

THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship—As We Forgive”

“Forgive our sins as we forgive, you taught us Lord to pray. But you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.” Central to the prayer our Lord taught us is the petition that speaks of forgiveness. In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, followers of Christ are instructed to give, fast, and pray, in secret; not for show. Jesus warns us about hypocrisy in our praying. Your Heavenly Father already knows what you need before you ask Him; empty phrases are not needed. Therefore pray like this! The Lord’s Prayer is our model! The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer that teaches us how to pray.

When we pray the “Our Father”, pronouns are important. God is not my private property. God is our Father. Adopted into God’s family, we are citizens of a heavenly Kingdom and heirs of a mutual promise—the forgiveness of our sins. Our vision is limited, so we pray for God’s Kingdom to come & God’s will to be done; both of which are most excellent, guaranteed by God’s sovereignty, not human



works. Daily bread teaches us to live by faith alone in the providence of God. It’s not enough for me to live “one day at a time”. I must also share daily bread with my neighbor for it is our daily bread (communal property) that we receive & distribute. God’s provision is held in trust and shared in common.

“To forgive is to set the prisoner free and the prisoner is me.”

St. Paul reminds the Church at Rome to “owe no one anything except the debt of love” (Romans 13:8). And so we pray, “Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors”. This verse is central to our praying. The *state of forgiveness* is the culture and DNA of God’s Kingdom. Jesus concludes his preaching on prayer by saying, “For if you forgive

others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15). The conditional language of this prayer reminds us that forgiveness is not a cheap expression of “I’m sorry”. Un-forgiveness has consequences.

Later in Matthew’s Gospel we hear more from Jesus about forgiveness. Reconciliation isn’t optional, it’s essential. Peter asks Jesus a question & then provides his own answer: “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven?” Peter expands the “three strikes and you’re out” governing principle of his day. Jesus tells Peter to put his calculator away. Forgiveness is beyond calculation. “Seventy times seven” means that forgiveness has no limits. —cont. on page 3 —

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Food For Thought:

“The Lord’s Prayer is the greatest martyr on earth (as are the name and Word of God). Everybody tortures and abuses it; few take comfort and joy in its proper use.”

—Martin Luther
(Luther’s Works 43:209)

INSIDE AND BACK PAGE NEWS

<i>A Gideon Story</i>	2
<i>NALC Convocation</i>	2
<i>Bible Saturday</i>	2
<i>Private Confession</i>	3
<i>Church Pictorial Directory</i>	4
<i>Emmanuel Church Picnic</i>	4
<i>Back Page Stories</i>	4

A Gideon Story—2 Billion Scriptures Distributed & Counting!

Tim Mattox was born and raised by his mother in the USA, where he lived a fairly normal life until he reached his early teens. Struggling with adolescence, Tim began experimenting with alcohol and drugs to gain the acceptance of his peers. At age 16, he lost his mother to cancer. Tim was angry and disillusioned with life and turned to stronger drugs to numb the pain. As Tim reached his early twenties, he lost all sense of self-worth, & his life was filled with whatever was necessary to maintain his drug habits. This eventually landed him in jail.

In his jail cell, he became clear-headed for the first time in years. Tim began to realize who he had become and felt a crippling sense of hopelessness. One day, he found a small Gideon-placed New Testament in his cell and began thumbing through the pages, landing in the book of Matthew. While he struggled at first to understand the words, soon Tim was captivated as the pages narrated the extraordinary life of Jesus Christ. Soon, Tim's understanding of a better life led him to a fully surrendered heart.

Tim realized God was offering him a brand new start. He understood what God was saying through the words, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness ... do not worry about tomorrow," (Matthew 6:33-34). Tim's conviction was strong. He confessed his sins to God that day and invited Jesus to be his Savior & Lord. The painful, empty, and visionless life he had led was replaced with joy, purpose, & a future. Ephesians 2:4-5 taught him, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ."

Tim saw only one reasonable response to what God had done for him: to tell anyone who would listen about the life-changing power of Jesus. It was during this time Tim began doing ministry with youth & the elderly. The simple & solid commitment to the study of God's Word revolutionized Tim's relationship with God. Working in him & through him, the Lord was gracious in using this unfinished vessel to reach others with His love.

