neither explanation jives with history. Truth be told, “The fact of the death of Jesus as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable.” A second indisputable fact is that both Jesus’ followers, and non-followers (e.g. St. Paul—Acts 9), truly believed that the risen Jesus appeared to them.

Finally, what about Jesus’ claim to be God. “For Muslims, the doctrine of a divine Christ is anathema.” “The Quran teaches that whoever subscribes to it will make his home in the flames of hell” (5:72). For Christians, believing in the lordship of Christ is necessary for salvation. Scripture unapologetically, and enthusiastically identifies Jesus as divine (*ego eimi—I, I AM*). The very earliest records are unanimous: Jesus claimed to be God! Bottom line: Jesus is THE Way, THE Truth and THE Life. No one comes to the Father except by Him.

As we enter the Season of Lent, carry our crosses, and follow Jesus, we remember a summary word from Nabeel Qureshi: “Would it be worth it to pick up my cross & be crucified next to Jesus? If He is not God, then, no. Lose everything I love to worship a false God? A million times over, no! But if He is God, then yes. Being forever bonded to my Lord by suffering alongside Him? A million times over, yes!”

May the One True God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us, make His face shine upon us and be gracious to us, look upon us with favor and give us His peace!

Embracing the TRUTH, Pastor Dave

2018 Thrivent Choice Dollars

THANK-YOU to the following persons who designated their Thrivent Choice Dollars in 2018 to Emmanuel Lutheran Church: Creig Anderson, Darald & Leitha Bothun, Mike Brown, Julie Engle, Don Holtan, Bob Newton, Lee & Judy Pearce, Karen Peterson, Jenna Serr, David & Julie Steffenson, Rich & Janet Sunde, and Don & Jean Wanek. Your designations make a difference and help with the ministry of Emmanuel Lutheran! Members and Friends of Emmanuel, if you would like information on how to designate choice dollars (it’s easy)--contact Julie Steffenson, our Thrivent Congregation Advocate. And remember: You need to designate your dollars EVERY YEAR. Thrivent will not do it automatically. Use them or lose them!

Save the Date: Rochester Day of Prayer, May 2

THURSDAY EVENING, May 2: from 7:00-8:15pm Theme: “Love One Another!” Christians in the Rochester area will Celebrate God’s Faithfulness. All Evening activities will be held at Autumn Ridge Church, located at 3611 Salem Road SW, Rochester.

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.

Walking our Way through LENT

Karen Salz will be our worship pianist on Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and all five Tuesdays during Lent. Our Lenten Sermon Series this year will be on the Psalms.

Ash Wednesday, March 6: Psalm 51—A Wideness in God's Mercy

March 12: Psalm 91—On Eagles' Wings

March 19: Psalm 27—LORD, You Are My Light

March 26: Psalm 85—Encore: Do It Again!

April 2: Psalm 32—Blessed are the Forgiveness

April 9: Psalm 126—Bringing in the Sheaves

Eve of Palm Sunday, April 13: Psalm 118—God's Steadfast Love Endures Forever

Maundy Thursday, April 18: Psalm 116—Now Thank We All Our God

Good Friday, April 19: Ps. 22—My God, My God!

Easter, April 20: Psalm 16—Pleasures Forevermore

13th Annual Devoted Hearts Conference

Conference Theme: "Broken and Beautiful"

We've all had times in life where we wish we could start over again. Life is not what we imagined it would be, for a number of different reasons. The decisions we have made, or those others have made, leave us stuck, sad, shamed, scared and searching. How do we overcome these struggles? How do we walk with God through these seasons of life?

DATES & TIMES:

Friday, April 26 – 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 27 – 8:30 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.

LOCATION: Autumn Ridge Church, Rochester, Minnesota

COST: \$57 thru Mar. 31, 2019 (\$62 after March 31, 2019). Women of Emmanuel will receive a \$12.00 scholarship in support of this conference (Barb Steffenson, Jenna Serr & Julie Edwards).

Speakers: Sheila Walsh & Jennifer Rothschild, musical artist Jonny Diaz, & dramatist Jeremiah Gamble, from Theater for the Thirsty

REGISTER: devotedheartsrochester.com or the Christos Bookstore!

