

THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Marks of Discipleship: SCRIPTURE”

“The B-I-B-L-E, yes that’s the book for me. I stand alone on the Word of God; the B-I-B-L-E.”

This month we look at the Word of God. God’s Word is understood in three primary ways: Jesus, the Bible, and the proclamation of law & gospel. In the third commandment we are exhorted to REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY. Martin Luther, responding to the question, “What does this mean for us?” replies, “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not neglect God’s Word and the preaching of it, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.”

Disciples feed and feast upon the Word of God. Daily devotions, Bible reading and Bible studies are mainstays in the life of God’s people. Luther read the Scriptures, cover to cover, at least twice each year. Each month, during the hours of prayer, he sang the entire Book of Psalms. Luther translated the Scriptures into the common language of the people because he wanted Chris-



tians to “gladly hear and learn God’s Word.”

Scripture is not a paper Pope, but it is our final authority in all matters of faith and life. We don’t stand over Scripture; we bow beneath it. We don’t read and interpret the Word; the Word reads and interprets us.

“God’s Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.”

Martin Luther offers these words about God’s Word: “Therefore dismiss your own opinions and feelings, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored, in order that you may find that divine wisdom which God here lays before you in such simple guise as to quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel

points the shepherds. Simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear the treasure, Christ, who lies in them” (Luther’s Works 35, page 228).

In his book, 7 Men and the Secret of Their Greatness, Eric Metaxas writes, “The secret was their faith in Jesus Christ.” George Washington believed that God had a purpose for his life. He had private devotions every morning & evening, reading from his Bible. William Wilberforce believed that God purposed him to abolish slavery in England. He prayed and read Scripture daily.

It is written: “All Scripture is God-breathed” (II Timothy 3:16-17)! In song we confess our faith: “*Thy strong Word bespeaks us righteous; bright with Thine own holiness. Glorious now, we press toward glory; and our lives our hopes confess*”—LBW #233.

Pastor Dave

**April 2014
Newsletter
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Food For Thought:

“Here the whole world (stars, water, air, And field, and forest, as they were Reflected in a single mind) Like cast off clothes was left behind In ashes, yet with hopes that she, Re-born from holy poverty, In Lenten lands, hereafter may Resume them on her Easter Day .”

Epitaph written by C.S. Lewis and placed on the grave of his beloved wife, Joy.

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Martin Luther: “For some years now, I have read through the Bible twice every year. If you picture the Bible to be a mighty tree and every word a little branch, I have shaken every one of these branches because I wanted to know what it was and what it meant” (Luther’s Works, 54:165).

READING GOD’S WORD: *During the fifty days of Easter, Servants of Emmanuel will be collectively reading the entire New Testament. Everyone gets to participate in this Bible Reading Course. Select your books and chapters of choice. Watch for the reading chart at church!*

WHO GETS SAVED?

I’m a “caption” guy. I skim magazines, newspapers, and the internet, looking for interesting, thought-provoking headlines. I’m a pastor, so a recent article in The Lutheran immediately caught my eye. The title of the article was “**Who Gets Saved?**” by Pastor Peter Marty. To be saved generally means to be rescued from imminent harm or danger. A lifeguard saves a swimmer from drowning. A snow day, may save an unprepared student from taking and failing a test. God saved the Israelites from captivity in Egypt. Some people save coupons. Some people put money into a Savings Account. One can save and reduce fuel costs by driving less aggressively or turning the thermostat down. “Save your energy,” the coach says, “We’ve got a long season ahead of us.”

So the question, “**Who Gets Saved?**” on the surface at least, has an easy answer: “Everyone, at one time or another gets saved or participates in saving. But at a deeper level “getting saved” is a religious question, a faith question. Salvation means different things to different people. What may be saving (heaven) for one person, could actually be damning (hell) for another. When it comes to “getting saved,” it’s best to clarify what one means by “*saved*”.

“**Who Gets Saved?**” Pastor Marty asked this question and answered it for himself. His answer was Universalism, i.e. everyone gets saved. Pastor Marty assumes that everything in life is a matter of fate and pre-determined destiny, from which one is powerless to escape. One is a Christian, or a Hindu, or (fill in the blank), simply because of one’s birthplace or cultural background. My parents had an eighth grade education and my dad smoked two packs of Camel cigarettes a day. Does that mean that I stopped going to school at the end of eighth grade and smoke two packs of Camels every day. Of course not. Everything is not fixed and everything is not random.