In 1994, Tim went on a 10-day mission trip to Moscow, where God confirmed His call on Tim's life to work in the mission field long term. Later that year, Tim returned to Moscow to reach people on the streets with Jesus' love, work with local churches, and disciple young believers. During the 8 years spent in Moscow, Tim met & married his wife, planted a church, & received his pastor's ordination. Currently Pastor Tim & his family live in Cyprus, serving Calvary Chapel Paphos, a multicultural community of believers from all corners of the globe.

BIBLE SATURDAY

"God's Word is our great heritage and shall be ours forever. To spread its light from age to age shall be our chief endeavor. Through life it guides our way; in death it is our stay. Lord grant while time shall last your Church may hold it fast, throughout all generations."

On Sat, August 29 at 6pm we will celebrate the gift of God's Word in our lives. **Bring your Bible to worship with you.** If you are in need of a Bible or would like to provide one to someone in need, contact Pastor Dave. A Gideon Speaker will be sharing a brief "moment for mission" with us at the beginning of our worship service. A freewill offering will be received at the door, following worship, in support of the work of the Gideons.

PRAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS

Each month on the 15th day of the month we pray for an area school. During the month of August we are praying for Longfellow Elementary and delivering goodies as an expression of our love and gratitude. Our pianist, MarJean Damerval, is a music teacher at Longfellow.

Martyr: Life-Giving Witness

The NALC Convocation will be held in Dallas this summer (Aug. 12-14). Pastor Steffenson & Lee Pearce will be our Emmanuel Delegates. The Convocation will celebrate the 50th Ordination Anniversary of Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring. Members of the NALC (North American Lutheran Church) are invited to send a Thank-offering Gift in support of the NALS (North American Lutheran Seminary) in honor of Bishop Spring. Contact Pastor Steffenson for more information.

Max Lucado: *"MERCY gave the prodigal son a second chance. GRACE gave him a feast."*

—cont. from page 1

Jesus illustrates God's principle of forgiveness by telling the parable of the "Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18:23ff. A servant is forgiven 10,000 talents. A talent was a monetary unit worth about 15-20 years of labor. The servant's debt is non-repayable. Forgiveness is about mercy, not merit. What does the forgiven servant do? He confronts a fellow servant & demands immediate payment of 100 denarii. A denarii was a day's wage. This is a repayable debt. But the one who is forgiven much refuses to practice forgiveness in his relationship with others. There can be NO forgiveness in the Kingdom of God for those who will not KNOW forgiveness. The King hears about this behavior and the unmerciful servant is thrown into jail until he pays his entire debt; i.e. learns to practice forgiveness.

Final word: "So also," Jesus declares, "my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." Forgiveness is a non-negotiable rule in the Kingdom of God. To forgive is to set the prisoner free; and the prisoner is me. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Saying Amen, Pastor Dave

PRIVATE CONFESSION!

"St. John writes, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Confession is good for the soul. It's not just a Catholic practice. A confessional booth isn't necessary, only the "office of the keys". When was the last time you made private confession?

Jesus gave to His disciples the power to grant absolution in His name: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you". The Resurrected Christ commissioned His Body of Believers to be ambassadors of Confession and Forgiveness: "If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven. If you bind the sins of any they are bound" (John 20:23). Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Peace be with you. Share the peace." The office of the keys is given not only to Peter (Matthew 16:19), but to the entire church (Matthew 18:18). Luther writes, "*In the New Testament every Christian has this authority to forgive sins, where a priest is not at hand*" (Luther's Works 35:22).

The Son of Man has authority to forgive sins and He shares this authority with His Disciples (Matthew 9). Martin Luther writes, "*Now this authority to forgive sins is nothing other than what a priest, indeed, if need be, any Christian, may say to another when he sees him afflicted or affrighted in his sins. He can joyfully speak this verdict, 'Take heart, your sins are forgiven' [Matt. 9:2]. And whoever accepts this and believes it as a word of God, his sins are surely forgiven.*" *Where however there is no faith, it would do no good even if Christ or God himself spoke the verdict*" (Luther's Works, 35:21).

In Worship we practice the gift of Corporate Confession & Forgiveness. Though the rubric is entitled the "Brief Order for Confession and forgiveness," we know that there is nothing brief about Confession and Forgiveness. Reconciled with God we are

commanded to be reconciled with one another. This is what the "sharing of God's Peace" is all about. We are required to give what we get ... before we bring our gifts to the Altar.