Rochester International Friendship Center

Hosting a performance by Ramy Adly on the Oud

When: Sunday, March 10 at 3:30pm

Where: Trinity Lutheran Church, Rochester, MN

Ramy Adly is known as one of the best oud players in the world. The oud might be the earliest stringed instrument in history. King David was an oud player and may have used it to compose many of the Psalms. Ramy is considered one of the true masters of this eleven stringed instrument and has played for thousands at the Kennedy Center, festivals, cathedrals, and performance halls. Come and be truly inspired by Ramy's music as he raises the awareness for the need to support International Friendship Centers. Imagine leaving your country behind and starting over in place with a new language and customs. You would be grateful for any assistance that could be provided. The Rochester International Friendship Center offers free assistance with ESL classes, medical ESL classes, sewing classes, cooking classes, food distribution, counseling, and fellowship opportunities to form new friends and family in the Rochester area. A free will offering will be collected to assist internationals at the Rochester International Friendship Center. A free reception follows the performance. For more information, please contact John Gayed (POBLO Ministries) at #484-378-2392.

SEMAC MISSION TRIP

This year's SEMAC mission trip is in the books. 30+ people participated in servant work in Wilmington, N.C. from **February 10-22**. Three Thrivent Action Team grants were received in support of this ministry! Special thanks to Larry Vomhof & his crew for sharing the love of Jesus.

In case you're wondering, SEMAC members worked on Twenty different projects while in Wilmington. Most of the residents received little or no FEMA dollars or insurance assistance. Servant work included flooring, insulation, drywall installation with mudding and sanding and painting, tile work, appliance hookups, removal of trees, and yard work. Group members enjoyed excellent accommodations, fantastic food, and lots of Christ-centered fellowship.

Here is what happened at the home of Renee Flowers: Flood damage from Hurricane Florence (September, 2018) devastated the mobile home of Renee. When SEMAC arrived, the interior walls were already stripped. SEMAC replaced the entire floor, insulated, installed drywall, taped, mudded, sanded, painted the walls and ceilings, installed a new tub, replaced electrical items, and hooked up faucets. SEMAC also purchased & installed a new water heater. Renee's home is now 80% complete.

Here is one of many thankyou's SEMAC received:
"Rain today. HEY! I didn't hear it dripping wildly into my home today. May GOD BLESS YOU ALL. I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! You people are truly God's angels. THANK YOU. THANK YOU. THANK YOU ALL!! From the old lady with thyroid eyes and her dog Cassylove. You brought new life to me. I had given up lately, but because of you all I feel like I can make it to church again. Thanks and God Bless You All."

Thank you for your donations and prayers in support of this valuable Mission Work! Next year SEMAC will be on the road again for two weeks in February of 2020. For more information contact Larry Vomhof (507-251-1342)! There are plenty of local opportunities to serve as well.

Excerpts from Carmen LaBerge

"Child Sacrifice in America"

Moloch was the false god of the Canaanites who required child sacrifice. God forbade this practice of appeasing the gods of the day (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; 2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 32:35). Moloch's got a new altar in New York, he's got worshipers and he's doing business as Autonomy and Choice.

On January. 22, 2019 the state of New York enacted a law allowing for abortion up to a baby's due date. **How are Christians to respond to this new reality?**
We grieve & mourn and pray and share the Gospel.
 There are things done upon the earth which so grieve the heart of God that His people do what they can to reflect the depth of it. I now more fully understand the scenes of God's people tearing their clothes and donning sackcloth and ashes when the darkness of sin became particularly acute.

Chosen because it was the anniversary of Roe v. Wade – the Governor of the state of New York in a formal ceremony that can only be described as celebratory – signed the Reproductive Health Act into law. The law allows for abortion at any time throughout pregnancy. If a child is born alive, after a botched abortion, the born-live child is no longer protected. Clearly Moloch has worshippers today and to this false god the children of America are being offered up on the altars of autonomy and choice.