Who Gets Saved? The problem with Christianity is its Gospel; its proclamation of good news. God loves the whole world, so God gives His only Son to save the world from sin. On the cross God restores a right relationship between us and the ground and source of our being. The Gospel is universal in scope and audience, but it is also particular in its delivery system: “There is salvation under no other name than the name of Jesus.” Jesus audaciously declares, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by me.” Jesus isn’t just offering pastoral care to worried disciples. He is proclaiming the Truth. According to Romans 10, “Those who confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised Him from the dead, get saved.” One gets saving faith when the Word of God, Jesus Christ, is preached as good news; when the Holy Spirit makes believers out of those who hear the Gospel. Jesus saved us from a fate worse than death; i.e. hell—eternal separation from God.

Is it ignorance and arrogance to assume that a particular faith has the Truth? Is religion nothing more than cafeteria dining, where each person selects their items of choice? Do all paths lead to the same destination? Does each faith or religion have its own version of the truth? **Who Gets Saved?** The short answer is, “Let me tell you about Jesus,” assuming of course that the question even matters; and it does...for all eternity! - *from, Pastor Dave Steffenson*

Lent & Easter

Saturdays in Lent—6 pm: Lectionary texts with a liturgy of Word & Sacrament; using portions of LBW & WOV.

Wednesdays of Lent—Drama Series: How to be a Disciple. Evening Prayer with Disciple Sketches by guest pastors.

Eve of Palm/Passion—Saturday, April 12 at 6 pm: Palm fronds will be distributed.

Maundy Thursday—April 17 at 6 pm: Foot Washing (John 13) and the Lord’s Supper.

Good Friday—April 18 at 12:00 Noon: Bidding Prayer & Passion Reading (Jn. 18-19).

Holy Saturday—April 19, Easter Eve at 6 pm: Celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord with an Easter Vigil—Light, Scripture, Baptism, & the Lord’s Supper. **THE FIFTY DAYS BEGINS!** Blessed Easter to you and yours!

Women’s Bible Study—April 21-August 25

“The Wise and the Foolish” is a Bible Study that focuses entirely on Jesus’ “people parables” – or what might better be described as Discipleship Parables. These are the character stories that focus on the nature of discipleship and what it means to be a wise and faithful follower of Jesus.

On Monday, April 21, Women of Emmanuel and their friends will begin a nine session study. Class will be taught by Pastor Dave and Julie Steffenson. This Study will be held at Oasis Church (1815 – 38th Street N.W. Rochester), twice a month, on Monday afternoons from 1:00-2:30 p.m. Like Mary, the sister of Lazarus, we are invited to sit at the feet of Rabbi Je-

sus—our Lord and Savior—and learn what it means to practice our baptism in daily life. What better time to learn about discipleship than in the Season of Easter, when we recall the Great Commission, authored by the Resurrected One who has “all authority” and promises to be with us always (Emmanuel).

Each session will be an individual learning opportunity. So come to one, several, or all nine sessions as you are able. While some people take the summer off, vacationing from God’s Word, Servants of Emmanuel will be sitting at the feet of Jesus eager to listen, learn, grow and serve. We hope you’ll join us!

Schedule:

April 21: “Two Builders”
Matthew 7:24-29

May 5: “Wicked Tenants”
Matthew 21:33-46

May 19: “Ten Bridesmaids”
Matthew 25:1-13

June 2: “Talents”
Matthew 25:14-30

June 23 “Sheep and Goats”
Matthew 25:31-46

July 14: “Wise Manager”
Luke 12:35-48

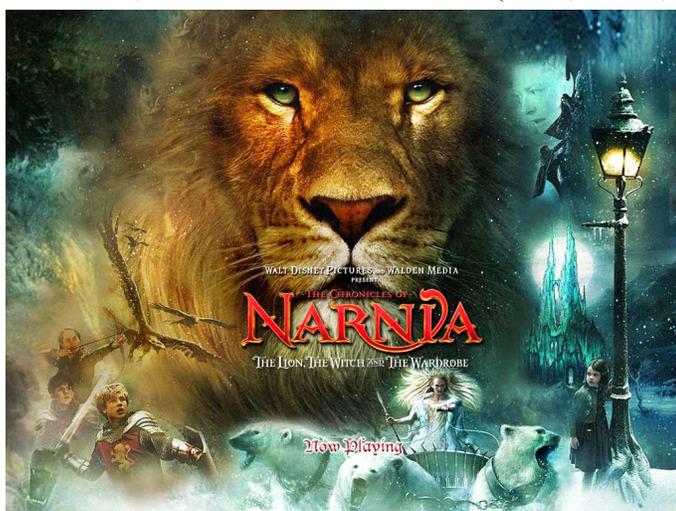
July 28: “Invitations”
Luke 14:7-14

August 11: “Prodigal Son”
Luke 15:11-32

August 25: “Shrewd Manager”
Luke 16:1-13

Confirmation Class for Elementary Youth:

During the Season of Easter, youth are invited to join Pastor Dave for a reading of C.S. Lewis’ Chronicles of Narnia. We’ll begin with “The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe” and see where the journey takes us. We’ll meet at Oasis Church on Wednesdays from 4:15-5:15 p.m. **SUMMARY:** During the German air raids of WWII, the four Pevensie children (Peter, Susan, Edmund & Lucy) are sent out of London to take shelter at



the country home of eccentric Professor Digory Kirke, who happens to be the owner of a curious wardrobe. Peering into this wardrobe one day—while playing hide-in-seek, Lucy finds herself in the snowy land of Narnia, which is mired in never-ending winter thanks to the magic of the evil White Witch Jadis, who has proclaimed that it will be always winter but never Christmas in the mystical land. When all four Pevensie children end up through the wardrobe, they discover that it was meant to be (fulfillment of prophecy), as two daughters of Eve and two sons of Adam must join with the mighty Lion God, Aslan to defeat the evil White Witch. The sacrifice of an innocent one will undo death and atone for the sins of many.

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SAVE THE DATE!

VBS at OASIS CHURCH

“WILD ANIMALS”

Roaring in the name of Jesus!

Sunday-Wednesday, July 13-16

Sunday (9:30 am-2:30 pm)

Monday-Wednesday (5-8 pm)

Playing Hide-in-Seek? “God in the Dark”

Where is God when it hurts? How does one survive the dark night of the soul, the agonizing absence of God? Why do good people suffer and bad people prosper? Why did Jesus have to die on the cross? The Season of Lent is running its course. “My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?”

C. S. Lewis spent the majority of his life as a confirmed and happy bachelor. But in his fifties he was surprised by a world-wind romance with an American woman he had been corresponding with, Joy Davidman. Wedded only a short time, their marriage was brought to an end by a recurrence of cancer in Joy. Lewis kept a journal which was published under a pseudonym at the death of Joy. When Lewis died a few years later A Grief Observed was published under his own name. This short book gives voice to Lewis’s deep grief and hard questions that came from it. Among its better known passages is this one:

“... Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, so happy that you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be—or so it feels—welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once. And that seeming was as strong as this. What can this mean? Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?”

- See Psalm 46

Back Page Stories

Men’s Bible Study Breakfast:

Weekly fellowship around God’s Word at 8 am Tuesdays at Charlie’s (1408 2nd. St. SW). Join us in being Evangelical. Invite a friend. Share the Good News!

Super Market Saturday: The next Channel One opportunity is April 19 (9 am—Noon). Let’s share the heart of Emmanuel by caring for the needs of our neighbors.

Women’s Bible Study: Pastor Dave & Julie will be leading a nine session Bible Study on the Discipleship Parables of Jesus, beginning on

Monday, April 21. Women will meet at Oasis Church, twice a month, on Mondays from 1:00-2:30 p.m. Bring a friend. Study will conclude in Aug.

Council Highlights: Two benevolence partners have been chosen for 2014: Supermarket Saturday and the Salvation Army. Thanks for your input in selecting this year’s recipients of Emmanuel’s local benevolence dollars (\$1000.00) and servant hours. Many good Christ-centered causes were considered. We hope Servants of Emmanuel will support these two ministries collectively, and additional opportunities individually, as the Spirit guides and directs. Council also

approved advertising in the “Coffee News” for another year (cost: \$375.00). Lee and Judy Pearce have consented to serve as coordinators of the Emmanuel Care Ministry. If you know of someone in need of prayer & care, please let the Pearce’s know.

Thanks...the following pastors are sharing Discipleship Sketches during Lent: Fred Morck, Bob Porisch, Jack Miller, Dan Berkland, and Mike Lockerby. **Thanks** also to the Emmanuel Lutheran Choir of Grafton, Iowa, offering gifts of music on March 29.

Keep St. Paul Lutheran (church plant), and our missionaries Jim & Diane Wagner in your prayers!