Philip Melanchthon, in the Apology for the Augsburg Confession, refers to Absolution as a Sacrament. Martin Luther rejected the ecclesiastical rule requiring confession saying that such a requirement makes confession a law, when in fact it is an indispensable form of the Gospel. Confession, be it corporate or private, is a gift not a requirement. "It must not," Luther proclaimed, "be neglected or fall into disuse in the church."

Luther included instruction for Private Confession in his Small Catechism. What Luther feared has become perhaps a habit in the life of the Church; i.e. the neglect of private confession. In the Large Catechism Luther writes, "*If you are a Christian, you should be glad to run more than a hundred miles for confession, not under compulsion, but rather coming and compelling us to offer it. ... When I urge you to go to confession, I am simply urging you to be a Christian*" (LC, 460:30-32).

Private Confession is *an opportunity* for hearing the Gospel, *not an obligation*. It's available at Emmanuel just for the asking.

Pastor Dave is taking Monday as his weekly day off. Please call for emergencies only. Thanks!

Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

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SAVE THE DATE!

Christmas With Emmanuel!

Join us as we celebrate the birth of our Lord on Thursday, December 24 at 4:00 p.m. at Oasis Church. Invite your family and friends to join us for Christmas Eve Worship.

EMMANUEL CHURCH PICNIC

Deb and Larry Vomhof are hosting a congregational picnic at their house (11530 Hwy. 52 S.E., Chatfield, MN) on **Sunday, August 23**. Emmanuel members and friends are invited to participate in a fun day of food and Christian fellowship. We hope you can join us.

Time: Arrive after 11:30 a.m. We will eat at 12:00 Noon.

Bring: A dish to share, and/or a dessert. Hamburgers and hotdogs, along with the fixings will be provided. Coffee and Lemonade will also be provided. Bring additional beverages if you wish.

Activities: The Vomhofs have a pool, so bring swimsuits, towels, lifejackets, & blowup tubes. Enjoy conversation, & outdoor games. Grow a friendship or make a new one.

Directions: From Oasis Church—travel on U.S. 52 South approximately 20 miles. Destination will be on the right; about 5 miles from Marion between the 2 county road 7's. Watch for the balloons.

Emmanuel Pictorial Directory: Church Directories allow members to stay in touch and to communicate well. Directories also serve as a wonderful Prayer Ministry resource. If you would like to have your family picture included in our inaugural Picture Directory, please submit a photo to Pastor Dave by August 29. A photographer will also be available before and after worship on August 29 for those unable to submit a photo.

Back Page Stories

Men's Bible Study Breakfast:

Weekly fellowship around God's Word at 8am Tuesdays at Charlie's (1408 2nd. St. SW). Join us in being Evangelical. Invite a friend.

Supermarket Saturday: The next Channel One opportunity is August 15, 2015 (9 am—Noon).

Council Highlights (July 14):

Pulpit Supply in August will be Rev. Tim Duesenberg on August 8 and Rev. Chris Brekke on August 15. The Emmanuel Picnic will be on Sunday, August 23 at the Vomhof's home. Emmanuel will provide the meats and drinks. Pianist schedule is set for July - September; thanks to MarJean, Mandy and Karen for your service.

Members of Emmanuel are encouraged to pack the WORD (bring your bible to church each week). Bible Celebration Saturday will be August 29 with a freewill offering in support of the Gideons. Thank you received from the North American Lutheran Seminary for our gift of \$1200. Next Council Mtg. is Aug. 11

THANKS: To LeRoy & Margaret Quam for the gift of new book shelves for the storage of our worship hymnals. Thanks also to Don Holtan who helped with the installation.

Women of the Word! Women's Bible Study resumes on Wednesday, September 9 at 1pm. We'll be studying famous Women in Scripture. An evening option will also be available for women not able to attend the af-

ternoon study. Watch the September Newsletter for more details.

Sympathies: Members of Emmanuel extend their love, prayers and sympathies to Judy and Lee Pearce in the recent death of Judy's mother Alice Miller. May God comfort, with the promise of resurrection in Christ, those who grieve.

SATURDAY SCHOOL: Mark your calendars! Rally Day is set for September 19.

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, & give generously.