Governor Cuomo commanded that "historic New York landmarks be lit up in pink to celebrate this achievement and shine a bright light forward for the rest of the nation to follow." What has been born in New York is intended to be conceived, gestate and birthed elsewhere. New York has now become the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) – the place where some of the kings of Judah sacrificed their children.

A woman may, under this new law, decide at any time prior the live birth of her child, to have the child's life terminated if she determines it is in HER best interest to do so. If she comes to view the child as a threat to her health – physical, mental, emotional, social, relational, financial, or otherwise – then she can request and receive a taxpayer funded abortion in the state of New York – today, from someone for whom abortion is a business.

Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

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Rochester, MN 55901
Attn. Pastor Dave Steffenson

Contact Information:

253-302-9845 (Mobile)

507-206-3048 (Home)

pastordavesteffenson@gmail.com



SAVE THE DATES!

"Fat Tuesday Pancake & Pastry Feed"

Tuesday, March 5, 2019

Serving from 4:30-6:30pm (Oasis Church)

"Public Reading of the New Testament"

Monday, April 22

Praying for our Methodist Brothers & Sisters

The United Methodist Church, the third-largest faith group in the U.S. & the largest mainline Protestant group, recently met in convention, & decided to stay the course with Scripture. Delegates voted to uphold the traditional and biblical view of sexuality. This decision has not been met with universal support. Please keep our Methodist friends in your prayers!

The traditional view of sexuality says that all people are created in God's image & are precious in His eyes. Though all people, regardless of their sexual proclivities or indiscretions are loved with an everlasting love, our holy God does not accommodate to cultural mores and appetites of the flesh. All sinners are valued and loved. All sin is called to repentance and amendment of life. The proclamation of Law & Gospel is not a popular word in the ears of all people.

In the Methodist Church, as in other denominational bodies (e.g. Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian), disagreements regarding the authority of Scripture often leads to division & separation. It appears that the Methodist Church is preparing for the departure of some of its congregations by graciously allowing individual churches to retain their property.

May God open the eyes of His people that all may see the TRUTH, love with the love of Jesus, and pursue a life of holiness which is truly pleasing to our Lord.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed."

Romans 12:1-2

Back Page Stories

Madonna Towers Ministry:

Pastor Dave is leading worship & preaching at the Madonna Towers Skilled Care Chapel twice a month on Wednesdays in 2019. Members of Emmanuel are invited to participate in this ministry to seniors of our community. Our next Worship Services will be on Wednesdays, March 6 & 20 at 1:00pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to help with this ministry.

Men's Morning Bible Study: The men of Emmanuel Lutheran meet on Tuesday mornings (8am) at Oasis Church for Bible Study & fellowship. The men are currently studying the Psalms appointed for weekly worship. Join us each week for conversation and coffee!

Women's Bible Study: The Women have concluded their study on Solomon and his "Song of Songs". The Women will take a break during Lent and return for a spring study on the Book of Esther (April 25-June 6): "Chosen for a Time Such as This!"

Church Council Highlights:

February 5, 2019: Income for the month of January exceeded expenses by about \$875. Authorization was given to submit benevolence support to SEMAC, and the NALC. Pulpit supply for 2019 will increase to \$150, plus mileage. A new Women's Bible Study on the Book of Esther will begin after Easter. Bodhi Konop was baptized on February 9. Pastor attended the SEMAC Mission Trip as a week of continuing education.

We have already received 4 Thrivent Action Team grants. Fat Tuesday will feature pancakes and pastries from 4-7pm. \$100,000 has been invested in a 3 month CD. Our Insurance is being reviewed and a recommendation will be made at the March 15 Council Meeting. Greeters are now serving Emmanuel as a part of our Worship Servants. M&M minis will be given to members and friends of Emmanuel prior to Lent. During the 40 days of Lent, empty tubes may be filled with coins and cash in support of the Emmanuel Hospitality House.

Congratulations to our newly elected Council Officers, installed on Feb. 23: Deb Vomhof (President), Barb Steffenson (Vice President), Don Holtan (Secretary), and Tom Vomhof (Treasurer).